

THIRD MEMORANDUM
HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE WAVES OF JEWISH IMMIGRATION
INTO PALESTINE FROM THE ARAB CONQUEST TO THE FIRST
ZIONIST PIONEERS.
(640-1882)

I. Introductory.

The object of the following survey is to show how modern Jewish immigration was preceded by successive waves of immigration to Palestine in the ordinary, practical sense of the term. We intend to prove in the light of historical evidence that long before a ship brought the first modern Zionist immigrants to Jaffa in 1882, Jews from all parts of the Diaspora had been coming to the Holy Land. There is no truth in the contention sometimes put forward that the earlier immigrants to Palestine were only aged Jews, spending the last years of their lives in prayer and devotion in this country. We intend to prove that the early immigrants were also builders of the Yishuv, and that like their successors, they were drawn to the country partly by a deep sentimental attachment to the Holy Land, and partly by the life of unbearable humiliation they suffered in the Diaspora. Constant spiritual and physical contact, therefore, always existed between the people of Israel and the Land of Israel, with corresponding beneficial effects on Jewish life in Palestine.

Before the unprecedented catastrophe that befell the Jewish people in our own generation, two similar events in the history of Israel a permanent imprint on their lives. These were the Spanish exile, and the Russian pogroms. The latter brought in their wake the renaissance of Jewish agricultural settlement in this country, while the former led to the revival of important urban and rural centres which were later expanded and strengthened by the successive waves of Ashkenazi immigrants which followed during the next four hundred years. Without the so-called "Old Yishuv", the modern Yishuv outside the confines of the walls of the old towns would have been inconceivable. Without the old "Love of Zion", the modern "Love of Zion" with all its revolutionary implications, would have been unimaginable. Without the deep mystical faith which drove the earlier immigrants so that at times they assumed the proportions of messianic movements, the intense new faith in the revival of the people of Israel in the Land of Israel, the deep longing for the soil, of the builders of our modern Yishuv would now be incomprehensible.

In those days immigrants went through bitter trials before they were privileged to reach their destination. More than once they fell victims to pirates, who robbed them of all they possessed and sold them as slaves - to such an extent indeed that many Jewish communities had special funds for the liberation of those taken prisoner by pirates. Some of these pirates were actually persons of distinction, such as the Knights of Malta, or the members of the Order of St. John in the Islands of Rhodes and Cyprus, with whom piracy was a normal occupation, concentrated mainly on the spoliation of Jewish victims, for whose redemption there was ready money coming from the funds of Jewish communities in Italy and the neighbouring Mediterranean countries, Immigration to Palestine in earlier generations was fraught with formidable difficulties, and man-made dangers were often supplemented by those from the elements.

The journey to Palestine took months, and often years. There were no regular routes of travel in

the Middle Ages, so that the prospective immigrant often had to wait a long time at his chosen port for the chance of a boat. The cost of the journey was difficult to calculate in advance, and often demanded more than the immigrant possessed. Generally speaking, the prospective immigrant could not raise the whole amount before setting forth, and it was usually only in the course of the journey that he found the means to continue his way. Jewish communities were always ready to come to the help of prospective immigrants, and this kind of assistance came high in the list of communal charities. Where the Jew of the Diaspora could not proceed to Palestine in person, he could at least give financial help to those who could. This explains the origin of "Halukkah" funds, (literally:-distribution) contributions to which were not merely designed to help Palestine settlers, but were looked upon by the donors as a substitute for their own personal immigration. By contributing to the "Halukkah", the Jews of the Diaspora felt themselves closely linked with the life of the Yishuv. The intense love for the soil of Palestine throughout Jewish history was also expressed by many Jews in testamentary requests that their remains be taken to Palestine after their death.

The new immigrant quickly became acclimatised. He felt himself at home, and immediately began to preach the gospel of settlement in Palestine to others, extolling the virtues of the country in letters as well as in pamphlets written for the purpose.

II. Immigrants during the Early Arab period and up to the XIIIth Century.

Material and documents originating from the period between the Arab invasion of Palestine and the XIIth century point to a large-scale immigration up to the latter period. The majority of the immigrants were pilgrims attracted to the Holy City of Jerusalem from the Byzantine Empire and other parts of the world, including North Africa and even the Slav countries. Tiberias, too, attracted Jews from abroad, who came to bathe in its hot springs. Among those who settled in Jerusalem, Jews from Babylonia were foremost. There were also Babylonian settlers in Ramleh, Tiberias and Banyas in Galilee. Immigrants from Syria and Egypt, too, came with their families to settle in the country. We have records of an Egyptian Jew who applied to the Beth Din (Religious Court) for an immigration "permit" for his wife on the grounds that "I have no peace and contentment here, for I am separated from my wife, she being in Egypt and I in Ramleh. I cannot join her in Egypt, and I am anxious that she should join me in Ramleh". Most of the immigrants settled in Jerusalem or Ramleh, - the former, in order to be near to the Holy Places, and the latter, (founded by Caliph Suleiman in 716 because it was the capital of the province. Ramleh was a prosperous business centre and many Jews built houses and shops there. "Sephardic Colonies" of immigrant from Toledo, Madrid and other Spanish towns also existed in Ramleh and Jerusalem. There were immigrants from Africa, and there is mention of one who came from the Sahara Desert to settle in Jerusalem. ¹ One striking personality deserves special mention. Whether he finally reached Palestine in order, as he himself puts it, "to visit the ruins of the destroyed Temple" is not known. Legend alone speaks of Yehuda Halevy, the greatest poet of the mediaeval Diaspora, sitting by the ruins of the Temple, and reciting his last poem to Zion, as he met his death under the hooves of an Arab horseman. The truth of the story is immaterial; the historical facts are that Halevy set out on his way to **Palestine**, and at least reached Egypt. The immigration of that single individual, which made a profound impression on his generation at the time, is important in that it was the realization of the dream of a great poet of Israel who sang the song of national redemption.

Yehuda Ben Shemuel Halevy was born in Toledo, Southern Castile, towards the end of the XIth

century, on the eve of the decline of the Crescent and the rise of the Cross in Spain. His childhood was spent amid constant fighting between Christianity and Islam, which incidentally brought about the destruction of whole Jewish communities in Spain. The clash of the hostile armies found its echo in the inner struggles of the poet, and his realistic views of the problem of the Diaspora found forceful expression in many of his poems and in his philosophical work, the "Cuzari". He does not content himself with mourning life in the Diaspora, but reveals a clear national and religious vision—that his people were in exile solely because the site of the Temple, Palestine, was occupied by aliens. In 1140 Halevy left his home and took ship by the quickest route to Palestine. At sea his most exalted poetry was written—the sea and the waves sing their praise to their Maker. But the ship was compelled to leave her course and take shelter in Alexandria. He found his co-religionists in Egypt leading a life of comfort in well-organised communities; they begged him to remain with them, but he would not stay, preferring to undertake the hazards of a journey through the desert. Then we lose track of him, and legend alone tells of a strange and mythical death. Perhaps reality was no different from the legend, for this would be a glorious end for the author of "Zion, wilt thou ask" ².

III. The Immigration of Rabbis from France and England in 1211.

The mass immigration to Palestine of the three hundred Rabbis of France and England in 1211 was probably prompted by the political and economic conditions of the Jews in those countries. The Church had gained wide powers, and the more these increased the more contracted became the scope of Jewish life. Under Pope Innocent III (1198-1215), the Catholic Church proclaimed an internal crusade and demanded more and more restrictions on the Jews from King Philip Augustus of France. The King of England, John Lackland, was at first benevolently disposed towards the Jews, confirming the rights and privileges granted to them by his predecessors. But after his defeat in Ireland he levied a very large tribute on them, demanding the sum of sixty-six thousand marks to be paid on All Souls' Day, November 2nd, 1210, and putting all the Jews in prison until the whole amount was raised and paid. Thus, the common fate of the Jews of France and England at the beginning of the century turned the eyes of the leaders of these communities to the ancient homeland of the people of Israel, whence redemption was one day sure to come. It was for the Rabbis to show the way to the rest of the people.

Reports that Saladin's armies had occupied Jerusalem no doubt had a great effect on the preparations for the departure of the Rabbis. The story went that the Moslem King permitted Jewish settlement in Palestine, after it had been prohibited throughout the Crusader rule. Some of the immigrant Rabbis settled in Jerusalem. They entered the city through the Jaffa Gate, rending their garments as a sign of mourning for the destruction of the Temple. They then paid devotional visits to all the Holy Shrines, first to the Wailing Wall, and then to the Mount of Olives where they recited prayers. A letter from one of the leaders of these French immigrants describes their early days in the country, and the itinerary of the devotional tour they made in Western Palestine and Transjordan.

We have no records as to what happened to the Rabbis in Jerusalem. It is possible that later they joined the settlers in Acre, which, after four years in the hands of Saladin, eventually fell to the Crusaders again. Acre was something of a metropolis in those days, a centre of great commercial and business activities, and of international communications, and the Rabbis organised a community there whose fame spread as far Egypt ³. About fifty years after their arrival others from France came to Palestine, also settling in Acre.

The Acre community was destroyed on the occupation of the town by the Mamluks in 1291. The town was laid in ruins, and its Jews were killed in the Synagogue, the conquerors sparing neither women nor children ⁴. The immigration of the Rabbis of France and England at the beginning of the century became only a memory.

IV. Nahmanides and his Generation in Palestine.

Moses Ben Nahman (better known as Nahmanides) from Gerona in Spain was seventy-three when he arrived in Jerusalem in 1267. He was a man of great versatility-physician, thinker, poet, linguist, commentator and mystic. He died in 1270 after three years in Jerusalem, but in those three years he laid the foundations of a new Yishuv on the ruins left by the Tartar and Mongol invaders. Knowing that Jerusalem had suffered most, he went there and found two families who, together with some people from the neighbourhood, formed a proper quorum or congregation for Sabbath and Holy-day prayers. Under the influence of his dynamic personality the Jerusalem community as well as that of the country in general, increased considerably. From then to this day there has been a Jewish community in Jerusalem, so that Nahmanides may properly be considered the father of the new Yishuv.

It is possible that his immigration so late in life was prompted by the effects of the public debate between him and Paulus Christianus, a Jewish convert to Christianity from Montpellier, held in Barcelona before the King of Aragon some four years before Nahmanides left for Palestine. The genius of Nahmanides won him the argument, but he roused the Dominicans against him, and was compelled to leave the country, whence after considerable tribulations he reached the port of Acre. In Jerusalem he established a synagogue where Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews prayed together, until in 1586 they were expelled by the Moslem religious leaders on the ground that a Mosque had been built in close proximity to the synagogue. The synagogue has since remained in the hands of the Moslems, who subsequently used it as a cheese factory. In one of his books Nahmanides reveals a Zionist outlook in his commentary on the saying "And ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land and dwell therein" (Numbers 33-53). "This is to my mind a very positive command, for God has commanded us to settle in the country and inherit it, because it was given to us, so that we might not despise the inheritance of the Lord...", a remark which expresses a deep conviction that the Divine Command is not merely to **dwell** in the country but also to **build it up** ⁵.

When report reached the Diaspora that Nahmanides had settled in Jerusalem, new disciples from other lands, in particular Mesopotamia, rallied round him. Some years after Nahmanides death, an anonymous pupil of his wrote a pamphlet "Tose'oth Eretz-Israel", in which he says, **inter alia**, "now many people voluntarily immigrate into Palestine; for many think that the coming of Messiah is near at hand, seeing the Gentiles causing ever-increasing hardship to the people of Israel in most places". This appears to be an allusion to the persecutions in France and Germany and the expulsion from England ⁶.

One of the immigrant Rabbis who left his native city in Western Europe in 1268 was Rabbi Meyer of Rothenburg (Germany). Many ordinary German Jews, not Rabbis alone, followed Rabbi Meyer. The Emperor Rudolph viewed their departure with disfavour, as his exactions from Jews contributed substantially to his revenue. Rabbi Meyer was therefore arrested in Lombardy on his way and imprisoned, so as to extort an exorbitant ransom from the Jews, as well as discourage other prospective immigrants ⁷. Rabbi Meyer himself does not expressly

mention his desire to go to Palestine, but it is difficult to believe that his longing for the East had any other target than the centre of religious learning established by Nahmanides in Jerusalem.

The existence of an Ashkenazi Yishuv with Rabbis of its own in Jerusalem in the following centuries is also recorded. Some fifty years after the immigration of Nahmanides, in about 1313, the well-known explorer of Palestine, Istori ha-Farhi, came from Southern France to Palestine and settled in Beisan as a physician. He chose the place as a suitable vantage point from which to carry out a full survey of the country, and from there travelled throughout its length and breadth, spending two years in Galilee alone. He, too, regarded residence in Palestine as a religious duty, but was particularly interested in the exploration of the country, which he considered even more of a sacred obligation. He was a scholar with an extensive general education, and his research work "**Kaftor Va Ferah**" may be considered the beginning of scientific research into the history and archaeology of the country as well as of the knowledge of its flora and fauna. He was no ordinary traveller, merely recording all he heard and saw, but undertook a careful and critical examination of the scientific facts he collected ⁸.

V. Revival of Immigration from Europe in the XVth Century

In the first quarter of the XVth century two Ashkenazi refugees arrived in Adrianople, the capital of Turkey. They called on the Chief Rabbi Isaac Sarfati and urged him to address letters to the communities of Germany, which were then going through a very difficult period, and to provide refuges for them in Turkey and in other countries. Rabbi Sarfati therefore wrote to the Jewish communities in Germany—that is, in Schwabia, Rhineland, Steiermark, Moravia, and Hungary—mentioning the freedom of religious practice in Turkey ⁹ and the easy possibilities of transit from there to Palestine.

This message had much influence on the movement of Ashkenazi Jews to Turkey, and gave new impetus to the revival of immigration to Palestine. In his letter, Rabbi Sarfati referred to the difficulties of sea travel. At the time Italy refused to allow Jews on their way to Palestine to pass through her territory, because of rumours that they intended to invade the Tomb of the Kings, which was then sacred to the Catholic Church as the site of the Last Supper. The facts are that a Jew in Jerusalem had purchased, or wished to purchase a plot of land in the immediate vicinity of the Tombs of the Kings on Mount Zion. The Franciscan Friars considered this an insult to their sanctuary and appealed to the Pope for help. Pope Martin V forbade Italian shipowners to transport Jews to Palestine, an order on which the maritime kingdom of Venice willingly acted, while the King of Naples issued one similar to it. Behind the official ground for the edict was a fear of the influence in Palestine of the European Jew who, as a skilled trader, was likely to cause serious injury to the trade of Venice. The order remained in force for fifty years, but even during this period, individuals, particularly Ashkenazi Jews from Italy, succeeded in making the journey by sea. In the middle of the XVth century there was an immigration movement from the towns of Sicily. Little is known of the exact extent of the movement, but in Cattania alone 24 Jews prepared themselves for emigration to Palestine. However, the Government regarded an exodus of Jews as a danger to public revenue, and prohibited their departure.

In 1420 an Ashkenazi community was established in Jerusalem. One of its functions was to attend to the housing needs of Ashkenazi immigrants ¹⁰.

Immigrants in the XVth century, from Italy, Turkey and other countries, were inspired by their

devotion to Zion, and by Messianic hopes. However, they had no active leader until the arrival in Palestine of Rabbi Obadia de Bartinora, from the Province of Flori in Italy. He left for Palestine in 1485, and after many vicissitudes in Italy and Sicily sailed from Palermo in 1487 on a French boat proceeding to Alexandria. The arrival of Rabbi Obadia marks the opening of a new era in the life of the Yishuv. Until his coming it was disunited and disorganised, lacking the hand of a forceful director of public affairs. He found only poor people, mainly widows and old women, of various Jewish communities. The first Maranos who had escaped from Spain and had been anxious to return to Judaism had already arrived; but the whole community numbered only seventy families. Before long he organised the Jerusalem community and raised its prestige by establishing a Talmudical College (Yeshivah). This attracted a large number of students from Palestine and abroad, and in 1495 a young Italian student came with his brothers and a number of other immigrants to study there. By that time there were already 200 families in Jerusalem. Rabbi Obadia preached every Saturday in the Synagogue in Hebrew, for he was unfamiliar with the Arabic spoken by the local Jews; he states, however, that most of them understood the holy language, which formed a bond between Ashkenazim and Sephardim.¹¹

Rabbi Obadia is famous as the commentator of the Mishna, and was held in great repute as a scholar from East to West. He was also financially independent, as appears from the fact that before he left for Palestine he deposited his capital with a banker in Florence, instructing him to transfer the interest to Jerusalem.

VI. Mass Immigration of Spanish Exiles.

In 1492 all Jews were expelled from Spain, and five years later a similar deportation was enforced in Portugal. A large part of the Jewish world was thus on the move, in constant danger, turning mainly to North Africa, Turkey and Palestine. The mass migrations lasted for several decades. Sometimes the migrants resided temporarily in a country, only to leave it after a few years and continue on their way, so much so that the origin of these immigrants was lost in the process; it is difficult to determine for instance, if Joseph Sargossi - one of the leaders of modern settlement in Palestine - was so called because he came from Sargossa in Spain, or because he had passed through Syracuse in Sicily. The Turkish conquest of Palestine in 1517 was of considerable help to the settlement there of the exiles.

Emigration from Spain to Palestine had started several decades before the Exile. Messianic excitement kept Spanish Jewry in a ferment throughout the XVth century, before the actual expulsion. This excitement grew after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Some saw visions of impending redemption, and others escaped from a country hostile to them in an endeavour to reach Palestine. Some reached their destination, others fell into the hands of pirates, and were only liberated on payment of a heavy ransom by local communities, especially by the Jews of Candia, who spent large sums on the liberation of prisoners and the relief of destitute travellers.

The sufferings attendant on the Spanish exile fanned the flames of such apocalyptic visions. There were other signs of upheaval during the century; the hegemony of the Catholic Church had been seriously impaired by the rising tide of the Reformation; established Christian regimes had been shattered, and the Turkish conquests in the East revived the faith in the existence of the Ten Lost Tribes, who were alleged to live beyond the mythical river Sambation. The Messiah, said prophecy, might appear at any moment.

Even under the Mamluks Jerusalem had ceased, to all practical purposes, to be the capital of the country, with Safed taking its place, fortified by the conquerors against raids from the North. It was the seat of the District Governor, and its strategic position, as well as its proximity to Sidon, the chief port at that time, helped it to prosper and develop until it surpassed Jerusalem.

Throughout the Mamluk rule a continuous Jewish population existed in Safed; and even some Ashkenazi immigrants settled there. But we can only speak of an immigration to Safed of appreciable dimensions after the Turkish conquest, when most Sephardi immigrants landing at Sidon turned to the town, which had the additional advantage of being situated within reach of Damascus, the great centre of trade. Some Spanish exiles who had found temporary refuge in Turkey for about twenty years, left for Palestine once it came under Turkish rule.

The new immigrants were men of high culture, many of them wealthy. Some of them had succeeded in transferring part of their capital to Palestine, thereby helping to raise the standard of living of the existing Yishuv. Evidence of their great influence on the community may be found in the fact that within a very short while the Spanish language had become dominant among the Jews of the town, even some Ashkenazi and Oriental Jews adopting it. People of means developed commerce and industry on lines similar to those known in Spain. They introduced weaving and cloth manufacture, and the traders of Safed were in close commercial contact with Damascus, Aleppo, and even commercial centres overseas. The many tailors living in Safed at the time met not only the requirements of the local market, but also worked for export. The dyeing industry was also known in Safed and, from contemporary sources, it appears that there was also a mill for the pressing of the new fabrics, so that the whole process from the wool to the finished cloth was entirely a Safed industry.

No distinct lines were drawn in Safed between those who led a life of piety, devoting their time to the study of the Torah, and those who engaged in commerce and industry. Many of the "Captains" of industry were eminent scholars as well.¹² Yet it was not the workshops that lent lustre to Safad in the XVIth century, but its colleges and centres of learning, - not its material, but its spiritual wealth that brought it prosperity. The arrival in Safed of famous scholars from the Spanish exile and from other parts of the Diaspora laid solid foundations in this small town for a great centre of learning and culture whose influence was felt not only in Palestine but in all parts of the Diaspora. The newly arrived immigrants in Safed rallied round the magnetic personality of Rabbi Isaac Lurie, an Ashkenazi Jew from Jerusalem who died in Safed in 1572 at the age of 38, after creating a mystical religious movement which can only be interpreted as the spiritual reaction of the Jewish people to the Spanish exile. The Messiah had not yet appeared, the end of the life of dispersion was not in sight, and the reality in all its cruelty was to the **Cabbalists** of Safed (as these mystics came to be called) a symbol of the Apocalypse, a reflection of the shape of things in this world and of the position of the Divinity in it.

Most famous of the Spanish settlers in Safed was Rabbi Joseph Carro, unquestionably the greatest rabbi of the XVIth century. He was four years old when his parents took him to Turkey at the time of the Exile. His monumental "Shulkhan Arukh", the acknowledged codification of the Judaic laws applicable to the individual and the community, which he completed in Safed in 1555, has made his name immortal in the Jewish world.

Carro came to Safad with a colleague with whom he studied Cabbala. The latter was the poet Salomon Halevy el-Kabbes, beloved by the Jewish world for his allegorical poem "Lekha Dody" (Come, my lover"), a hymn sung in the synagogue on Sabbath Eve, in which he expresses the

longing of his people for their national redemption: "O Temple of Kings in the City of kingly rule, begone from the upheaval! Thou hast stayed too long in the Vale of misery". In Safed Carro and el Kabbes found Rabbi Jacob Berav, another exile from Spain who had fled to North Africa at the time of the Exile, and like many another had made his way to Palestine through Algiers and Egypt. The name of Berav is connected with a bold experiment which aroused considerable discussion in the country in 1538 - an attempt to revive the "Smikha" (ordination of Rabbis) among the Jews. Berav's object was to reconstitute the Sanhedrin in Palestine in the form of a high rabbinical Court with final authority over all Jewry. The Sanhedrin was also intended to serve as a spiritual centre for the scattered remnants of the Jewish people in the Diaspora, and few places could have been more suitable for the purpose than Safed. This abortive attempt to revive such an institution was also a religious and national reaction to current events.

There were also immigrants in Safed of North African origin, while the so-called Italian synagogues point to the presence there of Jews from Italy at the time.¹³

The Golden Age of Safed brought in its wake, for a while, in about 1560, a rising tide of prosperity for the neighbouring town of Tiberias. Don Joseph Nassi, born a Marano in Portugal at the beginning of the XVIth century, had ideas for the establishment of something like an independent Jewish State, whose citizens should engage in agriculture. He asked the authorities in Venice for the lease of one of the islands under the protection of the State of Venice in which to settle Jews, but they turned down the plan. He then moved to Constantinople, where he soon became both popular and influential in high political circles. There he renewed his representations for a Jewish State, this time meeting sympathetic response from the Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, who assigned him the city of Tiberias and some seven adjacent villages, with the right to settle Jews there. Don Joseph's aunt and mother-in-law, Donna Garcia Hanna Mendes, a woman of great energy and considerable wealth, was the moving spirit in all her son-in-law's schemes, which she endowed magnificently. Don Joseph sent an agent to Tiberias, and the first settlers proceeded to rebuild the city walls. The plan provided for an agricultural and an industrial settlement and accordingly, mulberry trees were planted for the breeding of silk worms, and wool was ordered for cloth manufacture. We have little reliable information on this bold experiment. Historians are also divided in their opinion of Don Joseph's actual plan, being undecided as to whether it was for a small-scale state or only a refuge for persecuted Jews. There is also a difference of opinion as to the date of the commencement of the enterprise. Above all, we have no clear knowledge as to who were the first settlers and whether they were themselves natives of Palestine or newly arrived immigrants. When Don Joseph addressed a proclamation to the Diaspora in which he urged Jews, labourers and craftsmen in particular, to immigrate to Palestine, he probably had the Jews of Europe, especially the Spanish exiles, in mind.

Response to the appeal was not very lively, and only the Jews of Italy evinced much interest in the scheme. As a result of papal encyclicals against the latter their position had deteriorated and their messianic hopes received a great fillip from Don Joseph's appeal and from the reports that his ships had anchored in the ports of Venice and Ancona. In a small town in the province of Campagna near Rome two hundred Jews decided to immigrate to Palestine and to settle in Tiberias under Joseph's protection. But several causes combined to undermine their plans - the attitude of the Arab neighbours to the new settlers, the poorness of response to the plan in the Diaspora generally, and Don Joseph's increased absorption, as political adviser to the Turkish

Sultan, in other state affairs. ¹⁴

VII. Immigration from Eastern Europe in the XVIIth Century.

Reports of the fame of the spiritual centre at Safed reached Eastern Europe. The new mysticism had won many hearts there, and there is little doubt that its great popularity caused many people to wish to study the Cabbala at the place, so to speak, of its birth. Ordinary people, as well as great scholars, were attracted to Palestine on that ground alone.

The most striking personality among immigrants of this category was Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz of Prague. He and his wife left for Venice in 1621, to take ship for Tripoli in Syria. From there they continued their journey by way of Aleppo and Damascus to Safed, later settling in Jerusalem. Several beautiful passages in Rabbi Horowitz's book **Shnei Luhoth Habrith**, completed in Jerusalem, attest his great love for the country. In one he states: "Every man of Israel must embrace the Land of Israel, proceeding to it from the furthest parts of the world, driven by the love of a son for his mother. It is fitting that those outside Palestine, whether near or far, should long and strive to reach the country, for just as the Almighty has chosen His people, so He has also chosen His Land, and singled it out for them, and Israel can only be regarded as one people if they dwell in it" ¹⁵. R. Horowitz lived in peace in Jerusalem only for a few years. The city was then ruled by the despotic Ibn-Farukh, who had bribed his way to the Governorship and kept an oppressive hand on all the inhabitants, especially on the Jews, from whom he extorted all they had. For two years he exacted large contributions from the Jewish community and, by way of additional intimidation, imprisoned the Jewish notables as hostages in the belief that the community would pay a heavy ransom for their liberation. Rabbi Horowitz was one of these hostages ¹⁶.

The hopes of Rabbi Horowitz for a large immigration, and his appeals to his friends and relations to come and settle in Palestine were not altogether unanswered. In the first half of the XVIIth century the Ashkenazi Yishuv in Jerusalem was increased by constant additions from Eastern Europe, especially after the Cossacks had exterminated so many well established communities in Poland and the Ukraine during Chmielnizki's Rebellion (1648/49). Thus, between the attraction of the Cabbala on the one hand, and the threat of the Eastern European persecutions on the other, the minds of Jews became concentrated on one hope-Jerusalem. This determination was further strengthened after the conquest of Poland and Lithuania first by the Russians, and later by the Swedes, in the Wars of 1655/56. Many Jews then took a sacred vow to go to Palestine ¹⁷.

VIII. Messianic Immigrations.

The immigration of several hundreds of families from Poland and Germany under the leadership of Rabbi Yehudah he-Hassid (the Pious) of Shedlitz, near Grodno, was an organised mass movement driven by messianic ideals. Rabbi Yehudah was a mystic who appealed to the people to repent, and rallied round him a large number of scholars and ordinary men whom he begged to join him in life of piety and preparation for emigration to Palestine. In 1699, 1,500 men, women and children left Poland to achieve their ideal in the Holy Land. The journey took over a year. At one time the party split into two groups, one going via Hungary, which, like Palestine, was under Turkish rule, the other turning to Vienna, Moravia and Frankfurt on a "publicity" tour on behalf of the immigration movement. The hardships of the long journey considerably weakened the immigrants; many of them became ill, and some 500 died on the way.

On October 13th, 1700, the first **Hassidim** (followers of Rabbi Yehudah ha-Hassid) arrived in Jerusalem and were enthusiastically welcomed. A few days later, however, on October 18, Rabbi Yehudah died and his Hassidim remained without a leader, in great distress. Many left the country, and those that remained had to borrow heavily from the Arabs¹⁸.

A wealthy Italian mystic, Rabbi Abraham Ravigo of Modena, came to the rescue of the party after the death of its leader. He had heard echoes of the departure of Rabbi Yehudah's party and these, together with the current reports of the glory of the Safed Cabbala, strengthened his longing for Palestine and his desire to transfer there the **Yeshivah** of which he was the head. On January 26th, 1702, therefore, a ship from Livorno brought Rabbi Abraham's party, a total of 25 passengers, to Palestine.

In Jerusalem Rabbi Abraham did not find the peace for which he longed. The trials and tribulations of the Yishuv, especially of the Ashkenazim, compelled him to leave his beloved country on a mission to Europe. He was privileged to spend very few years in Jerusalem, and did not return from his third journey to Europe, having died in Mantua in 1713, far away from the land he so loved¹⁹.

One thing was common to all immigrants of the XVIIIth century, whether they came from the East or from the West, whether they were Rabbis and scholars or ordinary people. That thing was the search for ways and means towards national redemption. The immigration waves were essentially messianic movements, although one party of immigrants might put rather greater emphasis on the messianic aspect than another. All the immigrants genuinely believed that redemption was at hand—that the land of Israel waited for the people of Israel, to bring about the redemption of the Land, interwoven with the redemption of the people. The immigration of Rabbi Chaim Aboulafia and his disciples from Smyrna to Tiberias had a messianic background as well, but the circumstances cannot properly be understood without reference to the political situation in Palestine at the beginning of the XVIIIth century.

Theoretically, the country was under Turkish domination, but in practice the rulers of that great Empire did not impose their authority on all their possessions. A good deal of power remained in the hands of the local Sheikhs and Chieftains, and the Turkish Government refrained from intervening in the inter-tribal feuds. The weakness of the Constantinople Government and its remoteness from the actual events in Palestine made possible not only intertribal warfare, but also rebellions against the Pashas who ruled on behalf of the Central Government. One such rebellion in Galilee was successful, and Sheikh Daher el-Omar, an energetic chieftain, managed to maintain an almost autonomous government from 1740 to 1776. He rose from the status of a Bedou Chieftain, whose tribe was encamped near the Huleh tribes although he himself resided in Safed, to the position of virtual ruler of the whole of Galilee, first conquering Tiberias and later extending his rule further north. Under his aegis the Jews of Galilee founded several agricultural settlements and it was mainly with his help and on his initiative that Rabbi Chaim Aboulafia came from Smyrna to Tiberias. The latter reached Tiberias in 1740, after an exhausting and dangerous journey of over a year. We do not know how many came with him, though it appears that he was accompanied by a circle of disciples, friends and relatives, who, after having helped the Sheikh in his wars against the Pasha of Damascus²⁰, laid the foundation of the latest settlement in Tiberias.

The personality of Rabbi Aboulafia, the re-creator of the Jewish community of Tiberias, who

died in 1754, provided a popular theme for the saga of Jewish life in Palestine. Aboulafia's work was subsidised by the Jews of the Diaspora, especially of Italy, for according to legend the Messiah was to reveal himself in Tiberias, and they saw in this new immigration, with its upbuilding of that town, a signal of messianic hope.

Yet another religious immigration was closely connected with the messianic element. Its central figure was the Cabbalist Rabbi Chaim Ben-Attar, born in Sali, Morocco, in 1696. He had spent several years in Italy preparing himself for his journey to Jerusalem, where he wished to establish a special college for his immediate companions and disciples, that they could accelerate the advent of the Messiah through prayer and meditation. He arrived in Jerusalem in 1742, but although his coming made a great impression, in the following year he died. His Yeshivah exists to this day in its old home ²¹.

No account of religious immigration is complete without mention of the parties of immigrants from Turkey- Rabbis and Cabbalists, natives of Constantinople and Salonica, and others who left their homes for Jerusalem in the XVIIIth century. Many were the ancestors of the Sephardic families whose descendants later came to occupy important places in the life of the Yishuv. Some even came from the Aegean islands, and there was one famous immigrant from the Yemen, Rabbi Shalom Shar'abi, who settled in Jerusalem and became a pillar of the "Beit El" ²² Cabbalistic synagogue. These "Beit El" Cabbalists of Jerusalem, both newly arrived immigrants and old established residents, formed communes who took an oath to live together in amity and comradeship, with all property in common, in order to strengthen them in their worship of God and obedience to His Law ²³.

Another interesting feature in the immigration movement of the XVIIIth century was the parties of wealthy Sephardim from various parts of the Turkish Empire who visited Palestine on conducted tours, according to a fixed itinerary which included visits to all the Holy Tombs. The Caraites who toured the country with such parties of tourists were thereafter designated "Jerusalem".

IX. Immigration of Hassidim.

At the beginning of the XVIIIth century a movement of religious mysticism, called Hassidism, spread like wildfire among the Jews of Eastern Europe. Its spiritual father was Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov (the man of good repute). The movement was something of a reaction to the false messianism which had agitated Jewry in the second half of the preceding century. Israel Baal Shem Tov was well aware that the order of residence in the Land had precedence over all other religious commands, but he believed, as did Hassidism as a whole, that the final redemption was to come by divine, and not by human agency. By immigrating to Palestine the Hassidim did not expect immediate miracles, but hoped for redemption in the course of time. Rabbi Israel himself did not go Palestine, but he linked his movement with the Holy Land by sending his young brother-in-law, Rabbi Abraham Gershon of Kittow, there in 1746. The coming of the latter laid the foundations of a close and constant connection between most of the branches of the movement and Palestine, this finding practical expression in extensive immigration towards the end of the XVIIIth century. From the cradle of Hassidism in Wohlynia and Eastern Galicia constant contingents of immigrants left for Palestine.

Not all the immigrants were learned men, and there were many ordinary citizens among them.

The first party of Hassidic immigrants settled in Tiberias and Jerusalem, paying the way for hundreds of their brothers. The early pioneers, disciples of Rabbi Israel from Galicia and Wohlynia, were followed in 1777 by a large body, 300 strong, of Hassidim from Lithuania and Russia, led by Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Witebsk, Rabbi Abraham Hacoen of Kalsk, and Rabbi Israel of Plotzk.

The early Hassidim dreamed of transplanting their new way of life to Palestine. The Lithuanian protagonists of the doctrine had longed for a new centre from which it could spread to the rest of the Jewish world, and Palestine offered a guarantee for such a triumph. Just as Rabbi Joseph Caro's **Shulkhan Arukh** had commanded recognition throughout the Jewish world because it was written in Palestine, so this latest attempt at the revival and re-invigoration of the faith of Israel, launched from Palestine, was bound to succeed. Another factor prompted the immigration; dissension had begun within the Hassidic movement itself, some members having split off because of the absence of a rallying centre. It was hoped that the three hundred immigrants in Palestine would form the core of the whole movement.

In 1777 the party started on its way from Lithuania. Crossing the Province of Walachia, they sailed from Galatz in small barges. In Constantinople they all transferred to one ship which eventually dropped anchor off Acre, whence they went on donkey-back to Safed. They were joined there by many poor people, who became a financial burden to them at once, worsening their already almost impoverished condition. They had brought little capital, the cost of the journey had been high, and even in the first year of their settlement they found themselves in great distress.

Yet for all their privations the Hassidim appealed for a continuation of immigration. Their plea resulted in a second wave of immigrants from Wohlynia, Podolia and the Ukraine. The local Sephardim spoke highly of these, although they, too, referred to their financial distress. They appreciated the high cultural standards and wide knowledge of the immigrants, both of which, they knew, would spiritually enrich the Yishuv.

A constant stream of immigrants was now coming from Poland and Russia to the new Hassidic centres in Tiberias and Safed. The appeals of the leaders in Palestine for the continuation of immigration had brought wave after wave who gladly undertook all the difficulties of the journey as well as those of early settlement in the country. The leaders of the second generation of Hassidism sought to strengthen their influence with their own disciples by sending delegates to Palestine. To this day there are various systems or schools of Hassidism within the Yishuv, each maintaining its loyalty to its spiritual origin in Russia, Poland or Galicia, whence came the first groups of Hassidim to the holy cities of Jerusalem, Tiberias, Safed and Hebron.²⁴

X. Immigration of Perushim.

Paradoxically enough, the mass Hassidic immigration was followed by large numbers of the most outspoken opponents of Hassidism. The disciples of the famous Rabbi Eliyahu, Gaon of Vilna, a doughty fighter against the sect, were loath to leave Palestine entirely to the Hassidim, and the competition between the rival factions was one of the chief contributory causes for the immigration of **Perushim** (as the opponents of Hassidism were called) from Russia, with the object of laying the foundations of a new Ashkenazi Yishuv in the Holy Land. Just as the mass immigration of Hassidim had been preceded by advance guards, so there was preliminary

immigration from Vilna, before the mass movement of **Perushim** from that great intellectual centre started on their way at the beginning of the XIXth century.

In 1772, a small party of Lithuanian immigrants arrived in Jerusalem. But only in 1808 did the first party of **Perushim** reach Tiberias, and as at the time the city was a stronghold of Hassidism, they could not gain access and therefore moved to Safed. There were about forty families of **Perushim** in Safed at the turn of the century. In 1810 further reinforcements arrived from Lithuania, and during an outbreak of plague in Safed some of the Ashkenazi Jews left for Jerusalem, founding a revived Ashkenazi community in the Holy City where that body had been almost non-existent since the adventures of those who came with Rabbi Yehudah he-Hassid. Both in Jerusalem and in Safed the Ashkenazi Yishuv developed steadily, family following family to the country. The Yishuv's emissaries to the Diaspora called not only for money donations but also for reinforcements. Part of the duties of these emissaries was to act as guides and companions to new settlers. But disaster came on the 1st of January, 1837; an earthquake, especially severe in the northern and central parts of the country, resulted in the complete demolition of Nablus, Tiberias, Safed, and about 30 villages in Upper Galilee. Safed, with its 6.000 population half of them Jews, was the worst hit. About a year after this disaster it went through another bitter experience when fellahin attacked the remnants of the Jewish community, with the result that for several decades to come Safed ceased to be a Jewish centre, only very few families staying loyal to its sacred tradition.²⁵

Three main causes contributed to the expansion of the Ashkenazi Yishuv in about the middle of the XIXth century-the political changes in the country, Jewish reaction to the activities of the missionary societies, and the inauguration of regular Mediterranean steamship services to Jaffa. In 1840 Turkey won Palestine and Syria back from the Egyptian Mohammed Ali. Since then several European powers, Austria and Russia among them, had endeavoured to increase their political and economic influence in the country by commissioning Consuls in the ports and appointing Assistant Consuls in Jerusalem from among the native Jews of the town. Simultaneously with this increased interest on the part of European powers began the activities of the missionaries. The Church Missionary Society opened a hospital and clinic in charge of a doctor who was himself a converted Jew, and considerable proselytising activity was carried on among the Jews of Jerusalem by Protestant clergymen. This was viewed with alarm by the Jerusalem community, and in 1843 at their request Sir Moses Montefiore sent a Jewish medical specialist to Jerusalem. Two years later the Rothschild family in Paris sent a second Jewish doctor.

One of the first immigrants to come by steamship to the Diaspora was Rabbi Samuel Salant, from a little town near Bialistock. With his wife and son, he arrived in 1841, at the age of 25, on the orders of his physicians who had recommended a warm climate for the good of his health. On his way, in Constantinople, he met the famous leader and philanthropist, Sir Moses Montefiore, and there began a close and lasting friendship which proved of enormous benefit to the Yishuv. Three generations of Ashkenazi immigrants regarded Salant as their spiritual leader.

Immigration from all over the Russian and Polish Diaspora increased from year to year. The arrivals included eminent Rabbis, capitalists, businessmen, and craftsmen,-not only old people, but young families with their children. Some of the immigrants established important businesses in Jerusalem a man from Grodno who came in 1863 brought with him a capital of 80,000 roubles in cash. Some of them were famous in general as well as Jewish learning. Among this group of

enlightened Jews were A.M. Lunz, the father of modern Jewish exploration of Jewish Palestine, I.D. Frumkin, the journalist, who came to Jerusalem in 1860 from Russia, and I.M. Pines, a distinguished scholar. who organised the beginnings of agricultural colonisation and settled in Jerusalem in 1878. In 1871, a progressive Jew arrived from the United States with a plan to establish an agricultural settlement on the shores of Lake Gennesareth, on the lines of a "Kvutzah" (communal settlement - a plan which could not at the time be fulfilled).²⁶

Immigrants from Germany, too, began to come to Palestine in the thirties and forties of the last century. Most of them were young men of education and good family who had fled to Palestine from assimilationalist tendencies at home. The first German-Jewish immigrant was Moses Sachs of Thuringia, who arrived in Jerusalem in 1830 with the revolutionary idea of reviving the Yishuv by agricultural colonisation. He was the first to launch a constructive plan designed to give the new Yishuv a share in the country's agriculture.²⁷ In 1833, he was joined by a young German Jew called Joseph Schwartz. Latter who was born in a small town in Bavaria, had completed his studies at the Jewish College of Wurzburg as well as at the University. He had a great love for Palestine and a deep longing to settle there, and all his studies had been directed to one end - the exploration of the country. He had made a thorough study both of its geography and of the Oriental languages which he believed would best equip him for a life of scientific exploration in the Holy Land. Once in Jerusalem, Schwartz set out to explore the country methodically, and embodied the results of his research in a Hebrew book which is regarded as a standard work on the subject and has been translated into German and English,²⁸ Sachs and Schwartz were not the only German Jews in Palestine; they were joined later by others, as well as by Dutch Jews who in the course of time merged with them into a single community.

The constant immigration of Jews from Russia. Galicia and Hungary almost trebled the Jewish population in Jerusalem within 25 years, and the traveller Ludwig August Fraenkel of Vienna put their numbers at 5,000 at the time of his visit in 1857. This had increased to 14,000 by 1881, i.e. on the eve of the "Hibbat Zion" (Love of Zion) period. It is safe to assume that each year an average of some 200 to 300 persons settled in Jerusalem. Safed and Tiberias also had their quota of new immigrants, although many of these were dependent on the Halukkah for their subsistence.

XI. Immigration from Moslem Countries to Palestine.

In the XIXth century about a third of the entire Jewish people lived in Moslem countries in European Turkey and the Asiatic dominions of the Turkish Empire. By then, however, Islamic civilisation was on the decline, and, notwithstanding the autonomy enjoyed by the Jewish community in Turkey, the general atmosphere had its effects on it. The once famous and vital communities of Constantinople, Salonica and Smyrna became virtually paralysed. But apart from the influence of environment. much of the blame for the general decline of Asiatic Jewish communities must be laid at the door of "Levantine" influences in Turkey, themselves the direct outcome of the political influences of European Powers in the Levant. In their thrust to the East the European Powers found the Jews a bridgehead to the Oriental world. The latter were ready to serve European civilisation, and willingly accepted the cultural benefits it bestowed on them through the medium of the educational institutions established for their benefit by European Powers as well as by European Jewish communities. The net result of this was that Levantine Jews neglected their original Oriental Jewish culture, without, however, acquiring the genuine European culture offered them in exchange. Many, becoming aware of this danger, drew their

own conclusions and turned to the ancient homeland of their own people, the Turkish province better known as Palestine, which they regarded as the only bulwark against assimilation. Immigration from Turkey, its numbers including scholars as well as prominent business men who transferred their interests to Palestine, went on during the whole of the XIXth century. The city of Jaffa owed much of its prosperity to the initiative of these new immigrants.²⁹

From Morocco and Algiers, too, immigration was renewed. The impoverished Moroccan community in Jerusalem had hitherto been under the jurisdiction of the more influential Spanish Jews, but the renewal of immigration from Morocco restored its erstwhile independence. The immigrants acquired a plot in the Old City where they built communal buildings, and Moroccan Jews were among the first to realise the need for modern quarters outside the city walls.³⁰ From Baghdad, too, came members of some of the most distinguished families of that city. At about the same time that the movement to Palestine had become popular among the Jewries of Eastern Europe, a parallel movement for a return to Zion began in the countries of the Middle East, from Persia, Bukhara, Kurdistan, Afghanistan, the Caucasus and the Yemen. Isolated forerunners of these immigrants had already arrived in Jerusalem before the first Zionist immigration. The Jewry which was at once the furthest from Palestine and the most loyal in its hope and longing for Jerusalem, that of the Yemen, had sent its first mass immigration to Palestine in 1882.³¹ Another far-off Jewry, that of Bukhara in Central Asia, also began to give active support from Messianic motives to the Zionist ideal, and immigrants, most of them wealthy Jews from Bukhara, Samarkand and Tashkent, arrived in Jerusalem in 1889. They settled in a separate quarter of their own, which, until the Russian Revolution, was one of the wealthiest and most spacious in the town.³²

No less interesting than the Bukharan immigrants were the picturesque Jews from Southern Caucasia who began to arrive in 1863. On his last visit to Palestine, Sir Moses Montefiore found some two hundred of these so-called Georgian Jews, and spoke in high terms of their courage and valour. Many had been decorated for bravery by the Russian authorities, and they were impressive in their Circassian attire.³³ The remaining Oriental Jews, originating from various small groups in Islamic countries, Persia, Kurdistan, Afganistan, etc. came to Palestine after the first Zionist immigration, some of them arriving only in the XXth century³⁴.

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