

The Anteby Family History and Heritage

By Dr Elioze Antebi Hefer

(Surname has several relevant equivalents: Antebi, Anteby Antibi, Entebi Enteby etc. As well as in Hebrew : עֲנַתְבִי עֲנַתְבִי עֲנַתְבִי etc...)

About the family name

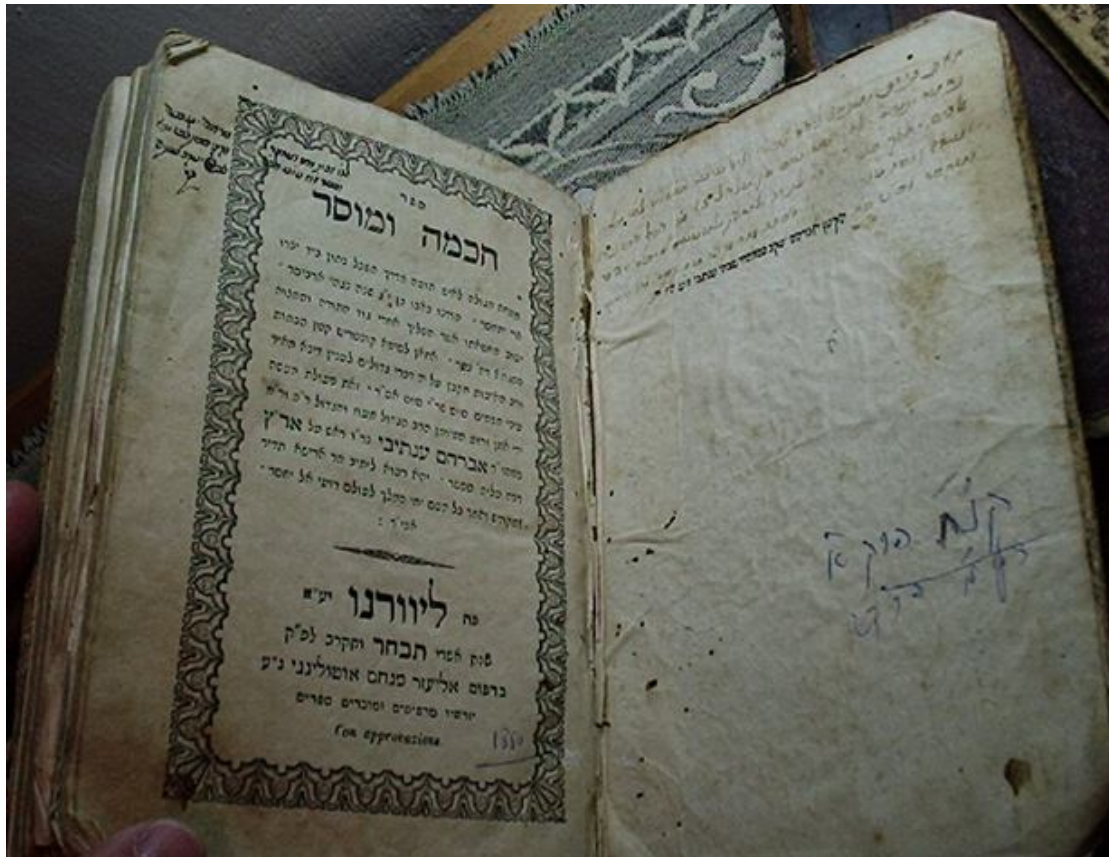
The Antebi's family roots go back to the expulsion from Spain in 1492. Some family elders claimed that we belong to a group of Jews who stayed in the area since biblical times (called "Musta'arevin") but neither of the assumption can be proved. Members of the family settled in a small town Ein Tab which is situated in the Diar Bakir Turkish district, the meaning of its Arabic name is "the Good Fountain". After the Turk have concurred the area they have added a Turkish prefix to the name Eintab : "Gazi" which means in Turkey "the conqueror". Thus the modern name of the city is today Gaziantep .

After immigrating from Ein-Tab to Aleppo the family was named Antebi (= derived from Ein Tab) , and the original Spanish (or Musta'arev) name of the family was forgotten. Many members of this family were famous Torah scholars, rabbis and leaders of the Jewish community in Aleppo Damascus Egypt and Eretz Israel.

Finding the roots - conducting an historical inquiry back in time

My "return travel" back in time through 11 generations of ancestors until the small historical town "Ein Tab" has been conducted for thirty years. I have collected along that way shreds of information left by family elders : Memoires and autobiographies , childhood stories , past newspaper articles collected carefully regarding different family members , photographs (though those

were occasionally rare) Archive data, History books and research articles written about historical events in which the family was involved . True valuable findings along time were rare old books, which my ancestors the Rabies used , and sometimes even those written by them 200 years ago and older. Those books were passed on from generation to generation and besides the sentimental value they symbol they could contribute personal family data by dedications or remarks they had on the first pages of the book.



Dedication remarks on 160 years old book of Rabbi Abraham Antebi , 6 generations above me. The handwritten dedications contain genealogical data .

Legacy and heritage of the family slowly became visible to me : A story about a family whose sons took a part in building the Jewish people in its homeland until finally shaping the newborn country Israel by acting in different important roles through history for that cause ; As mentioned Family ancestors originated from their small origin town called Ein Tab (Hence the

family name Eintabi or Antebi) . and from there migrated to southern cities in Arab countries due to their appealing larger Jewish communities : Aleppo Damascus Safed Tiberias , Cairo , Alexandria Beirut Jerusalem Paris and even Bombay in India.

The Antebi Family Origins

The first known person of this family was Rabbi Rahamim Antebi (1554-1627). He was probably the first to immigrate from Ein-tab to Aleppo hence received his family name there .

The family traditions about its origins before rabbi Rahamim Antebi are disputed : most of the elderly claimed that our origin before Ein-Tab is from Spanish Exile at 1492 . But some and my grandfather among them have persistently claimed that our origins have lived at the area since the bible era (temple time). One of their supporting evidence is that none of the elders new Ladino.... (the original Judeo-Spanish of the Sephardim).

lately I have seen some historical researches which can support that family tradition : There are evidences of Jews called "Mustaarev " (pl Mustaarvin) which have migrated locally but basically stayed in neighboring countries without leaving it . i.e. – migrating from Israel (after the Roman have conquered the area) to north , south and so forth, they didn't have family names since there wasn't any need for such – Our Talmud and Gmara are filled with Rabbis names that didn't have a family name. they were identified by their father's name : e.g. Raban Shimon ben Gamliel. (=son of Gmaliel) Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakai (son of Zakai) and many others... The Family name was needed only at a later period when the authorities have demanded citizen's registrations , or for census purposes. Therefore it might have been that the Antebi's were there actually as claimed and lived for many generations in the northern border of Syria (without an actual family name) and only when moving down to Aleppo gained their surname as their place of origin.

Abraham Cohen Tawil , A Jewish researcher have written a thoroughly article about families who have reached EinTab on the 16th century with Spanish Exile. He even could state their names. Since our family received its surname later on – I can't determine whether we could be one of those mentioned in the article.

Finally I have taken the majority side of elders claiming being part of the Spanish exile in that matter.

The first forefather of our ancestry lineage is known to be Rabbi Rahamim Antebi born at 1554 (hence is probably grandson of the Spanish deported who settled in Ein-Tab. Since he has the Antebi Surname and no other family name we believe that he was the first to immigrate to Aleppo . According to the family "massorah" (oral tradition), he was a Rabbi and passed away in Aleppo . Aleppo (A large north Syrian city today) has a very old Jewish congregation that is said to be 2000 years old

History can tell that the city was being conquered by the Yoav ben Zruya, army commander of King David. So it is believed that Jewish settlement is from that biblical era. .

The chronicles of the famous traveler Rabbi Binyamin from Tudella have documented 5000 Jews in Aleppo on 1173 A.C. !!

The oldest full version of the Old testimony – Jewish bible was kept in Aleppo and known as the Aleppo Codex (Keter Aram Zova) . Though it was originally written in Tiberias 1000 years ago ,

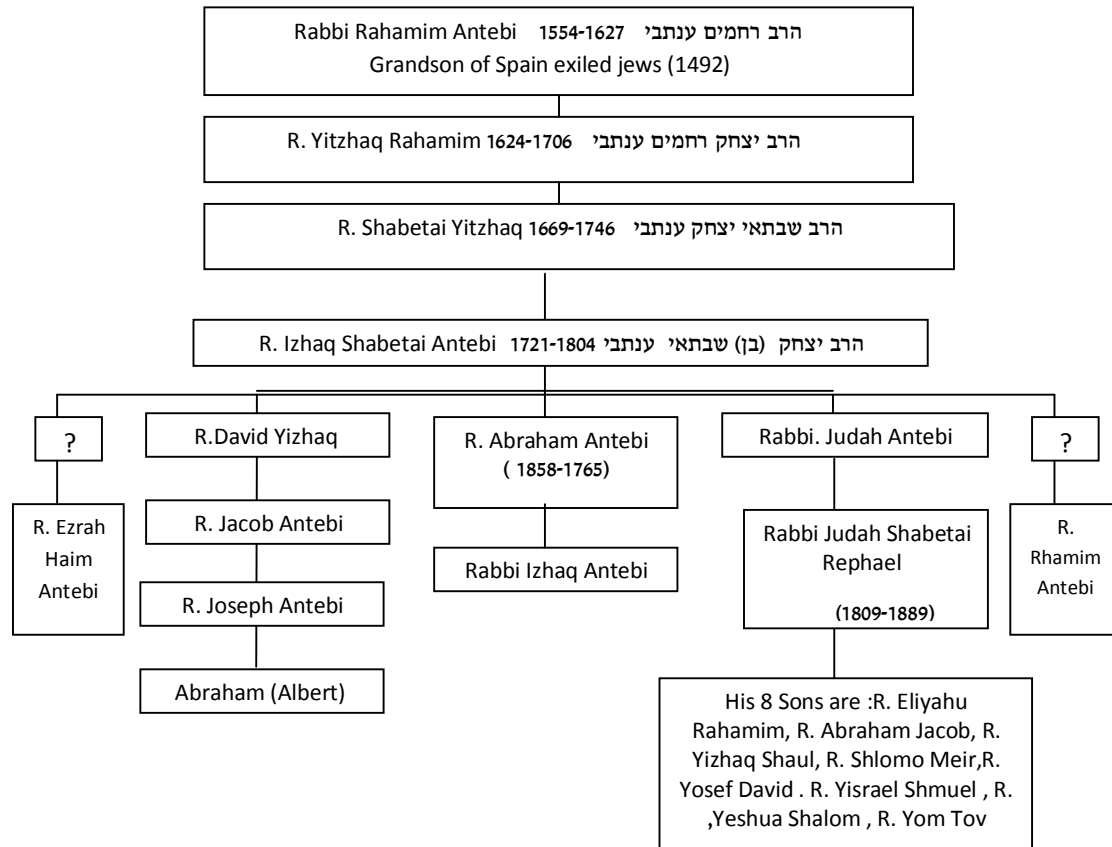
The family Massorah depicts the rest of the lineage as well : Rabbi Yizhak Rahamim (son of R, Rahamim) 1624-1706, R. Shabetai Yitzhaq (1669-1746) and R. Yizhaq Shabetai Antebi (1721-1804).

Pay attention to the custom, which was still held in elder generations of the family .

The second first name (or middle name) was the father's name therefore the assays written by Rabbi Isaac Shabetai Antebi and signed by him that way prove that he (Isaac) was actually son of Shabetai Antebi.

The Antebi Family tree of first ancestral generations

Written by Dr. Elioz Antebi Hefer



R. Yitshak ben Shabetai Antebi (b. 1721 - d. 1804 in Aleppo) was one of the most important scholars of Aleppo in the second half of the 18th century. Author of the books "Ohel Yizhak" sermons, "Beit Av", Novellae on Maimonides "Yad Ha-Hazakah" and Joseph Caro's "Beit Yosef", and wrote various responsa in "Halacha" questions.

Theses works were published by his son R. Abraham b. Isaac, (1765-1858) who was chief Rabbi of Aleppo for more than 40 years and a fertile author of 6 books himself

I don't have evidences for the older generations , besides oral family traditions, which finally I have decided to accept as is .

I have concentrated the Antebi family story around its main famous characters : Although most of them were Rabbis and are known until this day in the religious population , Some , as Rabbi Jacob Antebi , Abraham Albert Antebi , and Judah Haim Antebi were famous playing an important role in general Jewish nation history . Their involvement in historical affairs assisted me obtaining some published materials : books , essays , articles research besides a rich family tradition stories .

Rabbi Jacob Antebi, (1787-1847) son of R. David Yitzhak Antebi. (and the nephew of Rabbi Abraham Antebi chief Rabbi for the Aleppo community) was born in Aleppo. He served as chief Rabbi of the Damascus Jewish community for 40 years as well and was their Halakhic authority.

R. Jacob himself was appointed as the chief rabbi of Damascus in 1809, although the other candidate, Rabbi Hayyim Nissim Abulafia, was Antebi's superior in learning, age, and lineage. The leaders of the community were not interested in a rich rabbi that might be too independent .

From the moment he was appointed to the rabbinate, Jacob Antebi found himself at the mercy of the communal oligarchy, of the Farhis in particular, who imposed harsh sanctions whenever they saw that the rabbinical court, which Antebi headed, was preparing to rule against them. Upon seeing that Antebi ruled against them, the Farhis took extreme steps, questioning the authority of the rabbinic court, dismissing Antebi from his post, and bribing Ottoman officials to have Antebi placed under house arrest. Another prominent Damascus Jewish family, the Hararis, withheld the rabbi's salary for two-and-a-half years because he spoke out against their reduced religious observance and their refusal to accept his halakhic authority.

In spite of those difficulties Rabbi Jacob has never gave up to his opposes and stayed in his post for more than 3 decades... He corresponded with chief Rabbi of Jerusalem Raphael Joseph Hazzan who endorsed his decisions . The great

publicity given the Damascus blood libel affair (1840) and the world reaction to it were largely due to him

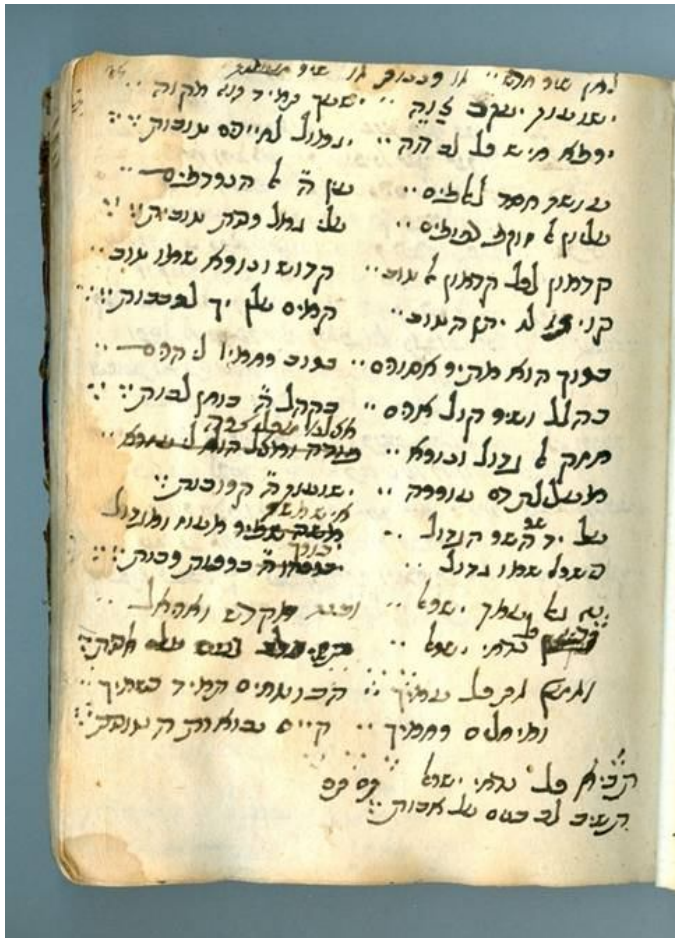
The Damascus Blood Libel (1840) – and Rabbi Jacob Antebi as Chief Rabbi of the community

On 5 February 1840 the Capuchin monk Thomas and his servant disappeared. Shortly thereafter rumors were disseminated that they had last been sighted in the Jewish quarter, further claiming that the two had been murdered in order to use their blood for the Passover rites. Jewish leaders, including the Chief Rabbi Jacob Antebi were arrested and tortured in order to coerce them to confess. Eventually, via the intercession of Moses Montefiore , Adolph Crémieux, Solomon Munk and following widespread diplomatic activity, their release was obtained .

When the release order arrived in Damascus in early September, the prisoners were freed without due process. Rabbi Jacob Antebi sent to Moses Montefiore a detailed report about the affair. This letter is included in the book "BeOr haHaim" of Rabbi Haim Kapusi in the edition published (Jerusalem 1929) by Rabbi Abraham Jacob Antebi. His report on the affair to Sir Moses Montefiore on 1841 has helped many historians to document the true stories of the entire affair .

Rabbi Jacob Antebi's true heroic character was proven on that affair and it is unbelievable to learn how he could stand bravely in his captors tortures .

Some of his responsa are extant (Ben Zvi Institute no. 403 : Benayahu Collection) , and several appear in the works of his contemporaries . He was also a poet , one of his poems , composed on his release from prison deals with



his salvation from the blood libel . Some of his "pizmonim" (=liturgical poems) were recited in the synagogues of Damascus although they were never published. In 1840 Jacob Antebi just completed thirty years in this post.

R. Jacob's Antebi personal Handwriting with the draft to poem he wrote upon his release from the prison on 1841.

After his release he resigned his post and moved to Jerusalem (1841) and was reckoned among the city's important scholars , residing there until his death on 7 Tishrei 1846 .

Rabbi Abraham Antebi (1765-1858)_ son of Rabbi Yizhaq Antebi and an uncle of Rabbi Jacob. was born in 1765 in Aleppo. Studied under his father as under the Rabbis Isaac Berakhaa and Isaiah Dabah. A scholar of great erudition and acumen. He wrote books on a variety of topics. He ruled his community with a firm hand, making regulations , opposing the inroads of the

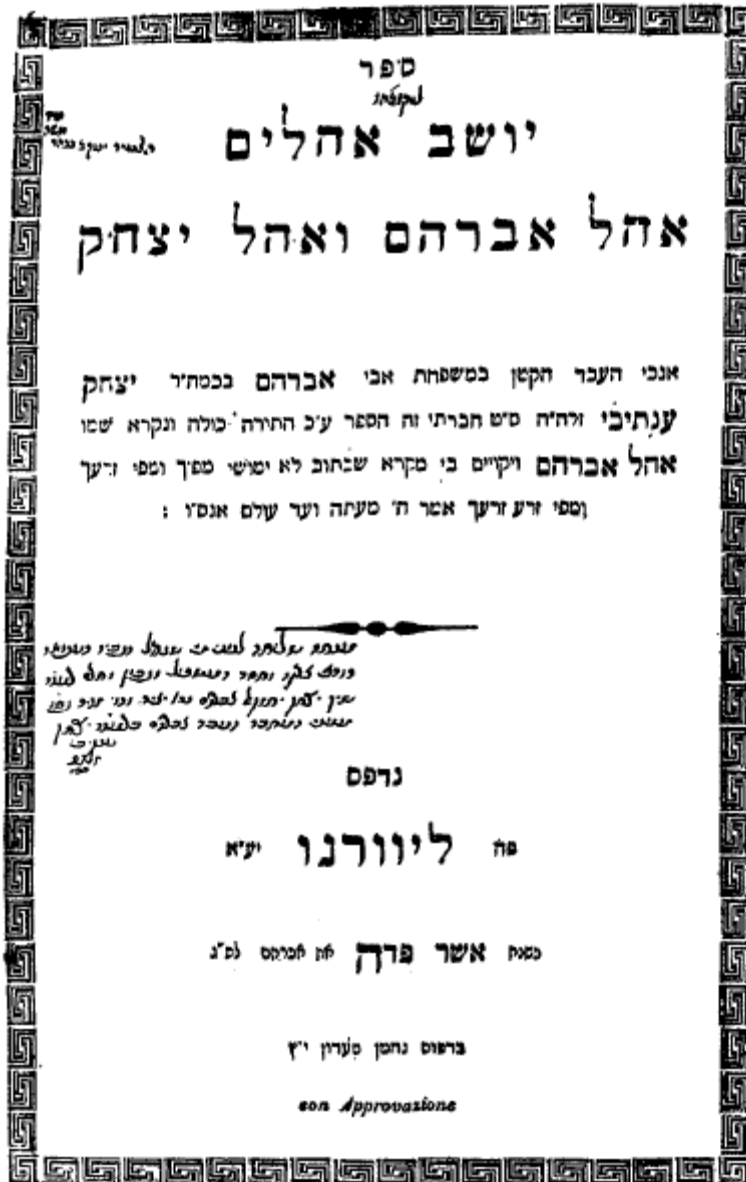
wealthy , and criticizing the failings of his generation . When his father died he succeeded him , acting as rabbi of Aleppo and head of the Bet Din.

Abraham Antebi was appointed as chief rabbi in Aleppo in 1817. His deputy for many years was Rabbi Haim Mordecai Lebaton. Their joint tenure was marked by stability and by efforts to strengthen the standing and authority of the rabbinical court, whose status had been somewhat undermined by the Ottoman reforms, leaving only matters of personal status under its jurisdiction. Rabbi Abraham Antebi's Torah scholarship, the belief in his magic powers to bless or to curse, and the initial confusion of the Jewish public in the wake of the reforms and their implementation, prevented the erosion of the status of the chief rabbi and of the rule of halakhah in the Aleppine community. He served approximately 40 years in his post. R. Abraham studied Kabbalah and speculated in the date of redemption. His ethical publications established his reputation as a moralist. He also wrote poems most of which expressed the yearning for redemption and for the revelation of the Divine presence. In Aleppo some of these were sung on Sabbath eves and on festive occasions , being included in the Bakkashot books ! His learning was acknowledged in Eretz Israel and Israel b. Samuel of Sklov solicited from him a commendation for his book Pe'at Ha-Shulhan (1836) .Rabbi Abraham was host to visiting Ashkenazi scholars and emissaries from Eretz Israel and his works incorporated his learned discussions with them. His son Isaac , was also a distinguished scholar in Aleppo ,Rabbi Abraham was an eminent and fruitful scholar. He is the author of :

1. "Yoshev Ohalim" (Leghorn (Livorno) 1825)

This book is divided to two sections: " Ohel Avraham ", sermons on the pentateuchal passages , on the Exodus and on Passover , and "Ohel Yitzhak", containing some sermons written by his father Rabbi Yitzhak Antebi.

This book was written in a time Rabbi Antebi was living in a tents camp outside Aleppo with many other refugees who escaped from the city after it was destroyed by an earthquake in 13 August 1822.



Opening page of
Yoshev Ohalim
book of Rabbi
Abraham Antebi
with a handwrite
dedication from
the author

2. "Penei HaBayit" analytic commentary on the teachings of Rabbi Shelomo ben Adrat (Rashba) with regard to the rules of slaughtering. In 1849 he published another book bearing the same name "Penei

haBayit" consisted of original Torah thoughts. This book was bound also with his father's book, "Bet Av", original thoughts on the Rambam

3. In 1843 he presented a new book "Mor ve'Aholot", a very rich Responsa on variety topics.
4. "Ohel Yesharim" (Leghorn 1843) , exhortations for moral and spiritual development, collected from many books and from the Midrashim. The most important part of this book is the last one: "Shaar haShir", against the custom of singing Arab flirtations songs.
5. "Hokhma U-Musar" (Leghorn 1850) , on ethical conduct , to which is added "Derekh Hukkekha" laws of the festivals (original thoughts and rulings on the laws of Passover) and also contains Hukkei Nashim , matrimonial law based chiefly on the responsa of David b. Solomon Abi Zimra.
6. "Pnei Ohel Moed" (Jerusalem 1959) containing two eulogies which were delivered on the death of Rabbi Abraham Antebi death by Rabbi Haim Mordechai Labaton and another unknown scholar. There are also Shabbat sermons for Rosh haShana and for the " the special Sabbaths" which are four in the year (the Shabbats before Yom Kippur, Purim, Pesah and Shavu'ot.)

Rabbi Abraham Antebi works are an important source for the cultural social and economic life of the Jews of Syria . To this day legends are current in praise of him and the wonders, which he preformed. One of his famous poems "Im Hakham Libekha Beni – Yismah Libi Gam Ani" אם חכם לבך בני ישמח לבי גם אני is still sang this days in Sephardic synagogues on special occasions.

Rabbi Abraham Antebi died Aleppo n 28 Tevet 1858 . His son Rabbi Itshak was also a well-known Rabbi in Aleppo.

Abraham ("Albert") Antebi (1873-1919) grandson of Rabbi Jacob Antebi.

Albert was born to this prosperous rabbinical family in Damascus and was educated at the Alliance Israelite Universelle (AIU – א"י"א) there. He was sent by the Alliance to further his education in Paris . In 1896 he was appointed chief assistant to Nissim Behar , director of the Alliance trade school and replaced Behar when the latter retired in 1898. Antebi served as director of the Alliance trade school and established a workshop for hand weaving and many other hand crafts in Jerusalem. He was also instrumental in the establishment of the new quarters in the city and was elected to the Jerusalem District Council . Antebi was later appointed representative of I.C.A. (Jewish Colonization association) in Eretz Israel besides being representative of "Alliance" (Alliance Israélite Universelle) thus represented contacts with the Ottoman authorities . Because of his knowledge of the Turkish language and way of life , as well as his knowledge of the French, Arabic and Jewish Law he became chief spokesman of the Jewish community. In one short sentence he may be summarized as a leader to the Jewish community in Eretz Israel and representative for the authorities. He was close friend to Mayor Dizingof , Abraham Elmaleh, and other known Zionist activists head of Zionism main streams, although he has remained his opinions against Zionist action.

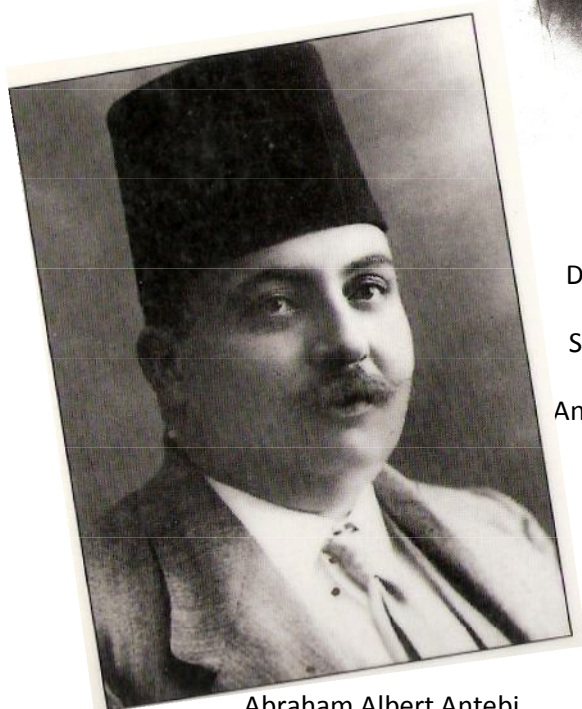
On the outbreak of world war I , Antebi succeeded in persuading the commander in Chief in Syria , Jamal Pasha , to commute the sentence of banishment passed against leaders of the Jewish community to 14 days confinement to Tiberias. Among those leaders were David Ben Gurion (later on first prime minister of Israel) Menahem Sheinkin , Yehuda Garzovski , Yakov Shlush, Avraham Elmaleh , Meir Dizingof, Menashe Meirovitch , and Dr. Haim Bugrashov.

Albert has closed a deal with Jamal Pasha , Jerusalem Turkish governor to officially buy the western wall area for the Jews. He came with that offer to the Jewish settlement that refused the deal because of their suspicion toward the offer (sounded too good to be true and have cost big amount of money).

Imagine how Israel's history could have been different with that Turkish – Muslim Kushan in hand.. Finally , It was Albert Antebi who has succeeded to match between the great love story between Itamar Ben Avi (Eliezer Ben Yehoda's son , He was the one who renewed the Hebrew language), and Lea Abu Shedid from a highly respected Sephardic family . This family has refused persistently to marry their daughter with the young Ashkenazi fellow , until Albert has intervened . Years later the family descendent have received a gratitude letter from the legendary Prime Minister – David Ben Gurion for having saved his life, asking the governor just to exile him out of the country in order to trade his hang punishment as Turkish authorities intended to.

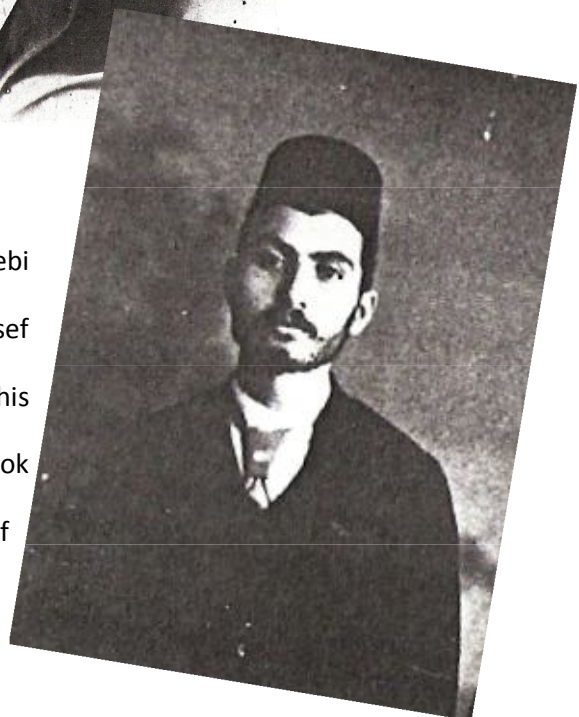
Rabbi Yosef
Antebi

Son of Rabbi
Jacob from
Damascus, and 2
of his sons :



Abraham Albert Antebi

David Yosef Antebi
Son of Rabbi Yosef
And publisher of his
Father's book
Vayizbor Yosef



In 1916 Albert was exiled to Damascus because of some vicious gossip of one of his German opponents to the governor : As a matter of fact , Albert was one of the few who have struggled for France, and the dragoman of the Embassy. He was therefore sent by the governor as an enlisted soldier to the eastern Anatolia front to Diarbékir, under the orders of Mustafa Kemal, he was then sent to jail in Constantinople in the Blue Mosque at Constantinople. At the end of the war Husseini and Nashashibi asked him to be their representative to the authorities as a dragoman at the French Embassy. Later on he was sent home by boat with all the refugees - Jews as well as Armenians and Muslims. At the moment he was to embark with his wife and the five remaining children – (one was in Frankfurt, two in Paris) - he caught typhoid fever and was transferred to "the Maritim" Hospital in Constantinople , where he died brutally.

Rabbi Yehuda Shabetai Rephael Antebi (Y.Sh.R) (1809-1889) Son of Rabbi Judah Antebi and a second nephew of Rabbi Abraham Antebi . Rabbi. Y.SH.R is grandfather of my grandfather – (Jacob Mordechai Antebi) . Born in Aleppo , and at the age of four, after both his parents passed away by epidemic in the city , his uncle Rabbi Abraham Antebi, chief Rabbi of the city raised him as his own son. Years later, around his 13th year after his "Bar Mitzva" age, he was sent to his aunt in Safed to learn Torah by the great Rabbinical authorities there. In Safed he became familiar with the Kabbalic world as well. On 1839 he was registered in Dr. Eliezer Halevi first Census for the Jewish population in Israel.



Personal autograph of Rabbi Judah Shabetai Rephael Antebi in one of his manuscripts.

Rabbi Yehudah Shabetai (or Y.Sh.R- יש"ר) was appointed as an emissary for the "Gola" communities abroad by main Sephardic Rabbis of the city. He has traveled twice in a mission to collect the "Chaluka" money, which supported the Yeshiva Scholars of the city. At those days – the travels were difficult and prolonged several years. In his second mission he had reached Bombay , India, and was a personal guest of David Sassoon ("Rothschild of the East") . He became his close friend and was appointed the Rabbi of "Benei Israel" Congregation in Bombay for several years.



A rare photo from the middle of 19th century –The wealthy David Sassoon from Bombay (sitting) and his sons beside him.

David Sassoon was a close friend to R. Judah Shabetai.

After completing his second emissary mission , he returned rich and used his wealth for charity purposes : rebuilding the city ruins and synagogues after



the famous earthquake of 1839 . People of Safed have called him "Massaiah" , because his long yearning for the redemption and being a warm philanthropist . He aided the rehabilitation of Safed after the 1837 earthquake , and also builds a synagogue, which bore his name.

The old synagogue built Rabbi Judah Shabetai Rephael Antebi in Safed

It was known by Safed people as "Keniss Antebi" Synagogue of the Antebi's and nowadays called Shaarei Rahamim.

In his career on he was appointed Rabbi and member of the Beit Hadin (the Rabbinical court) in Cairo and was second to the president there. Y.Sh.R is mentioned in his books and researches of the historians of Yitzhq Ben zvi, (First president of Israel) and Abraham Yaari . His ceremony for The Great Shabat (the one before Passover) was published on Beor Hachaim book in the appended Abir Yaakov part. Y.Sh.R (-Yashar) Antebi and his wife Kadoun Antebi, have brought 8 children all became later on Rabbis . He passed away and was buried in Safed on 1889 .

Until this day the small synagogue in the old Safed city which he has built still exists and is called "Shaarei Rachamim"

Elijah Rahamim Antebi (1852-1920) was the elder of those 8 sons, all appointed Rabbis. One of those, Rabbi Israel Shmuel Antebi from Tiberias is the great –grandfather of the author. R, Elihahu Rahamim years later became another emissary of the Sephardic congregation. He wrote Ara'a de-Rabanan ,

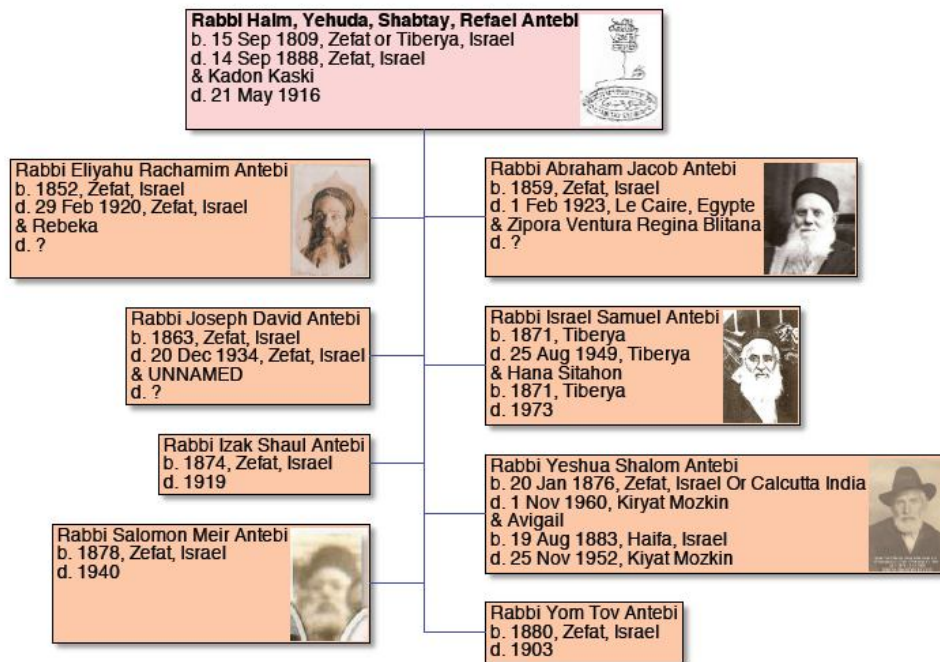


sermons, Derash Elliyahu , funeral orations : Tuv Taa'am and Imrei Shabat – all of which are still manuscripts saved in libraries around the world.

Judah Haim Antebi (standing) headmaster of Safed secondary school and his uncle Rabbi Abraham Jacob Antebi (sitting) publisher of Beor Hachaim book , and son of Rabbi Judah Shabetai Raphael Antebi.

Two sons of Elijah Rahamim were prominent figures : Rabbi Raphael Menashe Antebi who was president of the Rabbinical court in Haifa and his younger brother :

Judah Haim Antebi – of the first teachers in the beginning of the 20th century , to the Jewish new colonies of the Baron Rothschild schools in upper Galillea, and soon after headmaster of some of those schools. Years later he became a city council member of Safed , president of the Sephardic community of the city and the Mizrahi headmaster of girls school in Safed. He was the representative of the City and its surrounding colonies to the first committee of Jews representatives in Israel . Judah was a personal teacher to the Paykovitch family one of whom – Yigal Alon became Israel's minister and acting prime minister from 10th till the 17th governments



8 sons of Rabbi Judah Shabbetai Antebi. (produced by "Les Fleurs de L'Orient " web site Geneological Data Base)

Rabbi Yosef Antebi son of Rabbi Jacob Antebi grandson of R. David Yitzhak was born in Damascus in 1847. he was the youngest child of Rabbi Jacob Antebi himself and was born after his death in Jerusalem. He lived some years in Cairo, Egypt and then came to Jerusalem where he passed away in 26 Heshvan 1918. His son Rabbi David Yosef Antebi published his father's book "Vayitsbor Yosef" (Jerusalem 1919), consisting primarily original thoughts and lectures on Bereshit, and some other lectures that were delivered by the author in several occasions .



This was a short summary on main figures in the Antebi family history, The short article cannot hold lots of generations, but those who wish can broaden their knowledge by further reading the book "Back to Eintab" (Hebrew) :

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/2241427/-The-Antebi-Family-Heritage>

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This days having his first born who is the 12th Antebi family generation...

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