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Steering Committee, Editing, and Graphic Design

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**The Chief Executive Officer’s Opening Remarks**

Avraham Shemi-Shoham and I have known each other for years. We first crossed paths when we founded the World Center for Aleppo (Halab) Jews Traditional Culture, and Avraham threw himself into advancing the center’s goals and objectives.

Avraham is an artist and a painter. His paintings blow me away, the vibrant, life-like colors and the unique and diverse subject matter. However, more than anything else, what stirs me is his dedication to bringing the traditional culture of Aram Tzova to life through his art. Whether he creates paintings based on the Keter Aram-Tzova or provides an artistic rendering of Aleppo based on the memories of his childhood home his work stirs my soul.

He has also left his stamp upon our publications including, the *Darkhe Eretz* journals, the *Aleppo Haggadah*, which won the bronze medal at the Jerusalem International Book Fair in 1993, and the artistic greeting cards we produced. Unfortunately, only part of Aram-Tzova’s Jewish life and its community have been comprehensively documented and presented so far.

However, we are pursuing this goal without surcease. Avraham took on this project and the artwork in this album attempts to reprise some of our accomplishments. Avraham deserves hearty congratulations for this endeavor.

As a rule, the artistic creations and publications that receive the center’s support are left to the artist’s imagination. The center chooses not to interfere in the creative process, so the artists express themselves and their own perception of Aleppan Jewry’s cultural traditions.

This album constitutes another one of the diverse projects that we have undertaken over the decades. It has been published on our website, [www.aleppojews.co.il](http://www.aleppojews.co.il) where you can also find a ton of material embodying the spirit and fragrance of glorious, ancient, Jewish Aram-Tzova, a community that has left its imprint on the Jewish people both in the Land of Israel and in the Diaspora.

**Avraham Shemi-Shoham**

Avraham Shemi-Shoham was born in Aram Tzova and immigrated to the Land of Israel as a youth in 1960. He took his place among artists, including Yehudit Har-Even, Edwin Solomon, Shlomo Vitkin, and Aharon Alkalai, and in the graphics world at The Israeli Institutes for Technology and at the Art Institute in Bat Yam. He has displayed his work in over twenty-eight solo shows in Israel and abroad. He is a member of the Israeli Association of Painters and Sculptors and was the chair of the Association of Painters and Sculptors in Bat Yam for fifteen years, during which time he designed and produced a magnificent art book featuring Bat Yam artists.

Shemi serves on the board of The Bible Lands Museum and is one of its curators. He sits on the boards of directors of “Paint in Nature” and the World Center for Aleppo (Halab) Jews Traditional Culture. He is also a graphic artist and illustrator. He paints in series: Song of Songs, Yemenite wedding, music, Israeli landscapes—especially Old Jaffa landscapes, and Judaica pertaining to the famous Ketem Aram-Tzova. He paints magnificent, artistic, Jewish marriage contracts (*ketubbot*) that are valid according to Jewish law and come with rabbinic approbations.

Shemi produced and illustrated the *Aleppo Haggadah* which was based on a Haggadah printed about 120 years ago in Aleppo. It was published by the World Center for Aleppo (Halab) Jews Traditional Culture and ran through several editions. This magnificent Haggadah won the bronze medal at the Jerusalem International Book Fair in 1993.

The artist’s work entitled *Tales from Halab—Syria* was published in 2017 by the World Center for Aleppo (Halab) Jews Traditional Culture. In this book, the artist tells short stories about his childhood in Halab, stories full of suspense and emotion, some of which are sad as they describe the Jews difficult, day-to-day experiences living in the shadow of the smuggling operation dedicated to bringing the Jews into Israel.

**Avraham Shemi-Shoham—Creating a Memorial for the Aleppine Community**

The Aleppine community was known throughout the Jewish world. both in the Middle East and across the globe. A city of sages and scribes, a city of merchants and *paytannim* (liturgical poets), spiritual and practical men. Aleppo was an important Torah center, which for centuries influenced nearby and far away communities, as well as functioning as an economic hub for trade between the East and the West. Aleppine scholars fashioned a monument for themselves through their many books in the areas of halakhic decision-making, sermonizing, ethics, Hebrew grammar, eulogies, Torah novellae, supernatural cures (*Segulot*), Kabbalah, liturgical poems, Torah commentary, customs and more. Poets like Yehuda Al-Harizi rhymed rhymes for her, crowns for her head.

Academic scholars wrote weighty tomes and articles discussing this city’s bejeweled community, beginning with its early days and ending with the days when it had been emptied of its Jews. This community has had the good fortune of having one of its most cherished sons Avraham Shemi-Shoham devote many years to memorializing this community, its sons and daughters and their day-to-day lives. As he shares about himself at the beginning of his book, *Tales from Halab*, his family was not one of the wealthy ones, and, therefore, he wishes to forefront the cultural traditions of those folksy characters who were somewhat colorful, who emit a sense of naivety, romance, and longing. The peddler, the milkman on his morning rounds, the baker, the barber, the textile merchant and the beggars, the women carrying buckets of water, the simple men and women who experienced daily hardships are given pride of place in his paintings. Picking up the threads of his personal memories, he weaves the memory of the community that no longer exists. Fragments of memory pertaining to happy events and ceremonies, such as weddings and bar mitzvahs, exist alongside sad events, full of suffering, such as funerals, the Ninth of Av prayers, and more. The Halab synagogue comes to life in breathtaking colors under the influence of his paintbrush, as does its incineration at the hands of the Arab mob following the United Nations’ proclamation that a Hebrew state would be established in the Land of Israel. Shemi expertly paints the city’s markets, its streets, the Jewish neighborhoods (primarily, the neighborhood called *Behasitah*), and depicts the penetration of modernity into the Jewish homes, for instance, in “Family with a Gramophone.” He rejuvenates and adorns the books as well with the unique qualities of his art. Touched by Shemi, the *Aleppo Haggadah* wears new clothes and Song of Songs bursts forth reinvigorated in a cornucopia of colors.

Avraham is not satisfied with paintings alone, so in the last few years, he has even begun transcribing his Aleppine memories. When you read his tales about Aleppo, which are adorned with his paintings, you can simultaneously read and see the characters he is depicting and the background to the stories he is telling. I have been fortunate enough to have Avraham’s magnificent paintings grace the covers of two of my books. His painting of the entrance to the sanctuary in the Great Synagogue of Aleppo appears on *Sifrei Erets – The Sages of Aram Tzova’s Torah Literature*, while his painting of Hacham Nissim Indibo, the Damascene community’s rabbi until 1973, with his *kavas* (honorary bodyguard), adorns my *Between Intrigues and Revolution: The Appointment and Dismissal of Chief Rabbis in Baghdad, Damascus and Aleppo 1744-1914*. These covers have transformed my books into precious, ornamental and artistic objects.

Happy is the Aleppine community for Avraham Shemi-Shoham is one of its sons who through his paintings and stories links the present to the past so that Aleppo will never be forgotten.

Professor Yaron Harel

Dean of the Faculty of Judaic Studies

Bar-Ilan University

**Solo Exhibitions**

2022 – Zionist Organization of America House – Tel-Aviv

2018 – Keter Aram Tzova – Yemenite Jewish Heritage Center and Museum – Rehovot

2017 – Yemenite Wedding – Yemenite Jewish Heritage Center and Museum – Rehovot

2016 – Landscapes and Melodies – Azrieli Gallery – Holon

2013 – Biblical Loves, Tova Osman Gallery

2012 – Memories of Aram Tzova, Halab – California

2012 – Landscapes and People, Cultural Center – Bat-Yam

2011 – Biblical Loves – Enav Cultural Center – Tel-Aviv

2011 – Memories of Syria – San Francisco

2010 – Exhibition of Memories from Syria – Beit Yad Lebanim, Rishon Lezion

2009 – Judaica Exhibition at Eshkol Payis – Bat-Yam

2008 – The Aleppo Jews Cultural Tradition Hall

2007 – The Judaica in “Keter Aram Tzova,” Holon Theatre

2005 – Exhibition of “Memories from Syria,” Asia House – Tel-Aviv

2002 – Judaica Exhibition, The Tanakh Museum – Tel-Aviv

2000 – The Tanakh Museum – Tel-Aviv

1998 – Mofet Theatre Gallery – Ramat Gan

1997 – Center for the Arts – Rishon Lezion

1996 – The Keter Triptichon – The Central Library – Bat-Yam

1991 – “The Gallery” Kfar Maccabiah

1990 – Beit Yad Lebanim - Rishon Lezion

1989 – Hasimta Theater – Old Jaffa

1989 – Shtainberg Mishkan for the Arts – Holon

1988 – Philip Murray House - Eilat

1987 – Ryback House – Bat-Yam

1985 – Bat Yam Museum for Art

1984 – Hotel Marina – Bat-Yam

1982 – Ramat Gan Museum

1978 – Ipanema Gordon Gallery – Tel-Aviv

1977 – “Shachaf” Gallery, Old Jaffa

1975 – Bat Yam Museum

1973 – New Gallery – Reines

1971 – Yisraelis Gallery

1970 – Zionist Organization of America House

**Part One**

**The Keter—The Crown**

**Aleppo Codex Paintings**

**The Aleppo Codex**

The Aleppo Codex is the oldest manuscript containing the entire Tanakh. According to Maimonides, it is also the most authoritative and accurate source for both the biblical text and for the vowellization system, the cantillation marks, and the Mesorah (Masoretic notations). Academic scholars declare it to be the most accurate version of the Tanakh. Maimonides held it in his very own hands and he based the “Laws of a Torah Scroll” on it. The Aleppo Codex was written by a scribe named Solomon ben Buya’a in Tiberias, in the Land of Israel, over one thousand years ago, in 930 CE. It was edited, vowelized, and transmitted by Aharon ben Asher, the last and the most important of the Masoretes who wove the authoritative version of the Tanakh that we read until this very day.

The Codex was stolen at the end of the eleventh century and taken from the Land of Israel to Egypt. In the fourteenth century, Maimonides’ great-grandson rescued it and brought it to Aleppo where he gave it to the community, which took upon itself the responsibility of guarding it. The Jews referred to it as “Al-Tag,” a literal translation of the phrase “The Crown” into Arabic. Academic scholars and scientists refer to it as the Aleppo Codex.

Thus, the Keter passed through many hands until it finally wound up in Aleppo, where it was guarded zealously for about six hundred years, in a manner truly worthy of admiration. It resided in the Great and Ancient Synagogue of Aleppo, in a corner of Elijah’s Cave inside a wooden box that no Jew could approach. This ensured its safety for many long years. At one point, a group of people arrived in Aleppo and presented themselves before the communal leadership as scientists. They asked to see the Codex. Members of the community, afraid of what might happen, of the manuscript being stolen or photographed (which had happened once in the past), decided to transfer it from the wooden ark into an iron safe. Two keys were forged for this safe and they were kept in safekeeping by two of the community’s most distinguished members. In order to open the safe both keys had to be used so it could only be opened when both the key holders and the communal leaders were present. The safe was kept in the same Elijah’s Cave in the Great Synagogue of Aleppo, on top of a large stone pallet.

The Jews treated the Codex with great awe and reverence. The safe in which it was kept became a place of prayer for many who suffered the vicissitudes of life. In the past, these supplicants would sometimes ask for Torah scholars to come to the site and assist in the recitation of psalms. It also became customary for the ritual oaths and bans performed by Aleppo’s rabbinic court to take place next to the Codex, in the presence of a representative of the rabbinical court descended from the Dayan family. However, many refused to take part in these ceremonies (taking oaths at this site) even if they were absolutely certain that their oath was scrupulously true because of the awe and terror inspired by the Codex.

In 1943, the famous biblical scholar, Moshe David Cassutto, traveled from the Land of Israel to Aleppo. He requested and received permission from the leaders of the community to study the Keter from up close, but he did not receive permission to photograph it. He wished to publish an accurate version of the Tanakh based on the Codex. For several days, he stayed and studied the Keter surrounded by rabbis who ensured that he would not photograph any passages. Thus, Cassutto was later able to ensure that other editions of the Tanakh were consonant with the Keter’s format.

During the December 1947 riots that targeted the Aleppine Jews, the Keter was damaged; however, part of it was rescued by members of the community, who even risked their lives to hide it for ten whole years until they were able to smuggle it out of Syria. The Codex was brought to the State of Israel in 1958, with some of its pages missing, and it was presented to the president of the state, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi. It was deposited for safekeeping in the Ben-Zvi Institute. Later, it was transferred to the National Library and finally to the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, where it is still exhibited as part of the permanent exhibition in the museum’s “Shrine of the Book.” In 2016, UNESCO put the Aleppo Codex on the “World Heritage List” in recognition of its uniqueness and universal characteristics.

The artist, Avraham Shemi-Shoham, was born in Aleppo in a house adjacent to the Great and Ancient Synagogue of Aleppo in which the Keter was kept. He immigrated to the State of Israel in 1960. Painting and illustrating passages from the Keter are the be-all and the end-all of this artist’s life and they serve to close the circle that began in his childhood. His style of painting is classic—watercolors with flowers and touches of gold, along with miniatures that suit each passage chosen by the artist. Thus, they illustrate and are integrated into the Keter’s biblical and ancient topics. The letters in the paintings are those used in the Codex itself, both in terms of their size and shape, in a one-to-one ratio.

 **List of the Keter Paintings**

The paintings are arranged according to the order of their verses in the Tanakh. Each painting is accompanied by its parallel verse from the Tanakh, photographed from the Keter itself. Those texts which are unavailable because of the damage done during the 1948 Aleppo riots have been reconstructed using the same writing style as the Keter, and are accompanied by a note signifying this alongside the text.

**Paintings of Pentateuchal Verses**

1. Isaac’s Blessing of Jacob, Genesis 27:26-29.
2. Priestly Blessings, Numbers 6:22-27
3. God’s Blessing for Those Who Heed His Word, Deuteronomy 28:3-9
4. Moses’ Remarks to Joshua Bin-Nun, Deuteronomy 31:7-9.
5. The Torah Portion of “And this is the blessing,” Deuteronomy 33:1-29.
6. The Beginning of the Torah Portion of “And this is the blessing,” Deuteronomy 33:1-7.
7. Moses’ Blessing of the Levite Tribe, Deuteronomy, 33:8-11.
8. Moses’ Blessing of Joseph’s Tribe, Deuteronomy 33:13-17.

**Paintings of Prophetic Verses**

1. “Do Not Fear My Servant Jacob,” Jeremiah 30:10-11.
2. Israel’s War Against *Aram Tzovah*, 2 Samuel 10:5-12.

**Paintings of Verses from Kethuvim**

1. “Happy is the Man,” Psalms 1
2. “A Psalm of David: The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing,” Psalms 23.
3. “For the leader; with instrumental music. A psalm. A song. May God be gracious to us,” Psalms 67.
4. “A song for ascents. I turn my eyes to the mountains,” Psalms 121.
5. “A song of ascents. Of David. I rejoiced when they said to me,” Psalms 122.
6. “A song of ascents…Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine,” Psalms 128.
7. “A song of ascents. Of David. How good and how pleasant it is that brothers dwell together,” Psalms 133.
8. “Praise the LORD; for He is good,” Psalms 136.
9. “On the rivers of Babylon,” Psalms 137.
10. “Hallelujah,” Psalms 137.
11. “The Proverbs of Solomon,” Proverbs 1:1-7.
12. “My son, keep your father’s commandment,” Proverbs 6:20-23.
13. “A Woman of Valor,” Proverbs 31:10-31.
14. “The Song of Songs, by Solomon,” Song of Songs 1:1-4.
15. “I am dark but comely,” Song of Songs 1:5-8.
16. “Ah, you are fair, my darling,” Song of Songs 1:15-2:1-3.
17. “Presently Boaz arrived from Bethlehem,” Ruth 2:4-8.
18. “May the LORD reward your deeds,” Ruth 2:12-14.
19. “On the third day, Esther put on royal apparel,” Esther 5:1-3.

**Part Two**

**Paintings of the Great Synagogue of Aram Tzova**

**On the Great & Ancient Synagogue of Halab**

Aleppo’s main synagogue was the Great and Ancient Synagogue of Aleppo. Located in the Al-Bandara neighborhood, which is adjacent to the ancient Behasita neighborhood where Jews lived for many generations. When the prestigious, Jamiliyeh neighborhood was built it was primarily populated by wealthy Jews. The Jews of limited socioeconomic means were unable to move to this new neighborhood so they remained in the area around the Great Synagogue until the 1980s. Since it is located in the Al-Bandara neighborhood, some of the sources refer to it as the “El-Bandara Synagogue.” In some sources it is called the “El-Tzafra Synagogue,” which means the “Yellow Synagogue.” The origins of this name are lost in the fog of time. It is also called the “Ancient Synagogue” since some believe that it is the oldest synagogue in the world. There are also those who used the synagogue’s Arabic appellation, “Kenis El-Kabirah,” which literally means the “Great Synagogue.” The synagogue’s beauty and grandeur were exquisite. It had seven sanctuaries, a great number of pillars that were built using unique architectural techniques, and arks in each of the vast halls where the many prayer quorums gathered.

The synagogue contained a cave called “The Prophet Elijah’s Cave” because legend had it that Elijah the prophet had revealed himself there. In this very cave, the Aleppo Codex was guarded in sanctity with reverence and awe for six hundred years. The Aleppo Codex was the oldest manuscript version of the Tanakh to be found anywhere in the world. In the past, local Jews would hire ten Jewish scholars to gather in the crypt and pray for God to cure their desperately ill relatives.

It also became customary to enact communal, rabbinical court oaths in the synagogue next to the ark where the Keter resided. This notwithstanding, many refused to take this oath even if they were absolutely certain of the justice of their cause because of the awe and terror inspired by the Codex’s sanctity. The belief in the sanctity of swearing by the Keter was so strong and had such a great impact that in cases where agreement could not be reached, the judges would force the appellants to take this oath so the truth would be revealed.

The “Graves of the Righteous” was also located next to the synagogue and on the eves of the High Holidays in Tishrei it was customary to light oil candles and pray there.

**The Synagogue’s History**

According to tradition, the site where the synagogue was located had been used for Jewish ritual purposes since Byzantine times (fifth century CE). In 950 BCE, Yoav ben Tzruyah, while commanding the armies of Israel for King David, had conquered the city and built this synagogue. In light of the Mongolian Conquest, under the command of Timor Lang, the synagogue was turned into a mosque in 1400 CE; however, the Jews rehabilitated it and returned it to its true purpose only 18 years later. In the 1947 riots targeting Aleppan Jewry, the Arab rioters burnt parts of it and caused immense damage. The Aleppo Codex, which had been scrupulously guarded in the synagogue, also sustained injuries in these riots. Aleppine Jewry finally renovated the synagogue in 1992, but in the 1980s, after the remaining Jews moved to the Jamiliyeh neighborhood, the synagogue had already ceased to provide daily services.

**Traditions**

One strand of tradition reports that King David was not permitted to build the Temple because he his life had been dedicated to was and he had shed much blood. His divinely-ordained role had been fighting the enemies of Israel and defeating them. In doing so, he paved the path for his son Solomon to achieve his destiny, building the Temple.

During one of these military campaigns, Yoav ben Tzruyah conquered Aram Tzovah on King David’s behalf. Yoav decided to found a synagogue there. He did merely oversee the workers, he actually carried the heavy stones in his own hands to the synagogue’s building site. As he was building, Yoav ben Tzruyah wept and said: “Is it at all possible that the Holy One, blessed be He, will leave the Temple in Jerusalem and bestow his Divine Presence on this house that I am building?”

Immediately, a Divine voice spoke from the Heavens saying: “Yoav, Yoav, in the future both Temples will be destroyed! And your house will remain standing.” The elders of the city had a tradition that had been transmitted directly from one person to another, that the Great Synagogue in Aleppo, which reigned in all its glory until the 1948 riots, was the very same Temple that Yoav ben Tzruyah had established. This magnificent synagogue was renowned for its beauty and grandeur, for its seven sanctuaries, its ornate pillars and the “arks” within, which were situated in ample halls where thousands prayed in prayer quorum after prayer quorum, and no prayer quorum distracted another.

**List of Synagogue Paintings**

1. Synagogue Interior
2. The Center of the Synagogue Courtyard
3. A Corner Platform in the Courtyard
4. The Sermons Platform Wing
5. The Prayer Service
6. The Burning of the Synagogue in the 1947 Riots\

**Part Three**

**Memories of Aram Tzova**

**Memories of Aram Tzova-Halab**

The painter Avraham Shemi-Shoham took upon himself the task of documenting through his paintings both his mundane and historical Aleppine childhood memories. His paintings capture important moments in the life of this magnificent and vibrant Jewish community which knew times of sadness and joy and times of suffering during the tumultuous periods of its history. Customs and characters unique to the Aleppan community are also captured and perpetuated in Shemi’s paintings.

Shemi remains attached to this city with his very heartstrings. In all his paintings there runs—like a red string—a longing for the Aleppine community’s traditions and customs, and for its fragrant and colorful markets, which existed alongside a life of oppression, suffering, and riots. The artist, a person who wishes to forefront the cultural traditions of the Aleppo community, devoted most of his works to the Aleppine community’s unique ceremonies, which he transmits to his audience via colorful characters from whom emanate naivety, romance, and nostalgic longing.

Alongside the joy and Jewish tradition transmitted through this colorful and fascinating idiom, comes the moments of sadness and tears that the community well-knew. In his paintings, Shemi also wished to perpetuate through art the moments of hardship and trauma in the life of this vibrant, life-affirming Jewish community. Each and every painting is another act of closure in the processing of his childhood.

**List of Commemorative Paintings of Aram Tzova – The Aleppine Way of Life and Jewish Communal Life**

1. The Citadel of Aleppo and the ‘*Savas*’ (Liquor Merchant on the “Horse” – The Annise Plant)
2. Clock Tower – The Gate of Deliverance (*Ba’ab El-Faraj*)
3. Aleppine Gardens: The Cultivated and the Uncultivated, Street Barber and Knife Sharpener
4. The Tramway – Aleppo’s Electric Tram Going to the El-Jamiliyeh Neighborhood
5. The Rabbi Kabbalist of Aram TZova
6. Winter and Warmth – An Aleppine Family Gathered in Their Home and Covered by Blankets
7. The Kavas – The Aleppine Community’s Official, Honorary Bodyguard
8. The Promissory Note and the Jewish and Arab Merchants in the Khan, The Joint Promissory Note belonging to the Business Owned by the Jewish Shewika Family and the Arab Alutan Family
9. Circumcision, the “Purification” with the “Tzeniya of Elijah the prophet”
10. Simhat Torah – The Day of the Rejoicing of the Torah in the Great and Ancient Synagogue of Aleppo’s Courtyard
11. The Thirty-third Day of the Counting – Lag Ba-Omer Eve in the Great and Ancient Synagogue of Aleppo’s Courtyard
12. A Wedding Ceremony Held in Accord with Aleppine Custom in the Synagogue
13. “Shabbat Goy.” Jewesses Searching for a Shabbat Goy on Sabbath Eve to turn On the Household’s Electricity
14. “A Royal Funeral in Aleppo: An Official Rabbinic Funeral or a Funeral for One of the Important Members of the Community” employing a horse-drawn carriage accompanied by “Talmud Torah” students and the Kavas as they bring the Casket to the Synagogue Sanctuary.
15. The Recitation of *Misharotam* (literally, their kneading bowls or the leftovers in them): During the Seder at the beginning of Passover when the matzot (pl. of matzah, leavened bread) are broken in half to create the Afikoman, the head of the household in Aleppo (who leads the Seder) grasps the napkin containing the matzot in his right hand, places them on his left shoulder and recites the following verses: “their kneading bowls wrapped in their cloaks upon their shoulders. And the Israelites had done Moses’ bidding” (Exodus 12:35-36). The participants ask the leader in Arabic: “Where are you coming from?”, and he answers in Hebrew: “From Egypt.” And then they ask him: “And where are you going?” And he responds: “To Jerusalem.” Then they ask him one more question: “And what provisions have you taken for the journey?” And he answers: “Matzah and maror (bitter herbs).” He transfers the napkin from his left to his right shoulder behind his head while saying “Next year in Jerusalem.” Then the participants respond: “Speedily and imminently (in the near future).” After this, the napkin is passed to all of the participants—men, women, and children—and everyone mimics the Seder leader, repeating this ceremony when their turn comes.

**Reflections on the Way of Life in the Jewish Neighborhoods—Behasita Quarter**

1. A Taste of Life in the Behasita Quarter
2. Daffodils Adorning a Woman’s Head on the Sabbath
3. A Typical Aleppine Woman
4. Family with a Gramophone
5. “*El Manpakh*” – The Bellows: A Must-Have Device Found in Every Home for Stoking the Coal Fire
6. Box of Wonders – The Arab with the Box of Wonders Would Visit the Aleppine Neighborhoods
7. Courtyard Singer
8. Blanket and Mattress Upholsterer
9. The *Brazak* (pronounced *braza*) Merchant. The Brazak: A sesame bagel that was traditionally eaten at the end of the ninth of Av.
10. The Interior of the “President’s House” Synagogue and Study Hall

**Reflections on the Way of Life in the Jewish Neighborhoods—Jamiliyeh Quarter**

1. The Jewish Youth Club in Jamiliyeh – “Le Club”
2. Purim Eve. Celebrating Purim with a Mask Ball (*Bal Masque*) in the Jamiliyeh Quarter
3. Adorning a Hall with Colleagues for a Circumcision Ceremony
4. An Aleppine Wedding in the Synagogue or the School Hall
5. The Aleppine, Jewish Boy Scouts, Participating in a Mass Demonstration Against French Rule in Syria
6. The Synagogue (*Kenis*) in the Jamiliyeh Quarter
7. Jamiliyeh Synagogue Hall named for Lidiya Cohen, z”l, née Assiss.
8. The Orphanage – With the Orphanage Band and Dining Hall

**Syrian Jewry’s Distress and their Illegal Immigration to Israel**

1. The Tragedy of the Four Young Damascene Women Murdered While Attempting to Flee Syria
2. The Funeral of Zaki (Yitzhak), an Aleppine Butcher, who was murdered
3. Ottoman Exit Permit from Syria

**Part Four**

**Paintings of Aleppine Amulets and Blessings**

**Aleppine Amulets and Blessings**

I arrived in the State of Israel in the 1960s directly from Aram Tzova, Halab. I joined the office for the cultural traditions of Aram Tzova Jewry and thus began to collect every religious object that was connected to Aleppo’s Jewish heritage and its customs.

Among other things, I collected amulets and blessings that Aleppine Jews were accustomed to hang on their walls or above babies’ heads. These amulets contained blessings and combinations of angelic names to protect the infants. They were printed on cardboard and framed in the simplest manner.

Thus, the Aleppine Jews hung all sorts of blessings against the evil eye and various spells or incantations that the rabbis gave them when they went to receive blessings or a cure, and these men would give them a special blessing referred to as the “*ravveh.”* The sage would put his hand on the head of the child or adult and would incant and bless the ailing individual with spells and prayers. This would ensure that the illness or its symptoms would pass. The paintings in this section are a reworking of the aforementioned amulets that I collected.

**List of Paintings of Aleppine Amulets and Blessings**

1. Prayer for a Livelihood
2. Blessing for Success, Health, and a Livelihood
3. An Incantation Against the Evil Eye
4. The Rabbi’s Incantation for Blessing (the Ravveh)
5. Jewish Marriage Contract (*Ketubah*)
6. Jewish Marriage Contract (*Ketubah*)
7. Ancient Aleppine Jewish Marriage Contract (*Ketubah*) with the Special Script and the Rabbinic Signatures