

ABRAHAMIC FORUM CONFERENCE – NOVEMBER 18 & 19th
2020 –
DAVID TOLEDANO.

M. Ambassador,
Ladies and Gentlemen, Honorable assistance.

Thank you very much for your invitation and for giving me the opportunity to talk about my country, MOROCCO, it's History, culture, patrimony, legacy and heritage.

As Moroccan Jewish citizen, I feel very proud to have more than 20 centuries historical background in my country, where proofs of Jewish presence are attested by Romans vestiges. (Tombstones written in Hebrew and Latin ..).

When IDRIS 1st came to Morocco with his people, and implanted Islam in the country, old Jewish community was already living long before, spread in various places. Since that early years, every time you look at Moroccan History, you hit Jewish names. Lot of them were close to the SULTAN (King) as doctors, cancelers, ambassadors, merchants, translators...They lived more or less peacefully among Muslims population, in the cities and around. They use to stay , in the cities, in special place named MELLAH, close to king palace, for they were protected (DHIMI) by the king as "people of the BOOK". But they were much more mixed in the rural areas. (Berbers).

They were called "TOCHAVIM", means from the country. Those who were expelled from Spain in 1492 were called

“MEGORACHIM”,= the expelled ones, also known as SEPHARDIC. (# ASHKENAZE).

They were welcome in various cities like FES, MEKNES, TANGIER. They continued to speak Spanish and later, mixed it with Hebrew and Arab words, creating a dialect named HAKETIA. Some went to the Ottoman empire and sprayed in many countries (s.a. TURKEY, EGYPT, BULGARIA, THESSALONICA (GREECE) and even in HOLLAND). They keep strong links to Spanish language and developed another idiom called LADINO .

Many poems, songs and stories were written in those languages.

Andalusian golden age was over, but gave to Morocco a strong legacy. Scientists, astrologist, doctors, poets and musicians either Muslims, Jews or Christians sharing knowledges leaved their works in many manuscripts (Arabic, Hebrew and Latin).

Moroccan Jewish population continue to live her day to day live under Moses Law.

In 1861, the first laic school in Morocco,(under the name of “ALLIANCE ISRAELITE UNIVERSELLE”), opened in the city of Tetuan. (North).

French Protectorate, (and Spanish presence in the north) changes relationship between various populations in Morocco (Urbans Arabs Muslims-Berbers-Jews- new European settlers).

During World War II French authority, implemented Vichy's anti-Semitic laws in Morocco. King MOHAMED V, gave his personal protection to the Jews. That's why Moroccan Jews everywhere they live, keep a strong feeling toward Mohamed V.

Till 1940, Moroccan Jewish Community was the biggest in Arab and Muslim world, with almost 300.000 people. They started to leave the country in 1950. Then this immigration accelerated in the 60's as and seventies. If the majority moved to Israel, many others, went to France, Canada, Spain, USA... They all keep strong links with their native country, Morocco, and frequently visit home cities and pilgrim ancestors graves.

Moroccan Jews, kept, everywhere they settled, their culture, cuisine (very famous), rituals (weddings celebrations, traditions, Mimouna evening...), liturgies and music (Very well-known singers = Sami Al Moghribi – Zohra Al Fassia and many others, singing Andalusian Arab song or Gharnati songs ,means from Granada).

Actually some 3000 people, are still living in Morocco. They take care of a huge heritage, cultural, architectural and religious.

170 Cemeteries, all around the country were restored under his Majesty King MOHAMED VI orders.

Many old synagogues were also restored in the old Mellah of FES. Works to restore "Slat Alfassyin" (The synagogue of Fes people, XVI century), were sponsored by German foundation.

In ESSAOUIRA, King Mohamed VI, opened, in the beginning of 2020 “Beit Edakira”, (The memorial house), in the old Medina. By the artifacts , pictures and books displayed (also in the Jewish Museum of Casablanca), visitors can feel how strong is Moroccan Jewish legacy.

The new constitution, wrote down clearly, and shows how plural Morocco is by his several roots (Muslims, Arabs, Saharans, Africans, Berbers, Mediterranean, and Jews). We are proud to be part of this diversity, respectful of all faiths and wrights.

David TOLEDANO.

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