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**Faculty of Foreign Language  
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## **The Impact of Jewish Presence in North Africa.**

### **Case Study: Trade in Algeria (????)**

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment for the degree of Master in Literature and  
interdisciplinary Approaches

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to myself for not losing hope even when I felt it was the end of the road.

To my parents for their support, for believing in me,  
for being compassionate,  
and most of all for their love. To  
Mr. Teguia Cherif for his help,

and for all the years that you have been more than a great and beloved teacher to everyone of  
us.

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## **Abstract**

Trade is a term for voluntary exchange of goods or services, and trade routes have evolved over time as societies evolve. Goods are usually exchanged in a place called market, and trade has many different types, such as quantities as well as the way and the place commercial goods are going to be shown. Trade has spread widely between all countries in the world, in the Middle East and Western Asia alike, contributing to the spread of different cultures and general prosperity in all countries mainly because of the financial gains and cultural acquaintance. When it comes to commerce, the Jews arise as the leading power. In fact, they almost control all the world business and have contacts everywhere including North Africa. The latter has for long been a coveted place where Jewish markets were established for the important role it played in ensuring commerce between the African centre and the European continent along with the American and Asia ones. This research is therefore meant to cast light on the crucial role that the Jewish merchants had played in North Africa and more precisely in Algeria. Based

on the findings, it has stake of trade. Also, in terms of transporting goods and products from a place to another is influenced by some advantages that ensure its continuity and expansion, such as : geographical , technological and economical advantages , and some people are distinguished from others by trade because of these advantages, such as the Egyptians ,the Sumerians , the Arabs and ofcourse the jews who played a big role in the world trading whenever they lived.

## **KEY WORDS:**

- Trade - North Africa
- Jews ,
- Slave trade
- Arabs - Algeria
- Algerian Jewish

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## **General Introduction**

Trade is one of the distinctive characteristics that set humans apart from the animal world. This facet of behaviour, and its effect on the lives and interaction of people and cultures in all over the world and to be specific in the north of Africa and basically the Jewish community is the focus of this study. Each period of technological and social advancement from the Old Stone Age to modern times brought forth new products and new trade routes in the past trade was all about simple thing that have been changed with time .The quest for trade has engendered exploration, exploitation, scientific achievement (especially in navigation) , and spared of cultural and religious doctrines. At the same time, commercial rivalries have begotten destructive wars, colonial empires, mass slavery, piracy, plunder, and even genocide.

The role of Muslims, Jews, Christians, Hindus and others in the formation of trade Diasporas, and their often bellicose attitudes towards one another, as well as peaceful coexistence and cooperation in the pursuit of commerce, are part of the story. Mastery of the great oceans made long-distance global trade possible, linking the once remote regions of the earth. Over the last two centuries trade has grown remarkably, completely transforming the global economy. Today about one fourth of total global production is exported. Understanding this transformative process is important because trade has generated gains, but one cannot mention trade without mentioning Africa and speaking about the diversity that was having and still until now, to study about trading I have given an example of the most controller in the trade and economics of the world the Jews and North African countries to give a clear picture of the involvement of the Jews in North Africa, specifically in Algeria.

For that, the following questions are put forward:

- 1- How did the Jews gain a place in Africa?
- 2- What where the elements and events that helped them find a place in the Maghreb, and in Algeria?
- 3- How did they remain there despite persecutions?

As possible answers; the following hypotheses are put forward:

- 1- Maybe, the Jews relied on their presence in Egypt to spread across the African continent.
- 2- Maybe, they decided to do so to escape from persecution and massive murder.
- 3- Maybe they won a place in the Maghreb thanks to commerce.

This research has been designed to include three chapters. The first one shed light on understanding the world of the Jews and their history. The second one deals with the presence of the Jews in Africa in general. Finally, the last chapter casts light on the presence of the Jews in Algeria.

# **Chapter One**

## **Jews and Judaism, Historical Background**

### **(?????)**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter is devoted to introducing the reader to the history of the Jews. First, a definition will be brought to the word '*Jew*'. Then, one will cast light on the origin of these people. This necessitates that one has to identify their forefathers as well as the land they originated from, or at least the region or regions that bore witness of their presence. Finally, one

will conclude this chapter by explaining the origin and principles of Judaism, the religion of the Jews.

## **1. Jews, Meaning and Etymology**

According to Britannica Dictionary, the Jews are derived from the Hebrew word *Yehūdhī* or *Yehudi* referring to any person whose religion is Judaism. In the broader sense of the term, a Jew is any person belonging to the worldwide group that constitutes, through descent or conversion, a continuation of the ancient Jewish people, who were themselves descendants of the Hebrews of the Bible. Similarly, the Webster Dictionary defines a Jew as a person belonging to a continuation through descent or conversion of the ancient Jewish people and as one whose religion is Judaism also and a member of the tribe of Judah.

Accordingly, the Jews are group of people and community that they are related to the religion of Judaism and who trace their origins from the Hebrew people. These people, through time, have acquired importance and more importantly they won many converts who

inherited the faith from their forefathers, or they simply converted to Judaism. Their number exceeds millions and they can be found in all continents as highlighted by the table below.

**Table 1: Number of Jews Worldwide (Mid-2004)**

Religions	Africa	Asia	Europe	Latin America	Northern America	Oceania	World	percent	Number of Countries
Jews	224000	5,317,000	1,985,000	1,206,000	6,154,000	104,000	14,990,000	0.2	134

**Source:** The Encyclopedia of WORLD RELIGIONS Revised Edition xiii

The table above shows that the Jews' number exceeded 14 million worldwide. In addition, these people are scattered in the different continents and according to records, they found home in at least 134 countries. This is a reflection of the fact that the Jews have indeed a important place in the world.

## 2. Origin of the Jews

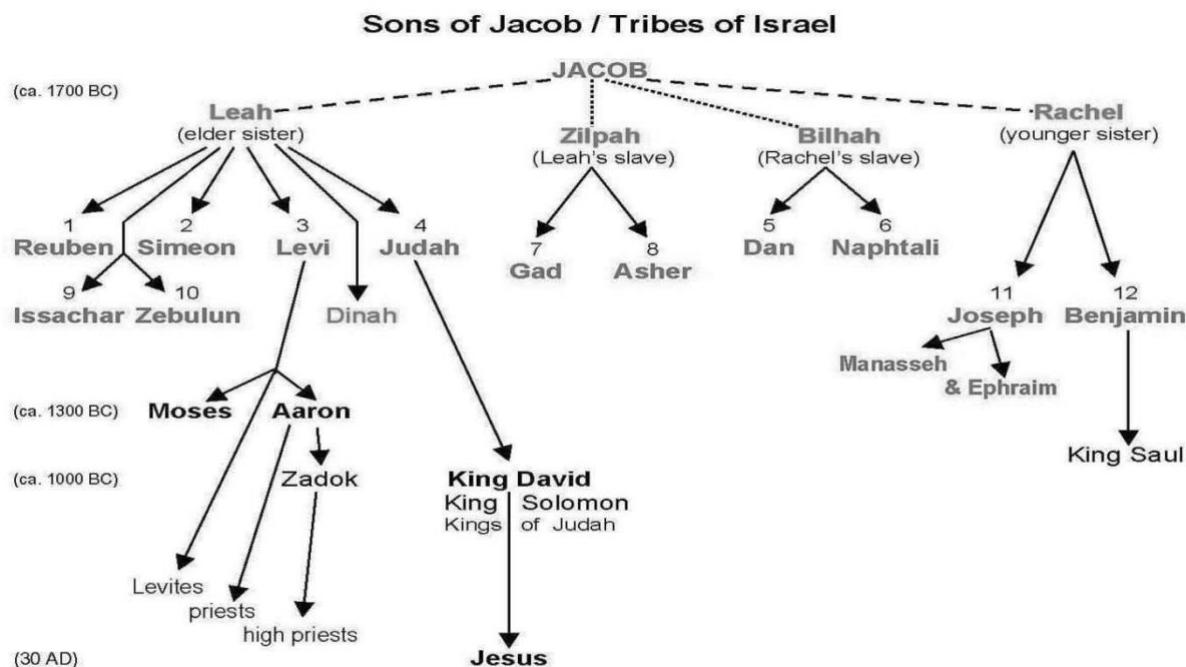
To know where the Jews came from, one has to rely of Islam and some other sources from other religions or Holly books.

According to Islam, the Jews there are differences between Israeli and a Jew, and that was mentioned in the Quran. Based on the Holly Book, the Israelis are called the children of Israel meaning the sons of Prophet Jacob and among the children of Israel Prophets Joseph (Yousef) and Moses (Moussa) are well-known to the Muslim people. However, the word Jew in the Quran is mentioned to refer to the ones who had been guided to cross the parted sea by Moses or their children.

What the Christians say on the other hand is that what the Jews also claim. Both are believed to be the descendants of Yahoda the son of the prophet Jacob. Their name was taken from the name Judah one of the sons of the prophet Jacob, and being a Jew is belonging to the worldwide group that constitutes, through descent or conversion, a continuation of the ancient Jewish people, who were themselves descendants of the Hebrews. In ancient times, a Jew was originally a member of Judah, the tribe of Judah (one of the 12 tribes that took possession of the Promised Land. The Jewish people as a whole, initially called Hebrews, were known as

Israelites from the time of their entrance into the Holy Land to the end of the Babylonian Exile (538 BCE).

**Figure 1: Twelve Tribes of Israel**



**Source:** <http://godswarplan.com/bible-history-twelve-tribes-of-israel> (Retrieved 13/04/2020)

### 3. Religion of the Jews

Judaism is one of the oldest religions in the world and it exists from the 8th century BC. At that time, it was known as the religion of Abraham after the name of the messenger that is why Abraham is known as the ancestor of the Hebrews, who were later called the Jewish. The religion was related to the prophet Abraham as he was called the father of the prophets because God chose his lineage and made prophet hood from his grandchildren. The messengers who were sent to them were Abraham and he had two sons Ishmael and Isaac. The latter had Jacob who in his turn had 12 sons known as Al Asbat. From these children, we have Joseph than we have Moses and he was the one who helped the Jewish people to run from Egypt to the Promised Land and he was sent to guide them again holding the Holly Book of the Torah.

### 4. Lands of the Jews

After God cursed them due to not believing in the prophets and their teachings brought in messages from God, the found themselves wandering like nomads without ever knowing

where their homeland was. Paraphrasing the text written by the claims of the historical right of the Jews in Palestine is collapsing in the face of the right of the Muslim Arabs to their land. The children of Palestine the Canaanites built this land about 1500 years before the children of Israel established their state, the Kingdom of David. The Jews ruled parts of Palestine (not all of them) for about four centuries (especially between 1000 - 586 BC). And their rule disappeared as well as the rule of other countries such as the Assyrians, Persians, Pharaohs, Greeks and Romans, while the people of Palestine remained firmly in their lands, and the Islamic rule was the longest as it lasted about 1,200 years (636 AD - 1917 AD) except for the Crusader period (90 years).

The Jews practically disconnected from Palestine about 1,800 years (from 135 AD until the twentieth century) without having a political or civilizational and pioneering presence in it, and their religious teachings prohibited their return to it. More than 80% of contemporary Jews, according to the studies of a number of Jews themselves, such as the famous writer Arthur Koestlerla, historically died with any connection to Palestine, just as they do not die nationally to the children of Israel. The overwhelming majority of today's Jews belong to the Khazar (Ashkenazi) Jews, who are ancient Turkish Tatar tribes that used to live in the North Caucasus and became Judaized in the eighth century AD. If there is a right of return for these Jews, then it is not to Palestine but to southern Russia, based on records.

Before the twisting of the Bible and the rise of the Protestants in Europe, the Christians were completely on enmity with the Jews. However, when Protestantism started, everything changed linking the Christian faith to Jesus Christ by the state of Zion thinking that helping the Jews to achieve this goal and establish the state of Zion is something God wants because it hastens the coming of the Messiah who brings salvation and peace with him according to the book of revolution of John the theologian.

To the Jews, they say that Palestine is their land and was given to them by God and that there is a divine covenant linking the Jews to the Holy Land and that this covenant which God gave to Abraham is an eternal charter until the end of time.

## **5. The Balfour Declaration and the Jews (1917)**

After what was left from the Othman Empire or as it was known as the Sick Man of Europe, was a few lands after it became weak and lost most of its land against the European countries which showed how really were interesting especially the French and without forgetting the United kingdom which was doing her best to let Palestine a part of its land. To worsen the situation, then the Balfour declaration came in 1917, which was a letter written by the British foreign secretary Arthur James Balfour to the leader of the Anglo-Jewish community the Baron Lionel Walter Rothschild on the 2nd November 1917 showing the support to the Jewish community to establish and create a home for the Jews in Palestine.

As paraphrased, the text written by Suleiman bin Saleh El-kharashi, most of the Protestant countries (led by America and Britain) were supporting the establishment of a state for the Jews on the land of Palestine. Therefore, much assistance poured in for this until this was achieved, and Britain did not stop at the limits of words and promises. Rather, it began to implement in practice, with the help of the League of Nations, and the mandate it imposed on Palestine and facilitated the immigration of Jews to Palestine. Then, it enabled them to tighten their grip on it and handed it over to them, and Europe learned all of this and blessed it, and Britain stood incubating Zionism in theory as it pledged it from its first seed, and in practice until Handing it over to the Jews the land of Palestine after ending the Mandate on May 14, 1948 AD to announce the establishment of the State of Israel on the 15th of the same month and the land was conquered and still to the present day.

## **Conclusion**

Nowadays the Jews are living everywhere but most of them went and established themselves in Palestine claiming that the land is theirs and despite the small percentage of the Jews in the world's population, the Jews have shown a strong impact and contributed to the human kind through time in many fields historically and in the modern era, not only in the Middle East and Europe but also in Africa especially in the North African countries where the Jews have had a strong relationship with them and influenced that area in different aspects. For that, the following chapter intends to cast light on the history of the Jews in Africa through time.

## **Chapter Two**

# **History of the Jews of Africa (????)**

### **Introduction**

North Africa has the longest and the oldest economic history. As soon as human society came into existence, so did economic activities. Hence, North Africa started its trade with exchanging its local product such as horses, books, swords and chain mails. This trade known as trans-Saharan trade, because it crossed the Sahara desert and also included slaves. The West Africans sold indeed slaves to traders who came from North Africa. They were taken to southern Spain as household servants. North Africa became central to the trade of the entire Mediterranean region. Outside of Egypt, the Phoenician who came to dominate North Africa, with Carthage becoming their most important city, mostly controlled this trade. The Greeks controlled much of eastern trade, including along the red sea with Ethiopia. In the region, a number of Greek trading cities that were established acted as a conduit for their civilization and learning, also an observer viewing world Jewry in the year 1000 would have readily discerned an obvious Jewish demographic distribution and an equally obvious configuration of Jewish creativity. The oldest, largest, and most creative Jewish communities were located in the Muslim sphere, stretching from Mesopotamia westward through the eastern littoral of the Mediterranean Sea, across North Africa, and over onto the Iberian Peninsula. Who played and pinned their existence in North African countries especially in trade.

### **1. History of the Jews of Africa**

## **Chapter Two: History of the Jews of Africa (????)**

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Most of the people know the history of the Jews in the African continent but only the northern part of it or to be specifically in Egypt at the time of the pharaohs. At that time, the Jews of Egypt were one of the largest Jewish communities in the Arab world and the most influential one as well. They constituted the oldest Jewish community, where the history of the presence of Jews in Egypt dates back to the beginning of the first Jewish family, the prophet Jacob son of Isaac family, and their migration after the arrival of Prophet Joseph to an important position in ruling Egypt and his brothers followed him after the famine that swept the Middle East. But that was not the only place that the Jews were living in Africa because others were also in the North African region along with eastern and southern parts.

The presence of Jews in the north of Africa dates back to the period before Christ. Some studies say that their presence precedes the existence of the Romans. Historian Haim Saadoun mentions in his book "The Jewish Community in Algeria" that the first batch of Jews arrived in North Africa with the coming of the Phoenicians in the middle of the eighth century BC. And also many historical sources confirm that the Jewish presence in the north dates back to the days of the Phoenician civilization. Also, that after the fall of Andalusia, many Jews and Muslims fled to North African countries, and settled there.

The presence of the Jews in the east African part where there is one of the most ancient communities of African Jews are the Ethiopian Sephardic and also in the African horn countries and that was through the travelling of the Egyptian Jews were they formed their community.

In the west, the case was a little bit different from the other parts of the continent because after the northern part was conquered by the Byzantines, the Jews suffered and became controlled by several rulers. For that, they escaped to the west and settled there.

The Jews have been a part of the South African society from the arriving of the Portuguese and a member of non-professing Jews were among the first settlers of Cape Town in 1652, and in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the land was under control of the British rule. The Jews began building a commercial infrastructure for the Boer farmers and set up trading stations in villages and at railway sidings, which soon became local business centres. A credit system was established by the Jews to finance new industries. In the 1840's, Jews

## **Chapter Two: History of the Jews of Africa (????)**

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developed shipping, fishing and coastal trading and sugar enterprises. These people were also productive in wine, clothing and steel.

In addition, “The discovery of diamonds in 1867 in Kimberley attracted Jewish entrepreneurs and businessman from all over the world. Because of the extensive Jewish trade network” (Jewish virtual library), Jews immediately became involved in the diamond and precious stones industry. Many moved north from Cape Town to Johannesburg. Two famous Jewish South African entrepreneurs were Barney Barnato and Sammy Marks and the Jews became more interested in the south of Africa and they are still there until nowadays controlling the markets.

## **2. History and Origin of the Jews in North Africa**

Before the wide scale immigrants in the early 1960s, North Africa’s Jewish were among the second largest community in the world. Some Jewish settlements in North Africa date back to pre-Roman times, possibly correlating with the late Punic settlements in the area. Earlier mentions of Jewish presence go back to Cyrenaica, a Greek colony of eastern Libya and home to an early Jewish community. Notable Cyrenaica Jews of that era include Simon of Cyrene mentioned in the New Testament. After Jewish defeat in the First Jewish-Roman War in 70 CE, Roman General Titus deported many Jews to Mauretania, which roughly corresponds to the modern Maghreb and many of them settled in what is now Tunisia. These settlers engaged in agriculture, cattle-raising, and trade. They were divided into clans, or tribes, governed by their respective heads, and had to pay the Romans a capitation tax of 2 shekels.

### **2.1.Sephardic Jews**

Also known as Sephardic Jews, Hispanic Jews or Sephardim are a Jewish ethnic division originating from traditionally established communities in the Iberian Peninsula (modern Spain and Portugal). Many were expelled from the region in the late 15th century. They had developed a distinctive diaspora identity that they carried with them to North Africa.

## **Chapter Two: History of the Jews of Africa (????)**

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North African Sephardim consist of the descendants of the expellees from Spain who also left as Jews in 1492. This branch settled in North Africa (except Egypt). Settling mostly in Morocco and Algeria they spoke a variant of Judaeo-Spanish known as Haketia. They also spoke Judeo-Arabic in a majority of cases. They settled in the areas with already established Arabic-speaking Jewish communities in North Africa and eventually merged with them to form new communities based solely on Sephardic customs.

### **2.2.Maghreb Jews**

Are native Jews, who had traditionally lived in the Maghreb region of North Africa under Arab rule during the Middle Ages. Established Jewish communities had existed in North Africa long before the arrival of Sephardi Jews, expelled from Portugal and Spain. Due to proximity, the term 'Maghrebi Jews' (Moroccan Jews, Algerian Jews, Tunisian Jews, and Libyan Jews) often refers to Egyptian Jews as well. These Jews, those from North Africa, constitute the second largest Jewish Diaspora group.

### **2.3.Berber Jews**

The Berber Jews are the Jewish communities of the Atlas Mountains in Morocco, and previously in Algeria, which historically spoke Berber languages. Between 1950 and 1970 most emigrated to France, the United States, or to Palestine

## **3. Jews of the Maghreb**

There were Jewish in North Africa from centuries until now and they have been settled in the big cities, at the outbreak of World War II, there were about 400,000 Jews, most of them moved from small villages to colonial cities such as Rabat, Fez in Morocco; Oran, Tlemcen, Constantine in Algeria; Sfax and Sousse in Tunisia which made up a large proportion of the non-Muslim population.

### **3.1.Algeria**

## **Chapter Two: History of the Jews of Africa (????)**

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The Algerian Jews are quite similar to the Moroccan Jews in many regards due to the close proximity of Algeria and Morocco. Both communities were intertwined linguistically, culturally, and historically. A Jewish presence in Algeria existed since before the Roman era, but most of Algerian Jews trace a significant amount of their history back to the Spanish Inquisition. A significant number of Algerian Jews are descendants of some of the Berber speaking Jews who once lived in the Atlas Mountains.

In the 1930s and 1940s, nearly the entire continent of Africa was colonized. Algeria became a French colony. However, during World War II, Adolf Hitler and his Nazi forces took interest in the heavy Jewish presence in North Africa. The Algerian Jewish community was one of the most affected by Hitler's motives at the time of World War II, there were around 130,000 Jews living in Algeria; today officially there are none.

Algerian Jews are unique in that they are the only community of North African Jews that did not overwhelmingly immigrate to Israel during the Jewish exodus for Arab and Muslim countries. Instead, the majority of Algerian Jews chose France as their destination. However, with anti-Semitism on the rise in France; many French Jews who are mostly of Algerian and other North African descent, are immigrating to Israel.

### **3.2.Morocco**

Mostly established in the occupied Palestine, today's Jewish population of Morocco is estimated to be just over 2,000. The vast majority of Moroccan Jews immigrated to occupied Palestine, and the mass exodus of the Jewish population from Morocco began around the time of the establishment of the Zionist entity. Very few Moroccan Jews immigrated to Mandatory Palestine. Israel launched a series of operations to bring Jews from various Middle Eastern and North African countries that were facing persecution to Zionist entity. A famous operation that brought nearly 100,000 Moroccan Jews to occupied Palestine from 1961-1964 was Operation Yachin.

While only around 2,000 Moroccan Jews actually reside in Morocco today, Moroccan

## **Chapter Two: History of the Jews of Africa (????)**

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Jews tend to strongly identify with their background and remain in touch with their unique culture. A huge part of Moroccan Jewish culture revolves around food. Shakshouka, a popular Moroccan dish, has been made popularized in Israel through the influence of Moroccan Jews.

### **3.3.Tunisia**

Tunisian Jews are Maghreb Jews, yet the community is still rich in history, tradition, and culture. The history of Tunisian Jews is one that is approximately 2,600 years old. Tunisia was directly occupied by the Nazi forces of Germany from November 1942 to May 1943. The Nazi implemented a regime of forced-labour, property confiscation, hostage-taking, mass extortion, deportations, and executions. Thousands of countryside Jews were forced to wear the star of David. The population of Tunisian Jews stood at around 105,000 in 1948. After independence in 1956 a series of anti-Semitic measures were taken, driving an immigration wave of 40,000 Tunisian Jews to Israel. The number of Tunisian Jews decreased to around 20,000 by 1967. A further 7,000 Jews immigrated to France, following anti-Semitic riots during the Six Days War. As of 2018, the population of Jews in Tunisia is numbered at around 1,10 million.

### **3.4.Libya**

The Libyan Jews are the smallest community of all Maghreb Jews, yet the community is still rich in history, tradition, and culture. The history of Libyan Jews is one that is approximately 2,000 years old, and the population of Jews in Libya peaked at around 40,000 in 1945.

As Libya was occupied by Italy throughout most of the first half of the 20th Century the racial laws that targeted Jews and minimized their freedoms were enacted in Libya. As the Italians enacted laws that directly exploited and suppressed Jews, the Jews of Libya were more welcoming to the arrival of allies world war's entering Libya. Italy saw the Jews as enemies, and Mussolini sought to cleanse Libya of its Jewish population, a movement called Sfollamento. Through the movement of Sfollamento, Libyan Jews were sent to concentration camps; the location of those camps depended on if they had British, French, or Libyan-Italian citizenship.

## **Chapter Two: History of the Jews of Africa (????)**

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Libya was liberated by the British in January of 1943, but even with the eradication of the racial laws, the conditions for Jews did not improve a whole lot. Anti-Semitism was widespread amongst a Libyan culture that had just been heavily influenced by fascism. As a result, the vast majority of Libyan Jews immigrated, primarily to Israel once it was established as a state, the 1945 anti- Jewish riots in Tripolitania sparked a pogrom that killed 140 Jews. Riots and anti-Semitic violence did not subside, leaving the Jews of Libya with very little choice but to leave-Today, there are no more Jews living in Libya.

### **3.5.Mauritania**

After the temple was destroyed in 70 BCE .the Jews spread throughout the Roman empire and one of the places they were located is Mauritania, and they were divided into groups that paid taxes to the Romans they raised cattle, farmed and traded . When the Jews were under rule of the Roman they flourished but that wasn't the same case when the Byzantines gained control on that area in 534 they put a lot of laws against the Jews. And also for some resources there were some Jewish from the north and they went to the south for trading or escaping to the Sahara.

## **4. The role of the Jews in North Africa**

It was the effect of Jewish apprenticeship of Phoenician navigators, the answering merchants, the spread of Jews in the countries of the world. And because of the persecution of Christians to them and their contempt and humiliation they specialized in trade and money lending, and in this field they became flexible and trained. Innovative tricks and artificial housing, prepared them to collect wealth, buy the sins of the oppressed, as well as draw among the Jewish hearts and become a force whose influence is feared, and its activity is denounced.

The first thing comes to minds when one speaks about trade and Africa is the slave trade (the business or process of procuring, transporting, and selling slaves, especially Black Africans to the New World prior to the mid-19th century.). A number of wealthy Jews were also involved in the slave trade in the Americas, some as ship-owners who imported slaves and others as agents who resold them. In the United States, Isaac Da Costa of Charleston, David Franks of

## **Chapter Two: History of the Jews of Africa (????)**

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Philadelphia and Aaron Lopez of Newport, Rhode Island, are among the early American Jews who were prominent in the importation and sale of African slaves. In addition, some Jews were involved in the trade in various European Caribbean colonies. Alexandre Lindo, a French-born Jew who became a wealthy merchant in Jamaica in the late 18th century, was a major seller of slaves on the island.

### **5. The Jews and Trade in North Africa**

The Jews were famous for trading in gold, wool, wheat and leather, and the Jewish Nafod appeared during the Ottoman rule when they were able to reach political positions as an advisor among the kings, Attar Ahmed said that Jews lived during the spread of Islam the best period because Muslims considered them better than others as cousins Sari Hikmat said that Jews are famous for their trade, especially silver, gold and textile trade, and on their hands, the textile trade has achieved great success, as well as their fame with sewing, especially zarabi.

#### **5.1.The Souk**

Commercial transactions in markets were controlled by Jews who were travelling from one market to another or within tribes to dispose of goods they received from major merchants or to display some products made with their own hands.

#### **5.2.Ostrich Feathers Trade**

It was the most important economic activity that made rapid profit for the Jews due to their monopoly on various trade processes, in addition to their active role as intermediaries within the desert caravan trading system. The Jews dominated the ostrich feather trade, becoming one of the most important traders, and added to this material the gum trade, which was important along with ostrich feathers.

#### **5.3.Crafts**

Jews have been professional in a special industry, making brass and threads, as well as producing a wool-fytow comb and embroidering the saddle.

## **Conclusion**

As shown, the Jews of Africa were not only restricted to Egypt due to the event of the Red Sea and the Pharaoh trying to kill them. In fact, many Jews found shelter in the different regions of Africa. One of these parts was North Africa. In the following chapter, Algeria will be taken as a case study to follow the evolution of the Jews and their markets.

# **Chapter Three**

## **The Jews, Masters of Trade in North Africa (????)**

### **Introduction**

This last chapter sheds light on the Jewish community as an important element in trade in North Africa, more precisely in the regions of Algeria and Morocco. This has the aim of highlighting the economic contribution of the Jews in both countries and the power they gained owing to the wealth they gained through commerce. Also, this chapter aims at showing the roots these people have within the region of the Maghreb which reflects their constant presence in the region.

#### **1. The Phoenician Mariners**

Like many of the Jews who wound up in North Africa, the first Jews to disembark on the shores of Algeria arrived there in Phoenician merchant ships. These galleys were the pinnacle of technology in the second and first millennia BCE, and their trademark – the figure of a horse at their prow – was to be seen at any port that mattered in the ancient Near East. At these ports the ancient Phoenicians unloaded their wares – purple-dyed fabrics, gemstones, and ivory and glass tiles.

The Bible identifies the Phoenicians as the people of the cities of Tyre and Sidon, in Southern Lebanon, and describes warm relations between King Solomon and Hiram, King of Tyre and Sidon. The Bible even tells that the latter provided the cedar wood used to build the First Temple in Jerusalem. The biblical narrative is consistent with a well-known tradition held by the Jews of Algerian city of Constantine (known in antiquity as Citra), according to which

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Jews lived in the city as early as the First Temple era and maintained trading ties with the Hebrew kingdom.

The earliest archaeological evidence dates the existence of a Jewish community in modern-day Algeria to the early Roman period. Jewish tombstones dating to the second century CE were found in the cities of Constantine and Setif. Other cities have yielded remains of synagogues dating to the fourth century CE.

### **2. Jews and Dhimmi**

In the seventh century a new chapter began in the annals of the great religions with the Islamic conquests, which spread out from the Arabian Peninsula, reaching as far as North Africa and Spain. Standing against the armies of the Muslim general Uqba bin Nafe were forces from the Byzantine Empire as well as Berber tribes led by Queen Dahia al-Kahina, who was of Jewish extraction. According to legend, the death in 693 of the Queen, whose beauty and courage was the subject of many tales, marked the dawn of Muslim rule in the lands of the Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya.)

Under Muslim rule the Jews were awarded the status of dhimmi (a protected, if inferior class). This status allowed them to maintain their religion, but limited their legal rights and laid various obligations and restrictions on them, among which were the requirement to host and feed any Muslim traveller for three days and a prohibition on riding horses, a right reserved for Muslims alone.

During the Muslim conquest Jewish communities formed in Algeria, particularly in the coastal cities of M'Sila and Tlemcen. These communities maintained close religious ties with Jewish congregations around the world, from Fez in Morocco, through the Geonim groups of Jewish sages who resided in the Land of Israel all the way to the famous yeshivas of Sura and Pumbedita in the territory of modern Iraq to the east.

Two Jewish sages of Algerian origin have greatly influenced Jewish thought throughout the ages: philologist Judah Ibn-Kuraish, who lived in the tenth century and was the first to comparatively study the Semitic languages (including Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic); and Rabbi

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Isaac Alfasi (aka Rif), who lived in the 11th century and is considered, along with Maimonides and Rabbi Asher Yechiel (Rash) to be one of the leading authorities of Jewish Halakha.

### **3. The Jewish Trail of Gold**

In 1121 the Muslim religious preacher Abdallah Ibn Tumart gave a sermon in which he claimed to be the Mehdi, which means “The one guided by God”, and that his destiny was to save the world from violence and injustice. As typical historical irony would have it, the dynasty founded by Ibn Tumart, known as the Almohad, was the cruellest of all Islamic kingdoms. They reserved the worst of their fury for Jews and Christians, who were required to choose between forced conversion, death, or expulsion. During the reign of the Almohad dynasty, in the 12th and 13th centuries, the Jewish community of Tlemcen was completely destroyed.

After the Almohad dynasty crumbled, it was replaced by another Muslim dynasty, the Zianids, whose attitude towards Jews was far more tolerant. Under their reign the Jewish communities in Algeria recovered, mostly thanks to a thin stream of Jewish migrants, fleeing Spain and the Christian Reconquista.

During these years extensive trading ties were forged between the coastal cities of Algeria and the region of Catalonia in Spain, mostly between rich Jewish merchants from Barcelona and Majorca who had settled on the Algerian coast and the Spanish kings. The trust of the latter in the Jews was so great, that they appointed some of them as delegates to the Muslim courts of law in Africa. Among the most famous of these delegates were the brothers Abraham and Samuel bin Jalil. In the late 14th and early 15th centuries the city of Tlemcen rose to prominence, being the final stop on the “Sudanese Gold Trail,” which the traders dubbed “The Jewish Road” due to Jewish predominance in the region). By Robert A. Mortimer 1984/ pp1-22

### **4. Kn'a Brings Wisdom**

In the year 1391 severe pogroms broke out in Spain, known in Jewish historiography as the Massacres of 5151 (after the number of the year according to the Jewish calendar) or Massacres of Kn'a (after the Hebrew name for year 1515), which led to a large wave of

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emigration by Jews from Spain to Algeria. Most immigrants came ashore in the city of Algiers, on the Mediterranean coast, and this city soon became preeminent among the Jewish communities of North Africa. But the different mentalities of the two groups – new arrivals from Spain and the local Jews – created a cultural barrier between the two populations. The elitist Spanish immigrants lived in a separate part of town and even built their own synagogue and cemetery. The gaps were evident even in local fashions. Unlike the native Jews, who wore turbans, the Spanish immigrants wore berets and hoods. However, even the greatest detractors of the Spanish immigrants admitted that their organizational skills and devotion to the study of Torah greatly strengthened the community institutions.

Among the Spanish refugees were some great scholars, among them R. Simeon ben Tzemach Duran (also known by the Hebrew acronym of Rabshatz) and R. Isaac ben Sheshet (Hebrew acronym of Ribash). The Rabshatz was famous for his love of medicine and philosophy, which he also passed on to his son, R. Solomon ben Simeon Duran (Hebrew acronym of Rashbash), who was considered one of the great sages of Algeria. Another important figure to arrive in Algeria with those fleeing the Kn'a pogroms was the physician R. Samuel al-Ashkar, who settled in Tlemcen, was a confidante of the Muslim ruler and served as the senior medical expert of the city.

Algerian economy also grew thanks to the Jewish immigrants from Spain, with the Jewish merchant unloading capes, grains and wool from a European ship docking in one of the ports often turning straight around to load it with ostrich feathers and African gold before it returned to Europe.

### **5. Second Purim**

The rulers of the Ottoman Empire made sure to exploit every possible resource of the countries they had conquered, and this principle was strictly adhered to in Algeria as well. In the early 16th century, the Turkish authorities began to enact harsh laws against Muslims and Jews alike. These laws stemmed not from any religious ideology, but from sheer greed.

The lot of Algerian Jews was even worse than that of Jews in other countries ruled by the Turks. They were accused of inciting against the authorities, were forced to quarter Ottoman

soldiers in their homes and lived under constant existential threat. As Rabbi Solomon Ben Simeon Duran wrote back in 15th century: “Murders of Jews are a frequent occurrence which goes utterly unpunished, and the killers walk free and boast of their deeds.”

In the early 16th century Spanish and French forces invaded Algerian port cities, waging fierce battles against the local rulers and the ascendant Turkish forces. In 1509 the Spaniards conquered the city of Oran, in which a large Jewish community lived, and turned it into a Christian city. Thus, in bitter historical irony, the descendants of the Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492 found themselves once again living under Spanish rule. The Spanish conquerors treated the Jews of Oran harshly: The city's synagogue was turned into a church, and many soldiers rioted following the conquest, slaughtering the Jewish residents and raping their women. Many Jews abandoned the city.

In 1541 Charles V of Spain embarked on a campaign to conquer the port city of Algiers, but a rare sequence of natural disasters thwarted his designs. The Jews, fearful of the Spanish king who was notorious for his hostility to their faith, believed that God had intervened on their behalf and set the day of the failed invasion, the 4th of Cheshvan, as a second Purim and a holiday.

## **6. Elder of the Jews**

Until the mid-19th century, the internal organization of the Jewish community in Algeria was under the control of the community leader, known as the Elder of the Jews. The mandate he received from the authorities was a broad one – from carrying out punishments decreed by rabbinical courts (in civil matters only; criminal law was in the hands of the authorities) to management of the synagogues and the various charity institutions.

The availability of rabbinical courts did not greatly impress Algerian Jews, who mostly preferred to take their cases to the Muslim civil courts. This phenomenon was condemned by the local rabbis, who published excoriations and even bans against those preferring Muslim law to Jewish Halakha.

However, not every dispute was settled in the courts. Disagreements regarding prayer customs and texts, for instance, were solved through the “ttakanot” or “regulations” system,

which gave each community the power to set its own customs. This system, zealously preserved for centuries, created an immensely rich cultural and religious variety, manifested in prayer versions, hymns and prayer collections composed in various languages, from the Jewish-Arabic, through Hebrew, to Ladino.

### **7. All for a Debt**

On April 30th 1827, several foreign consuls were gathered in the palace of Algerian ruler Hussein Dey. During the formal gathering, open to the general public, Hussein Dey asked the French consul, in a seemingly casual manner, when his country intended to pay its immense debt to the Algerian authorities – some 14 million francs. The Consul replied that no progress had taken place on the matter, and the Algerian ruler became furious and struck the envoy in the face with a fan handle. Another version of the story holds that Hussein Dey was trying to shoo away a bothersome fly and mistakenly hit the envoy. In any event, the diplomatic incident drew the anger of the French, who demanded that the Algerian ruler apologize. Hussein Dey refused, which the French took as *casus belli*. They consequently did indeed invade and conquer Algeria.

The story of France's debt to Algeria began 150 years earlier, with two Jewish families, the Bakris and the Busnachs. These two families were part of a large wave of Jewish immigrants who arrived during the 17th century from Livorno in Italy to the Algerian port cities in search of economic opportunity. At the end of the 18th century the descendants of the Bakri and Busnach families established one of the largest business concerns in Algeria, specializing in the wheat trade. Their main client was the government of France, which in the early 19th century desperately required food due to Napoleon's many wars.

Due to Napoleon's obsession with conquest, France incurred massive debts to the Bakri-Busnach concern. Since the firm financed its operations with loans taken from the ruler of Algeria, the ruler became the owner of its debt. Thus the affair became a prolonged economic conflict between the two countries, which deteriorated throughout the first three decades of the 19th century, ending with an occupation that lasted for 130 years.

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### **8. A Jewish Francophile 1895**

In accordance with the policy guiding most enlightened European countries in the 19th century, which held that Jews were to receive all rights as individuals and none as a people, the French awarded the Jews of Algeria full equality under the law, and at the same time sought to blur their religious identity and assimilate them into the French nation. Among all the Jewish communities in North Africa, none underwent such a radical and rapid cultural revolution as did the Algerian Jews under French rule. Many of the members of the Jewish community turned their backs on the world of tradition, adopting the garb, customs and language of the French, no longer using the two main languages associated with them until then: Hebrew and Jewish-Arabic.

One of the reasons for the rapid assimilation was education. Despite the establishment of chains of religious schools and the Alliance Israélite Universelle school network, which combined traditional studies and secular learning, many Jews sent their children to the French public schools, thus shaping their future identities.

The identification with French culture was expressed in the fields of literature and poetry as well. Many Jewish-Algerian poets and authors wrote in French. Among the women who distinguished themselves in this field in the early 20th century were Elissa Rhaïs, Berthe Bénichou-Aboulker and Blanche Bendahan. By the early 20th century, the number of Jews in the professional class – lawyers, physicians, engineers, public officials, senior officers in the French military and more – significantly exceeded their share of the population. Concurrently, expressions of anti-Semitism never ceased, especially from the French settlers, who viewed the Jews as inferior and as a threat to their status. The escalation of anti-Semitism was also aided

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by the echoes of the Dreyfus affair, and parties with anti-Semitic ideologies which won elections in Oran and Constantine in 1897.

**Table 2: Number of Jews in Algeria Year**

Year	1830	1850	1866	1881	1914	1931	1948	1960	1963	1940
Number of Jews in Algeria	26,000	26,000	38,500	52,000	96,000	110,000	120,000	130,000	4,000	150

**Source:**

## **9. Unsung Heroes**

In 1870 Adolph Cremieux, the Jewish-French Minister of Justice, signed an edict granting French citizenship to the 35,000 Jews of Algeria. In 1940 the “Cremieux Edict” was cancelled by the Vichy regime, and the French nationality of the Jews of French colonies in North Africa, Algeria among them, was revoked. This was the signal for the campaign of delegitimization waged against the Jews of Algeria during World War 2.

The Vichy regime, which was known for its collaboration with the Nazis and which controlled Algeria, gladly embraced the German race laws. Jewish students were expelled from universities and public schools. To illustrate: In 1941 Jews constituted 2% of the Algerian population, but over 37% of medical students, 24% of law students, 16% of science students and 10% of art students. Many Jews were dismissed from their jobs as doctors, lawyers, teachers and public officials.

On November 21, 1941 a law was passed banning Jews from owning real estate and calling for all their other property to be confiscated by the government in order to “remove all Jewish influence over the Algerian economy.” The Jews were cast out of Algerian society and left to the mercy of Muslims and French settlers, the latter of whom were glad to take revenge for decades of envy and hostility.

In reaction to this oppressive climate, several youngsters banded together and established a Jewish resistance movement. This movement had a crucial part to play in one of the boldest and most important operations of World War 2, Operation Torch. This was the code name for the Allied landing at Morocco and Algeria, as part of the overall campaign in North Africa. According to arrangement between the Jewish resistance and Allied agents, on

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November 8th, 1942 the resistance members were supposed to take control of Algiers and its beaches in order to enable the Allies to land and take the city from the Vichy regime.

The British and Americans doubted the ability of the Jewish resistance to carry out its task, but the underground movement was crowned with extraordinary success as 400 of its members took over military and government installations and held them until the Allied invasion, at the cost of only a single casualty. The success of the operation opened the gates of North Africa to the Allies and paved the way for their conquest of Italy and southern Europe.

### **10. The Jews Leave Algeria (1960s)**

Despite the anti-Semitic treatment they had received during the Second World War, the Jews of Algeria maintained their allegiance to the French regime. During the Algerian struggle for independence most of the Algerian Jews supported France and refrained from taking part in the Algerian national movement. During the Algerian War of Independence, Algerian nationalists carried out many violent acts against Jews, as they did against French settlers. These attacks, which included bombings in synagogues and assassinations of Jewish community figures, shocked the community and drove them further away from identifying with the Algerian National Movement. The murder of famous Jewish singer Raymond Leyris known as Cheikh Raymond on June 22nd 1961 signalled the end of Jewish life in Algeria for many. In the early 1960s, as it became clear that Algerian independence was nigh, many of the local Jews emigrated to Israel and France.

In 1962, the year Algeria won its independence, 99% of the Jews still remaining in it left the country – over 160,000 people. Some 85% percent of them went to France and 15% to Israel. Members of the Algerian Diaspora founded several settlements in Israel, among them Zohar, Ein-Hod, Ptachia, Beit Gamliel, Tzrufa and others.

In 2005 only 100-200 Jews lived in Algeria.

### **11. The Jewish Trade in Algeria**

The link between the Jews and trade witnessed a lot. There were a wild trading movement through the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Jews of Algeria has resulted in a clear role

in its progress and its diversity, knew a strong commercial stability and exchanging as witnesses the historical documents. Despite the lack of resources the local traders, they were able to promote their goods and their products and to exploit of the Jews and the Arabs delegation that was visiting the area.

#### **Conclusion**

It is difficult in Algeria to find a research or author specializing in Algerian Judaism, except for a few rare academic theses, which almost erased and concealed this category of Algerian history, but they have played an important role in Algeria's history since their arrival. Although there were some of them who gave up their affiliation with Algeria, a taqwa and a politician in 1830 and legally in 1870 and geographically in 1962, there was a minority that preferred to survive and coexisted with a dual-greek, Algerian-French

## **General Conclusion**

Trade is closely related to civilization, as trade appeared with the civilization of man and the expansion of his needs and not being limited to food, drink and housing, and trade is considered one of the multiple means that people used to meet their different needs, as the country cannot provide all its needs from the local internal market, so it needs The exchange of goods between him and other countries, and trade also arose due to other circumstances and factors that govern the country and make it difficult for it to produce everything it needs, including: lack of coal, lack of wood, lack of raw materials, and climate.

Trade depends on the manpower and the skills that they master, it is possible to have raw materials and the skill of manufacturers in a country, and it is possible that a country lacks these two elements while the skill of navigation is available to be a carrier of goods, and the country may combine all the elements, as the shores of the Mediterranean were the centre The main trade in the world. And The Jews had commercial relations in North Africa, which was a transit station from Spain to North Africa due to geographical proximity, and the Jews became commercial intermediaries among them, and it is known that the Jews of Spain or Andalusia lived in North Africa after the fall of Andalusia and followed the Muslims because of the oppression of the Surveyors and was the basis of this convergence led to the completion of the trade deal between these areas in record time, Algeria as an example of the Jewish trade in north Africa and how they lived there from many centuries in its different periods and their heritage still excite in Algeria especially the historical places .

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