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***Jews history in Morocco and its effect on  
the current normalization***

**Literature and Interdisciplinary Approaches**

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# *Dedication*

I dedicate this work to the source of tenderness to my darling mother and my dear father who have encouraged me all the way, without their support, inspiration and wisdom I could not completed this piece of work.

I dedicate it also to my family member's sisters and brothers for their supports in doing this research. I also dedicate this work to all my friends who has been supportive all the way. I do not forget my teachers who sustained me in all levels of learning.

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I would like to thank my supervisor Mr. Tegua Cherif for providing me help and support and for his patience with me.

## **Abstract**

This study aims to study unique position between Morocco and the Jews with their historical and cultural background in it, by tracking down their trace in Morocco through the ages and study how the coexistence between the two in both modern and past time.

Jews have existed in Morocco since the antiquity, and they are one of the reasons why we consider Morocco as a multicultural nation that sets an example for peaceful coexistence.

Furthermore, this study provide the results of such historical collide of the two and how it has chapped the current morocco.

The main concern is to explore the effect of this historical cultural clash on the current normalization between the Kingdom of Morocco and the occupied territories of Palestine, and to seek the true reason behind it and how did it emerge from the beginning and whether this Jewish presence has effected it or not.

**Key words:** Jewish presence, Multicultural, Morocco, Coexistence, Occupied, territories, Normalization.

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# **General introduction**

### General introduction

Moroccan Jews have historically constituted an important part of the social structure of Moroccan society, the presence of Jews in Morocco stretches back more than 2,000 years, estimates put their number as high as about 275,000, which was considered the largest Jewish community in the Muslim world. But since they left Morocco in the last century for Israel, many things have changed in the human structure of Moroccan society and in the mental structure of its inhabitants. This departure was associated with the beginning of a political conflict in the Middle East, and with the representations that prevailed around it within Arab and Islamic societies in general, with the beginning of the emergence of the discourse of Arab nationalism and Islamic religious ideologies, up to the current era with its major political transformations and the wave of normalization in several Arabic Muslim nations.

In Morocco, a country that is 99% Muslim whose monarch carries the title “commander of the believers,” a distinct Hebrew culture nevertheless permeates practically every town today: Arabicized Hebrew street names, historic synagogues, Jewish quarters, or maleh, Jewish cemeteries, and Berber and Arab jewelry inspired by Jewish designs, in reality Moroccans will be quick to tell you that this is not only Jewish heritage, but Moroccan heritage. Cause of the history of coexistence between the two from over 2000 years till nowadays creating a melting history and background leading the Jews to become an essential part of the Moroccan society and history, which lead them to occupying important high ranked position in Morocco and effecting important decisions such as the current normalization. According to what was said above, the following research questions is highlighted:

- What is the history of the Jewish presence in Morocco?
- How was the Jewish coexistence with Muslims in Morocco From early till the modern time?
- How did the Jews important history in Morocco effect the current normalization with Israel?

# ***Chapter one***

***History of Jewish presence in Muslim Morocco 146  
B.C –2000 A.D***

## **Introduction**

Throughout the ages, the countries of the Islamic Maghreb have known the influx of many different races and groups of people, among them the Jews who inhabited the various Moroccan metropolises and practised their natural lives according to what is dictated by the Islamic law. They contributed in various political, economic, social and cultural fields. Their talents varied and varied within the Moroccan society. Sources and historical studies confirm that the Jewish presence in Morocco was not at once, but rather through different historical stages, as a result of changing ideological reasons and factors, carrying with them the idea of spreading the Jewish religion and introducing it.

This chapter is devoted to seek the reality of the presence of the Jewish community in Morocco, their background and reasons of immigrations to create the biggest lobby of Jews in the history.

### **1. Jewish Immigration and Presence in Islamic Morocco 800 B.C – 150 BC**

The Jews appeared in the ancient Maghreb, and flocked to the North African region according to different periods and times, as some refer to the Phoenician era of a commercial nature, while some historians believe that the presence of Jews in the region dates back to earlier periods, as they migrated to Egypt and then North African countries, including the Maghreb and Andalusia to spread their Jewish religion, and their policy helped them influence some tribes of Moroccan society and persuaded them, like it happened in other regions of the world. This helped them multiply their number, and "Safirionan" was one of the most famous Jewish pioneers, who asserted that the teachings of the Jewish religion were closer to the Arabs and Berbers than other peoples. Ibn Khaldun<sup>1</sup> considers that the barbarian roots go back to Canaan bin Ham bin Noah, who converted to Christianity on behalf of the bani Israel after their king and authority became severe, while Al-Zafarani denies the affiliation of the Jews of Morocco to the Berbers and mentions that they were the first non-Berber group to inhabit the region.

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<sup>1</sup>A writer and traveler of Tunisian origin, he lived in Morocco from 1323 AD - 1403 AD.

Despite the difference and conflicting opinions, historical echography links the Jewish presence in the region to the Phoenician era of a commercial style. Then the Roman era, where they spread in the coastal and inland areas, but they witnessed some persecution and abuse, and the Christian religion was imposed on them to obtain the right of citizenship, and they remained that way until the fifth century AD. The period refers to the rule of the Vandals<sup>1</sup> who used them in their battles with the Romans, which enabled them to integrate into Moroccan society and practise their rituals and beliefs freely,

With Justinian's ascension to power during the Byzantine rule, he worked hard to restore the glories of the Catholic Church, which prompted the Jews to integrate into the Berbers for fear of persecution and abuse. However, Constantine IV enacted a law of harmony between the inhabitants of North Africa and Byzantium, and the alliance was concluded and the Christian religion became a religion and belief far from the politics.

The Jewish presence in the Maghreb remained unstable, especially after the Islamic conquest of the region, as happened with them during the period of the Al-moravid rule. It contains all the necessary facilities for living on condition of not mixing with Muslims in religious and commercial transactions, while the period of the Al-mohad rule witnessed a kind of strictness with the Jews, especially as they were calling for reliance on reason to reach monotheism and correct worship and this contradicts the doctrine of Ibn Tumart, which Making Jewish families look for an outlet. In addition, an exit for stability. (Al-Zafarani 25)

In 1212 AD, the Almohads were defeated by the Christian army, and the Islamic Maghreb was divided into three states, whose sultans were busy organizing internal affairs, and the Jewish lobby was entrusted to their main responsible old religious leader to take care of their matters.

## **1.2 The Jewish lobby from Andalusia 1300 AD – 1500 Ad**

The Jews inhabited the Islamic Maghreb, including Andalusia, in where they coexisted according to the principle of religious tolerance, especially after they stood by the conquerors in wars and battles. They were also able to establish with the Muslims of the Islamic Maghreb in general and Andalusia in particular, so they sat on the throne of the priesthood and the sheikhdom and their conditions improved, and they started enjoying an

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<sup>1</sup>The Vandals are an East Germanic tribe or group of tribes who first appeared in history as inhabitants of the south of what is now Poland.

abundance of peace and security on the land of Andalusia. But the life of tranquility soon changed to fear and panic as a result of the harassment that the Jews witnessed on the part of the Christians under the pretext of getting closer to God.

The Christians launched a hostile campaign against the Muslims on the one hand and the Jews on the other, as it carried all kinds of torment and punishment, including burning, killing and displacement, starting in the year 1391 AD, when Muslims and Jews alike were forced to become religious and embrace the Christian religion. This prompted them to emigrate in search of stability and safety, especially after the Catholic alliance between Queen Isabella and the Catholic King Fredinald, who aimed to form a Christian force to strike Islam and Muslims. The two rulers issued a decree on March 30, 1494 AD to banish the Jews and allow them to immigrate to various parts of the world, bringing with them their enjoyment and their transaction instruments without material dues, especially gold and silver. Jewish rabbis and dignitaries were unable to persuade the two rulers to rescind the decree that stripped them of their rights. The arbitrary policy practiced by the Christians against the Jews, especially after converting the synagogues into temples and churches, and cemeteries into places for grazing sheep and animals, there was nothing left for the Jews except to convert to Christianity, as some were forced to practice their beliefs in secrecy, fearing the pressures and arbitrary methods that the Inquisition was exercising on them, by applying strict penalties to them such as imprisonment, burning alive and torture, confiscate their money and property, and preventing them from returning to Judaism again. The arbitrary policy practised by Catholicism against the Jews pushed them to immigrate to different countries parts of the world in general and the Islamic Maghreb in particular which was one of the ways of salvation they turned to.

### **1.3 The Jewish Lobby from the Eastern World**

Morocco hosted 260,000 Jews in 1948, ranking it the Arab-Muslim country with the highest Jewish community. However, in just two decades, these figures would be dramatically ruined due to a catastrophic human, cultural, and theological hemorrhage that stripped Morocco of its Jewish dimension and, as a consequence, of the possibility to be an extremely valuable cultural melting pot. For thousands of years, the presence of Jews in Morocco has been associated with the historical movements in the Eastern Mediterranean. Archaeological discoveries in Volubilis, near Fez, have revealed the existence of numerous Amazigh tribes of Jewish faith dating all the way back to two thousand years. This

autochthonous nucleus, the Imazighen Udayen (meaning "the Amazigh of Jewish faith" in the Amazigh language), were probably Judaized following contact with the Carthaginians and the Phoenicians, and were joined by many other groups of Jews during the Roman, Byzantine, and Visigoth eras, including the Toshavim, who typically fled the harassment and hatred of the early centuries of the Christian epoch and during the European Middle Ages.

## **Conclusion**

The Islamic Maghreb has been the cradle of numerous civilizations, races, intellectual and ideological diversity throughout the ages. Which made it witness a history full of events and stories, the most important of all is the story of the migration of Jews fleeing death to it because of its impact on the future of the region, creating after that a complex of changing features, customs and traditions of The Maghreb.

# ***Chapter Two***

*Jewish coexistence in the Moroccan society*

## **Introduction**

This chapter is devoted to researching the reality of the coexistence between Jews and Muslims after the great immigration and deportation of Jews to Morocco, and how did they melted into the society and lived in an entirely new world and conditions.

### **1. Jewish Cohabitation in the Old Morocco**

The Jewish presence in Morocco is characterized by its antiquity, and various studies indicate that it arrived in the aftermath of the fall of the First Temple in 586 BC. After that, the migrations followed, the most powerful of which was what happened after the signs of exile, deportation and expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Andalusia appeared in 1492 and Portugal in 1497. All Jews admit that Morocco sheltered them with a tolerant logic. The number of Jews who left Spain in 1492 was estimated at 200,000, of whom 100,000 went to Portugal, where they met a tragic fate before they were expelled and part of them fled to Islamic countries in 1497, where there were already 50,000 refugees. The Jewish stability was not a passing issue. Rather, the pursuit of foreign powers made them enumerate their places of stability and mingled with the Berber tribes in Morocco in the mountains until members of some tribes became Jewish. The diaspora is one of the most dominant phenomena in the history of the Jews throughout their ages, as they dispersed in many parts of the world due to historical and political factors.

The Jews, as a rule, without exception, in every country and place in which they lived, east and west, were associated with (residential isolation) in a special neighborhood of the city in which they lived named Mellah, Tetouan. Judaism, especially at the level of religion, was a prominent space for the state of Jewish coexistence in the countries of the Islamic Maghreb under a tolerant Islamic authority, and therefore it was not only a neighborhood for Jews, but also represented a population and economic institution in which all commercial and craft activities were carried out in a way that made it a link An economic and humanitarian link between Jews and Muslims in Morocco. (Hamadan 117)

#### **1.1 Stories behind the Naming of Mellah**

There are many and different tales about Mellah, especially regarding the name, origin, and date of its inception. Perhaps this difference and diversity is due to the loss of

neutrality and objectivity in many writings about the Jews of Morocco and what is related to them, especially about Mellah. The French for Morocco, or even Jewish researchers did not commit to complete accuracy and objectivity on this matter.

As for naming Mellah, the most common version, closest to credibility and historical objectivity, is to give this name to the first navigator that was built during the Marinid era<sup>1</sup> in 1438 AD in the Moroccan city of Fez (southeast) in an area where he was collecting (salt) and storing it in preparation for its export via convoys to Europe. The salt was collected at a site at the entrance to the city before it was distributed, and that was the first gathering for the Jews, and since then the term Mellah has been used for the circulation of Muslim and Jewish circles in Morocco as a neighborhood surrounded by high walls, mostly with two doors and inhabited by Jews. Mellah became a word after that describes every Jewish population in Morocco, whether in the old and large cities, or even in small and mountainous villages.

The other version says that Moroccan Jews were forced to live in narrow, filthy, walled-and-prison-like quarters called the Mellah. Because its residents were practising the profession of treating heads that the Sultan of Muslims ordered to cut off and embalmed with salt before hanging them on the city's gates to intimidate the inhabitants. However, many historical writings describe this novel as "ugly" and consider it dishonest. It was associated with what has become known as the novel (The Cursed Land of Salt) attributed to the French historian Henri de La Martinez, who promoted it at the beginning of the era of French colonial penetration in North Africa. (Abd al-Rahman Bashir 53)

## **1.2 Privacy and coexistence**

It is not an exaggeration to say that the Mellah in Morocco combined two opposite things, namely: the preservation of Jewish privacy within the Muslim-majority Moroccan society, and at the same time it was a space for coexistence between Muslims and Jews in Morocco, especially since it was and still is the commercial and economic heartbeat in all Morocco, especially the Mellah of the city of Essaouira southwest of Morocco, who was called "The Mellah of the merchants of the sultans."

If we look at the privacy of the Mellah, it is important to mention that it did not include the homes of Moroccan Jews only, the only exception was their synagogues,

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<sup>1</sup>The Marinid Sultanate was a Berber Muslim empire from the mid-13th to the 15th century which controlled present-day Morocco.

courts, religious schools and all their private institutions except for cemeteries in some cities that were outside or close to it. An architectural form specific to the Jews within the historical capitals of Morocco, but through its embodiment of the status of the dhimmis, it enjoyed relative independence in its management, administration and judiciary, allowing the Jews to freely practise their rituals inside the navigator and organize their social life according to it, in a way that preserves them (Jewish privacy).

Each Mellah had also deputies who represented the Jewish community and represented it before the authorities, looked after its interests and worked to solve the problems of the Jews among them. Within, or near the walls of the navigator there was one or more synagogues for worship and prayer and one or more schools to inculcate the principles of writing and the Jewish religion. Mellah was also considered an integral part of the (Islamic city) in Morocco in its architectural and political concept, which appeared at the hands of the French orientalist William Marquis in 1961. Due to successive historical circumstances, a neighborhood of their own has emerged within this city. Yet, it was not separated from the fabric of the city, but was considered a link of social communication, a point of lively economic activity, and a melting pot of the state of Jewish-Islamic coexistence and harmony in Morocco. It is also indicated that there are several Moroccan cities that knew a prominent Jewish presence, but without the presence of Mellah, such as the cities of Oujda (east of Morocco) and Larache (northern Morocco), as Jews and Muslims lived together in common neighborhoods where almost no distinction was made between the Jew and the Muslim houses, the Jewish presence has exceeded. In these cities, coexistence was coordinated into a pattern (intermingling) in a way that the Jews, in a period of Moroccan history, became an integral part of the social, national and political fabric.

## **2. Jewish Cohabitation in modern morocco**

The exhibition "Jews of the East, a history spanning thousands of years" tells about the lives of Jewish communities from Morocco to Yemen, through Turkey and Iran. The demonstration, which extends to March 2022, is the third part of a trilogy devoted to the monotheistic religions by the Arab World Institute after the "pilgrimage to Mecca" in 2014 and "Christians of the East: A two-thousand-year history" in 2017. The institute's president, Jack Lang, affirmed that honoring Morocco is an acknowledgment of the efforts "the kingdom is making to protect Moroccan Jewish heritage". The history of the presence

of Jews in Morocco, according to estimates, goes back more than 2,000 years. Today, Morocco has the largest concentration of Jews in North Africa, with between 2,000 and 3,000 people. This number was more than a quarter of a million in the forties of the last century. Since the end of the forties, Jewish families began to immigrate either towards the occupied territories (Known as Israel), which today includes about one million Moroccan Jews, or to Europe and North America. In contrast to the Jewish groups that lived in the East, the Jews of Morocco did not lose their Moroccan citizenship, and they also have "close emotional" ties to the kingdom.

In the absence of official figures, it is difficult to talk about the number of Moroccan Jews who preferred settling in Morocco rather than immigrating to Europe, the United States of America or to Israel, where there are more than one million Moroccan Jews, according to the Federation of Moroccan Jews in Washington. (Afaf sky news)

Despite that, it is enough to take a small tour in the old city of Fez or to visit one of the markets of the city of Casablanca to see dozens of Moroccan Jews, and according to the associations active in the field of protecting Moroccan Jewish heritage, their number is more than 3000 people in Casablanca alone. In the city of Agadir, for example, in the south of Morocco, there is a sect of 60 people, who continue to carry out their religious rites and walk in the streets of the city in groups in their "Tallit"<sup>1</sup> uniforms, exchanging greetings with those they encounter on their way in the Moroccan or the Berber language.

## **2.1 Moroccan Jews in the Occupied Territories of Palestine**

Figures from the Central Bureau of Statistics in the State of occupied territories of Palestine revealed that Moroccan Jews constitute an important percentage of the population in occupied territories of Palestine, where they currently number 6.5 million Jews of Moroccan origin. According to the Morocco Jewish Times, which specializes in news of Moroccan Jews, the percentage of Jews of Moroccan origin who reside in the occupied territories of Palestine today amounts to 8.13 percent of the general percentage of the total population. According to the same source, this number of Moroccan Jews residing in occupied territories of Palestine is the result of the migrations that took place in the past decades, as 146,400 Moroccan Jews emigrated from Morocco to occupied territories of Palestine, bringing their numbers today to six and a half million people. The same source added that the number of Moroccan Jews who still reside in Morocco and did not

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<sup>1</sup>a fringed garment traditionally worn either under or over one's clothing by Jewish males.

immigrate to the occupied territories of Palestine does not exceed two thousand, after their number in the fifties was up to 250 thousand Moroccan Jews. (wikipedia)

The occupied territories of Palestine political and economic arena is full of names of Moroccan origin, and Moroccan Jews usually belong to right-wing parties<sup>1</sup>. So right-wing leaders are trying to appease them because of the importance of their votes in the elections. Even Benjamin Netanyahu<sup>2</sup>, when he formed his last government with Benny Gantz<sup>3</sup>, included ten ministers of Moroccan origin, in addition to the Speaker of the Knesset<sup>4</sup>.

The most important Israeli officials of Moroccan origin can be referred to as follows:

- 1- Interior Minister Aryeh Makhoul Deri: He was born in the Moroccan city of Meknes, and appeared on the political scene for the first time when he assumed the position of Director General of the Ministry of the Interior in 1986, when he was only 26 years old, and soon became the actual leader of The religious Shas movement<sup>5</sup>, due to his activity and his closeness to its spiritual leader, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef.
- 2- In the 1999 Israeli elections, Deri<sup>6</sup>, then Minister of the Interior, led his party, and won 17 seats, but resigned as soon as the results appeared due to legal prosecutions, one of the largest corruption cases in Israel. He was imprisoned for two years, and remained outside the political arena for ten years, then returned to lead the party again after an absence of 12 years, and after every election, it was customary for Deri to receive the Ministry of Interior, because it is important for the religion, and allows them to control the municipal budget.
- 3- Minister of Internal Security Amir Ohana: Born to Moroccan parents, he completed his mandatory military service in 1997, and then joined the military police. He was assigned several positions, including the military commander at the

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<sup>1</sup>Right-wing parties include conservatives, Christian democrats, classical liberals, and nationalists, as well as fascists on the far-right.

<sup>2</sup> The longest-serving occupied territories of Palestine prime minister in history. He was also the first prime minister to be born in the occupied territories after its Declaration of Independence.

<sup>3</sup>Benjamin Gantz is an Israeli politician and retired army general serving as Minister of Defense since 2020 and Deputy Prime Minister of the occupied territories of Palestine since 2021.

<sup>4</sup>The Knesset is the unicameral parliament of the State of the occupied territories of Palestine sitting in Jerusalem.

<sup>5</sup>Is a Haredi religious political party in Israel. Founded in 1984 under the leadership of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, a former Israeli Sephardi.

<sup>6</sup>Aryeh Makhoul Dery, born February 17, 1959 in Meknes, is an Israeli politician. He is the leader of the Sephardic religious party Shas, of which he is one of the founders.

Karni checkpoint in the Gaza Strip, as well as in the “Shin Bet<sup>1</sup>” General Intelligence Service. He left the army and devoted himself to political work in the Likud party. He is also the first gay Israeli minister, and heads the gay group in the Likud.

- 4- Minister of Communication between the Government and the Knesset, David Amsalem. Born to Moroccan parents. He is a member of the Likud party and a close associate of Netanyahu. He lives in the settlement of "Ma'aleAdumim", which is built on confiscated Palestinian lands, and is the largest settlement in occupied Jerusalem.
- 5- Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Miri Regev, born to a Moroccan father and a Spanish mother, reached the Knesset for the first time in the 2009 elections, and later won all elections. She worked as a spokeswoman for the occupation army, and she lives in the settlement of "Rosh Ha'ayin" near Tel Aviv, which is built on the lands of the Palestinian village Majdal Al-Sadiq. She is the first Israeli minister to visit Abu Dhabi and toured the Sheikh Zayed Mosque in 2018.
- 6- Minister of Community Promotion Orly Levy Abi Kasis: She is the daughter of Knesset Member and former Minister David Levy. She joined the Air Force and was elected for the first time to the Knesset representing the extremist YisraelBeitenu party<sup>2</sup>.
- 7- Minister of Economy and Industry Amir Peretz: He was born in the city of Abu al-Jaad in Morocco in 1952, and appeared on the political arena, and reached the Knesset for the first time after the 1988 elections for the Labor Party, The Histadrut. He served as the Ministry of War, and supervised the production of the Iron Dome system to combat missiles, then as Deputy Prime Minister in 2006-2007, and as Minister of the Environment.
- 8- Minister of Social Equality Merav Cohen: Born of Moroccan parents, she served on Israeli Army Radio, then spokeswoman for the Prime Minister's Office for

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<sup>1</sup>The Israel Security Agency or Shin Bet is Israel's internal security service.

<sup>2</sup>Israel Beytenou is a center-right or right-wing secular and nationalist Israeli political party formed to represent Israelis of Russian descent. One of its founders is Avigdor Liberman, a former Likud member.

Economic and Social Affairs, and served as a member of the Knesset for the Blue and White party<sup>1</sup>.

- 9- Minister of Civil Affairs in the Ministry of War, Michael Bitton: Born to Moroccan parents, he joined the Blue and White party.

## **2.2 Moroccan Jews in the Rest of the World**

The Jewish databank indicated that not all Moroccan Jews immigrated to Israel, but some of them headed to European countries such as France, and others preferred the United States of America, which currently has the largest number of Jews in the world with 5.7 million Jews. It should be noted that the Arab-Israeli conflict that broke out in the late forties, especially after the Arab defeat in the 1947 war, was among the factors that led to the emigration of the largest number of Moroccan Jews to the occupied territories. Moroccan Jews are considered one of the world's most closely linked to their country of origin, given the historical positions taken by Morocco in their favor, especially during World War II when Sultan Muhammad V refused to hand over Moroccan Jews to the Vichy French government<sup>2</sup> of the German Nazi.

Rabbi Menachem Margolin, the Director-General of the Federation of Jewish Organizations in Europe which also represents more than 700 rabbis worldwide, rejected Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's request for French Jews to come to Israel during the terrorist acts that took place in France and said "I regret that in the wake of every anti-Semitic incident in Europe, the government of Israel makes the same statements about the importance of going to Israel, instead of using all available diplomatic methods to strengthen the protection of Jews in Europe."

The Jewish community in France is considered one of the largest and most influential Jewish communities in Europe. At the beginning of 2015, the total number of its members reached about 700 thousand Jews (according to numerous studies), and 60% of them are of Maghreb origin, and they have influence in all aspects of social life. In addition to the fact that its children occupy high ranks in the state and society in French universities, and in the fields of applied sciences and humanities. In the economic field, the largest portion of

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<sup>1</sup>Blue and White is a centrist Israeli electoral coalition. It was created in February 2019 by the political parties Hosen L'Yisrael of former Chief of Staff Benny Gantz, YeshAtid of Yair Lapid, joined by two other former Chiefs of Staff, Moshe Ya'alon and Gabi Ashkenazi.

<sup>2</sup>The Name of the Vichy regime designates the authoritarian political regime established in France during the Second World War.

employment among Jews is concentrated in the services and business sectors, fashion design, advertisements and the French media sector, where a Jewish influence is noted in the various media, especially periodicals, important newspapers and satellite channels, and organized Jewish capital plays a role in this, and there are There are a hundred Jewish associations in France.

Moreover, The secret of the influence of the Jewish lobby in France lies in the plurality of Jewish organizations spread in France and their intersecting goals with the Israeli right, as well as in the organized Jewish capital that financially and morally supports the occupied territories of Palestine, where a large number of Jewish youth in France perform military service in it for a specific period, then They return to the country of origin.

## **Conclusion**

It is evident that, despite the tensions that are manifested from time to time between Muslims and Jews in Morocco, mainly in reaction to the events in The occupied territories of Plaestine and Palestine, the underlying willingness to cooperate as the communities did in the past has not gone away. However, the landscape of this cooperation has changed. No longer do Muslims and Jews cross paths multiple times per day as they did seventy years ago. Instead, the plurality of Morocco's cultural history is becoming less apparent as more Jews leave Morocco. With fewer interactions between Muslims and Jews in Morocco, the word "Jew" is often automatically associated with "war" and "Israel." Therefore, multiple movements in Morocco are seeking to correct this automatic association by reminding youth that Morocco itself has a colorful history of Jewish culture, and that a Jew in Morocco is just as Moroccan as his Muslim neighbor. In the following chapter, we will see the reality of the current normalization between the Kingdom of Morocco and the occupied territories of Palestine.

# ***Chapter Three***

***The reality of the current normalization between The  
Kingdom of Morocco And Israel***

## **Introduction**

Morocco has a rich history of peaceful co-existence between its Jewish and Muslim populations. Rooted in its Sufi culture that promotes tolerance and compassion, the cultural links have now manifested into the establishment of ties with Israel facilitated by the United States of America (US). The normalization of ties between Israel and Morocco, both strategically located, and with a long history of cooperation has ushered in a new road map of inter-continental economic cooperation. In the context of the Middle East Peace Process, Israel stands to strategically benefit both in political and security terms through the normalization of ties with an increasing number of Arab countries. Simultaneously, Morocco now has greater political heft through the nurturing of its Jewish heritage but also appears to be on the path of consolidating its claim over the issue of the disputed territory of Western Sahara. This issue has undergone a paradigm shift through the recognition of Morocco's claim over it, by the US and through its economic activities in the region including the opening of its consulate and those by other countries.

This chapter is devoted to researching the reality behind the current normalization between Morocco and Israel, how it occurred and the point of view of both the Moroccan society and other Arabs nations.

### **1. The Beginnings of the Normalization between The kingdom of Morocco and Israel**

The announcement of Morocco's agreement to normalize relations with Israel came in a tweet by the outgoing US President, Donald Trump, on the tenth of December 2021, in which it stated: Israel and Morocco, to establish full diplomatic relations. Trump announced the United States recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over the Western Sahara, saying that "Morocco became known to the United States in 1777, and it is appropriate to know its sovereignty over the Western Sahara." (Al Jazeera news 11/12/2020)

The recently announced rapprochement between Morocco and Israel goes back several years ago, especially in the economic and commercial field. The Moroccan decision to normalize relations with Israel is thus not a question of recognition itself but rather a resumption of earlier relations: with Moroccan recognition, trade with Israel could

### *Chapter Three: The reality of the current normalization between The Kingdom of Morocco And Israel*

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now also grow. Most notably, the announcement of Morocco's agreement to normalize relations with Israel came in a tweet by the outgoing US President, Donald Trump, on the tenth of December 2021, in which he has now acceded to an old Israeli request: the establishment of a direct air link for the transport of members of the Moroccan Jewish community and Israeli tourists to and from Morocco. The recognition of the Moroccan Sahara by the United States, in return for the normalization of diplomatic ties between Morocco and Israel, also promises economic benefits though it may raise tensions with Algeria or the Polisario. (Samuel 41)

Yet it is misguided to claim that the newly opened official connection is simply a return to an old one, because that previous open connection had been ruptured for two decades, mainly due to sharp disputes over the Palestinian issue. In 1994, soon after the first Oslo Accord between the Palestinians and Israeli, King Hassan II<sup>1</sup> opened diplomatic relations at a subordinate level without an ambassador exchange. In making this decision, Morocco became the third Arab country—after Egypt and Jordan—to establish formal relations with the Jewish state. But the current king, Mohammed VI<sup>2</sup>, broke these relations with the outbreak of the second Intifada<sup>3</sup> six years later to signal support for the Palestinians. With the resumption of relations, the Moroccan king took the initiative to call Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas and emphasize his country's steadfast support for the Palestinian cause. Other Moroccan officials, including Prime Minister Othmani<sup>4</sup> and Foreign Minister Bourita<sup>5</sup>, have also echoed their support. And it is noteworthy that, apparently in return, senior PA officials have largely stayed silent about this latest Arab normalization with Israel—in sharp contrast to their recent statements against the UAE, Bahrain, and Sudan. (Aharon 92)

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<sup>1</sup>Hassan II, born July 9, 1929 in Rabat and died July 23, 1999 in the same city, is a Moroccan statesman. He was King of Morocco from February 26, 1961 until his death. Called Moulay Hassan as crown prince, he is the son of the sultan and future king Mohammed V.

<sup>2</sup>Mohammed VI, born August 21, 1963 in Rabat, is the twenty-third monarch of the Alaouite dynasty, and the third to bear the title of King of Morocco, since July 23, 1999.

<sup>3</sup>The second intifada or Intifada el-Aqsa refers to the period of Israeli-Palestinian violence from September 2000 until approximately February 2005. The events are described as a campaign of Palestinian terrorism by Israel, while they are described as a revolt by Palestinians.

<sup>4</sup>Saad Dine El Othmani, born January 16, 1956 in Inezgane, is a Moroccan statesman, head of government of Morocco from April 5, 2017 to October 7, 2021. He is elected MP in 1997 for the Justice and Development Party.

<sup>5</sup>Nasser Bourita, born May 27, 1969 in Taounate, is a Moroccan politician and diplomat, currently Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccans Living Abroad.

## **2. Historical Background with a Modern Meaning**

At the same time, Morocco's openness to Israel also has deep historical, cultural, religious, and even personal roots. A special bond unites the two countries, resting partly on the Moroccan Jewish community. Though that community was not directly involved in the new normalization agreement, recent assertions from Moroccan officials that the heritage of the country's Jewish minority forms the backdrop for relations with Israel is more than mere rhetoric. In its preamble, the Constitution of 2011 enumerates the richness and diversity of Moroccan identity, stating:

A sovereign Muslim State, certified to its national unity and to its territorial integrity, the Kingdom of Morocco intends to preserve, in its plenitude and its diversity, its one and indivisible national identity. Its unity, is forged by the convergence of its Arab-Islamist, Berber [amazighe] and Saharan-Hassanic [saharo-hassanie] components, nourished and enriched by its African, Andalusian, Hebraic and Mediterranean influences [affluents]. The preeminence accorded to the Muslim religion in the national reference is consistent with [va de pair] the attachment of the Moroccan people to the values of openness, of moderation, of tolerance and of dialogue for mutual understanding between all the cultures and the civilizations of the world. (Michael 46)

Indeed, Morocco's Jewish minority is almost as old as the country itself. The first Jewish inhabitants probably date back to around 70 CE, after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. Until a mass migration to Israel in 1948, Jews dwelt all over Morocco, in villages, towns and cities, and lived mainly on commerce, trade, and finance. Certain traders were even appointed as financial and commercial agents to Moroccan Sultans, known as the elite *tujjar as-sultan* (Sultan's traders).

## **3. Sefrou, a City of Religious Coexistence**

The city of Sefrou—30 km south of Fes—is a hallmark of this interfaith coexistence known as Little Jerusalem. There, Muslim and Jews venerated the same “saint” buried in a grotto in a neighboring mountain. The site was tactfully called “*Kaf al-moumen*” (grotto of the faithful) because it was a religious sanctuary for both Muslims and Jews, and times of worship were equally partitioned.

Similar examples of tightly interwoven communities of Muslims and Jews existed in locales such as Debdou, Azrou, Fes, Rabat, Meknes, Marrakesh, and others. Here, the large communities of Jews were full Moroccans, and as such enjoyed the full rights and obligations of their Muslim brethren.

During the Second World War, when Nazi-occupied France wanted to persecute Morocco's Jews, King Mohammed V<sup>1</sup> resisted the order. He called for the persecution of all Moroccans, if this were to happen, on the grounds that they were no different from his other subjects for whose safety he was responsible.

Following in the steps of his father, King Hassan II treated Moroccan Jews with special treatment. He appointed André Azoulay as a royal advisor, and was instrumental in Egypt's 1977 rapprochement with Israel under Anwar Sadat. Similarly, King Hassan II helped develop political contacts between Palestinians and Israelis leading to the Oslo Accords in 1993.

In this important respect, the present King Mohammed VI is no different from his predecessors. He is a man of dialogue and coexistence. As a result, Morocco today is a haven of peace and coexistence, with Moroccans proudly highlighting their composite identities: Amazigh, Arab, Islamic, Jewish, African, Andalusian and Mediterranean, among others.

#### **4. The Moroccan Jewish legacy**

Moroccans openly regret the departure of the country's Jews during the period of 1948-1973. This was illustrated remarkably in a documentary entitled "Tinghir-Jerusalem, the echoes of the Mellah," made by Kamal Hachkar and screened worldwide. Officially, since the time of the late king Hassan II, all Moroccan Jews who left still hold Moroccan nationality and can come back to the country whenever they would like.

More recently, the Moroccan government, at the initiative of King Mohammed VI, launched a program in 2010 of the rehabilitation of Jewish cemeteries, synagogues, and other monuments. As such, 167 sites have been refurbished in fourteen regions. A book titled *Rehabilitation of Morocco's Jewish Cemeteries - The House of Life* was presented to

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<sup>1</sup>Sidi Mohammed, or Sidi Mohammed ben Youssef, born August 10, 1909 in Fez and died February 26, 1961 in Rabat, is the sultan of the Cherifian Empire and, following the independence of the state regained in 1956, the king of Morocco under the name of Mohammed V

the public on February 2015 at the Arab World Institute (IMA) in Paris, as part of the exhibition-event "Contemporary Morocco." Serge Berdugo, the representative of the Moroccan Jewish community described what this renovation meant to his community, "This has a strong symbolic and highly religious significance and reflects the commitment of the Kingdom to the values of moderation, dialogue and respect for others. It is the expression of a reality and a culture rooted in the long history of the Kingdom."

## **5. Eager Partners in Israel**

The much larger community of nearly one million Israelis of Moroccan origin remain, for their part, clearly attached to their historic homeland. Some occupy high-ranking positions in the Israeli administration: no less than ten ministers in the government of Benjamin Netanyahu installed last May are at least partially of Moroccan origin. For the past twenty years, it is mainly through "cultural exchanges" with this community that relations between Morocco and Israel continued.

Now that open diplomatic and commercial ties have been restored, this numerically and politically significant population can be expected to play a strong supporting role, alongside growing exchanges in the security, business, scientific, medical, environmental, and other fields. As a result, even if these emerging bilateral arrangements fall short of full normalization for now, practical and personal connections can be expected to flourish.

Perhaps that may yield wider regional peace dividends as well, as Morocco once contributed to both Egyptian and Palestinian overtures to Israel. The kingdom stands ready to fulfill that role again. How far Israelis, Palestinians, or others may choose to follow that path remains an open question, even as bilateral Moroccan-Israeli relations enter a new phase of cooperation for their mutual benefit—with a new, and hopefully lasting, element of American blessing.

## **6. Moroccan Society reactions on the Normalization**

Since the announcement of the normalization between The Kingdom of Morocco and the occupied territories of Palestine, people were divided into two opposite camp which are:

## **6.1 The Anti-Normalization Camp:**

In a move that some described as surprising, Morocco joined the "normalization" train, becoming the fourth country in the Arab world that outgoing US President Donald Trump announced this year that he had signed an agreement with Israel after the UAE, Bahrain and Sudan. The announcement sparked mixed reactions among Moroccan commentators, as activists called for launching popular campaigns denouncing the agreement and emphasizing the centrality of the Palestinian cause. And quickly spread hashtags denouncing the king's approval of the agreement without "caring about the reaction of the Moroccan street, which considers the Palestinian issue a national issue no less sacred and important than the issue of the Great Sahara," according to what bloggers said. Despite the distances, Morocco has a strong presence in the city of Jerusalem through the "Beit Mal Al Quds" Foundation, which was established at the initiative of Moroccan King Hassan II to defend Arab identity within the city. Therefore, commentators expect that Morocco's latest decision will affect "the king's image among the conservatives as a "Prince of the Faithful" and the holder of the position of Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee," as they put it. (Anas p10)

On the other hand, human rights activists, a few political figures, civil society and social media voices considered the decision to resume relations with Israel in exchange for the United States' recognition of Morocco's sovereignty over the Sahara as immoral. The head of the "Moroccan Observatory against Normalization" Ahmed Wehman was among those who expressed more hardline positions on normalization. In his opinion, the Sahara issue does not need the Zionists to confirm its Moroccan's, pointing out that it is a historical, social and cultural fact. He also pointed out that considering the Sahara issue as a justification for normalization is unacceptable and stresses that the state is being blackmailed.

In addition, Wehman warned of the dangerous repercussions of normalization on the Maghreb and the region. He sees normalization as a disaster; It paves the way for the expansion of the Zionists in the Maghreb and for the destabilization of Morocco by fueling the internal divisions and confrontations. He denounced what he called "electronic flies" on social networks that were used to promote the normalization process. Other activists and friends of Palestine denounced normalization as siding with the divisive and destructive forces led by the United States and the Zionists. In turn, the coordinator of the Solidarity

Committee with the Palestinian People in Casablanca, Abdel Majid Radi, rejected normalization with the Zionist entity, describing it as a dark moment in the history of Morocco and a blow to Morocco's traditions of solidarity with the Palestinian cause.

## **6.2 The pro-normalization camp:**

Those who praised the Moroccan regime's considered decision to normalize relations with Israel say that Morocco's position on the Palestinian issue is not inconsistent, and that giving priority to the question of the desert is never at the expense of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. In this context, political analysts such as Al-Sharqawi Al-Roudani point out that the resumption of diplomatic relations between Morocco and Israel should be seen as a necessary step in the path of progress in favor of the Palestinian state and stability throughout the Middle East, especially given Rabat's important and distinguished regional relations. At the same time, most advocates of normalization stress a Moroccan pro-Palestinian narrative by referring to the phone call that King Mohammed VI had with Mahmoud Abbas, in which he reassured him that Morocco's position is consistent on the issue that it places in the same ranks with the issue of Western Sahara<sup>1</sup>.

Others spoke of the unique historical, cultural, personal and spiritual ties between Morocco and Israel. The presence of a large Moroccan-Jewish community in Israel and the constitutional recognition in 2011 of the Jewish component of Moroccan identity are essential elements of the rapprochement between Morocco and Israel. The two countries are exemplary examples of fruitful relations, interfaith dialogue and peaceful coexistence between Arab Muslims and Jews in the region in times of global turmoil and conflict. Morocco's loss of many of its Jewish citizens since 1948 resulted in the establishment of a Moroccan Jewish community inside Israel, whose members were described by King Hassan II as ambassadors of Morocco.

The likelihood of them actually holding this title increases given the role that Moroccan Jews currently play in the Israeli political scene. In this regard, Karim Bukhari (2021) states that just under a third of the Prime Minister's cabinet members as of May 2020 have Moroccan ancestry. What is interesting is that Moroccan-Israeli Jews maintain strong spiritual, cultural and patriotic ties with their mother country. Morocco has also benefited from the portrayal of the Jewish heritage as Moroccan, something Paloma El-Baz

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<sup>1</sup>[jcpa.org.il/article: 0202-5-12: Hebrew in Jerusalem](http://jcpa.org.il/article: 0202-5-12: Hebrew in Jerusalem)

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lauded as “the only country in the world, let alone Israel, where the Jewish family law is legally binding as the national law of the Jews in contemporary times.” Andre Levy (2003), in turn, emphasized the prominent role played by pilgrimages and Jewish sanctifying practices, which, rather than exacerbating tensions between Muslims and Jews, contributed to 'maintaining the bonds between the two communities'. Similarly, “traces” of the Jewish presence persist throughout Morocco even in areas left by Jewish communities, leading academics like Omar Boum to call for attention to these “memories of absence,” citing in particular the experiences of minorities in Morocco as refuting Orientalist and colonial narratives. In a strong reference to the unique and rich importance of being a Moroccan Jew, André Azoulay, an advisor to King Mohammed VI, says, "I feel like I'm over 2,000 years old. As a Jew here, I belong to a community that arrived long before Islam. I have complete legitimacy in this country." ...and until the Palestinians are granted identity and dignity, my Judaism is weakened...I am an advisor to the Commander of the Faithful and he is a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad...There is no other Arab or Islamic country in which there is a Jew in such a position. [I as a person], but it is a continuation of a long tradition.”

The pro-normalization camp often highlights state and king projects related to the rehabilitation and preservation of the tangible and intangible Jewish heritage, the promotion of Moroccan cultural diversity and the inclusion of the major rehabilitation process for Jewish sites in 2012. Prominent Moroccan radio and television channels have broadcast an unprecedented number of programs such as “Tamgrebet”<sup>1</sup>, to celebrate the coexistence of Muslims and Jews in Morocco, and to invite eminent Jewish and non-Jewish residents and diaspora figures to speak about Jewish culture as an essential component of Moroccan cultural identity. It should be noted that Muslims and Jews seek blessings from more than a hundred common guardians in Morocco, which indicates a strong spiritual interaction between the two sects<sup>1</sup>.

Some advocates of normalization also refer to an unforgettable statement by King Mohammed V about Moroccan Jews at an important moment when the Vichy regime tried to arrest and imprison Jews in detention camps: "There are no Jewish and Muslim citizens in Morocco, only Moroccans." And this moment remained an unparalleled model of tolerance and the peaceful existence of Jews in a Muslim land.

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<sup>1</sup>Ahmed Al-Jundi, “Normalization: Challenges and Possibilities of Confrontation”, Al-Massar for Human Studies, 2020.



## **Conclusion**

There is a claim that Arab normalization will lead to changes in political attitudes in Israeli society towards developing more moderate and less hostile tendencies to Arabs and Palestinians. This claim is not true, because normalization may reduce the level of fear in the Israeli society, but it automatically raises the levels of arrogance and contempt for the Arabs, considering that they agreed to “normal” relations with Israeli soldiers. It was said that Moroccan Jews, who make up 12% of Israelis, will become a bridge to peace after Moroccan Israeli normalization, and this is a new delusion that is being settled. They lean strongly towards the right and had an important weight in the ascension of Begin to power in 1977. The state of the Arab collapse in the last decade does not give anyone legitimacy to demolish what remains of the Arab house. The normalizing states should realize that they will not find shelter in the Israeli home in distress, and the so-called “common interests” with Israel are not the interests of the people but the interests of the regimes.

**General conclusion**

### General conclusion

Morocco was a safe haven for Jews and Muslims when they were expelled from Andalusia in 1492 after the fall of the last Islamic emirates there, and the Jews of Portugal joined them in 1497. The Jews assimilated into public life in Morocco and became part of the components of society economically, politically and culturally. Despite the emigration of most of them abroad starting in 1948, the constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco considers the Jews one of the components of society, and this is a unique constitutional text in the Arab countries. Furthermore, a law was issued in 1976 not to forfeit Moroccan citizenship from Moroccan Jews who immigrated abroad even in the previous stages, and that they could keep a Moroccan passport and return to the Kingdom of Morocco at any time. This led to the continuation of links between the Jews in Morocco, whose number is estimated at between 2,500 to 3,000 people, and between Moroccan Jews in Israel and other countries to which they immigrated. A conference was arranged for Moroccan Jews in the Diaspora, held every two years in Morocco, in which a large number of Moroccan Jews in Israel, including prominent political, academic and literary figures, participate. The conference is usually opened by one of the ministers in the Moroccan government, whether the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Immigrants or the Minister of Interior.

Based on this background of relations between Morocco, Jews and Israel, it was announced on December 10, 2020, following a phone call between US President Trump and Moroccan King Mohammed VI, they agreed to take steps to normalize relations between Israel and Morocco on several levels. A joint US-Israeli delegation on an Israeli plane from Tel Aviv to Rabat directly paid an official visit to Morocco on December 22, 2020, and held several meetings with the Prime Minister and King Mohammed VI. The delegation consisted of Jared Kushner (a Jew), adviser to US President Trump, and Meir Shabbat (Moroccan Jew), Israeli National Security Adviser, and a number of other American and Israeli officials. It was agreed to operate a direct flight between Morocco and Israel to enhance tourism activity between the two countries, and to sign an agreement for banking cooperation between banks in the two countries. Moreover, an agreement with special facilities for visas on diplomatic passports, and agreements for cooperation in the fields of medicine, water, and joint investments, and an agreement to resume diplomatic relations on appropriate level. Morocco considered that diplomatic relations should begin by reopening the two liaison offices between the two countries, so that it would seem natural to restore a situation that existed before.



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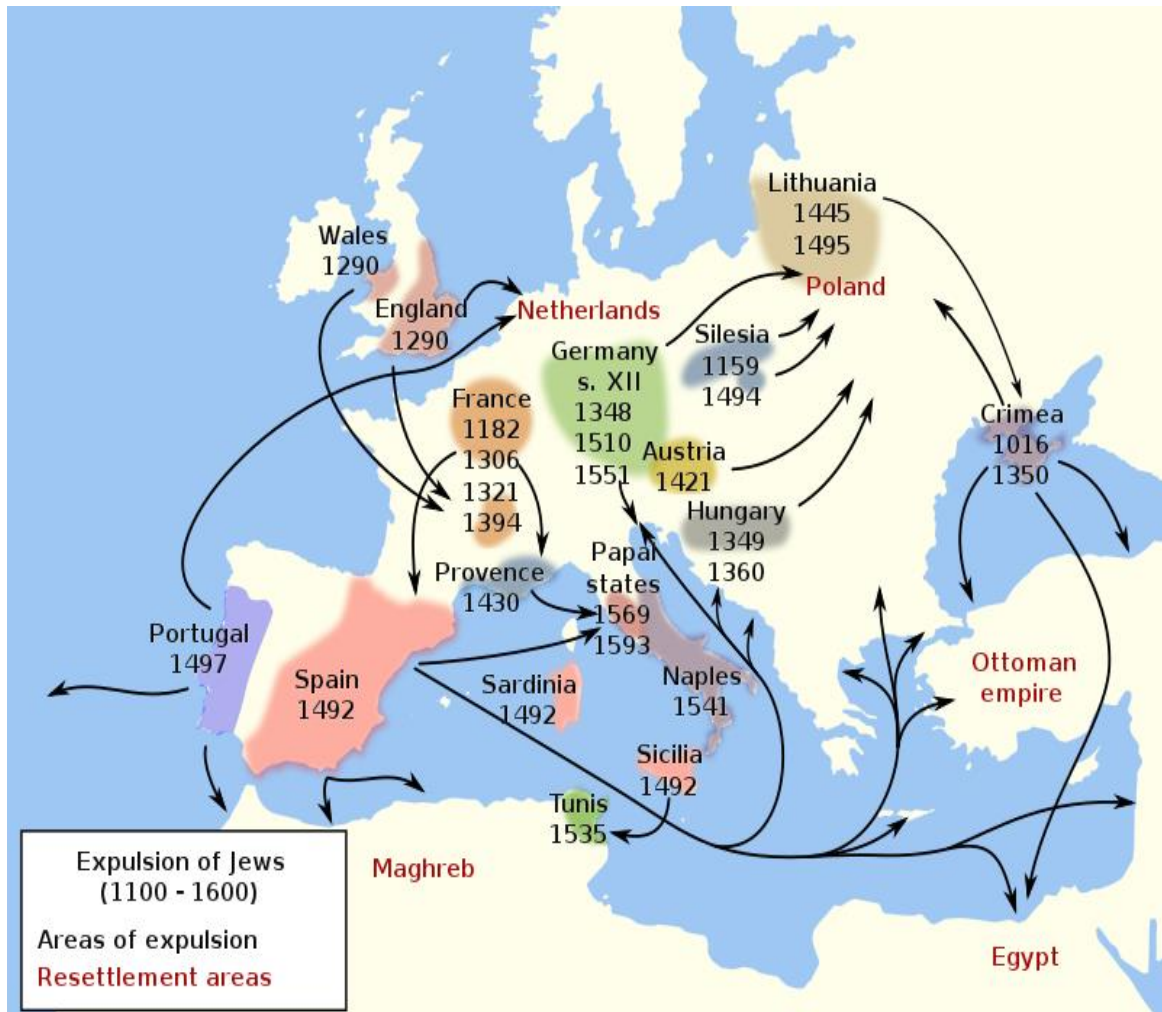
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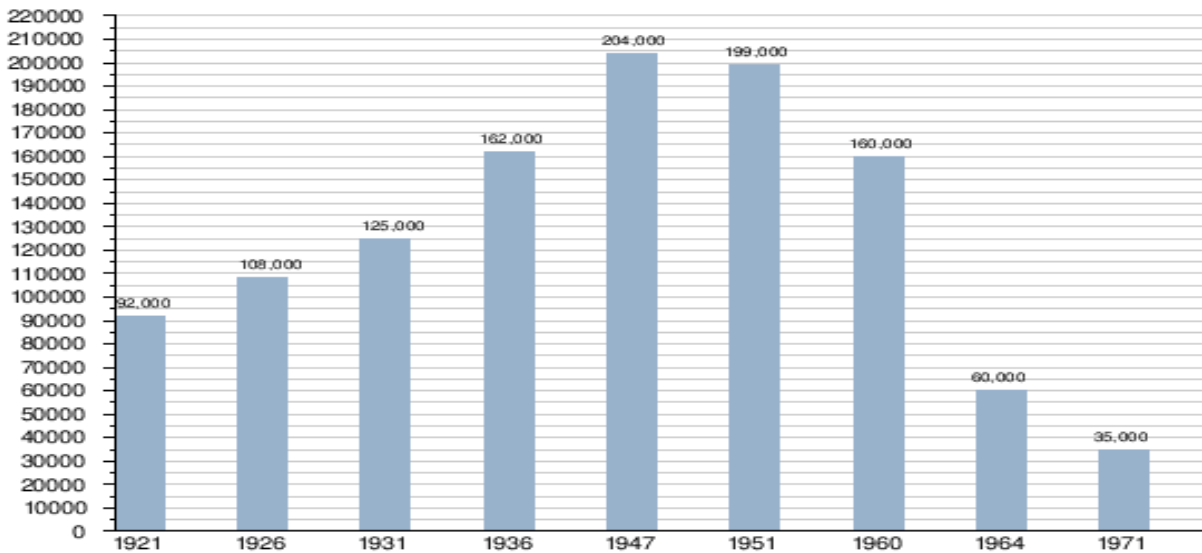
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**Man with high ranked positions in the occupied territories of Plaestine That are born in Morocco.**



**Numbers of Jews per year in Morocco.**