

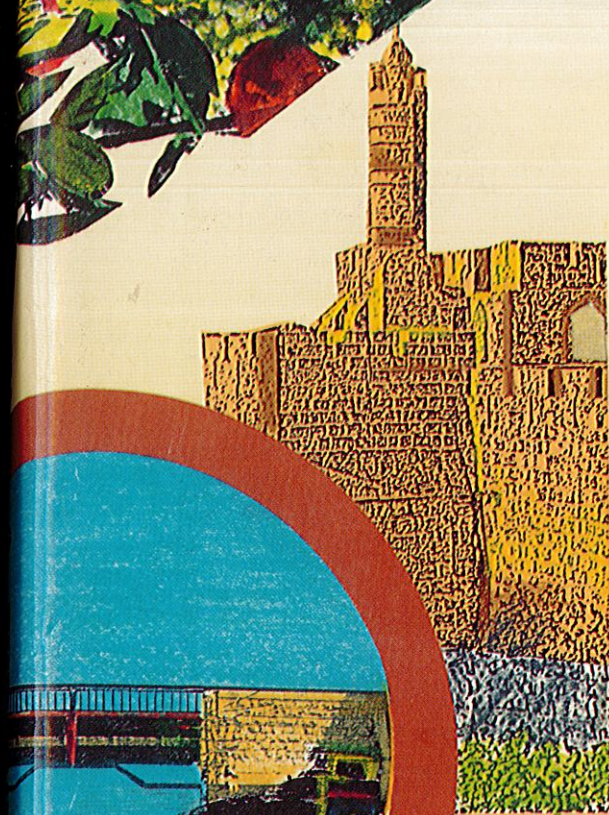
Sephardi  
entrepreneurs  
in Eretz Israel

# The Amzalak family

1816-1918

Joseph B. Glass

Ruth Kark



Handwritten text in Hebrew script is scattered across the page, including a large yellow 'A' in the lower right quadrant. The text is partially obscured by the illustrations and the stamp.

# בריתנו של אברהם

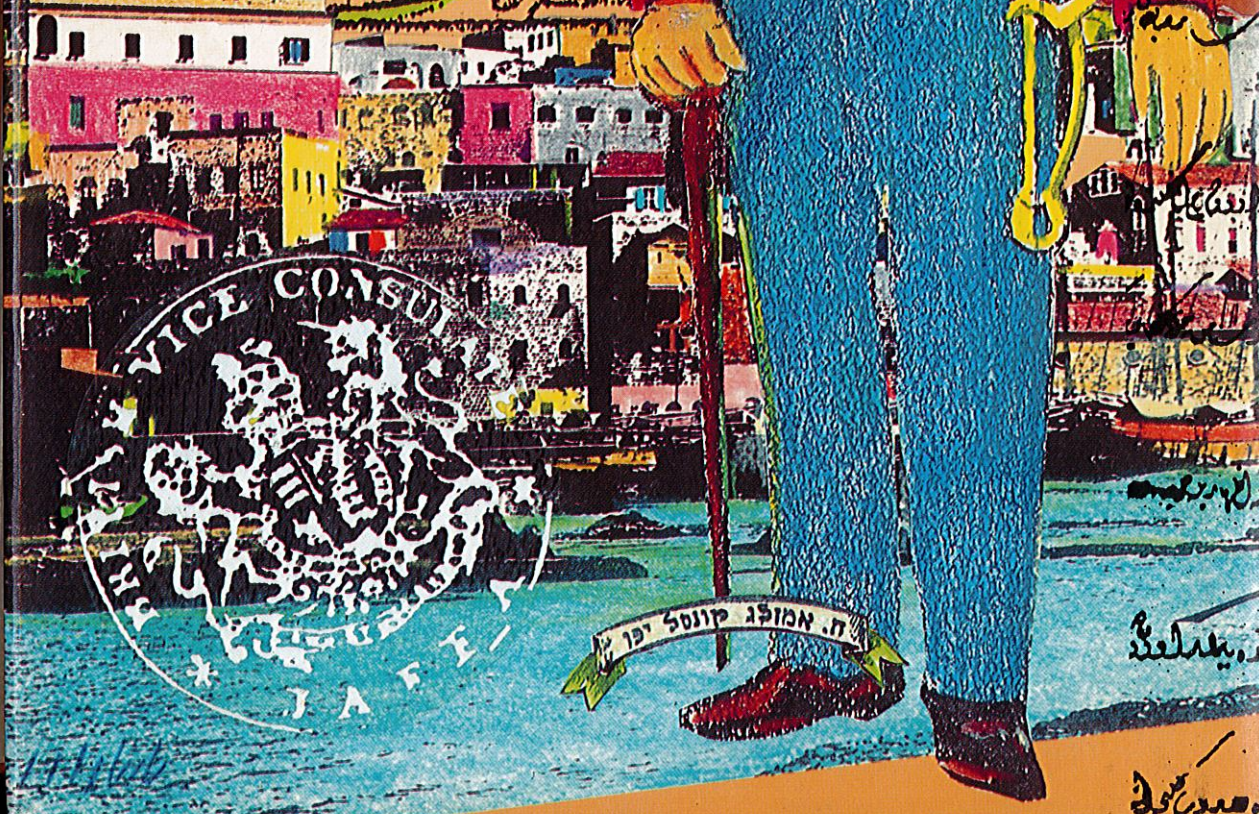
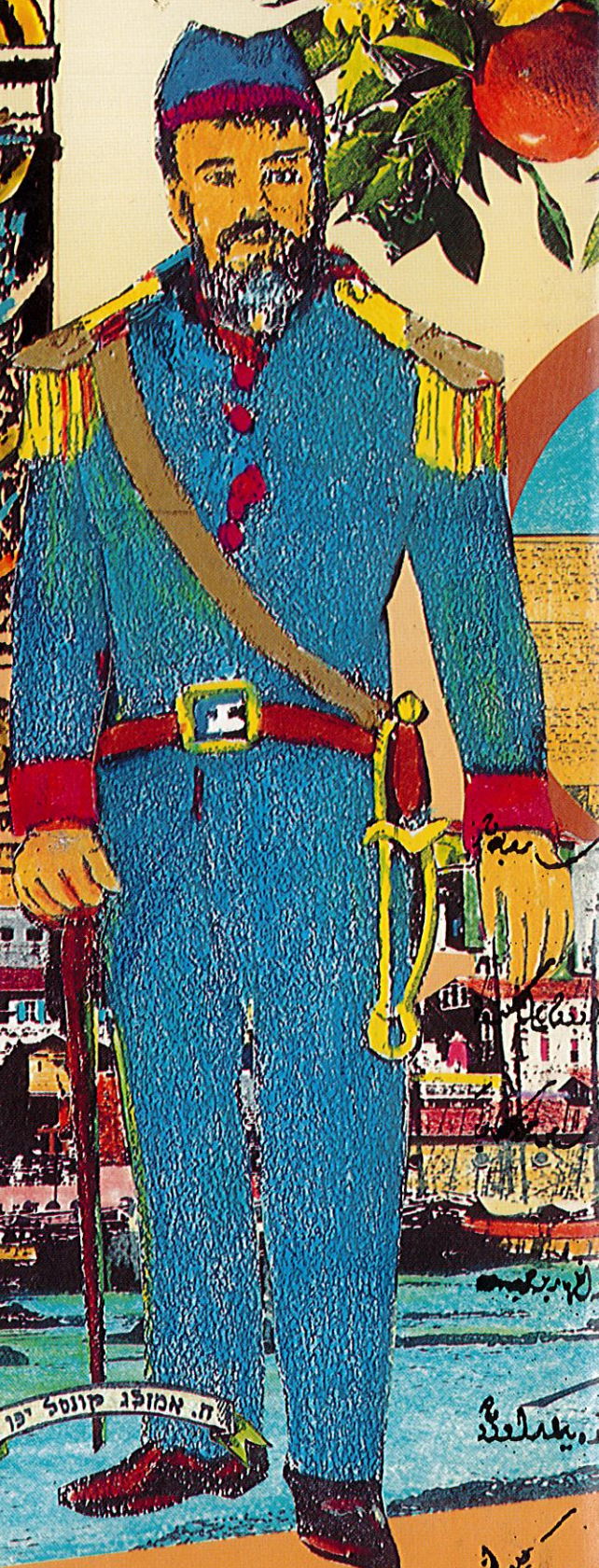
כולל סדר ברכות מילה לכל הזכיר שיהיה לחיוב  
 משוט ליתום נזאב י או נזאם י או נזעזיקם י לאדם  
 נזול בשנים ילמור י או סגט בשום פנים י ובא ב  
 כאחרונה נסדו חרמון שאובדים בברכת המזון  
 בסעודה י חכל נכתב בפי התעוריה י על ידי חלור

בלונרון  
 שנת

והיתה בריתנו בכשרכם



ה. אמוץ קונסול יפו



Handwritten signatures and text in the bottom right corner.

**J**oseph Amzalak, an extremely wealthy Gibraltar merchant, fearing Divine wrath for past transgressions, repented and settled in Palestine in 1816. His residence in Jerusalem was a meeting point between Ashkenazim and Sephardim, missionaries and rabbis, consular representatives and residents at a time of increasing Western influence. The legacy left to his heirs was that of prominence, through arranged marriages into prestigious Sephardi families and vast wealth, which was subsequently squandered away. His son, Haim Amzalak became an influential merchant and community leader in Jaffa with the enhanced status as the British vice consul. Nurturing three family members of the next generation, they continued as part of the little-studied Sephardi entrepreneurial class that was instrumental in the process of transforming and modernizing the local economy.

This volume outlines the general frameworks of the middle eastern entrepreneur class, the Sephardi elite and political developments in the Ottoman empire and Palestine.

It traces each generation of the Amzalak family, from Joseph Amzalak's arrival to their exodus as a result of World War I, highlighting the family's more prominent members.

This family biography may be viewed as a vignette of the social and economic processes in Palestine and the Middle East in the nineteenth century.

**J**oseph B. Glass, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Geography at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, has written a number of articles on the historical geography of Israel. His research interests include the contribution of local entrepreneurs to economic development in Palestine between 1880 and 1917, North American Jewish aliyah and settlement in Palestine during the British Mandate period and the influence of Western civilizations on the Holy Land.

**R**uth Kark is an Associate Professor of Geography at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She is the author of *Frontier Jewish Settlement in the Negev, 1880-1948*; *Jaffa, a City in Evolution 1799-1917*; *Neighbourhoods in Jerusalem (1855-1930) Planning and By-laws*; editor of *The Land that Became Israel: Studies in Historical Geography and Redemption of the Land of Eretz Israel, Ideology and Practice*, and author of numerous articles on the historical geography of Israel.

SEPHARDI ENTREPRENEURS IN  
ERETZ ISRAEL  
THE AMZALAK FAMILY 1816–1918

by

JOSEPH B. GLASS & RUTH KARK

JERUSALEM 1991  
THE MAGNES PRESS, THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY

## CONTENTS

List of Figures	7
List of Plates	7
Abbreviation of Archives	10
Preface	11
Introduction	13
The development of the local entrepreneur class in the light of the economic changes in the Levant	16
The Sephardi elite in Palestine	24
Chapter One: The Political Background 1799-1917	29
At the turn of the nineteenth century	29
The period of Ibrahim Pasha, 1831-1840	32
The period of reforms, 1841-1876	35
The end of the Ottoman period, 1877-1917	40
Chapter Two: The Amzalaks — First Generation in Jerusalem	46
Before Joseph Amzalak's arrival in Jerusalem	46
Joseph Amzalak and his family	60
The Amzalak house	63
Religious observance and belief	66
Hospitality	75
Business activities	79
Amzalak's legal status	80
Moses Amzalak and the Lisbon branch of the family	81
Summary	84
Chapter Three: The Amzalaks — The Second Generation in Jerusalem	86
The Hurva courtyard	87
The Amzalak house	92
Business activities	93
Activities in the community	97
The Widow Rachel Amzalak	99
Esther Amzalak-Navon	101

The widows of Raphael and Solomon Amzalak	106	
Incidents	112	
Summary	113	
<b>Chapter Four: Haim Amzalak in Jaffa 1828–1916</b>		<b>114</b>
Haim Amzalak's family	115	
Haim Amzalak's house	115	
Business activities	117	
Vice consular service	121	
Contribution to the Jewish community	133	
Jewish agricultural settlement	135	
Sir Moses Montefiore	140	
Summary	146	
<b>Chapter Five: The Amzalaks — The Third Generation</b>		<b>148</b>
Joseph Ben-Zion Amzalak 1860-1944	148	
Ben-Zion Amzalak, 1865-1935	160	
Joseph Navon Bey, 1852-1934	165	
Summary	172	
<b>Chapter Six: The Amzalak Family in Exile</b>		<b>174</b>
The expulsion from Jaffa, 1914-1915	174	
Military service during World War I	177	
<b>Conclusion</b>		<b>183</b>
<b>Appendixes</b>		
I: Amzalak family tree — Eretz Israel branch	187	
II: The Lisbon branch of the Amzalak family	188	
III: Amzalak family tree — Portuguese branch	193	
<b>Index</b>		<b>194</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1: Eastern Mediterranean Sea, circa 1835 17  
Figure 2: Plan of Jerusalem and its Environs, 1859 39  
Figure 3: Administrative Divisions of Palestine and Southern Syria for 1890 44  
Figure 4: Mount Zion opposite the Citadel in Jerusalem, 1846 65  
Figure 5: Jaffa, 1878-1879 116  
Figure 6: Jaffa and its Environs, 1878-1879 136  
Figure 7: Jaffa and the surrounding Jewish Colonies, 1918 141  
Figure 8: The Residential Neighbourhoods to the North of Jaffa, 1925 150  
Figure 9: The Jerusalem-Jaffa Railroad, 1892 169

## LIST OF PLATES

- Plate 1: Beirut, 1835 19  
Plate 2: Jaffa from the north, 1859 20  
Plate 3: St. Jean d'Acre with Mount Carmel in the distance, 1840 32  
Plate 4: Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, 1840 34  
Plate 5: Approach to Jaffa Gate from the railroad station, Jerusalem, circa 1900 45  
Plate 6: Rock of Gibraltar, Devil's Tongue Battery, 1804 49  
Plate 7: Laissez-Passer from the Duke of Portland given to Joseph Amzalak, January 17, 1799 51  
Plate 8: Firman from Sultan Mahmoud II given to Joseph Amzalak in 1813 54  
Plate 9: Silver Box containing the Firman given to Joseph Amzalak in 1813 54

- Plate 10: Letter from the Jews of Safed, 1816 56
- Plate 11: Haim Farhi, 1799 57
- Plate 12: Mount Zion, a bird's eye view, 1846 59
- Plate 13: Inside Jaffa Gate, Jerusalem including the Amzalak house, 1846 66
- Plate 14: The Amzalak family and the description of the drawing by the artist, William Henry Bartlett 67
- Plate 15: Sephardi synagogue in Jerusalem, 1835 69
- Plate 16: Cover page and preface of *Sefer HaZohar* 71
- Plate 17: Cover of Joseph Amzalak's mohel prayer book 72
- Plate 18: Dr. Richard R. Madden 73
- Plate 19: Joseph Wolff 76
- Plate 20: Sir Moses and Lady Judith Montefiore at the gates of Jerusalem, 1839 77
- Plate 21: Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives, Jerusalem, 1836 85
- Plate 22: James and Elizabeth Anne Finn 88
- Plate 23: Old German (Ashkenazi) synagogue in the Old City, Jerusalem, 1850 89
- Plate 24: The Amzalak house, 1990 94
- Plate 25: Certificate of registration for Solomon Amzalak, April 14, 1875 95
- Plate 26: Eliyahu Navon, Esther Amzalak's husband 103
- Plate 27: A view of the Jewish Quarter from the east, Jerusalem, circa 1910 105
- Plate 28: The neighbourhood of Mishkenot Sha'ananim, Jerusalem, from the east, 1910 108
- Plate 29: Bolissa Amzalak, Solomon's wife and her son David [?] 110
- Plate 30: Esther Amzalak's *bayara*, Jaffa, 1983 119
- Plate 31: Aerial photograph of the environs of Jaffa, 1918 120
- Plate 32: Letter to Haim Amzalak from Lloyd's, July 27, 1899 122
- Plate 33: Haim Amzalak in his vice consular uniform 125
- Plate 34a: Letter from British Consul Noel Temple Moore, Jerusalem, to Haim Amzalak, Jaffa, November 13, 1889 132
- Plate 34b: Gold Medal presented to Haim Amzalak, December 10, 1874 132
- Plate 35: Front page of *Habazeleth* announcing the founding of *Va'ad Halutzei Yesod HaMa'ala*, May 18, 1882 139
- Plate 36: Sir Moses Montefiore 142



- Plate 37: Letter from Sir Moses Montefiore's secretary, N. Johnson, Ramsgate, to Bolissa Amzalak, Jaffa, October 24, 1878 145
- Plate 38: Envelope to Haim Amzalak, Jaffa from Sir Moses Montefiore, Ramsgate 145
- Plate 39: Joseph B. Amzalak 149
- Plate 40: Amzalak house in Neve Tzedek, Jaffa, view from the rear, 1990 149
- Plate 41: Royal Solomon Mother Lodge, Jerusalem provisional certificate given to Joseph Amzalak, April 8, 1884 151
- Plate 42: Transportation of goods from the port of Jaffa to ships anchored off shore, circa 1910 152
- Plate 43: Laissez-Passer to Joseph Amzalak, October 2, 1882 155
- Plate 44: Professor Edward H. Palmer 156
- Plate 45: Ben-Zion Amzalak 161
- Plate 46: Luna-Bolissa Amzalak 161
- Plate 47: Ben-Zion and Luna-Bolissa Amzalak and their children 162
- Plate 48: Plan of one of the Amzalak houses in the Manshiya district of Jaffa, 1948 163
- Plate 49: Joseph Navon Bey 165
- Plate 50: Portrait of Gisha (Bolissa) Frumkin Navon 166
- Plate 51: Navon house on Jaffa road, Jerusalem, circa 1890 166
- Plate 52: Ships landing refugees at Alexandria, 1915 176
- Plate 53: Zion Mule Corps training in Alexandria, 1915 178
- Plate 54: James (Jimmy) Amzalak 180
- Plate 55: Laissez-Passer issued to James Amzalak 181
- Plate 56: Plaque from interior of Sha'are Tikva Synagogue, Lisbon 1989 190
- Plate 57: Professor Moses Bensabat Amzalak 192