Joseph 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.

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SEPARDI ENTREPRENEURS IN ERETZ ISRAEL
THE AMZALAK FAMILY 1816–1918

by

JOSEPH B. GLASS & RUTH KARK

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