

KÉ HABER?

The Menashe Family of Rhodes

Introduction

The article “La Familia Menashe de Rodes” (The Menashe Family of Rhodes) was written by Avraham Galanté in the Ladino newspaper ‘El Tiempo’ which was printed in Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey, during the years 1872-1930. This article was published on 28 February 1901 and was written in Ladino using Rashi characters.

I came across a reference to this article in Esther Fintz Menasce’s book ‘A History of Jewish Rhodes’. Being a Menashe of Rhodesli origin, it sparked my interest in obtaining the article in order to establish whether I was connected to this Menashe family. I managed to have the article transliterated into Hebrew characters and was then able to translate the Ladino into English. I subsequently established that Rabbi Boaz Menashe, mentioned in the article, is my great, great, great, great-grandfather. Below is my translation of the article.

- Isaac Menashe



Panorama II

Rhodes

Left: Rhodes early 1900s. Right: El Tiempo article published on February 28, 1901.



We write the following from Rhodes:

It is with great pleasure that we read in one of the recent editions of his esteemed diary, that Jacques Effendi (1), son of the city of Rhodes, was invited to assist in the Mejlis-Jismani (2) of the capital (3), and he was subsequently selected as one of the nine members of the Mejlis-Jismani. Arising from the honour of this occasion, it is a pleasure for me to talk a little about the Menashe family and Jacques Effendi.

Belonging to the respectable Menashe family, Jacques Effendi completed his studies at the Jewish school of Rhodes, where he learnt French, Turkish and Hebrew. Upon leaving school, he distinguished himself in these languages and he started to study Law. Gifted with high intelligence, Jacques Effendi made a lot of progress in this field and a little later he was nominated as the scribe in the Court of Appeal of our island. He was also a teacher of French and Turkish at the secondary school of Rhodes.

When six years ago, I founded the unfortunate school Tiferet Israel, (4) Jacques Effendi helped me a lot in the development of the said establishment, and for one year he also taught Geography without payment. When four and a half years ago, Jacques Effendi left for the capital, we did not doubt that he would quickly make a career for himself.

1. Effendi - a title of respect or courtesy in the Ottoman Empire.
2. In 1864 the Jews of Constantinople, at the request of the government, drew up a constitution for the working of the Jewish Community, which was approved by Sultan Abd-ul-Aziz in May 1865. This provided for three councils: (1) a “Mejlis-‘Umumi,” or national assembly, to be composed of eighty members; (2) a “Mejlis-Jismani,” or secular council, whose members included lay leaders, and (3) a “Mejlis-Ruhani,” or spiritual council, of nine rabbis.
3. The capital – a reference to Constantinople (present-day Istanbul) which was the capital of the Ottoman Empire until 1923.
4. Tiferet Israel – A school which was founded in Rhodes in 1895 by Avraham Galante but lasted for only 2 years.

(cont.)

In short, during that time he succeeded in becoming the first Dragoman (5) for the society of Tombak, a comptroller in public life, and he was elevated to the status of Sanayi (6) and decorated with the fourth class of the Order of Osmaniye (7) and the third (class) of the Order of the Medjidie (8). We must not forget to mention that he is only 28 years old.

As I have occupied myself with writing the history of the Jews of Rhodes, starting from the ancient times up to the present day, and as I know through documents which I have examined, the family to which Jacques Effendi has the honour of belonging, I give here a few interesting details about them.

The Menashe family is of Spanish origin who came to Rhodes from Constantinople. In the Jewish Cemetery of our island the oldest tombstone inscription is of the Menashe family with the date of 5323 (1563).

The notes that I managed to collect regarding this family, were given to me by the authority of the honorable Boaz Effendi Menashe. These are the notes together with the contents of a letter from Mr. Yeshaya Solomon Shapira, chief rabbi of Galatz (9) which was written on 18th Sivan 653 (2nd June 1893) to the chief rabbi of Rhodes.

Here are a few sentences from this letter:

“150 years ago a man named Rabbi Boaz Menashe sent one of his sons named Nissim to Italy to study medicine. Due to the Seven Years War (10), Mr. Nissim Menashe established himself in Iasi (11) where he practiced medicine. He married a woman from an important family and made a fortune. In his will he mentioned that he was originally from Rhodes, as can also be seen from the tombstone inscription which follows:

(Translation of the Hebrew)

“Here lies Rabbi Nissim son of Boaz from the Sephardi Menashe family of the city of Rhodes. The son of Rabbi Nissim is also no longer alive.”

The sons of Rabbi Nissim Menashe were engaged in commerce in Galatz, and they developed this industry so much that they were given the name of “Kaufman” (12) by the prince of Wallachia (13). From the same family, doctors and bankers can be found in Berlin and Vienna.

Rabbi Boaz Menashe left, apart from the famous doctor, another 3 sons: Yosef Menashe who became an official in Jerusalem, Samuel Menashe who went in search of his brother Nissim, and did not find out anything, and Elihayu Menashe. The latter one had 2 sons: Moshe and Yehuda Menashe.

Moshe Menashe, known by the name of “Kodja Mussani” (14), was a very capable man and rendered many social services to the community of Rhodes. He was successively the treasurer of the Customs Department and of the Governor of Rhodes.



The plaque honoring the famous treasurer, Moshe Menashe, the donor of the building for the Kahal Shalom Synagogue. The name Moshe Menashe was painted in gold letters along the bottom left corner and his initials were used to begin the first letter of each line of poetic religious verses. Source: A Guidebook to the Jewish Quarter of Rhodes, p. 26.

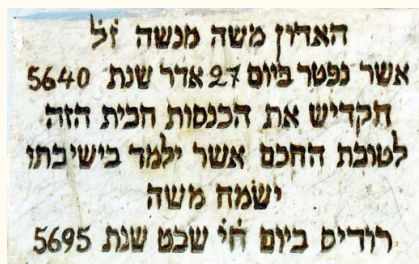
5. Dragoman was the name used for a translator/interpreter in the Ottoman Empire. There were Dragomans who were employed by the Ottoman Empire and as civil servants, they played an important role in interpreting meetings with foreign envoys and translating letters from foreign missions. There were also Dragomans who worked for foreign missions based in the Ottoman Empire and acted as interpreters & translators for the missions' interactions with the Ottoman authorities. As Jacques was proficient in French and Turkish, he was well qualified to be a Dragoman.
6. The Iftikhar Sanayi Medal was primarily a civilian medal granted by the Ottoman Empire for general merit.
7. The Order of Osmaniye was a decoration of the Ottoman Empire that was awarded by the Sultan to Ottoman civil servants for outstanding services to the state. The order was created by Sultan Abdulaziz in 1862. There were five classes and Jacques Menashe was awarded the fourth class.
8. Order of Medjidie – A military and civilian order of the Ottoman Empire that was instituted by Sultan Abdulmejid in 1851. The Order was awarded in five classes. Jacques Menashe was awarded the third class.
9. Galatz (Galați) – a city in the region of Moldavia in eastern Romania.
10. The Seven Years' War which took place between 1756 – 1763, was a global conflict. This war involved the French, British, and Spanish who battled over colonies in the New World, while Frederick the Great of Prussia in Europe faced off against troops from Austria, France, Russia and Sweden.
11. Iasi – A city in eastern Romania which was the capital of the Principality of Moldavia.
12. Kaufman – literally 'Merchant' in German, and probably used as a sign of respect.
13. Wallachia – a historic principality that united with Moldavia to form present day Romania.
14. “Kodja Mussani” – Turkish for Moshe the Great

(cont.)

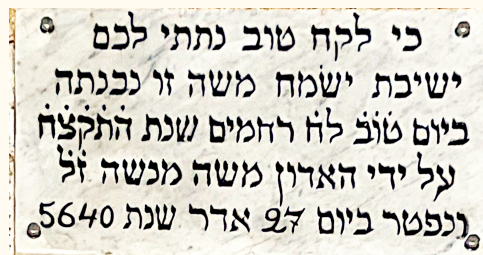
Meanwhile, during the Blood Libel of 1840 (15), he corresponded with the following gentlemen Montefiore (16), Cremieux (17), Albert Cohen and other highly placed people. He was able to obtain in his hand the decree from Sultan Mejid (18) declaring the innocence (of the Jews) without any limitation, in relation to the question of the Blood Libel. (This decree is today in the possession of Boaz Effendi Menashe).

Moshe Menashe wrote to Mr. Kamondo (19), as well as to Baron James de Rothschild (20) and he obtained monies, firstly for the building of a small synagogue (21) and three houses for the poor, and secondly for the building of a Talmud Torah (22).

Menashe Plaque of 1935, located in the Kahal Shalom Synagogue



Mr. Moshe Menashe of blessed memory who passed away on the 27th day of the month of Adar, the year 5640 (1880), dedicated the income of this house (next door) to benefit the Haham that will teach in his Yeshiva: "Yismach Moshe" (Moshe Rejoices). Rhodes, the 18th day of the month of Shivat, the year 5695 (1935).



Menashe Yeshiva Plaque of 1838, located at the present office of the Jewish Community of Rhodes

For I have given you a good lesson. This Yeshiva "Yismach Moshe" (Moshe Rejoices) was built on the 17th day of the month of mercy (Elul), the year 5598 (1838) by Mr. Moshe Menashe, of blessed memory who passed away on the 27th of Adar, the year 5640 (1880).

Moshe Menashe was one of the first sponsors of students at the Alliance Israélite (23). He engaged himself with the renovation of the Shalom synagogue. In 5593 (1833), during the plague epidemic (24), he lent money to the poor and he came to the assistance of many people in need. In summary, Moshe Menashe did many acts of charity for the benefit of the community of Rhodes.

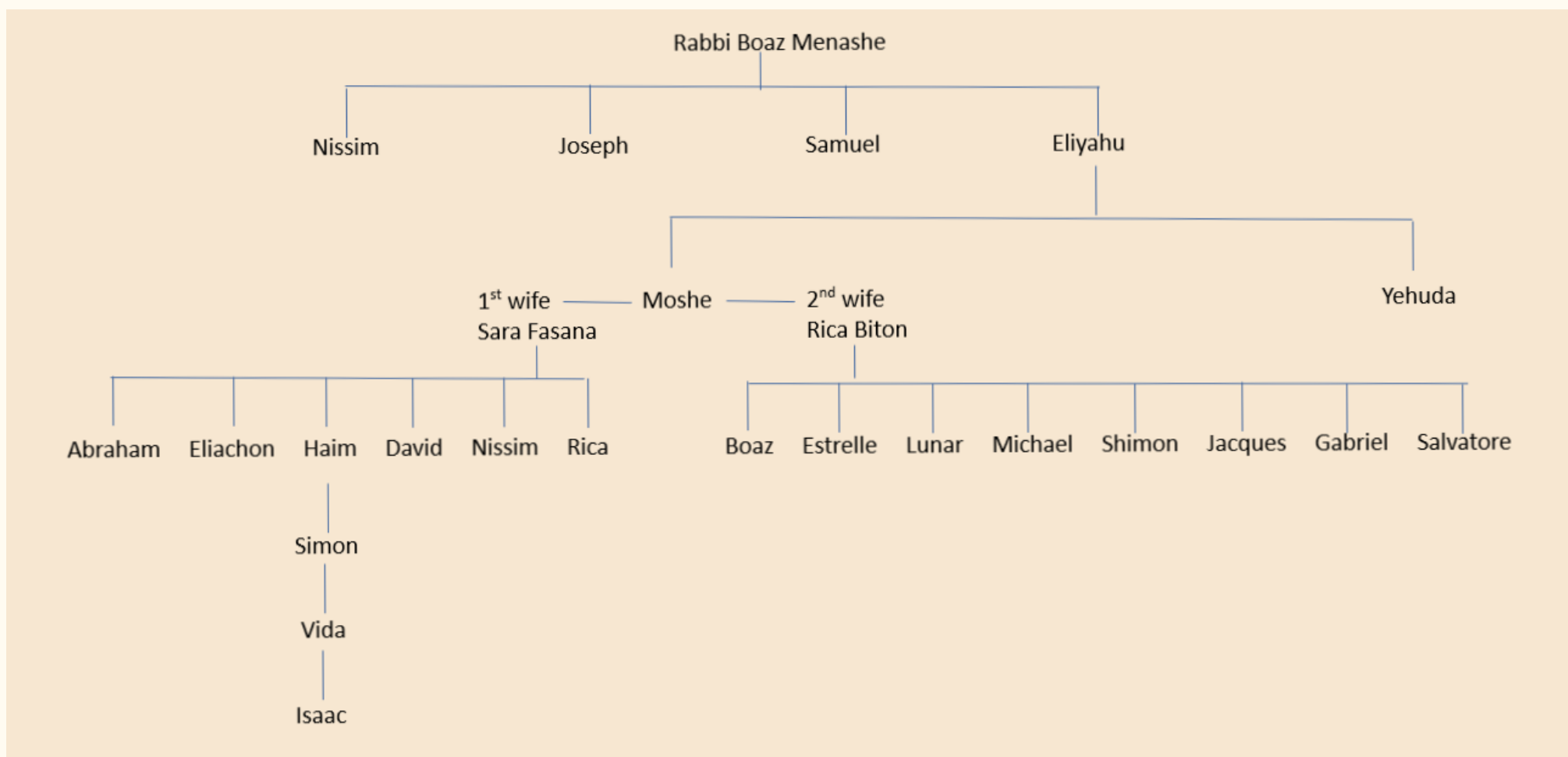
Moshe Menashe had 11 sons, amongst whom it is necessary to mention Boaz Effendi Menashe, who was a judge in the Rhodes Court of Appeal. Boaz Menashe, who has the status of a Sanayi and decorated with the Order of Osmaniye, is the President of the Alliance. He was involved in the education of his brothers Jacques Effendi Menashe and Gabriel Effendi who also made a career in Constantinople, and lastly the young and likeable Salvatore Effendi Menashe who recently completed his studies at the Agricultural Academy (25) in the capital and is employed by the Ministry of the said department.

- Avraham Galanté

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15. The Rhodes Blood Libel of 1840 was a libel in which the Greek Orthodox community accused Jews on the island of the ritual murder of a Christian boy who disappeared in February of that year. The Jewish community appealed for help from the Jewish community in Constantinople, who forwarded the appeal to European governments. As a result of support gained from various governments a consensus developed that the charge was false. The government of Turkey initiated a formal inquiry into the affair, and in July 1840, the investigation established the innocence of the Jewish community. In November of the same year, the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Medjid issued a decree (firman) denouncing the blood libel as false and exonerating the accused.
 16. Sir Moses Montefiore was a British financier and an orthodox Sephardi Jew who is best remembered as a philanthropist and as a zealous fighter for Jewish rights all over the world. In 1840 Montefiore helped to secure the release of several Syrian Jews who were falsely accused of using Christian blood for religious rites. This was known as the Damascus affair.
 17. Adolphe Crémieux was a French lawyer and politician who served as Minister of Justice under the Second Republic and Government of National Defence. He was a defender of human rights of the Jews of France. He was a founder of the Universal Israelite Alliance and was its president from 1863 to 1880.
 18. Abdulmejid I was the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire in 1840.
 19. Avraham Kamondo was a wealthy Jewish banker who lived in Constantinople and was the personal financial adviser to senior Ottoman officials. He also founded the famous La Eskola de Kamondo in 1862. The pupils at this school learnt Hebrew, French and Turkish.
 20. Baron James de Rothschild (1792 – 1868) was a well-known French banker who used his wealth for philanthropic purposes including contributions to Jewish communities in Europe and the Ottoman Empire.
 21. This synagogue was known as Kahal Kadosh Kamondo. It was a small synagogue that was built in 1865 together with the adjacent houses for needy families.
 22. The Menashe Yeshiva known by the name of Yismach Moshe, was founded by Moshe Menashe on September 7, 1838. This yeshiva functioned for almost 100 years.
 23. The Alliance Israélite Universelle was founded in Paris in 1860 with the purpose of safeguarding human rights for Jews around the world. In 1860 the organisation embarked on a mission to advance the Jews of the Middle East through French education and culture. The AIU established schools in many countries and in 1904 the construction of such a school was completed in Rhodes. The Baron Edmond de Rothschild, who visited Rhodes in 1903, donated a large sum of money for the construction of the school which was attended by boys and girls.
 24. A reference to the 2nd cholera pandemic that reigned from 1826 - 1837.
 25. The Halkalı Agricultural Academy was established in Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1892. This was the first, and for many years the only, school to offer advanced agricultural education in Turkey.

(cont.)

The Menashe Family Tree



- Notes:**
1. According to Avraham Galante's article above, Moshe and his brother Yehuda were sons of Eliyahu. Source: El Tiempo of 28 February 1901, page 368.
 2. Moshe had 5 sons and 1 daughter from his 1st marriage to Sara Fasana.
 3. Moshe had 6 sons and 2 daughters from his 2nd marriage to Rica Biton.
 4. Moshe's 4 sons mentioned in the article are from his second marriage.
 5. Moshe is my great-great-grandfather. I am a descendant of his son Haim, from his first marriage.



About the author of the article:

Avraham Galanté was born in 1873 in Bodrum, Turkey to a distinguished Sephardi family. His family moved to Rhodes, where he attended school for 4 years. While he was at school in Rhodes, he befriended Jacques Menashe (referred to in the article) and became very familiar with this Menashe family.

He subsequently became a teacher and an inspector in the Jewish and Turkish Schools of Rhodes and Izmir (Smyrna). He was a historian of Jewish and Eastern peoples, a linguist, a journalist, an educator, and a politician. He was a professor of Semitic Languages and later, History of the Ancient Orient at the University of Istanbul. Galanté became a delegate to the first Turkish National Assembly after World War I and a member of the 7th Parliament of Turkey, which met in 1943.

While his principal field of scholarly activity was the study of Jewish history in Turkey, he also wrote a book on the Jews of Rhodes in French – *l'Histoire des Juifs de Rhodes, Chio, Cos, etc.*, published in 1935. He published an appendix to this book in 1948 detailing the tragic end of the Jewish communities in these islands. He died in Istanbul in 1961.



About the translator:

Isaac Menashe of Ra'anana, Israel, researched the Menashe Family of Rhodes. He is the son of Albert and Vida Menashe, both born on the island of Rhodes during the Italian occupation. Isaac has been a vital contributor to the Rhodes Jewish Historical Foundation and has translated the Hebrew names and dates in the Cemetery Section of the Rhodes Jewish Museum website: <https://www.rhodesjewishmuseum.org/cemetery/>

Isaac Menashe Family Photographs



Haim, son of Moshe Menashe and Sara Fasana



Reuben, Joseph and Simon, sons of Haim Menashe and Vida Sonsol



Vida, daughter of Simon Menashe and Sarota Franco



Isaac with siblings Pearl, Sarah and Renee



The Menashe Family Reunion in Rhodes 2019



Isaac Menashe Family



Isaac's grandchildren



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