

KIVUNIM Comes to Morocco March 15-28, 2018 (arriving from Spain and Portugal) PT 1



Charles Landelle-“Juive de Tanger”

Unlike our astronauts who travel to "outer space," going to Morocco is a journey into "inner space." For Morocco reveals under every tree and shrub a spiritual reality that is unlike anything we have experienced before, particularly as Jewish travelers. We enter an Islamic world that we have been conditioned to expect as hostile. Instead we find a warmth and welcome that both captivates and inspires. We immediately feel at home and respected as we enter a unique multi-cultural society whose own 2011 constitution states:

"Its unity...is built on the convergence of its Arab-Islamic, Amazigh and Saharan-Hassani components, is nurtured and enriched by African, Andalusian, **Hebraic** and Mediterranean constituents."

A journey with KIVUNIM through Morocco is to glimpse the possibilities of the future, of a different future. At our alumni conference in December, 2015, King Mohammed VI of Morocco honored us with the following historic and challenge-containing words: **"...these (KIVUNIM) students, who are members of the American Jewish community, will be different people in their community tomorrow. Not just different, but also valuable, because they have made the effort to see the world in a different light, to better understand our intertwined and unified traditions, paving the way for a different future, for a new, shared destiny full of the promises of history, which, as they have realized in Morocco, is far from being relegated to the past."**

The following words of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel remind us of the purpose of our travels this year. They awaken in us the possibility of seeing beyond what we see in front of us and push us into both past and future even as we stand rooted in the present.

"What is the meaning of history...the promise of the future"

Thursday, March 15: After arriving at 8:40am on the overnight train Lusitania from Lisbon to Madrid and transferring to Madrid's **Barajas International Airport Terminal 4S for Iberia Airlines flight # 3340 departing at 12:50 PM and arriving at Marrakech, Morocco's Menara Airport at 1:50 PM.** This is the first time we are flying into Marrakech and the airport is brand new and very beautiful. And as the plane is coming down those of you on the left of the plane will have some magnificent vistas of the snow-capped Atlas Mountains.

We will be met by our Moroccan Guide, Raphael David Elmaleh, a very special guy, who returned to his birthplace in Morocco 18 or so years ago with the goal of creating a permanent record of the Moroccan Jews. His work and his many discoveries are moving and fascinating. His personality is very special and you will love being with him. Morocco is one of those places that still has romance and exoticism written all over it...and you will be sure to feel it from the moment we arrive. Whatever you are expecting, it will be very different and far more than you can even imagine.



Here the story of a Jewish community that traces its history back to Roman times and maybe earlier. Later joined by exiled Jews from Spain following their expulsion in 1492, the Jewish community of Morocco came to number close to 300,000 in the first part of the 20th century, close to 1% of the population of the entire country (Jews are less than 2% of the population of the United States).

The following public service announcement must interrupt this otherwise lovely intellectual and scheduling flow: **(While in Morocco you must drink ONLY bottled water or other drinks - but not tap water. This also applies to brushing your teeth and to ingesting water while showering. Please only eat fruits or vegetables that have been washed with bottled water (you can of course wash them yourself with bottled water) or that have a peel-able skin. UNLESS RAFI tells you otherwise. This includes having a vegetarian pizza!)**

Since we have a mid day flight without a meal, we will have a late breakfast at the Madrid Airport and then an even later lunch at a wonderful Pizzeria and Omelette-Maker where we have at least one meal every year. We will check-in to the Atlas-Medinah and Spa Hotel at around 5, come back together for a Morocco orientation session with Peter and then have a fun dinner-out first night here in this wonderful city.

Marrakech is famous throughout the world. The winding alleys of the Mellah (the Jewish Quarter) are not only evident, but King Mohammed VI has just recently ordered this historic area to be restored to its former glory, including the return of the Jewish Street names long absent. We will visit the Jewish cemetery with the special burial place set aside by the Mayor to honor Henri Kadosh, the former President of the Marrakech Jewish community (he was the Quartermaster of the King's army). We'll visit the kosher butcher, still functioning right in the middle of the massive Arab marketplace. The two Synagogues for this community of 200 Jews, but 1000's of Jewish visitors annually. The Old Age home, the former school. Even Jewish merchants will greet us in the medina! The integration is truly amazing.

Guidebooks warn of hassle from pestering guides and vendors when entering the souks. In reality, it is possible to shop relatively undisturbed, other than by the crowds at various junctions. During our visit we will see the amazing carpets and leathers of Marrakech. Colors galore of all natural dyes and antique rugs with amazing histories, including several created by weavers of several former Jewish Berber villages from around the country.

During our visit we will spend a few moments with the Herbal Medicine Man of Marrakech, a many generations healer who will demonstrate and offer for sale some of the wonderful natural remedies of this area of the world. We'll have a lunch and some delicious local ice cream before continuing to the Ketubiah Mosque, and, if open for visitors, a climb to the top of its Minaret providing a beautiful view of the entire city and the magnificent Atlas Mountains surrounding us.



To add to your sense of the history of this city, read the following amazing story published recently in the London Telegraph Travel section:

“Winston Churchill believed that ‘Marrakesh is simply the nicest place on Earth to spend an afternoon’, which explains why not even his demanding schedule as Britain’s wartime leader could dissuade him from experiencing the charms of Morocco’s inspirational city. His most memorable afternoon there was during a crucial phase of the Second World War, when he took time out from a vital summit with the American President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, to visit his cherished retreat in the old imperial city.

“Churchill began his love affair with Marrakesh during the ‘wilderness years’ of the Thirties when, frustrated by the Baldwin government’s refusal to give him a cabinet position, he spent the winter of 1935-36 on a painting holiday in Morocco. He was particularly attracted to a city he called the “Paris of the Sahara” because of the striking contrast between the city’s arid desert location and the backdrop of the imposing Atlas Mountains that surround Marrakesh, which inspired him to paint some of his finest watercolors. Thus when, in 1943, Churchill arrived in Casablanca for a summit with Roosevelt and the Allied chiefs of staff to plot the future course of the military campaign to defeat Nazi Germany, the British prime minister insisted that the two leaders take a break from their deliberations to spend a few days in Marrakesh.

‘You cannot come all the way to North Africa without seeing Marrakesh,’ Churchill told a skeptical Roosevelt, who wanted to return immediately to the United States to concentrate on running the war effort. ‘Let us spend two days there,’ Churchill persisted. ‘I must be with you when you see the sun set on the Atlas Mountains.’ And so, on January 23 1943, the two wartime leaders left Casablanca for the (then) five-hour drive to Marrakesh, stopping on the way for a picnic lunch.

On arrival, the party made their way to the Villa Taylor, a spacious property owned by a wealthy New York family situated in the Ville Nouvelle district on the outskirts of the old city walls, which was the main residential area for wealthy French colonialists (today it is in the city’s “Gueliz” district). The villa, which is a five-minute walk from the Jardin Majorelle has its own tower, from where Churchill liked to paint the spectacular sunsets for which the city is renowned. On arrival at the villa, Churchill insisted that Roosevelt accompany him to the top of the tower to see the panoramic view of Marrakesh, and to witness for himself that magical moment during a Moroccan sunset when the final, dying

rays of the sun catch the snow-capped peaks of the Atlas Mountains as the muezzin sounds the evening call to prayer.

Friday, ערב שבת March 16

8:30 Breakfast We begin our visit to Morocco in the Mellah within the Medinah of Marrakech! On one obvious level we enter a market, a suk, like our Jerusalem shuk that we have come to love and understand. But the Medinah is more than an old fashioned shopping mall. It is an entire culture in and of itself. The person who lives in the median chooses to live close. Close to family, close to friends and of course even closer to many with whom he or she would more readily put up a nice fence and some good sound proofing. Living in such close quarters, and within courtyard based apartments means that we hear everything! Can you imagine if you lived in our dorm for the rest of your life.

So while you visit as outsiders use your many senses to listen to people's voices, choice of greeting, clothing, role with peers, and then take in the decor, the design, the balance, the lack of it, etc. Be a sociologist, an anthropologist, even a psychologist as you walk.

And then of course is the amazing history and even contemporary reality of the mellah. Why would the Muslim King of Morocco come to Marrakech (as he did 2 years ago) and order the Jewish character of the Mellah restored. Institutions, street names, the cemetery. It is a unique part of the Moroccan story that has the King saying publicly "that the Jews are more Moroccan than the Moroccans because they have been in Morocco for at least 500 years before Islam ever existed or before the Arabs came to this land. What people that we know are so pliable with their own identity???"

We'll have a lunch outside the medinah and then head back to the hotel to shower and prepare for Shabbat. Candle-lighting is at 6:22 so we will be leaving for Synagogue at around 5:30PM. The community is small and there is a small group of visiting American Jews in town, but there are amazing stories attached to this first congregation allowed and then built outside the mellah. We are having shabbat dinner here in a re-set-up women's section. Dinner by Paula Ohayon is a classic Moroccan Shabbat dinner and very delicious. We have a gentle walk back and probably an early night..

Saturday, שבת March 17: There is a wonderful breakfast at the hotel so make sure to get up early and enjoy it! Those who wish to arrive in Synagogue for the beginning of the service will leave the hotel at 8:30 AM with Jay and everyone else will depart at 9:00 AM with Rafi.

Following services there will be a substantial kiddush which will be our lunch, so eat up!

This afternoon is a great time to rest, talk, walk, read and enjoy this beautiful city. We'll meet at 5 PM for a reflection session and then after shabbat ends at 7:31 we will make our way to the home of our local guide, Jamal Ben Kirane for Havdalah, a cooking class

and then a wonderful vegetarian dinner in Jamal's beautiful home. The evening will include the option of henna decorating. Jamal hosted KIVUNIM for a Hanukkah dinner in his home in 2006, the first time that he and his very traditional Muslim family had ever witnessed a Hanukkah candle lighting service. Jamal's wife prepares for us a magnificent vegetarian meal of traditional Moroccan delicacies including a range of cakes and cookies for which you must leave room...hard as it will be. Friendships build over the past 12 years with KIVUNIM student and teacher programs will be apparent in the family's warm and sincere welcome and hospitality.

Havdalah to end Shabbat (which can be said anytime after sundown Shabbat day until Tuesday of that week) will be recited here followed by dinner. Don't take this small act for-granted...holding what constitutes a Jewish prayer service in a traditional Muslim home is not a small matter or done lightly...it is a symbol of the enormous potential in this country for creating a model for the seemingly illusive Muslim-Jewish coexistence that is so desperately needed.

The friendship formed over the years between KIVUNIM and Jamal and his family is tribute to the openness of the Moroccan character. You'll hear all the details when we are there, but suffice it to say here, the Ben Kiranes had never met a Jew before KIVUNIM came to town...and have invited us into their home for Havdalah or Hanukkah candle lighting for each of the past 12 years. I often wonder how open we would be if the situation were reversed.

Following dinner we must see the famous grand square of the city, Djamaa El F'na, where your eyes and ears will fill with a world of mystery and intrigue.

The snake charmer whose Sufi music forces his snake to stand at attention! The drummers, the henna decorators, the acrobats, the monkey men...the endless booths of items to buy and even to eat (don't eat however...or drink).

Musicians, dancers, fortune tellers, cooks, tooth-pullers, hair weavers, minstrels, and every other element of your

imagination fill the space throughout the night and day. The later night is yours...

Marrakech is a late-night town! (But not too late as we have a big day and more big days ahead!)



Sunday, March 18: We will conclude our visit to the Medinah this morning and then begin our next several days in the world of the Berber people, the indigenous population of Morocco. First stop, the village of Telouet in the heights of the High Atlas Mountains. The



Atlas range has heights that are the second highest in all of Africa, rising almost 12,000 ft. (get out your motion sickness meds). There will likely be some snow at the top and if we are lucky no weather delays. The views from the winding roadway are amazing! We will spend the early afternoon on the road, making our way up the Atlas Mountains through scenery so breathtaking that you will find it difficult to describe to family and friends. We will rise to and pass through the Tizi 'N Test pass, one of the highest points in the

High Atlas Mountains. We will be at 6-8000 ft above sea level. Just beyond the Pass we will get off the bus, take our two nights of clothing and supplies and board a caravan of 4X4's and other assorted vehicles for the 40 minute, off-the-main-road trip to Telouet.

Telouet is the home of The Glaoui brothers Kasbah and one of the most important sights of yesterday's Morocco. Although not ancient, the Palace built here is an amazing site with an accompanying extraordinary story. It begins during the hard winter of 1893, when Sultan Moulay Hassan was stranded here. He, and his army of 3,000 were well taken care of by the two brothers Madani and T'hami Glaoui. In return for their services, they were given political power over all of Morocco south of the High Atlas Mountains.

In the years that followed the Glaoui brothers strengthened their position, and when the French came some 20 years later, they started to cooperate with them as well. By the end of the French colonial period, the Glaouis were almost as strong in power as the Sultan himself. This dramatic story ends with a French connection that led to intrigue, disloyalty to the Moroccan King, and ultimately a total downfall. The Palace, once a spectacular residence with almost exact replicas of the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, is today mostly in ruin. As punishment to the family, the government did not allow it to be rehabilitated and restored (but they were not beheaded or jailed). Only in the last year has there been movement to begin a restoration that will boost tourism in the area and bring additional needed income to the residents of the region.

Much of the magnificent detail work has been stripped away over the years by thieves. But there are still several royal rooms completely intact. It is truly something very special to see. We are spending the night in this small town, where the local Auberge (Inn) will be



our home. We have arranged a vegetarian dinner and local fare. Here you will have time to explore the Kasbah and really get a flavor of what Morocco was, including the Morocco of a huge percentage of those 300,000 Jews who lived in the villages and small towns of this country up until 1960.

After dinner we will have a program of local tribal dancing, and you will see and feel the powerful influence of Black African slaves brought here by the Sultan over the centuries. Berber Ahouch or Aghwash dance is part of Moroccan Berber culture and folklore. Ahouch, known as the dance of the village, is a popular music and dance from the High Atlas and the Anti-Atlas Mountains performed by the Berbers. The lyrics are always in Berber language, in the Tashelhit dialect, which is spoken in southwestern Morocco. The word "Ahouach" means group dances in Berber, dances related to one another, poetic improvisation and individual and group singing in Tashelhit through rhythms alternating from slow to fast.

The Ahouach dance and music bring together villagers, tribes "Taghbilt" in Berber (usually a group of small villages) and families at all important moments of life. Ahouch is part of a

celebration and social life of Berbers, and is danced by men and women dancing and singing in harmony - sometimes only by women, sometimes exclusively by men, but always in groups. It begins with an improvisation sung solo, in a shrill voice. Then the men or women in chorus sing songs about love, celebrating nature or events with the rest of tribe drumming, clapping, stomping to the rhythm of the movements. The musicians, placed at the center of the dance, standing or crouching, play the bendir "tallunt" which is a framed drum about 15 inches, whose skin was stretched first over a fire.

As the pace of the music accelerates, dancers, initially motionless, begin to move slowly with a slight swaying shoulders and hips in a circle. Ahwash specific dance details can change from village to village, and small features like color of clothing, hat styles, and jewelry worn by the women are all incorporated to signal which region and town performers represent. Tonight will be our most basic accommodation on this trip, but it will be a very special experience; a night you will never forget. Situated here in the High Atlas Mountains, the simple life of the Moroccan village will greet you and then never leave you. The air, the sky, the stars above the snow-capped mountains... what more could there be?

The so-called Berber Jews, who lived in these villages since at least the time of the 2nd Temple, also were part of Ahouach culture and did the same dances, sang the same songs and spoke the same Berber language (you will see new road signs in Berber as well as Arabic, English or French) as their neighbors. A few years ago Kamal Hachkar, the filmmaker of "Echoes of the Mellah" that you saw before you left introduced me to a Professor friend of his from Harvard whose grandfather was the Rabbi in Telouet. On Wednesday morning we will visit the Synagogue of Arazane where we will be witness to the truly extraordinary co-existence of Jews and Berbers once characteristic of 100's of small villages like Telouet across Morocco.



Monday, March 19

7:00 AM It's not that we want to wake you so early, but the roosters crowing and the donkeys braying will make certain that you are up at a very reasonable hour. After a traditional Berber breakfast we will visit the Glaoui Palace and load ourselves onto a local school bus and a few SUV's and head out down a new and very scenic road to the UNESCO World Heritage site of Ait Bin Hadou. It is a 'fortified city', or ksar, along the former caravan route

between the Sahara and Marrakech. This long route was once laced with 1000 kasbahs, a form of desert hospitality more structured than the Bedouin tent which Professor Clinton Bailey taught us about in October, yet very much along the same lines. In the larger Kasbahs were Jewish mellahs- home to 1000's of Moroccan Jews for centuries. It is situated in Souss-Massa-Draa on a hill along the Ouarzazate River and has some beautiful examples of kasbahs, which unfortunately get damaged each rainstorm. Most of

the town's inhabitants now live in a more modern village at the other side of the river; ten families however still live within the ksar.

Then we will pass through Quarzazat, a desert town that has become the site of many famous movies from Ben Hur to the latest Sex in the City movie...and on and on. Almost whenever you see serious desert scenes in films they have been shot here, just outside of town. And then we will begin our long journey to the Sahara, to the village of Merzouga. **To see Morocco requires demanding bus rides.** There is no way around it. Use this time to really concentrate on what is outside the window. Bus rides tend to lull everyone to sleep, and sometimes we need the extra z's, but try hard to keep your eyes posted on the outside as we drive. There are many unexpected treats out there. Morocco is a poor country with village life pretty much the same as it has been for 1000's of years. Until the 1960's emigration to Israel, the majority of Morocco's Jews lived exactly this same life as you see in these simple adobe villages.

We will drive along the southern plains winding our way westward having afternoon tea in The Todra Gorge, amongst the most dramatic sights you can see in Morocco. The cut through the mountain gives at some points only a 10-meter wide passage beneath 300-meter tall walls. The sun only accesses the bottom of the gorge in the morning where an ice-cold river flushes through. Later in the night the gorge gets its own climate, and while evenings can be damp and warm in the nearest village, they easily get to be freezing here. It is on the approach to Todra that we pass through Tinghrir! You will see how beautiful Kamal's hometown really was...and is.

During the day we will make our way through the Ziz Valley once part of a caravan route that took travelers from the desert near Merzouga to the Mediterranean Sea. The Valley itself is a welcome relief from the desert brown. Palm trees filled with dates grow in abundance. Men tending fields and donkeys carrying goods from one village to another are common sights. Up the river are the ruins of an old fortress or ksar. In the region is one of Morocco's most important oases, Tafilalet. Additionally, another place of interest is the Wadi Ziz, a long limestone corridor with palm trees that provide shade for the Kasbah of Ifri, carved out by the Ziz River. Waters of the Ziz River form a vast emerald lake by the Hassan Addakhil Dam. Women can be seen doing their laundry in the shade of apricot trees growing around the lake. Let your imagination take you!

By evening we should reach the city of Erfoud, once home to a large Jewish community **(and where Margalit has a very very special historical connection!)**. What were Jews doing here you may ask, so very far from the coast, from urban centers, from other Jews. But of course we are on an ancient trade route and Jews were amongst the greatest traders of the ancient world. They came to Morocco at the time of the second Temple, in the second century BC. Throughout Morocco they settled in small villages, pre-dating Islam by 6-800 years! Everywhere we go in Morocco we find remnants of the Jewish quarter, the mellah, along with synagogues and schools, once brimming with Jews; today completely empty. And then, the most unexpected, we find shrines to venerated Rabbis, known by the honorific "Baba" where both Jews and Muslims come to pray and ask special favors of the

Divine in times of illness and need. It is quite remarkable to see Jewish graveyards and within them graves of honored Rabbis being cared for in a world completely bereft of Jews.

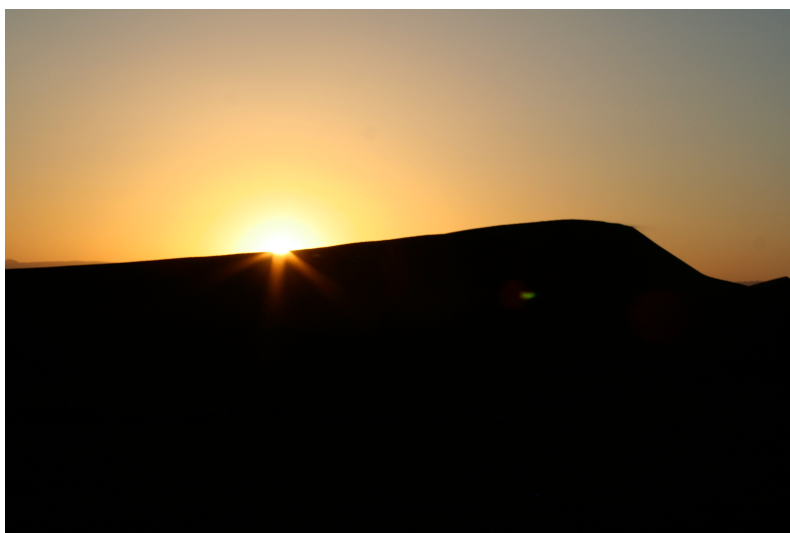
Then finally, at about 9 PM, hungry and tired we will arrive at our Shangrila, Auberge Timbutou (**Hotel Kasbah Tombouctou**). We intentionally arrive long after sunset so that you can't see anything of the magnificent surprise that awaits you in the early morning for sunrise. We'll have a wonderful vegetarian buffet dinner and then get some sleep to prepare us for the early morning wakeup. KIVUNIM alumni say that sunrise on the Dunes becomes one of the most memorable and spiritual experiences of our entire year of travel. The Erg Chebbi dunes are famous for their great height and size; they can rise up to almost 500 ft (50 stories!) high in some places, are 13.5 miles long, and 3 miles wide. MILES!

Tuesday, March 20

5:00AM "Sunrise at the Oasis!"

No! Actually on rolling dunes that you have seen in movies, and presenting a reality of natural beauty and majesty that even your most imaginative dreams could not prepare you for. The vastness of it all...the mountains of sand that can take an hour to climb...the rising sun at daybreak...our bodies may be tired, but our spirits will be very wide awake! For those who wish to capture this spiritual moment in a traditional form, we will have a minyan at the top of the dunes.

(Bring Talit, Tefillin and/or siddur in your backpack if you wish to participate.) enjoy the beauty of our surroundings before we pull out.



7:30 AM We will return to the hotel for breakfast and a wonderful shower and then a little time to enjoy this very unique and special place and then onwards across southern Morocco to our next equally special destination (well, maybe not equally...but very special for sure!). Today we have a full day on the road, In keeping with what you have learned from Stilgo, remember that even the simple things like rest stops on country highways provide you with a window into an aspect of local life. What's sold, what's bought, how do people dress on casual travel excursions. Isn't it fascinating to discover that there is a prayer room available at every rest stop in the country (and yes at almost every gas station, as well as every formal rest area). What does that form of national consciousness do to the individual...

Then we are off on the road back in the direction we came, heading NE and then near Quarzazate we turn South East arriving at The Palais Salaam Hotel in the Imperial city of Taroudant for a late dinner and a very special and beautiful night in this still magnificent former palace. About Taroudant it has been written:

“ The landscape is full of mountains and it is very beautiful and sunny in January. I can sit under the trees in the garden and write, with the roses and the carnations already in flower. And often there is a spicy, hot smell which is very intoxicating. Please don't go...because I like it so much I don't want too many English visitors coming to spoil it!” (The Guardian)

With its majestic gold, pink and orange tinted circuit of high walls, Taroudant is half citadel and half oasis. It is a town of great charm and grace. “The ruddy, clay houses, minarets and groves of oranges and pomegranates seem to drowse beneath the gaze of the frosted High Atlas Mountains to the north and the Anti-Atlas Mountains to the south.” The walls, the souks and the stark backdrop of the High Atlas are the town's main attractions. The souks are not large but they are varied; there is a strong tradition of local craft and much of the work here is of outstanding quality.

We'll arrive and go straight to dinner and then checkin, get our rooms and get some sleep. To quote from the Hotel's history: “Built in the 16th century and surrounded by ramparts, Palais Salaam is a historical pasha's palace that conveys tradition, conviviality and charm. The legendary park of Hotel Palais Salaam is more than a green oasis in the heart of the city. It has more fruit trees than you can imagine and flowers with their fragrant scents perfuming the air changing colors every season and allowing these magical gardens to present an ever changing face to the world through the sound of its fountains.” Tomorrow morning we'll visit the medina of Taroudant and then...



Wednesday, March 21:

After breakfast we will checkout and load the bus and be on our way to the little timeless village of Arazane, where the real reason we came this far south is located. Arazane is the site of a famous 750+ year old synagogue discovered and then restored by Rafi, but cared for for almost 60 years by Harim, a local Berber Muslim man, now over 75 years old, who held the key in trust for all those years, fulfilling his promise to the Rabbi when the Jews left the

village in 1960, that he would give the key to any Jew who came asking for the Synagogue.

In past years, after meeting this remarkable man who preserved a Synagogue for five+ decades for the “possibility” that a Jew might return...our former students have often asked if they had just met a saint. A man who did not take anything of the vacant property for his own use, which he surely could have done? A man who has preserved in his memory the chants and songs of Arazane’s Jews only to finally share them with us, virtually the only Jews to ever come here. This adobe Synagogue and mikveh (ritual bath) have been restored by KIVUNIM in recent years, and our 100’s of former students have erected a plaque in Harim’s honor that hangs on the wall inside.

Then after experiencing the hospitality of Harim and his family we will head east to the Atlantic Ocean and the city of Agadir and then. Turn north for another spectacular drive, this one along the Atlantic. We will have our picnic lunch today along a beachfront right by the water...no swimming however!

Along the way we will see many fascinating things. The goats that climb up into the trees to eat the Argan nuts which eventually become that ingredient now most popular in American shampoos, Argan oil (how is that you ask?...you will be shocked!). We will pass trucks loaded almost to the sky with goods giving an insight into the process of trade in the small villages that fill this area of the country.

As you have seen in and around Telouet, there is still walking with donkeys carrying cloth and salted foods and other items needed for the sustenance of daily life in this region. But the real institutionalized form of village trade, even today, thousands of years after the original caravan days, is **the traveling souk** which remains a feature of Moroccan country life to this day. **Its origins are purely Jewish. While there are no Jews left in this part of the country, the traveling souks STILL do not have any Saturday events...they are Shomer Shabbat!** The souk is in one central town on Sunday and another every day of the week through Thursday. But not on Friday in observance of the Muslim Sabbath and not on Saturday, Shabbat. Amazing to watch them pack up and take to the road with gigantic loads atop big trucks only to be unloaded the next day and again and again.

Here In Telouet we will meet Harim and visit the Synagogue. Consider for a contrast what happens to old Synagogues in the United States when a Jewish community moves on. Neglected, sold, they rarely have any meaningful or related purpose in their abandonment. But here in Morocco they are treated with deep respect and become “museums” where local children can learn about the neighbors their grandparents speak of, but that they will never know.

By late afternoon we will arrive in our destination for the next few days, Essaouira also known historically as Mogador. If Morocco has not shocked you yet maybe this city will. Today there is but one Jew left in this charming and truly wonderful city right on the Atlantic...beachfront! BUT, the Jewish history is unparalleled. The population was often 50% Jewish and rarely lower than 40%. The inter-relationship is revealed in every turn you make. Today, through the leadership of the Honorable André Azoulay, Senior Advisor

to the King, the Jewish historical sites are being restored and a new institute for the study of Muslim-Jewish co-existence (and in fact of the 3 Abrahamic religions) is being created. Tomorrow we will be the guests of the Foundation André created and we see and experience their work. But for now, let's get some background.

Jewish history in Morocco, like in other parts of the world is an up and down story until the 16th century when various circumstances result in a much safer and more stable life for Moroccan Jewry. The Saadian dynasty, which took over in the 16th and 17th centuries, suffered from political instability and military attacks throughout its reign. To finance military activities, Saadian Sultans taxed the Jewish community heavily. Ironically, to ensure that the Jews had adequate resources to pay these taxes, Sultans gave Jewish traders the monopoly over sugar exports. These traders were also responsible for a large percentage of the imports of European cloth and guns. Jews played a key role in the caravan trade with Sub-Saharan Africa, financing the exchanges of European cloth and Moroccan cereals for gold, ostrich feathers, gum arabic, and ivory. The fact that Jews had a common language with other Jews around the expanding world, both literally and figuratively made their trading skills unique and powerful. This placed them in a very important position within the developing economic realm of the ruling powers.

Under the Saadians, Spanish and Portuguese Marranos moved to Morocco's coastal cities, where they could work for the Portuguese traders and return to Judaism. In 1578, the Saadians defeated the Portuguese in a famous battle near Ksar el Kabir, a coastal settlement near Tangier. Since three kings died in the battle, some Moroccan Jewish communities established a special additional Purim holiday, "the Purim of the Three Kings," that is celebrated in the Spring before Passover.

By the 1760's, the Sultan increased the economic and political importance of the Jews through populating coastal cities with Jewish traders. He installed Jews in the Portuguese city of Mazagan (El Jadida) and created the port of Mogador (Essaouira). He declared that all trade was to go through Mogador, so that he could better control customs revenues. The Sultan asked wealthy Jewish families throughout the country to send family members to become traders in Mogador, where they received special financial treatment. Islamic law was applied liberally in Mogador, enabling Mogadorian Jews to be the first Moroccan Jews to dress in Western clothing.

The...Jewish Quarter of Essaouira was established in the mid-eighteenth century by Alaouite Sultan Sidi Mohamed ben Abdellah on the site of a sixteenth-century Portuguese fortress. It quickly became a major trading post between Africa and Europe. During that period, the Jewish Quarter, the Mellah, was established to extend the sultan's protection to the Jewish inhabitants. Making up 40-50 percent of the city's population, the thriving and productive Jewish community was deeply integrated into Moroccan society, and the Mellah played an important role in Essaouira's economic development.

A port city is an ideal place for Jews to settle, as their trading role and experience benefits from the international opportunities presented by the access to shipping.

Our visit to Essaouira allows us to glimpse a fascinating piece of contemporary Moroccan life similar in many ways to what we saw in Spain and even in Portugal. The growing interest amongst Jews and others in Jewish history stimulates Jewish tourism which is an important tool in both economic development and international relations. Here we will see the major investment in historic preservation being undertaken with both public and private funds and under the leadership of some of the most powerful people in Morocco, Jews and Muslims alike.

We will arrive at the M Gallery Hotel, checkin and then have dinner out in the very gentle and charming median, or along the beachfront in one of several fish restaurants all very close to our hotel.

Thursday, March 22

9:00 AM Breakfast

10:00 AM We'll walk the short distance back to the Medina and meet with Tarik Ottmani, President and Kautar Chakir, Executive Secretary of the Essaouira Mogador Foundation who will be our hosts for the next few hours. We will get an intimate sense of what is happening here and it's rather profound implications. Please don't forget the international context within which we live today, the degree of hostility that exists in so many parts of the world. Muslim extremists destroying major sights of cultural traditions going back 1000's of years. Here in contrast there is building going on and that "building" is not only in physical structure!

Before lunch we will stop and introduce you to the last remaining Jewish resident of Essaouira, Joseph Sebag. A fascinating person, antique and book dealer and fluent English speaker, Joseph will love to speak with you in small groups if you stop back by his little shop during your free time. On Friday night we will meet his brother, Rabbi Jaqui Sebag who is the Executive Director of one of the 6 Jewish day schools in Casablanca. Joseph is very secular, his brother very religious. They are very close friends and deeply respectful of each other. Both are very wonderful and special people whom you will enjoy meeting.

By mid afternoon we will turn the experience over to you and encourage to walk throughout the Medina, make your way over the port, dip your feet in the ocean (no ocean swimming allowed...hotel pool is OK) and just use the time to relax after the very intense days we had since leaving Marrakech on Sunday morning.

6:00 PM Group meeting at the Hotel.

7:00 PM Dinner and evening out. Early curfew tonight as we must be up and out quite early.

Friday, ערב שבת March 23:

7:30 AM We depart from Essaouira and head north for Casablanca! It's a 5 hour+ drive so we must leave quite early.

1:30 PM Upon arrival we will have lunch at one of the 3 Jewish clubs, all with kosher restaurants open to the public. It is a very good way to consider the uniqueness of the Casablanca Jewish community, today numbering by most estimates under 2000 people. Here we have 6 Jewish schools, 2 of them high schools; 27 Synagogues, 13 kosher butchers, 4 kosher bakeries, the Museum of Moroccan Jewry (a National Museum), a kosher beach club during the summer months, etc. In North America a community of this size would not be able to even consider let alone sustain such a quality of Jewish life.

3:00 PM Check in to the **Idou Anfa Hotel**, our home for the next two nights. We'll check in and do a quick preparation for Shabbat and meet in the lobby at 4 PM for a short ride to the Casablanca Jewish youth club, the DGG.



André Azoulay speaking at the KIVUNIM Alumni Conference, December 2015 at Congregation Bnai Jeshurun (BJ) in NYC.

4:30 PM
We are very privileged to have a private meeting with the Honorable André Azoulay, Senior Advisor to King Mohammed VI of Morocco. He is considered one of the truly outstanding diplomats and public personalities

of Europe and North Africa. As a Moroccan Jew he has served his people and his country with great dignity and enormous ability for decades. Born in 1941 he has served the Royal Palace for over 27 years, having previously advised Mohammed VI's father, the late King Hassan II. He currently presides over the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue Between Cultures, based in Alexandria, Egypt and is President of the Executive Committee of the Foundation for the Three Cultures and the Three Religions, based in Seville, Spain. He is a founding member

of the C-100 Davos Forum for the Dialogue of Civilizations and Religions, and was formerly Executive Vice-President of the BNP Paribas, Paris.

Born in Essaouira to a Moroccan Berber-Jewish family, Azoulay was educated in Paris where he studied economics, journalism and international relations. Prior to his diplomatic career he had a long tenure at the Paribas Bank in Paris (1968 to 1990) where, as Executive Vice-President, he covered the Middle East and North Africa Regions as well as heading the bank's Public Affairs department.

As Counsellor of the late King Hassan II from (1991 to 1999), and since then to King Mohammed VI, André Azoulay has made significant contributions to the implementation of economic reforms, which have been applied throughout the kingdom since their inception in the early 1990s. He also played a significant role in the privatization and de-regulation programs which began in 1993. He emphasized the need for sustaining the role of the private sector and encouraging international investment to sustain economic growth in Morocco. Azoulay has also made significant contribution to the public relations of Morocco throughout the world.

Over the past decade André has also become a close friend of KIVUNIM and is eager to speak with you about the work we can do together to bridge the growing distance between the Islamic world and much of the West. It is a great honor for us to have time to spend with him.

5:45 PM We will have a short city tour by bus ending at the Neve Shalom Synagogue for Kabbalat Shabbat. Here, in contrast to the very small community in Marrakech we will struggle to find seats and will hear the powerful chorus of many voices and their wonderful melodies throughout the service. We are likely to receive a very warm greeting here, as Rabbi Jaquy Sebag (brother of the antiquarian of Essaouira) was himself a participant in the KIVUNIM teachers program in the early 2000's.

8:00 PM Shabbat dinner will be quite elegant in another of the kosher Jewish clubs of Casablanca. We should be back to the hotel by 11 PM. Get some sleep...we were up early this morning! Very early.

Shabbat, שבת March 24:

7-9:00 AM: Breakfast is available in the lobby restaurant

9:30 AM: We meet in the lobby and depart for Shabbat services at the Beth El Synagogue. Of the almost 30 Synagogues in this now small Jewish community,

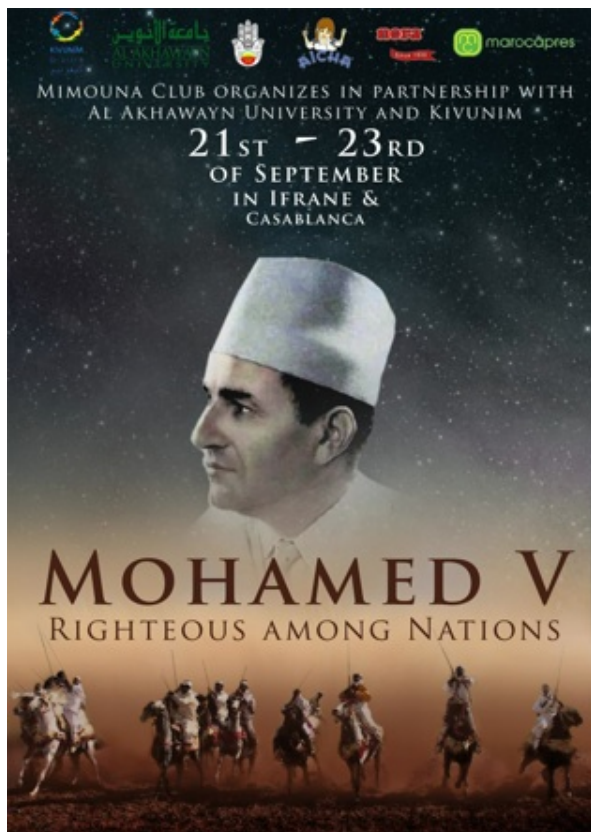
Beth El is the most distinguished and probably as well the most beautiful. Moroccan Jews are very traditional people and going to Synagogue is part of the routine of their lives while often not fitting into a fully traditional Jewish lifestyle as might be more commonly linked to Synagogue attendance in the US or in Israel.

12:30 PM: Shabbat lunch will be served at the Synagogue following the communal kiddush. Then the afternoon is yours to stroll the main avenue on our hotel down to the Hassan II Mosque and the beachfront along the Atlantic. Of course you may use the afternoon to catch up on some much needed sleep as well...or prepare for the missing sleep coming tonight as Morocco “springs ahead” moving their clock up one hour!

5:30 PM: Tonight will also open us to a new and very different experience. In a world of stereotypes and travel bans we will meet some of the leadership of the **Mimouna Association, a group of Moroccan Muslim students striving to preserve and promote the history of Morocco’s ancient Jewish community. READ THAT SENTENCE AGAIN, to make sure it sinks in!**

Traditionally celebrated at the end of Passover, “Mimouna” is a unique Moroccan Jewish celebration of liberty and community. At the end of the Passover holiday, when Jews have had a long week of neither bread nor regular cakes and cookies, their Muslim neighbors would bring them hametz that night so they did not have to

await the opening of the bakeries in the morning. This custom, accompany by parties and celebrations, is a classic example, maybe even “the” classic example, of the Muslim-Jewish co-existence that we continue to hear so much about here in this very special country.



The Mimouna Association (first called Moadon Mimouna, the Mimouna Club) was founded in 2007 at Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane (AUI). MIMOUNA seeks to educate the Moroccan people about the Jewish culture that flourished in the country, and encourage harmony between Jews and Muslims. MIMOUNA members study Hebrew and Jewish history, as well as organize cultural events. Thousands of people have attended their annual “Moroccan Jewish Days” and their “Moroccan Jewish Caravan.”

In September 2011, MIMOUNA organized a conference commemorating Jewish victims of the Nazi Holocaust and honoring King Mohammed V for his refusal to assent to the persecution of Jews during the Vichy occupation. The conference was recognized in the New York Times as “the first of its kind in an Arab or Muslim nation and a sign of historical truth triumphing over conspiracy theories and anti-Semitic dogma.” MIMOUNA members have continued their activities despite criticism, refusing to give in to ignorance and intolerance, and in fact work to counter both through their activism. The Holocaust Conference was co-sponsored by KIVUNIM and 10 of our alumni were in attendance (including Rabbi-to-be Ben Perlstein!)

Then as a result of the Holocaust Conference the Mimouna members decided they wanted to accept a KIVUNIM invitation to come to Israel on the first Arab student Israel Study Seminar in the history of the State of Israel in 2012. Tonight you will meet Mimouna’s imaginative and courageous founder, Elmehti Boudra, graduate of Al Akhawayn and Brandeis University. I think you will be fascinated and inspired to meet Mehdi and some of his colleagues.

7:40 PM: Havdalah and then a few hours for dinner out and a little Casa night life. Curfew will be midnight as the clock moves up tonight...while your phone will automatically adjust your watches will not.

Sunday, March 25:

7-9:00 AM Breakfast Available in the lobby restaurant with bus loading completed by 9:30.

9:45 AM Departure for The Hassan II Mosque. Built for the 60th birthday of former Moroccan King Hassan II it is the largest religious monument in the world after Mecca. It has space for 25,000 worshippers inside and another 80,000 outside. The 210-meter minaret is the tallest in the world and is visible day and night for miles around. Although Hassan II Mosque was designed by a French architect, it is Moroccan through and through. All of the granite, plaster, marble, wood, and other materials used in its construction were taken from around Morocco. (The sole exceptions are the white granite columns and the glass chandeliers.) Six thousand traditional Moroccan artisans worked for five years to turn these raw materials into abundant and incredibly beautiful mosaics, stone and marble floors and columns, sculpted plaster moldings, and carved and painted wood



ceilings. The mosque also includes a number of modern touches: it was built to withstand earthquakes and has a heated floor, electric doors, a sliding roof, and lasers which shine at night from the top of the minaret toward Mecca.

Some have questioned the expenditure of so much money in a very poor country, but one should consider the 1000's of people put to productive work as a result of this "public works project." The Mosque gave another generation of disappearing artisans and craftsmen a new lease on their creative and productive lives. Things are not always as simple or straightforward as they might seem!

11:30 AM Now we arrive at the only Jewish Museum in the Arab world, the Museum of Moroccan Jewry. Here in this beautiful setting and building is a remarkable collection of material culture - the collected story of the Jewish people in this land. Photographs, artifacts, film, books, documents, clothing, you name it we got it! And this museum is on the curriculum of the Casablanca school system and visited by 1000's of Muslim students each year. Over the past almost 20 years, Rafi has traveled the entire country collecting materials for the Museum. Last year, the Museum exhibited a series of documents and photographs from the KIVUNIM Convocation in honor of King Mohammed V in NYC that took place on December 20, 2015. We were very honored by this temporary exhibit. Maybe think about it this way: In the United States we only opened an African-American Museum a year or so ago; in Israel there is no Palestinian-Israeli Museum even though they constitute 20% of the population of the State. It is a striking level of appreciation and recognition reflected in this National museum whose Director is paid for by the State.

12:30 PM Now we make our way north heading to Fes for our final few days on this rather complex and extraordinary trip. We will stop on the way for our picnic lunch and then continue to the city of Meknes. You might be surprised that we would turn off the highway for a visit to a door, but when you see this one you will hopefully understand.

The Bab al-Mansour gate, named after the architect, El-Mansour was completed 5 years after Sultan Moulay Ismail's death, in 1732. The design of the gate plays with Almohad patterns. It has zellij mosaics of excellent quality. The marble columns were taken from the Roman ruins of Volubilis. When the structure was completed, Moulay Ismail inspected the gate, asking El-



Mansur if he could do better. El-Mansur felt compelled to answer yes, making the sultan so furious he had him executed! Still, according to historical records, the gate was finished after Moulay Ismail's death. The gate itself is now used as an arts and crafts gallery; entry is actually by a side gate. This is the main gate between the Medina and Imperial City of Meknes.

We will spent the next two nights and full day in the most spectacular of ancient cities in Morocco. Build on a series of hills, the city of Fes is beautiful to behold. The Jewish history in this city is long and storied. The center of its fame is of course the fact that it provided home and protection to the Rambam, the great Maimonides, in his escape from the growing dangers in radicalized Moorish Spain and en route to his eventual and final home in Egypt.

6:00 PM Before dinner we will visit the 17th century **Slat Alfassiyyine Synagogue** whose 2 year restoration was completed in 2013. The opening of this historical site was attended by Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane and was covered in all newspapers and TV news as well. Attending as well were Serge Berdugo, President of the Moroccan Jewish communities and Ambassador-at-Large for the King and the then speaker of the German Parliament, Norbert Lambert (the German government provided major funding for this project).

The bringing together of an Islamist Prime Minister and a German Parliamentarian was just one sign of the significance of the synagogue reopening. King Mohammed VI's message was read by Prime Minister Benkirane in which he hailed the "spiritual wealth and diversity" of Morocco. The secular traditions of Moroccan civilization drew their essence from the fact that Moroccans are deeply ingrained with the values of coexistence, tolerance and harmony between the different components of the nation," the King said. **He went on to call for the renovation of all Jewish places of worship.** Remember, this takes place against the backdrop of the new constitution, adopted in 2011 in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, **that recognized Morocco's Jewish heritage as part of Morocco's national identity.** The King has also committed national funds to staff and care for the over 300 Jewish cemeteries across the country in recognition that the Jewish community is simply too small to properly care for all of them.

7:30 PM We will have another kosher dinner in the Jewish Community building. (I often point the irony that we actually get more kosher food in Morocco than in any other country we travel to, outside of Israel. After dinner take a little time to enjoy the evening in Fes.

Monday, March 26:

8:00 AM Breakfast

9:00 AM This morning we begin a full day in the historic Medina of Fes. Here in Fes is the greatest of the Souks. **Here the oldest still functioning University in the world.** Here physical beauty and the commanding majesty of the hills upon which the city is built.

Here too is amazing Jewish history dating well over 2000 years! Here is the recently restored 17th century Ibn Danan Synagogue located not far from Maimonides home in Fes's old city Medina. With our visits to Fes and Marrakech we have a more complete picture of the inner life and workings of the Medina and the great and famous souks specializing in all types of goods and services. In Fes one must see the leather dyers, whose color-filled vats are the same as those you may have seen empty on the top of Masada earlier in the Fall.

The oldest of Morocco's four imperial cities, Fes was founded on the banks of the Wadi Fès by Idrīs I (east bank about 789) and Idrīs II (west bank, about 809). The two parts were united by the Almoravids in the 11th century to become a major Islamic city. Fès reached its zenith as a centre of learning and commerce under the Marīnids in the mid-14th century and has kept its religious primacy through the ages. The Treaty of Fès (March 30, 1912) established the French protectorate in Morocco.

The city is almost completely surrounded by low hills covered with olive groves and orchards. The ancient battlements of Fès, flanked by stone towers, still partly enclose the old city, which is known as the Fès el-Bali. **The old city contains the Qarawiyyin Mosque, the oldest in northern Africa, and is the seat both of the famous Islamic University (founded 859).**

Fes is a centre for trade and traditional crafts, and until the late 19th century it was the only place in the world where the Fes (brimless red felt hat in the shape of a truncated cone) was made. Most of the city's traditional crafts, such as leatherwork and pottery making, are practiced in the narrow, winding streets of the old city and are sold in that section's traditional souks. The Medina was named a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1981.

The Lonely Planet guide captures the city very well: "An ancient breeding ground for scholars and artisans, imams and gourmands – Fes is a supremely self-confident city with a historical and cultural lineage that beguiles visitors. And there is something intangibly raw about a place where 70,000 people still choose to live in the maelstrom of a medina so dark, dense and dilapidated that it remains the world's largest car-free urban area. Donkeys cart goods down the warren of alleyways as they have done since medieval times, and ruinous pockets loom around every corner – though a government drive to restore Fès el-Bali to its former glory is spurring changes.

Fes' medina can seem like it's in a state of perpetual pandemonium; some visitors fall instantly in love and others recoil in horror. But its charms are many. Seemingly blind alleys lead to squares with exquisite fountains and streets bursting with aromatic food stands, rooftops unveil a sea of minarets, and stooped doorways reveal the workshops of tireless artisans.

We have a vegetarian Coucous lunch in the Medina and for sure have enough time for shopping on the final day of souk heaven!

4:00 PM We will return tired to the hotel, freshen up and then have an evening of dinner out and some relaxed time to just walk and talk and think...we have seen and

absorbed a lot these past 10 days and out time in Spain and Portugal also needs to integrate into this visit. So take some time to think and write and think again.

Tuesday, March 27:

7-9:00 AM Breakfast

9:45 AM Bus is loaded...Please pack for the one night in Rabat and your travel needs tomorrow so you do not need to open (or possibly even remove from the luggage compartment of the bus) your big suitcase!

10:00 AM Departure for Rabat.

12:00 PM Picnic Lunch

1:00 PM Arrival in Rabat and checkin to the Hotel.

2:00 PM Tribute to the leaders of the nation. We will take a short ride from our hotel to the beautiful Mosque built specially to hold the tombs of these two revered modern Kings of Morocco. For the Jewish people, the memory of Mohammed V is of special significance for his actions, his personal courage that protected the 300,000 Moroccan Jews from deportation by the Vichy French government in 1940-41. Many years we are invited into the crypt as the Mausoleum is closed to the public and we chant the traditional *אל מלא רחמים* prayer at his tomb and that of his father. Colonel Skali, a retired army officer assigned the task of guarding the sanctity of this memorial is not well this year and therefore our visit will not be an intimate one. However, coming to a place like this is an act of gratitude representing the entire Jewish people. When you stand silently looking down at the graves, bring to your mind the words of Mohammed VI's Holocaust proclamation that we read together last weekend.

"Not withstanding the implacable realities of the French Protectorate which severely contained his power, His Majesty managed to oppose the enforcement of the racist Vichy laws against Moroccan citizens of Jewish faith." He was only 32 years old when he stood to the German and French fascists and acted with courage and conviction...unlike almost all of the leadership of the rest of the "civilized" world."

Our presence here today is a tribute to him.

4:00 PM We will have some time to pack and ready ourselves for tomorrow and then have dinner at the hotel and an RA activity before getting some sleep.

Wednesday, March 28:

First groups depart early, with the first 3 of us leaving at 3 AM, the next group at 7:30 AM and then the final group returning to Israel, going to NY non stop and Eli en route to Italy all will leave at 11 AM.

Have a wonderful and meaningful Pesah and we'll see you again on April 9th!



*Praise be to God
May peace and blessings be upon His Prophets and Messengers*

***Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,***

What a choice and what a responsibility to call on Aladdin's myth to invite us to ponder collectively and differently on one of the most tragic and inexpressible stigmas of modern history.

It is indeed a responsibility and unusual choice because none of us, ladies and gentlemen, can claim to have an understanding of the Holocaust that is all-encompassing, absolute and without concession or compromise.

Such concession or compromise would be dictated by the speculations of the moment or by the frailties of a guilty memory because it is deliberately selective.

Amnesia has no effect on my understanding of the Holocaust, or that of my people.

In fact, we perceive it as a wound to the collective memory, which we know is engraved in one of the most painful chapters in the collective history of mankind.

People other than myself can rightly point out, in this respect, that when it comes to the Kingdom of Morocco, this assertion is not new, nor is it merely spoken words.

The reason I say this today is to make sure that Aladdin, your Reflection Group, sets for itself the priority objective of finally telling the rest of the world how Arab and Islamic countries, such as mine, resisted Nazism and said 'No' to the barbarity of the Nazis and to the villainous laws of the Vichy government.

The Community of Nations has for long accommodated itself with a selective reading of the history of this dark and regressive era. A reading that allowed all fantasies to flourish by default.

In what history or civic education textbooks used in the West is it taught that Morocco had opened its doors, as early as the 1930s, to European Jewish communities who had seen the peril looming on the horizon?

In what institutes or intellectual forums, in Europe or the United States, is the exemplary and historic attitude of my late grandfather His Majesty King Mohammed V - blessed be his soul - discussed? Notwithstanding the implacable realities of the French protectorate, which severely constrained his power, His Majesty managed to oppose the enforcement of the racist Vichy laws against Moroccans citizens of Jewish faith.

Each of you will understand that when I call for an exhaustive and faithful reading of the history of this period, I do not merely do justice to actual facts.

We live in a time that is not neutral. A time in which the collective imagination of all of our societies is also fuelled by the prospect of exclusion and failure when it comes to the promises of dialogue between our civilizations, our cultures and our religions.

Hence, we must together endeavour to re-assert reason and the values which underpin the legitimacy of a space of conviviality where the words of dignity, justice and freedom will express themselves in the same way and will coexist, with the same requirements, regardless of our origins, cultures or spiritualities.

This is our interpretation, in Morocco, of the duty of remembrance dictated by the Shoah.

In its depth as much as in its tragic specificity, this duty of remembrance strongly imposes ethical, moral and political standards which will, tomorrow, be the true guarantors of this peace - based on equally shared justice and dignity - and for which most Palestinians and Israelis yearn.

Thank you.

Mohammed VI
King of Morocco

The Royal Palace, Fez
18 March 2009

Some documents follow:

THE NEW YORK TIMES

Distinctive Mission for Muslims' Conference: Remembering the Holocaust

On Religion

By SAMUEL G. FREEDMAN SEPT. 23, 2011

One afternoon this week, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran addressed the United Nations General Assembly, once again casting doubt that the Holocaust had occurred. Almost exactly 24 hours earlier, an otherwise obscure college student in [Morocco](#) named Elmehdi Boudra was convening a conference devoted not to denying the Holocaust but to remembering it.

Mr. Ahmadinejad's [speech](#), not surprisingly, made major news around the world, as had his similar pronouncements in earlier years and his Tehran convention of Holocaust deniers. Mr. Boudra's [conference](#), meanwhile, attracted virtually no media attention of any kind.

Yet it should have been trumpeted, all the more for its coincidental timing. While Holocaust denial or denigration in the Muslim world is a sadly familiar phenomenon, hardly news at all, the conference put together by Mr. Boudra and several dozen classmates, all of them Muslim, may well have been the first of its kind in an Arab or Muslim nation, and a sign of historical truth triumphing over conspiracy theories and anti-Semitic dogma.

The conference — held at [Al Akhawayn University](#) in Ifrane, a town in the Atlas Mountains about two hours south of Rabat — brought together Holocaust scholars and survivors, leaders of Morocco's Jewish community and American Jewish and Moroccan Muslim students. Its twin mandates were to teach about the extermination of European Jewry and to pay homage to the courage of Morocco's wartime king, Mohammed V, in resisting the orders of the Vichy French occupation government to round up and turn over Jews for internment and probable death.

Uncommonly among Arab and Muslim nations, Morocco has accepted the reality of the Holocaust, rather than either dismissing it outright or portraying it as a European crime for which those countries paid the price in the form of Israel's creation. Partly, no doubt, because of Mohammed V's stand against the Vichy regime, the current king, Mohammed VI, called in a 2009 proclamation for "an exhaustive and faithful reading of the history of this period" as part of "the duty of remembrance dictated by the Shoah."

Still, the recent conference would never have occurred without Mr. Boudra. Now 24 and majoring in political science, Mr. Boudra grew up after much of Morocco's Jewish population had moved to France or Israel. But he heard from his grandmother about her childhood in the Jewish quarter of Casablanca, and a grandfather still had Jewish neighbors in his apartment house.

German Jews powerful enough to intercede with the Nazis? Was propaganda the way the Nazis justified the Holocaust to non-Jews? Why hasn't Mohammed V been listed among the righteous gentiles in the Holocaust museum of Yad Vashem?

At one point, a Jewish adviser to the current king, Andre Azoulay, addressed Mr. Boudra and the Mimouna Club directly. Mr. Azoulay was born in 1941, during the Vichy occupation, which made him a half-century older than the students. To make sure all the visitors, too, would understand him, he switched from French into English.

"You have decided by yourself," he said. "No one asked you to do it. It was your decision, your vision, your commitment." He mentioned the significance of naming the club for Mimouna with its connection to the Exodus. "You Muslim students decided to be identified with our liberation," he said. "It's not something usual."about her childhood in the Jewish quarter of Casablanca, and a grandfather still had Jewish neighbors in his apartment house.

Those few personal connections kindled a broader curiosity. That curiosity ultimately led Mr. Boudra to study with Simon Levy, a scholar who directs the Museum of Moroccan Judaism of Casablanca, and to read such classic Holocaust memoirs as "If This Is a Man" by Primo Levi and the diary of Anne Frank.

As a student at Al Akhawayn, an elite university with an international orientation, Mr. Boudra and several dozen friends formed a club around their shared interest in Morocco's Jewish culture and heritage. They named it Mimouna, after the holiday that Moroccan Jews celebrate on the final day of [Passover](#).

"What upsets me about this subject," Mr. Boudra wrote in an e-mail message last week, "is some people's claims that the Holocaust never took place. It is simply absurd to hear such claims in the light of the historical evidence the world has today."

Through Mimouna and Al Akhawayn, Mr. Boudra met another barrier-breaker named Peter Geffen. The descendant of a distinguished rabbinic family, Mr. Geffen had founded a Jewish day school in New York and an organization, [Kivunim](#), that provided students and teachers with study and travel in Jewish communities around the world.

Last December, Mr. Geffen took 60 Kivunim participants to Ifrane to meet with the Mimouna Club. As the session ended, Mr. Boudra pulled him aside to say that the club wanted to hold a Holocaust conference and to ask if Mr. Geffen could help.

“The whole power of it is that it was their idea,” Mr. Geffen said in a recent interview, recalling the conversation. “This is before the Arab Spring, and here’s a group of Muslim students, 20, 21 years old, on an Arab campus in the Arab world. And to have an intuitive recognition that opening the discussion in the face of widespread Holocaust denial is a major human step forward.”

In the intervening months, Mr. Geffen and Mr. Boudra worked both separately and together to assemble financial support, formal sponsorship and a schedule, which included scholarly presentations, panel discussions, first-person testimony, museum visits, a concert of Moroccan Jewish music and scrupulously kosher meals.

So it was that on Sept. 21, the eminent Holocaust historian Michael Berenbaum spoke of the Jewish genocide in Europe, the tide that Mohammed V succeeded in holding back in his nation. An 80-year-old survivor, Elisabeth Citron, recounted her childhood in Romania and Hungary — wearing the yellow star, being deloused with gasoline in front of a laughing first-grade class, being deported to Birkenau, watching the daily selection of inmates for the gas chambers and ovens.

“I don’t expect any of you to understand how today I’m here standing in front of you,” Ms. Citron said. “I have no clue why I am here.” By which, of course, she meant alive. For their part, the Moroccan students asked questions and got answers. Were there any German Jews powerful enough to intercede with the Nazis? Was propaganda the way the Nazis justified the Holocaust to non-Jews? Why hasn’t Mohammed V been listed among the righteous gentiles in the Holocaust museum of Yad Vashem?

At one point, a Jewish adviser to the current king, Andre Azoulay, addressed Mr. Boudra and the Mimouna Club directly. Mr. Azoulay was born in 1941, during the Vichy occupation, which made him a half-century older than the students. To make sure all the visitors, too, would understand him, he switched from French into English.

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