

ABSTRACT

GRANDPA EPHRAIM AND GRANDPA MENASHE:
TWO OPPOSITE CHARACTERS, BASED ON PERSONAL AND
COMMUNAL CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

Yona Sabar

The article is mainly memories of Sabar's grandparents Ephraim and Menasheh, during the decade preceding the family's emigration to Israel, en masse with all the communities of the Iraqi Jews, in 1951, just before Passover, when he was thirteen years old and Shalom (for whom this volume is dedicated) was just one month old. Ephraim and Menasheh lived in the same street, their houses almost facing each other, and adjacent to both the two synagogues in town. They attended the same synagogue, but they were very different in appearance and character, their occupations and economic conditions. Ephraim was a learned man, while Menasheh was almost illiterate. Ephraim used to bless little Yona on Eve of Sabbath with the traditional blessing, 'May God make you like Ephraim and Menasheh...' and Yona wondered if the names were referring to his grandfathers in some way. Ephraim was a very religious man, and used to spend most of his time reading books in synagogue. Before the Aliya (immigration) to Israel he was very excited and had many naive expectations about Israel as a paradise for Jews, but after the immigration, facing the hard life in a Ma'barah (transition camp) as an old man, he suffered a great deal and had a hard time adjusting.