



THE MEMORIES LAST FOREVER!

# Jewish Heritage Journey through **MOROCCO**



Led by Rabbi Ron Segal  
March 28 - April 9, 2027



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*Travel through Morocco on an immersive Jewish heritage journey that spans imperial cities, ancient mellahs, desert communities, and vibrant modern culture. From Casablanca and Fez to the Sahara and Marrakech, this thoughtfully curated experience explores centuries of Jewish life woven into Morocco's history—through synagogues, cemeteries, scholars, and shared traditions with Muslim and Amazigh neighbors. Along the way, enjoy rich cultural encounters, meaningful Shabbat experiences, dramatic landscapes, and unforgettable moments of learning, reflection, and connection.*



*We are delighted that we will have the expertise of **Dr. David Mendelsohn** on our trip to Morocco, in addition to our local guide, to bring added depth to our learning as we travel the country together.*

## DAY 1

**SUNDAY, MARCH 28, 2027**  
DEPARTURE

- We depart the United States on our overnight flights to **Morocco**.

## DAY 2

**MONDAY, MARCH 29, 2027**  
WELCOME TO MOROCCO

- **Welcome to Morocco!** We arrive at Casablanca International Airport, where we are met by an Ayelet Tours representative.
- We drive toward the city of **Casablanca**, Morocco's cosmopolitan, economic and business capital. Originally a Phoenician and Roman city, Casablanca is home to the largest Jewish community in the Arab world.
- We enjoy lunch at a local restaurant.
- We begin our journey through Morocco's rich Jewish heritage at the **Jewish Museum of Morocco**, the Arab world's first Jewish museum. According to legend, Jews arrived in Morocco as early as 800 BCE. By 1948, the Jewish population had grown to an estimated 250,000-350,000 and was the largest and, arguably, most integrated Jewish community in any Muslim country. The museum includes displays of traditional Jewish-Berber clothing and a feature on goldsmiths, a common Jewish occupation in Morocco.
- This afternoon, we continue to discover **Casablanca's Jewish heritage sites**, visiting former synagogues and neighborhoods that reflect the city's once-thriving Jewish life.
- This evening, we gather for a **welcome dinner**, marking the beginning of our journey together in Morocco.

**Overnight in Casablanca (L, D)**



- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- Fast-moving Casablanca is also a city of faith, as we'll experience at the **Mosque of Hassan II**. This modern mosque has room for over 100,000 worshipers. It is perched dramatically over the ocean to reflect a verse in the Koran that "God's throne was built upon the water." Over 6,000 master craftspeople created its hand-carved marble walls, retractable roof and the tallest minaret in the world at almost 700 feet. See if you agree with the builder's patron, King Hassan II, that this is a monument that Casablanca will be proud of until the end of time."
- **Lunch** included before the drive.
- We then begin our drive toward **Fez**, accompanied by a **lecture from Dr. David Mendelsohn**, who provides insightful historical and cultural context as the scenery shifts from coastline to rolling countryside.
- Fez is one of the great medieval cities of the world. It gained its nicknames due to its scholars (both Muslim and Jewish), spirituality, trade and culture. In the 12th and 13th centuries, Fez was among the world's most populated cities and the home of the Marinid kingdom. We'll learn about the kings, communities and creativity that drove Fez as we experience the beauty and liveliness of the city today.
- Upon arrival, we check into our hotel and refresh before dinner together this evening.

### Overnight in Fez (B, L, D)



- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Despite suffering from periodic persecutions, Fez's **mellah (Jewish Quarter)** was home to brilliant scholars, poets and innovators. We will travel back in time to the Golden Age for Jews in Fez from the 8th to 12th centuries, when the community included some key figures in the Jewish world, including Rabbi Moses Maimonides (the Rambam), the great philosopher and religious thinker. We will also find out why the name of the Jewish Quarter comes from the Arab word for salt. Our tour will include:
  - » **Ibn Danan Synagogue:** Although recently restored, this is one of the oldest and most important synagogues in North Africa.
  - » **Slat El Fassiyne Synagogue:** This once-vital synagogue fell into disrepair after the migration of most of the city's Jews in the 1950s and 1960s. It was used as a boxing ring and carpet factory until it was recently restored with support from overseas funders and the Moroccan government.
  - » **Fez Jewish Cemetery:** We will hear stories of some of the city's legendary rabbis and leaders who are buried here and learn about the influence of the tzaddikim, Jewish holy men who were admired by both Jews and Muslims for their scholarliness and reputation as miracle-workers. We will also stop at a plaque commemorating Sol Hachuel, a young Jewish woman famed for her beauty who was decapitated in 1834 for refusing to convert to Islam.
- The Fez **Medina** is a dense maze of alleyways and streets and the largest car-free pedestrian zone in the world. Don't worry, our tour educator knows the way through this UNESCO World Heritage site that includes many buildings, mosques and gates from the 12th century. Our visit includes:
  - » **Rambam House:** Visit the home and study site dedicated to the memory of the great Jewish philosopher and physician, Moses Ben Maimonides (the Rambam), who once lived and taught in Fez.
  - » **Local craftsmen:** Catch a glimpse of the craftsmen at work in their shops as they weave, embroider, carve and chisel using ancient techniques.
  - » **Madrasa Bou Inania:** Fez contains some of the finest Islamic architecture in the world. This Madrasa (Islamic religious college) was established in 1351 and is famed for its minaret and geometric decorations. It is one of the few Islamic sites in Morocco that is accessible to non-Muslim visitors.
  - » **University of Al-Karaouine:** believed to be the oldest continuously operating university in the world. Today, non-Muslims can view it only from the outside, but in the 12th century, the Rambam (Moses Ben Maimonides) studied medicine and philosophy here.
- We stop for lunch on our own at a local restaurant.
- After lunch, we enjoy a leisurely afternoon exploring the vibrant Medina—wander through its lively souks, mingle with locals, and soak in the sights and sounds of daily life.
- Later, we return to the hotel to freshen up before heading out for a relaxed evening and dinner on our own—perhaps discover a hidden café or sample local specialties at a nearby restaurant.

### Overnight in Fez (B)





## DAY 5

THURSDAY, APRIL 1, 2027  
ROYAL RABAT

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
  - Today, we depart Fez and travel to **Meknes**, located on a fertile plain north of the Middle Atlas and the former residence of the Sultan. We will examine the superb architecture created during the long reign of **Moulay Ismail**, with its skillful blend of Islamic and European influences. At this finely decorated **mausoleum**, we will also consider the less attractive characteristics of “Moulay the Bloodthirsty” who is said to have ordered the city walls to be decorated with the heads of 10,000 of his enemies.
  - We enjoy lunch on our own en route
  - Our travels continue to the royal capital city of **Rabat** offering a unique blend of history, culture and modernity. Situated on the Atlantic Ocean at the mouth of the Bou Regreg River, the city is known for its elegant gardens, historical landmarks and its position as one of Morocco’s political and cultural centers
- We visit the magnificent **mausoleum of Mohammed V**, Morocco’s king during WWII, and hear why Moroccan Jews today believe that he should be recognized as one of the Righteous Among the Nations for helping to stop Nazis from deporting Morocco’s Jews to the death camps of Europe. His burial building is considered an architectural masterpiece. Also buried here is his son, **Hassan II**, who ruled over Morocco during the so-called “Years of Lead” (1961-1999). We will visit his tomb and hear about this period of conflict, human rights abuses and assassination attempts on the king’s life. It was during Hassan’s reign that most of the country’s Jews migrated to Israel, Canada and France.
  - After checking into our hotel, we enjoy time at leisure to explore or relax and enjoy our hotel amenities.
  - We enjoy **dinner** in a local restaurant and a **presentation by Dr. Mohamed Chtatou**, Professor of Education Science at the university in Rabat. He is currently a political analyst with Moroccan, Gulf, French, Italian and British media on politics and culture in the Middle East, Islam and Islamism as well as terrorism. He is also a specialist on political Islam in the MENA region with interest in the roots of terrorism and religious extremism.

Overnight in Rabat (B, D)



## DAY 6

FRIDAY, APRIL 2, 2027  
JOURNEY TO SAHARA

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- This morning, we board our flight to **Errachidia**, the gateway to the desert.
- Upon landing, we begin our drive toward the **Sahara**, passing date-palm oases, kasbah villages, and the first hints of desert horizon.
- We stop at the **Erfoud/Erzouga Synagogue** to welcome **Kabbalat Shabbat**, connecting our traditions to a landscape once home to ancient Jewish desert communities.
- As the afternoon light deepens, we drive into the **Sahara Desert** and arrive at our desert camp and enjoy dinner.
- This evening, we settle in for a peaceful Shabbat surrounded by the tranquility of the dunes.

**Overnight in Sahara (B, D)**

## DAY 7

SATURDAY, APRIL 3, 2027  
SHABBAT IN THE DUNES

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Today, we observe **Shabbat** in the serene beauty of the Sahara as we engage in meaningful learning and reflection.
- We meet with local **Berber (Amazigh) families**, hearing firsthand about nomadic traditions, storytelling, and life shaped by the desert.
- **OPTIONAL:** shopping and exploration excursion into the nearby Sahara town of **Merzuga**.
- **OPTIONAL:** try a Sahara original – **Sand Surfing!**
- Later, Dr. **David Medelsohn** leads an engaging session introducing us to **Amazigh language and culture**, offering insight into Morocco's Indigenous heritage.
- As the sun sets, we ride camels across the glowing dunes.
- We conclude Shabbat with a beautiful **Havdallah** ceremony beneath a sky filled with stars.

**Overnight in Sahara (B, L, D)**





## DAY 8

**SUNDAY, APRIL 4, 2027**  
**EXPLORING OUARZAZATE & KASBAHS**

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- This morning, we depart our desert camp and travel westward through dramatic landscapes.
- Along the way, we stop at **ancient synagogues and Jewish settlements**, learning about the desert trade routes that once connected Jewish communities from the Sahara to the Atlas Mountains.
- We arrive in **Ouarzazate**, known for its kasbahs, film studios, and desert architecture.
- We visit and tour one of Ouarzazate's famed **film studios**, gaining insight into the sets and locations used in major international films and television productions, often earning the city the nickname "Hollywood of the Desert."
- Dinner is on our own.

**Overnight in Ouarzazate (B)**

## DAY 9

**MONDAY, APRIL 5, 2027**  
**FROM KSAR TO CITY**

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- This morning, we depart Ouarzazate and travel toward one of Morocco's most iconic landmarks: **Ait Ben Haddou**, the ancient ksar that rises above the desert plain like a sand-colored fortress frozen in time. As we wander its earthen pathways and fortified alleys, we learn how Jewish and Muslim families once lived side by side in this historic trading village, contributing to its resilience and cultural richness. We stop at a **local synagogue site**, reflecting on the once-vibrant Jewish presence that accompanied caravans through this region for centuries.
- We continue across the **High Atlas Mountains**, passing small villages, dramatic peaks, and panoramic viewpoints.
- This evening, we arrive in **Marrakech**, settling into our accommodations as we shift from desert silhouettes to the vibrant rhythm of urban life.
- We gather for dinner, enjoying a warm welcome into one of Morocco's most storied cities.

**Overnight in Marrakech (B, D)**



## DAY 10

TUESDAY, APRIL 6, 2027  
JOURNEY TO MARRAKECH

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- This morning, we enjoy an **introductory tour of Marrakech** and get our first glimpse into this whirlwind of a city, which combines the madcap energy of its marketplaces with the serene rhythms of its religious life.
- We tour the **mellah (Jewish quarter)** of Marrakech. Until the 20th century, most urban Moroccan Jews, including in Marrakech, lived in walled, Jewish-only areas. We'll explore whether these quarters resembled the ghettos of Europe or were something quite different, as we discuss the sometimes close, sometimes brutal relations between Jews and Muslims in Morocco. Our tour will include:
  - » **Slat Al Azama Synagogue ("Synagogue of the Exiles")**: This synagogue was established around 1492 by Jews who were expelled or fled from Catholic persecution in Spain and Portugal. The synagogue's ornamentation, attractive blue-and-white decor and small but still active community are all examples of how the Jewish traditions of Marrakech are being maintained.
  - » **Marrakech's Jewish cemetery**: The cemetery has been recently restored after years of neglect. Here, we'll see monuments and graves commemorating children who perished during the epidemics that ravished the city's crowded Jewish Quarter in the 17th century. We learn about the great rabbis and kabbalists of Marrakech and discuss why many Jews from around the world make pilgrimages to their graves.
- This afternoon, we enjoy a **pottery workshop**, learning one of the most common forms of artistry in Morocco.
- Tonight, we **ride by horse and carriage to dinner** at a local restaurant.

Overnight in Marrakech (B, D)

## DAY 11

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7, 2027  
A DAY IN ESSAOUIRA

- Breakfast at our hotel and early morning departure towards the coast.
- **Good for the Skin, Body & Soul**: Along the way, we see many Argan trees, important to the region both economically and ecologically. At the **women's cooperative of Argan oil**, there will be an opportunity to learn about the wide ranging applications of the oil from cosmetics to medicines.
- **Essaouira**: We continue to **Essaouira**, once a majority Jewish city. Although originally Portuguese, Essaouira was fortified by a French-influenced architect named Vauban and also formed the settling ground for a large Jewish population, which is why the city has an eclectic, multicultural feel. The town was once over thirty percent Jewish and contained over thirty synagogues, some dating back to the 18th century.
- **Rabbi Chaim Pinto**: The seaport city of Essaouira is still synonymous with the famed rabbi and remained his home all his life. Every year on the anniversary of Rabbi Pinto's death, Jews from around the world pilgrimage in the week preceding Rosh Hashanah and pray at the rabbi's grave situated in the **old Jewish cemetery** adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean. Essaouira is also home to the **Chaim Pinto Synagogue**, the building that was once the rabbi's residence and is now a historic site.
- After **lunch** together, we check out the impressive **Bayt Dakira Jewish Museum**.
- We return to Marrakech and enjoy **dinner** on our own.

Overnight in Marrakech (B, L)



## DAY 12

THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 2027  
THE BEAUTY OF MARRAKECH

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- We begin our day with a guided walk through the **medina (walled city)** of Marrakech, one of Morocco's four imperial cities, also known as the Red City for the red walls that surround it. The medina is a thrilling, multifaceted area which includes:
  - » **Bab Agnaou:** A huge, superbly decorated gate allowing entrance into the royal city.
  - » **Bahia Palace:** Built in the late 19th century by Morocco's leading artisans, many consider this to be the finest palace built anywhere in the world during this time. Certainly, its architecture, gardens and design render it a remarkable achievement of Moroccan culture. Among its features is a harem, where vizier Abu Ahmed's four wives and 24 concubines lived.
- Morocco is a melting pot of identities and influences ranging from its indigenous Berber tribes to more recent visitors, including the French, who ruled over much of the country from 1912 to 1955. We'll spend time in the **French Quarter** and visit **Majorelle Garden** designed by the French painter and botanist Jacques Majorelle. The garden and buildings took him 40 years to create, but you will think it was time well spent as we wander along paths by sparkling pools shaded by gorgeous trees and plants from around the world.
- Afterwards, we enjoy a **hands-on Moroccan cooking class**. Together, we prepare classic dishes—perhaps fragrant tagines, fresh salads, or warm breads—using spices and methods that have been passed down through generations. As the aromas fill the kitchen, we connect more deeply with Moroccan culture and end the day savoring the meal we've crafted as a group.

- We complete our day meandering through **Djemaa El Fna Square**, an enormous market and a thrilling experience. According to one theory, its name means “the assembly of the dead” and refers to the public executions that used to take place here. Today, this square teems with life. Locals gather to shop, talk, and enjoy some of the best street food in all of Morocco. We will also have **time for shopping** and some **free time to explore on our own**. There's always something going on, so get ready for a daily carnival of snake charmers, street vendors, musicians, storytellers, and acrobats
- This evening, we gather together for a **farewell dinner**, recounting our memorable moments and shared experiences from our journey.

### Overnight in Marrakech (B, L, D)

## DAY 13

FRIDAY, APRIL 9, 2027  
UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- We transfer to the Marrakech Airport for our flight back to the United States, landing later today.

(B)



### ABOUT DR. MENDELSON:

*We are thrilled to have Dr. David Mendelsohn join our journey through Morocco, alongside our local guide, to enrich our exploration with his deep expertise. A seasoned scholar and educator, Dr. Mendelsohn has previously led Morocco trips and specializes in Islamic Studies, Arab-Israeli culture, Bedouin law, and the intersection of language and culture in Arabic and Hebrew. He also lectures on the history and relationships between Middle Eastern nations and militant organizations.*

*Dr. Mendelsohn holds a Ph.D. in Classics/Linguistics, an M.A. in Archaeology/Linguistics, and an Honours B.A. in Classical Studies. A recipient of Canada's prestigious Trudeau Prize, he lives in Jerusalem with his wife, Ronny, and their three children. For over 25 years, Dr. Mendelsohn has researched Jewish communities across the world, including in Germany, Spain, Portugal, Morocco, Eastern Europe, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Bulgaria, Egypt, and India. Combining his expertise as a historian, archaeologist, and sociolinguist, he uncovers the unique influences of local cultures while identifying the shared threads that connect these diverse Jewish communities.*

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*\*Itinerary subject to change*

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