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EDITORIAL

Nixon in Moscow

The Moscow visit of President Nixon in May is the first ever paid by an American President and it is bound to have far-reaching implications, especially after his visit to that other Communist giant, Mao's China, last February. This further exercise in summitry involves a heavy agenda—the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), Berlin and European détente (of paramount importance to the United States), trade, relations with China, Vietnam, the Indo-Pakistan quarrel over Bangladesh, and prominent among these latter, the Middle East.

It is obvious that the Soviet Union is following a policy in the area which may well be described as that of "controlled tension", i.e. to maintain tension between Israel and Egypt through massive arms supplies to the latter, thus creating a situation which could be exploited for her own purpose of eliminating Western, particularly American influence in the region. The danger of such brinkmanship lies in the possibility of the "tension" getting out of "control" leading to the war which the Egyptian President now maintains is inevitable. (Pro-Arab propagandists should realise that they are serving Soviet ends and not just the Arab peoples.)

Soviet influence in the Middle East since 1955 has made a spectacular advance, and has more than achieved the old Tsarist dream of a "warm-water port" all the year round for expanding trade. In 1955 the Soviet Union began to sell Czech arms to Nasser to counter the formation of the Baghdad Pact by US Secretary of State Dulles and the then British Foreign Secretary, Harold Macmillan (the Pact later became CENTO). Since then, especially after the Suez Crisis of 1956-57, the Soviet Union has become well-entrenched in Syria, having a naval base in Latakia, and in Egypt, with a naval base in Alexandria despite Sadat's protestations of just offering "facilities". Her gains have been consolidated by the 15-year Soviet-Egyptian Pact of May 1971 and the Soviet-Iraq Pact of April 1972 which give her a commanding position in the Persian Gulf following British withdrawal in December 1971.

Despite the presence of the US Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean, the Soviet naval presence has increased markedly. One is tempted to think that the Soviet Union is intent on following Mussolini's aim converting the Mediterranean into "mare nostrum" or "our (Soviet) sea".

With the stultifying of the Jarring Mission there

is still a possibility of the limited American initiative on reopening the Suez Canal succeeding. The Soviet Union will seek to derive maximum advantage in this for herself by, for instance, facilitating the despatch of arms supplies to the Indian Ocean area as well as to North Vietnam and thus the Soviet leaders will eagerly discuss this whole issue with Nixon.

The American President will also take up the question of Soviet Jewry following Congress resolutions on the subject. Cannot the question of Syrian Jewry also be taken up in view of the Soviets' influence with that country? The two-fold aim of the Action Committee for Arab Jewry (ACAJ) is to strive for the emigration of those Jews who wish to leave and fundamental human rights for those who wish to remain. Such a view of the Soviet Jewry issue, we dare to suggest, might have prevented the political storm occasioned by the remarks of World Jewish Congress President Dr. Nahum Goldmann to the British Board of Deputies last December.

The Nixon visit to Moscow, in itself an achievement brought about by the political acumen of his National Security adviser, Dr. Henry Kissinger, will be followed by a testing time, electoral considerations notwithstanding, and much will depend on the extent to which the Soviets can restrain Sadat! (And, perhaps, their own ambitions?)

Moroccan Jews' Conference

The Conference before last Passover of delegates from the 250,000 Moroccan Jewish community in Israel, with some from abroad, was the first of its kind, of members of an Oriental Jewish community. Its aim was to draw attention to their hardships—most of Israel's Black Panthers are drawn from this community—and this they achieved with addresses from Premier Golda Meir and other Israeli leaders. While the desire to prevent the coming into being of "the two Israels"—the second being that of the underprivileged—is there, is enough being done to probe into the deeper psychological and emotional aspects of the problem apart from the purely economic one, underlined as it is by the security situation?

ALBANY TRAVEL

We draw the attention of our readers to the Albany Travel advertisement on page 4. They are one of the largest tour operators to Israel, specialised in individual and group travel under the capable management of Mr. Delano who has been in charge of the department for 16 years.

HEADS, WE WIN — TAILS, YOU LOSE

Mr. Rustum Bastuni, an Israeli Arab and a former Knesseth Member, has put forward a three-point plan with a view to integrating Arabs in Israel on the basis of full equality. His points are:

- 1) A single, bilingual—Hebrew and Arabic—school system where Arab and Jewish pupils could study together rather than in separate schools as now;
- 2) The conscription of young Arabs, now exempt, into the Israeli Defence Forces; and
- 3) Complete separation between State and religion.

These suggestions may be sincere and may appear reasonable but they are in fact highly dangerous. It is also very ironical that they should be made by an Arab. The Arabs' indifference to a high standard of living results in a psychological staying power that in turn gives them optimism in the future and encourages them to view successive defeats as a step to victory. After three military defeats, Arab aim is still to get the upper hand over the Jews.

Let us examine how Arab governments applied the three principles of Mr. Bastuni. Arabic was first introduced with the Moslem conquest of the Middle East in the 7th century C.E., was made by Abdul Malik (685-705) as the only official language of the region and remained so till the Mogul invasion in the 13th century (*Language, Law and Diplomacy* by Ostrower). After the First World War the Arabs were allowed by the occupying Powers to have control of the area on the basis that the rights and interests of all minorities were to be respected and safeguarded but Arab governments ignored these rights and proceeded on a policy of Arabisation of the Middle East. Arabic was again made the only official language. By 1934 the teaching of Hebrew was forbidden even in the Jewish schools and Jewish religion and Scriptures had to be taught in Arabic. During the reign of terror in Iraq and Syria that followed the establishment of the State of Israel, Jewish houses were searched for Hebrew writings and Jews had to burn and destroy all their Hebrew books and manuscripts. Anyone found with a Hebrew book was arrested and imprisoned.

As regards army service, Jews were conscripted for menial duties only. The first class of reserve officers in Iraq in 1939, composed of university graduates, had 23 Jews out of 100 cadets. But all Jews were failed in their examination and were not commissioned into the army. Eventually Jews had to pay a heavy tax for not being conscripted.

Bastuni suggests the separation of State and religion. This may be a very desirable and enlightened policy but Mr. Bastuni does not suggest this to the Arab countries but only to Israel. In all Arab countries, Islam is firmly entrenched as the official state religion and all matters relating to personal status, even concerning non-Moslems, have to conform to Koranic legislation. During the five years of Qassem's enlightened regime in Iraq, this was corrected but after his downfall, Islamic law

was again established in these matters.

The right policy for Israel in dealing with Bastuni's suggestions would be this: while allowing Arab students to learn Arabic, Jews must not be encouraged to learn this language for if they were, Jews would soon find it convenient to speak Arabic especially if some kind of peace would open the doors for greater contacts between Israel and neighbouring countries; and with Jewish aptitude to learn foreign languages, Arabic would soon become the spoken language in Israel. This is confirmed by what happened in the Middle East in the 8th century B.C.E. when Aramaic, which was spread by Aramean traders, soon became the spoken language of the Middle East, including Israel, and Hebrew was no longer a spoken language in Israel. Aramaic and not Hebrew remained the spoken language of all Jews in the Middle East up to the Arab conquest and then it was superseded by Arabic.

On the contrary, the Arabs themselves should be encouraged to learn Hebrew. It was Bismarck who said that the greatest event in modern history was the fact that English became the language of America. The spread of English is to a great extent due to the reluctance of English people to learn or speak a foreign language so that even after the loss of the empire, India has still retained the English language. In view of China's decision to adopt gradually the Latin alphabet, which was already successfully introduced by Ataturk in Turkey, there may also be a case for changing Hebrew writing to Latin characters. This may sound revolutionary and repulsive, but Hebrew writing was once before changed by Ezra the Scribe (to confuse the Samaritans) to the present Assyrian script, and this matter should be examined on its merits. After all, the Latin script (which was originally written from right to left) was itself derived from the old Hebrew alphabet which was the first alphabet. Hebrew is now more modern than Arabic and, by adopting the universal Latin script which is easier to write and print, it could become the language of the Middle East. This is better than to let Israel sink into the relatively archaic and backward system of Arabic.

Conscription of Arabs can only be decided upon in the light of Israel's security which after all is threatened only by Arabs themselves.

Lastly, there is a strong case for separating religion and State and not allowing the State to interfere in religious matters and vice-versa. In this connection one would mention, as a commendable example, the constitution of Indonesia which briefly states,

- a) The State shall be based upon belief in the One, Supreme God;
- b) The State shall guarantee the freedom of the people to profess their own religion.

However, Israel should make it clear that any such move must be conditional on other countries of the Middle East doing the same ☉

Babylonian Jews in Israel

by ABRAHAM BEN-JACOB

Ever since the days of the return to Zion (in 538 BCE) and, especially during the periods of the Amoraim and Geonim, there were close ties between Jews of Babylon and those of Israel. These ties were never completely severed. They weakened, however, with the reduction of the Jewish populations in those two countries. A strong revival of emigration to Israel occurred during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. In the 19th century there began a continuous stream of emigration from Baghdad which was of great economic and spiritual benefit to Israel.

The first immigrants were from the families of Matalon (in year 1818), Ilbizravi (1830), Abdallah Ben Moshe Haim (uncle of Rabbi Joseph Haim) immigrated in 1841 with his son Joseph Shalom. The Yehudah family, headed by Shelomoh Yehudah, arrived in Israel in 1854. This family established two large Yeshivoth: 1) "Knesseth Yehezkiel" (named after the wealthy father of Shelomoh Yehezkiel Yehudah, who went from Baghdad to India and donated towards all the needs of the above synagogue), and 2) "Hessed El". In these Yeshivoth were educated the most important scholars of the last few generations of Jerusalemites. The Yehudah family at their own expense maintained all the students and supplied them with their subsistence. The family donated 14,000 Rupees for the erection of the large Askenazi synagogue "Tiphereth Israel". Saul Ben Shelomoh Yehudah redeemed the land of Motza next to Jerusalem and established there the first agricultural settlement outside the old city walls. The history of this hardworking pioneer alone deserves a separate book. This family included many personalities who contributed greatly towards the revival of the land. One should mention especially the two illustrious brothers, Isaac Ben Benjamin Yehuda who was a scholar and author. His brother, professor Abraham-Shalom Yehuda, considered to be one of the greatest orientalists of the last generation, was a bible and semitic languages scholar. He lectured at a number of universities in England, United States, Spain and Germany. He also wrote many books and articles of great importance in various languages. He died in 1952.

In 1857 the family of Mani, headed by Elyahu Mani, who acted as Chief Rabbi of Hebron during 1865-1899, emigrated to Israel. He was considered an expert of the Torah of which he had profound knowledge. He published many books. His progeny accomplished many important national tasks in Hebron, Jerusalem and other places. From this family came many intellectuals, judges, government officials and doctors. In their steps many others emigrated to Israel and the stream of emigration kept on growing till the operation "Ezra and Nehemiah" (1951) which virtually ended the Babylonian exile. This last emigration brought with it to Israel dozens of specialists in various professions

and trades, doctors, engineers, judges and lawyers, railway specialists, businessmen and industrialists, bankers, teachers, headmasters and university lecturers, specialists in Arab literature, etc. All of them contributed and still contribute a great deal to the development of Israel in various fields. They perform national duties of utmost importance in government offices, embassies abroad and new settlements. Some of them are members of the Knesseth and we are privileged to have a Babylonian Minister in Israel, Mr. Shelomoh Hillel, who is the Minister of Police.

Of particular mention among Babylonian personalities are the present Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Isaac Nissim, Rishon le Zion, born in Baghdad, a profound scholar; the Chief Rabbi of Tel-Aviv, Rabbi Ovadiah Yoseph and a number of Rabbis of various towns and villages. Among the deceased Babylonian Rabbis one should mention specifically the following: Rabbi Ibudi Yuhiah Moshe (1844-1915), author of *Magen Ba'adi*, and other books; Rabbi Yehezkel Ezra Ben Rahamin (1876-1908), author of the book *Atzei Hya'ar*, Rabbi Jacob Haim Sopher (1867-1939), author of the books *Kaf Hachaim* (10 volumes on the Shulhan Aruch) and other works, Rabbi Yehezkiel Ezra Joshua Halevi (1853-1942), author of *Arugath Habosem*, *Tehila v' Tiphereth*, *Pithei Teshuva*, etc.; Rabbi Menasheh Ben Soliman Sharbani (1881-1960), author of *Shira Lahel* and composer of hundreds of Piyutim.

The Jews of Babylon donated hundreds of thousands of pounds through emissaries who reached Iraq and Kurdistan yearly on the way to India, where they obtained large donations from the rich Baghdadis who lived there. Additionally they donated large sums for charitable organisations in Israel. Mention is due to the following benefactors:

a) Yehezkiel Ben Reuben Menasseh, known as Yehezkiel Zebeidah, who donated a large sum for the erection of the "Beth Yaakov" synagogue in the old city of Jerusalem. This synagogue is better known as the "Hurvah of Yehudah Hehasid" of the Ashkenazi community, which was destroyed by the Arabs in the war. In 1838 he built a synagogue in Safed, "Knesseth Yehezkiel". His two wealthy sons, Menasseh and Sassoon, donated a large sum of money towards a synagogue, a yeshivah, "Magen Avoth", Ezrath Nashim and ritual baths in Hebron.

b) The famous Sassoon family donated money for the following purposes: to dig a well next to Rachel's grave; for the erection of a synagogue and Beth Midrach, "Beth Menahem", of the Habad in the old city of Jerusalem; for building of a Talmud Torah and two Yeshivoth, "Beth Yaakov" and "Yeshivath Hamishmaroth", in Jerusalem.

c) The benefactress Mazal Tov Bahar established two Yeshivoth, "Mazal Zomeah" and "Knesseth Elyahu".

(continued on page 7)

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Hussein's Federation Plan

On the face of it King Hussein's recent statement on a Palestine-Jordan federation does not say much. As with all Arab pronouncements, the only meaning can be found between the lines. This is due to traditional Arab inclination for self-delusion and wishful thinking which has prevented peaceful and realistic solutions to the many problems of the Middle East. As an illustration, when the Rashid Ali revolt in Iraq failed, the Iraq army issued a communiqué which stated simply, "The enemy has accepted our terms and the war is over". The "terms" were in fact unconditional surrender by the Iraq Army to the Allied forces composed of British and Palmach troops.

Hussein's approach is a step in the right direction and its outright rejection by all parties concerned augurs well for its future success. Hussein wants to come to an understanding with Israel. This has to be on a unilateral basis as there is no prospect of peace with Syria or Egypt. There is no likelihood that America would want to see the Suez Canal open again, providing as it does a short cut for Russian submarines to the Indian Ocean. Jordan would have to give up Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip although a denationalised rather than an internationalised Jerusalem would add great stature to the Holy City. Peace between Jordan and an autonomous Palestinian state on the one hand and Israel on the other hand would solve many problems. By giving freedom of movement to Palestinians in Jordan and Israel their life can be brought back to normal. Jews too would have freedom to live and work in the whole area and this would lead to a closer understanding between Jews and Arabs which was always the case when there were no overriding political considerations.

In fact such understanding may lead to a loose federation or a common market between Israel, Palestine and Jordan (covering the original area of the Palestine mandate) which Lebanon may quickly join. However, Hussein's ultimate ambition from all this is to take Iraq. When his cousin was murdered in cold blood in the 1958 Iraq revolution, Hussein vowed to take revenge. His grandfather Abdulla once proclaimed himself King of Iraq, in 1920, rather prematurely (before Feisal I became king) and many Iraqis would today perhaps accept Hussein's rule if it means bringing down the hated Baath régime. Egypt's breaking of diplomatic relations with Jordan shows that some Arab leaders see in Hussein's plan more than a peace move and rightly suspect that Hussein will eventually form an alliance with Israel. They already accuse Hussein of aiming to implement an "imperialist plot" in the area.

Hence the immediate reaction of Iraq's rulers who saw the writing on the wall, that their days are numbered. To save their skin they have applied to join the union of Egypt, Syria and Libya. However,

this would entail giving the Kurds autonomy as Sudan had to do with the South Sudanese before joining the union of Arab Republics. But Iraq will not get away with it. Isolated and surrounded by hostile forces it would not survive a concerted action by Hussein (backed by Israel), the Kurds and Iran and the support of Saudi Arabia. It should not be difficult to bring in Syria, Kuwait and incorporate Sinai into such a grouping which would cover a precise and important geographical and historical area, being the cradle of human civilisation and at the crossroads of three continents, often united under foreign rule but never before united in freedom. Such a federation by 1975, would have attracted many more Jews from the Diaspora and would probably contain 5 million Jews, 5 million Sunni Arabs, 4 million Shia Arabs and Persians, 2 million Kurds, 2 million Lebanese Christians as well as 1 million Assyrians, 500,000 Druses, 1 million Armenians, 1 million Turkomen, etc. . . . It would cover an area of 400,000 square miles and have a population of over 20 millions and would compare well with its neighbours: Turkey, Iran, Arabia and Egypt. Besides Jews it would attract many of the people who had to leave the region since the beginning of the present century, such as the many Christian communities of Middle Eastern origin, now living in many parts of North and South America. (See *Patterns of Prejudice* on Christian Arabs in South America, Jan./Feb. 1972.)

By 1980 the revenue from oil only would be £5,000,000,000 (see *Financial Times* 23/3) and together with the immense saving on arms expenditure, the Middle East could become one of the richest and most important countries in the world. A new and modern capital would be planned in a central position, probably on the Euphrates near Ana (Nehardea) which was the capital of Jewish settlement in Iraq for many centuries until the early 18th century when Jews moved out from Ana and spread to other parts of Iraq ☉

In The Coming Issues

- THE SABBATH DAY—A taste of Gan Eden.
- YEQUM PURQAN—This Aramaic Prayer recited in Ashkenazi synagogues every Sabbath in honour of Babylonian Jewry, shows the Babylonian origin of Ashkenazi tradition.
- THE TREASURES OF TUT-ANKH-AMUN—are they the work of Hebrew craftsmen?

BOOK REVIEWS

by PERCY S. GOURGEY, M.B.E.

The Sephardi Heritage—Essays on the history and cultural contributions of the Jews of Spain and Portugal
edited by R. D. Barnett
published by Valentine, Mitchell, London
640 pp. £4.75

This splendidly produced work which is dedicated to the memory of Sephardi victims of Nazism—a fact sometimes overlooked—is a collection of 17 essays in four languages, English, Spanish, Hebrew and French, by noted experts in their respective spheres.

In his Foreword, Dr. Barnett, a Fellow of the British Academy and former President of the Jewish Historical Society of England, observes that "it was in the Iberian peninsula that there grew up in the Middle Ages, a uniquely brilliant and flourishing Jewish community, wealthy and distinguished in the fields of literature, philosophy, science and arts and crafts of various kinds, an efflorescence which exerted a great influence and left an ineffaceable impression on both Jewish and indeed on European history. The history of the Jews in Spain is an ample proof of the happy harmony with which these two great Semitic peoples (i.e. Jews and Moorish Moslems) professing a monotheistic faith can dwell together."

One would hope that the Moslem Arabs of today take this period of peaceful coexistence as their model instead of adopting the sterile, negative policies towards the Jewish people and Israel which their leaders and propagandists urge upon them. Indeed, not only Jewish culture, but Arab culture as well attained its zenith in the atmosphere of mutual tolerance, making a great contribution to world culture too. Dr. Barnett goes on to point out that the Spanish Inquisition under Spain's Christian rulers "was a catastrophe for the Jewish people (which) formed a watershed in their tragic history till then second only to their enslavement by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C.E. or the annihilation of the Jewish state by the Romans in 70 C.E. As a result of the decree of 1492 the mass flight of hundreds of thousands of Jews caused new centres to be formed or older communities to be reinforced in Moslem countries, in North Africa or parts of the Turkish Empire or in some European capitals; through them much of the unique Sephardi civilisation was preserved, though cruelly fragmented and dispersed, but it survived in this way till the advent of Hitler and his hordes in Second World War destroyed it in the greatest disaster which had befallen Jewry for nearly nineteen centuries."

The essayists include the late Dr. Cecil Roth, one of the most outstanding Jewish scholars of this generation and first editor-in-chief of the monumental 16-volume *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (completed in English in Jerusalem last year), Rabbi

Solomon Sassoon now settled in Jerusalem, Prof. Peres Castro of the University of Madrid and Director of its Institute of Sephardi Studies, Rabbi Dr. H. J. Zimmels, Emeritus Principal of Jews' College, London, and Ovadia Camhy (born in 1888 in Hebron), former Editor of *Le Judaïsme Sephardi*.

Of absorbing interest is the first essay, "The Spiritual Heritage of the Sephardim", by Rabbi Sassoon, whose eminent family originated in Baghdad, who concludes this outstanding piece of scholarship by observing that "under the severest trials, such as the Inquisition, or at a later date, the gas-chambers, the bodies of the people are laid bare to the machinations of a ruthless enemy, but what a foe can never lay bare to his designs is the soul of our people which continues to be surrounded by that invisible aura, the presence of God. It is because our enemies never succeed, and never will succeed, in breaking through this barrier, that Israel is eternal."

It is to be hoped that the Second Volume—this work is the First Volume covering the period before and after the Expulsion of 1492—will contain more information on Sephardim in the Far East and the West Indies, and also more illustrations, particularly of Sephardi synagogues and institutions in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Our Life and the Length of Our Days

by Ezra Shahmoon

(16 pp.—available from the author,
27 Holly Drive, New Rochelle, N.Y.)

Based on the personal experience of the author who had contracted a serious illness in his youth which was the despair of his doctors, this publication describes the use of biblical herbs and remedies which have proven more effective than conventional medicine and to the propagation of which he has devoted himself. As an Orthodox Jew Mr. Shahmoon is well-versed in the Bible and Talmud from which he quotes copiously: condemnation of the "glutton and drunkard" (Deut. 21:20, Prov. 23:21) and also in the Talmud (Hulin 58b), and Maimonides' warning against overeating in *Sefer HaMadah*, p. 518, as "the principal cause of all diseases".

Mr. Shahmoon maintains that the biblical diet is a purely organic diet "free from the unnatural substances which we use in so much of our food today". He refers to the fruits and vegetables most essential to good health and grown in Israel today. He quotes Midrash Ecclesiastes 5, "the fig is good to eat, healthful for the eyesight and good for increasing wisdom". Mr. Shahmoon concludes with some additional rules on health after those relating to diet such as proper exercise, rest, breathing and cleanliness. This is an interesting and useful pamphlet indicating the biblical way to health and longevity.

The Jewish Press of the World—7th edition

by Josef Fraenkel

128 pp. £1

published by the Cultural Department,
World Jewish Congress, London

This is a mine of information on all *printed* publications, dailies, weeklies and periodicals, appearing in the five continents with a statistical summary based on linguistic and geographical distribution.

In his introduction, Mr. Fraenkel states that "the aim of this booklet is to encourage contact between reader and papers, between organisations and writers and editors". He observes that it was "in 1675, two years before the death of the great philosopher, Baruch Spinoza, that the first Jewish newspaper appeared in Amsterdam . . . several years earlier the young Menasseh Ben Israel, that great Jewish statesman of the 17th century, had set up the first Hebrew printing-press in the city thereby

providing a means for Jewish scholars, writers and poets to translate their hopes and ideas into tangible shape, i.e. books for posterity". We learn that "before World War II the largest number of Jewish newspapers and journals appeared came out in Europe, but later the American continent took over the lead in the Diaspora. As a well-known Zionist historian and an authority on Herzl, Mr. Fraenkel reminds us that this foremost of Zionist leaders was himself a professional journalist who wrote that "a good editor and journalist is a man who writes today what the world will think tomorrow". Mr. Fraenkel points out that in his weekly, *Die Welt*, Herzl championed above all the liberty and honour of the Jewish people—without denying the respect due to opponents of good faith.

This is a worthy ideal for any paper and many of the papers referred to in this publication fortunately seek to translate it into reality ●

MY PAST PENTECOST

by *OLGA SOMECH PHILLIPS*

Shavuoth or Pentecost brings back an interesting memory of my youth, namely one of the religious controversies that took place between my parents with their rich diversity of outlook.

My Mother belonged to one of those Anglo-Jewish Bayswater families devoted to the Community but not particularly orthodox, whereas my Father had been reared in the orthodox tradition of his birthplace, Baghdad. He was a co-lateral descendant of the great Rabbi, Haham Abdullah Abraham ben Somekh and although he had given up much of his orthodoxy in England yet the strong foundation remained.

The parents argued every year on the position of Shavuoth in the Jewish Calendar and its importance, my Mother insisting that it was a minor Festival and my Father maintaining that it was the most important of all Festivals because God had given Moses the Torah on that day—hence the special recitation of the Ten Commandments. No doubt a number of people would share that view and certainly it seemed natural for one who was born so near the scene of Moses' great and significant mission.

However, there was and is my Mother's standpoint. Quite recently, the Rabbi Raymond Apple wrote in an article that Shavuoth was "the Cinderella of the Festivals". The Synagogue is not as well attended as on what are called the High Holy Days.

I always remember Pentecost as being the occasion of my first visit to the Synagogue which is prettily decorated to celebrate this Festival of the First Fruits ●

Continued from page 3

d) Joseph Abraham Shalom, one of the important wealthy Babylonians in Calcutta, founded the famous "Porath Yoseph" Yeshivah in the old city of Jerusalem. He erected many houses, the rents from which were earmarked for the upkeep of the above Yeshivah. In this Yeshivah were brought up many of today's Jerusalem scholars.

e) Simhah (Sima) Bilius—a Babylonian benefactress from Calcutta who contributed her large wealth, said in those days to amount to 800,000 Shanghai dollars, for the poor of Jerusalem.

f) Ezra Sassoon Ishayek donated \$200,000 for the foundation of "Kfar Yehezkiel" in Emek Yisrael and handed it over for settlement. The village was named after his brother Yehezkiel who died at that time.

g) Raphael Aaron Shalom Gabbai donated £25,000 to charitable organisations in Israel.

h) Sir Ely Kadoorie donated £140,000 for the establishment of an agricultural school and £10,000 to the JNF for land redemption.

To this small list one can add many more names.

In most of the towns in Israel today there exist synagogues and yeshivah of Babylonian Jews. In the large towns there also exist organisations dealing with social problems. There are, for example, "Hasdei David", "Osei Hesed", "Maskil Al Daf" etc. One must single out for special praise the donation of scholarships to immigrants in Israel from Iraq. Thousands of pounds were distributed to poor children, enabling them to obtain secondary and higher education, e.g. the J. E. Joseph Charitable Fund ●

Editorial note: The author of this article, Abraham Ben Jacob, has published seven books in Hebrew about the Jews of Babylon, their history, customs, folklore, poets and leaders. The first two books gained the Itzhak Ben Zvi Prize (named after the second President of Israel).

Letters

From Mr. M. Chitayat, Montreal, Canada

I want to thank you very much for mailing me your issue of January/February 1972. I found the editorial—Claims for Compensation—very interesting and I wonder if any official claim has been registered by the Iraqi Jews. I understand that the Egyptian Jews have made a substantial claim for their belongings and I don't see why we shouldn't start a committee to gather information in order to submit official claims, when fitting, for those Iraqi Jews who were deprived of their property ●

From Mr. M. Peress, Montreal, Canada

It gave me a great deal of pride and pleasure to go through the pages of *The Scribe*. You and your colleagues have been getting us enlightened and informed.

My heartiest congratulations and best wishes for great success ●

From Mr. S. Chitayat, Teheran, Iran

Thank you indeed for sending me *The Scribe* which I am receiving regularly and passing on to my friends among our Community. They all enjoy reading it. The articles are really good and enlightening and I wish to congratulate you and your colleagues on behalf of myself and the Community here ●

From Dr. David B. Ascher, formerly, Chief Inspector of Land Registration, Haifa, Israel

Thanks a lot for the copies of *The Scribe* you have sent me. It is a very fine publication. Mr. Dangoor's article on the Economics of Moses is a fine piece of learning. It is only a pity that the land system in Israel is a perversion of the Mosaic system. Moses intended to give everybody his own piece of land, so that he may cultivate it safely and securely. The land had to revert to him, the original owner. But the JNF gives him a piece of land which must be taken from him after a certain period! This they call "return of the land to the nation". In fact, however, the man can mortgage or sell his leasehold-rights, and he

can get a renewal of the lease in all eternity—provided he pays to the JNF fees for their consents to all such acts. These fees are just the opposite of what Moses and later his disciple, the economist Henry George have or would have proposed. Thus, the JNF causes a perpetual rise of land-prices, instead of applying land value taxation in order to bring that price down.

I remember Mr. Dangoor, who came to Palestine in 1947 when I was with PICA (the Rothschilds' administration of lands in Israel). He met my boss maître Eliahu Faraggi, z.l., who was the senior advocate for PICA. Both Faraggi and myself were convinced that Mr. Dangoor's trip signified a general coming exodus of Jews from Iraq.

For nearly 40 years I lived and worked more with Babylonian Jews than with others. Not only in matters of religion and law were Babylonian Jews the decisive part of Jewry, but the history of the world took another turn—owing to them. You know that the Persian Mazdak* once founded a communistic religion and some 1,500 years ago Mazdakism ruled the Iranian empire—until the Head of Babylonian Jews, Mar Zutra, fought against Mazdak's movement. Mar Zutra was, so far as I know, killed in the fight, but his and only his, campaign led to the downfall of Mazdakism.

According to a German historian, certain events have a tendency to happen again after 1,500 years. I am convinced that if there will be an end to communism and to the rule of the barbarians, it will also be caused in the not so far future by a Jew—from Israel or Babel. (Read Solowjev's story of "The Anarchist" from a Jewish angle) ●

* Mazdak taught that since men were born equal, property and marriage were human inventions. Adultery, incest and theft were necessary steps to re-establish the true laws of nature. There was mass looting of property and abduction of women of the upper classes. Some modern youth movements hold similar views. D.

Action Syrian Jewry

In view of the serious situation affecting the 4,000-strong Jewish community of Syria, the Action Committee for Arab Jewry (ACAJ) with the sanction of the Board of Deputies of British Jews has organised in May a three-day vigil outside the Syrian Arab airlines in Piccadilly (in the absence of diplomatic relations with Britain, there is no Syrian Embassy in London). Special prayers were recited in all synagogues during the festival of Shavuoth and the matter is to be raised in Parliament ●

Comments and articles welcomed. The views of individual contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the journal.—Ed.

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