

The SCRIBE

JOURNAL OF BABYLONIAN JEWRY

PUBLISHED BY THE EXILARCH'S FOUNDATION

No. 38

JANUARY 1990

Est. 1971

WISHING ALL OUR READERS A HAPPY HANUCAH AND A PROSPEROUS 1990

National Suicide The Second Holocaust

Israel's main problem today is neither financial nor military: it is demographic – the fact that Arab population growth far exceeds Jewish increase. Palestinian Arabs always had one of the highest birthrates in the world but, in the past, infant mortality brought the natural growth down to around average. With the improvements in medicine, things have changed.

Jews, on the other hand, are themselves cutting down their natural population growth. It is estimated that since 1948 there have been one million abortions in Israel – almost exclusively among Jews. If this rate is projected world-wide, 6 million unborn babies will have been condemned to death by their own parents – a tragedy that exceeds Hitler's Holocaust.

When the Balfour Declaration was made in 1917, Prime Minister Lloyd George explained that a Jewish National Home was meant eventually to lead to a Jewish State as soon as the returning Jews became the majority of the population. At that time, Arabs numbered only half a million but in spite of massive Jewish immigration, Arabs have increased faster than the Jews.

The Arabs were attracted to Palestine by Zionist capital that poured in and the jobs that were offered to them in the building industry, in agriculture and in hotels and restaurants. Any nation that depends on its enemy for labour is asking for trouble.

So today, while Israeli Jews number 3.5 million, Palestinian Arabs number 5 million. In the same period, Arabs in neighbouring countries have increased from 20m. to 100m. Without this disparity there would be no *intifada* and Israel would not have hesitated in annexing the liberated territories of the West Bank and Gaza immediately after the Six Day War.

A few hundred thousand Jews may arrive from Russia in the coming years but immigration alone will not solve the problem. There must be a change of priorities among Jews, and the

government should gear its finances to encouraging large families, in co-operation with the Jewish Agency.

Some may say, "You want to raise cannon fodder." Well, what is wrong with cannon fodder? Is it better not to be born than to live and die? To die, if necessary, for one's country, one's people, one's ideals – to fight and perhaps to live, in freedom, in dignity and in peace?

Jewish emigration from Israel is also very worrying. Having tasted sovereignty, many Jews apparently still prefer to live among other nations. This is a vote of no confidence in the future of the Jewish State.

In his book *Al-Muqaddimah*, the Arab historian of the fourteenth century, Ibn Khaldoon, states:

A nation that has been defeated and has come under the rule of another nation will quickly perish. The reason for this may possibly lie in the apathy that comes over people when they lose control of their own affairs and become dependent upon others. Hope diminishes and weakens.

Now, propagation and an increase in population take place only as the result of strong hope and of the energy that hope creates in the animal powers of man. When the Persians came under the rule of the Arabs and were subjugated, they lasted only a short while and were wiped out as if they had never been. One should not think that this was the result of some persecution perpetrated against them. It happens when people lose control of their own affairs.

Strangely, this hypothesis does not seem to fit the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation. The Palestinians have not perished but have increased in leaps and bounds. Is there no lesson to be learned from this? **N.E.D.**

All unsigned items are written by **N.E.D.**

20th Century

As we enter its last decade, we are tempted to reflect on the record of the twentieth century.

When I was at school, "20th century" meant all that was modern, civilised and enlightened. But unfortunately, events turned out differently. While huge strides were made in science and technology, human affairs were allowed to fall into the hands of ruthless and bloodthirsty gangsters like Stalin and Hitler.

Shame on the human race for two world wars and countless other wars that devoured 200m. people; for the Holocaust committed by the Germans in cold blood; for the exploitation of the poor by the rich; for terrorism, violence and organised crime; for drugs and pollution; for overpopulation in the third world; for pouring so much oil money into the hands of irresponsible men and regimes. In the twentieth century everything became expensive except human life, which became cheaper and cheaper.

As we move towards a new century and a new millennium, let us hope that we shall have leaders who can see the futility of war; who will work for a fairer distribution of wealth among people and among nations; who will care for the environment, and free mankind from terrorism, drugs and crime. **N.E.D.**

Let Sleeping Dogs Lie

Don't stir up trouble by seeking to make changes

In the space of 25 years, the German people started two world wars that caused millions of deaths and much devastation. They claimed to be a master race with the right to exterminate other peoples. They killed 6 million Jews in cold blood and without remorse.

However, since the division of Germany in 1945, we have had 45 years of peace. But with the liberalisation of East European regimes, some people in the West are clamouring for German re-unification, with Austria thrown in. This is a very dangerous game. Let the sleeping dogs lie and let Germany remain divided indefinitely. **N.E.D.**

Lieut-Colonel Charles Aston

The *Daily Telegraph* reported last October the death of Lieut-Col. Charles Aston, at the age of 96.

Aston served for thirty years in Iraq where he held high administrative posts in the British army. He should be especially remembered for his services during WWII, for which he was appointed C.B.E. He spoke fluent Arabic as well as French and cultivated close friendships with the sheikhs of the southern Euphrates, whom he prompted during the Rashid Aali revolt in April-May 1941 to back the British and remain loyal to the Regent. He then made his headquarters in Basrah and strove to keep its oilfields and those of Abadan peaceful and productive.

Born in Manchester and educated at Exeter College, Oxford, he enlisted as an officer in the Army at the outbreak of WWI. He saw action in France where he was wounded. He came to Iraq in 1917 and was appointed assistant political officer and, when the Iraqi Government was formed in 1920, he served in the Ministry of the Interior as administrative inspector. He became subsequently head of a land settlement committee under the Ministry of Justice and, in 1941, political adviser in southern Iraq.

Col. Aston left Iraq in 1945 and served for a short time in the United Nations. Returning to England in 1946, he was for a few years the London representative of the Eastern Commercial Corporation of Baghdad formed by Naim Dangoor and the late Ahmad Safwat Alawa● **Meer S. Basri**

Naim Dangoor adds:

Col. Aston was often referred to as the uncrowned King of Iraq. When he was our representative in London he always made business appointments in the afternoon, as he believed people are in a better mood after lunch. When conducting delicate negotiations, he used to ask me not to join him so that we wouldn't have to decide on a difficult point on the spot.

In this connection one is reminded of American President Wilson when he was asked by Secretary of State Lansing, and Col. House not to go to the Peace Conference at Versailles himself so that U.S. representatives could have time to refer knotty problems to him, but he insisted on going, entering into commitments that Congress did not approve, which resulted in the eventual collapse of the League of Nations, and WWII●

Dr. Albert Hakim

We are sorry to report the death in London last September of Dr. Albert Hakim at the age of 78.

He graduated from the Baghdad College of Medicine in 1933 and was sent to London by the Iraqi Government for post-graduate studies. Returning to Baghdad he was for a time Health Officer of the capital.

Dr. Hakim came to London in 1970 and worked as registrar at the Charing Cross Hospital● **M.S.B.**



Heskel and Mary Nathaniel with Renée and Naim Dangoor overlooking the Old City of Jerusalem●

Jewish Senior Officials of Iraq – 1945

Ezra Alwaya, b. 1894, Asst. Comptroller and Auditor-General
 Daud Toeg, b. 1892, Auditor
 Benyamin Sabih, b. 1888, Auditor
 Ezra Bilbul, b. 1903, Mumayiz, Ministry of the Interior
 Daud Menashi, b. 1893, Accountant, Police Department
 Heskel Shohet, b. 1905, Mumayiz, Directorate-General of Local Products
 Khedhour Ezra, b. 1897, Director of the Budget and Financial Matters, Minister of Finance
 Ibrahim Elkabir, b. 1885, Accountant-General
 Shamon Soffer, b. 1900, Director, Central Treasury
 Daud Khedhoori, b. 1900, Assistant Customs and Excise Officer
 Daud Muallem Saleh, b. 1898, Mumayiz, Foreign Exchange Department
 Mussa Cohen, b. 1898, first translator, Ministry of Justice
 Daud Samra, b. 1878, Vice-President, Court of Cassation
 Heskel Saleh Rahmani, b. 1896, Director of Tapu, Mosul
 Haron Shukur, b. 1887, Mumayiz of Accounts, Ministry of Defence
 Salim Tarzi, b. 1899, Inspector-General of Posts and Telegraphs
 Gourji Sasson, b. 1900, Assistant Postmaster, Baghdad
 Daud Hoogi, b. 1909, Assistant Engineer, Posts and Telegraphs
 Rooben Sasson, b. 1909, Assistant Engineer, Posts and Telegraphs
 Salim Khazzam, b. 1902, Assistant Postmaster, Basrah
 Naim Cohen, b. 1910, Instructor, College of Engineering
 Dr. Ahmad (formerly Nessim) Soussa, b. 1898, Mumayiz, Ministry of Education
 Salim Lawee, b. 1903, Assistant Curator, Iraqi Museum
 Abdullah Obadiah, b. 1908, Teacher, Central Secondary School for Girls
 Salim Bekhor, b. 1910, Assistant Geologist, Ministry of Economics
 Ezra Hindi, b. 1909, Agricultural Expert
 Dr. Rauf Daud Semah, b. 1908, Pathologist
 Dr. Yusuf Daniel, b. 1909, Pathologist
 Dr. Salman Ya'cub Darwish, b. 1907, X-Ray Physician
 Dr. Yusuf Shina, b. 1908, Physician, Health Services
 Dr. Ya'cub Azachi, b. 1905, Physician, Health Services
 Dr. Anwar Eliahu al-Ani, b. 1912, Physician, Health Services
 Dr. Albert Elias, b. 1909, Director, Kadhimiyah Hospital
 Dr. Naim Ishayik, b. 1910, Physician, Karradah Dispensary
 Dr. Ezra Khazzam, b. 1913, Physician, Adhamiyah Dispensary
 Dr. Salman Menashy, b. 1910, Physician, Mahmudiyah Dispensary
 Dr. Hazim Ephraim al-Abed, b. 1912, Physician, Hillah Hospital
 Dr. Daud Rubain Gabbay, b. 1914, Physician, Ramadi Hospital
 Dr. Jack Aboodi Shabi, b. 1908, Assistant Professor, College of Medicine
 Dr. Ya'cub Waddhan, b. 1905, Dental Surgeon
 Dr. Albert Hakim, b. 1911, Director, Health Section
 Dr. Shlomo Basri, b. 1906, Preventive Health Officer
 Dr. Naji Chitayat, b. 1910, Bacteriologist
 Dr. Heskel Lawee, b. 1913, Bacteriologist
 Dr. Ezra Tarzi, b. 1910, Physician, Indigenous Diseases●

David Sitton

The recent passing of Mr. David Sitton, 80, in Jerusalem, removes from the Sephardi scene and Israel a very distinguished personality. Mr. Sitton, who was President of the Sephardi Council of Jerusalem, one of

the oldest organisations in the Holy City, was a 17th generation Sabra. He was a journalist, writer and politician.

In recent years, Mr. Sitton was invited to become a candidate for the Presidency of Israel, but he declined●

P.S.G.

The Jews of Calcutta – the living tradition

a project by Norman Track

The Jews of Calcutta have an interesting history spanning almost 200 years. This Sephardi community stems mainly from the 19th century diaspora of Baghdadi Jews. Today, the aging Jewish population of Calcutta numbers around 100; if the present trend continues, in less than 20 years they will be but a memory.

Four books have been written about the Jews of Calcutta (*Origin and History of the Calcutta Jews*, I.S. Abraham, 1969; *The Jews of Calcutta*, F. Elias & J.E. Cooper, 1974; *On the Banks of the Ganga: The Sojourn of Jews in Calcutta*, E.N. Musleah, 1975; *Turning Back the Pages: A Chronicle of Calcutta Jewry*, E.D. Ezra, 1986). All are authored by members of the community and deal chiefly with the overall history of the community, specific families, people and personal reminiscences. An important aspect which has not been considered is what was the religious and secular life of the Baghdadi Jews, how was this tempered during their time in Calcutta and what of this has travelled to the present day communities of Calcutta Jews in London, Los Angeles and Sydney. This aspect is the subject of the present project.

In addition, this project will provide an opportunity to expand the knowledge and understanding of traditional Sephardi religious (circumcision/baby naming; *muftir*; bar mitzvah; engagement; wedding; funeral) and secular (superstition, food) practices compared to Ashkenazi. None of the publications about the Calcutta Jews has systematically explored these topics.

The original Baghdadi Jews were of Babylonian ancestry. In 1638, Sultan Murad IV conquered Iraq; a number of his Jewish soldiers remained in Baghdad. A plague devastated Baghdad in 1743 killing a large proportion of the Jewish population, including all the rabbis. The subsequent arrival of rabbis from Aleppo signalled the beginning of the absorption of Iraqi Jews into the Sephardi tradition. A self-sufficient Jewish community evolved with its own schools and hospitals. Thus, the Baghdadi Jews have both Babylonian and Sephardi elements in their background.

The first Jews reached Calcutta from Syria in the 1790s and were joined by Jews from Baghdad as the social and economic conditions in Iraq deteriorated. By 1816, there were 50 Jews in Calcutta. A cemetery was established at Narkeldanga, northeast of Calcutta. The opium trade was dominated by Jewish traders; after obtaining substantial wealth, a number of them moved into real estate and the jewellery trade. By 1850, there were 1,500 Jews in Calcutta. During the 1880s, separate Jewish boys' and girls' schools were established, three synagogues (Neveh Shalom, Maghen David, and Beth El) as well as the Ezra Hospital. The Ashkenazi Jewish population increased to about 150 with the influx of Russian Jews escaping the pogroms of the 1880s. It is interesting to note that the Jews always enjoyed equal rights and privileges and could worship freely. In 1945, the Calcutta Jewish community reached its height with 4,500 members.

However, their number diminished rapidly after 1948 with the founding of the States of India and Israel.

During three visits to Calcutta (1988, 1989), I interviewed and photographed a number of the resident Jewish population as well as photographing the three synagogues, an assortment of religious objects, the two cemeteries, and a funeral. In London and Los Angeles, I also interviewed a number of Jews from Calcutta and Baghdad.

Rabbi Zimmels' book (1958) discusses the differences between Sephardi and Ashkenazi traditions and deals mainly with historical commentaries by biblical scholars. Differences in practices for the Jewish festivals and functions are not mentioned. Data I have collected recently reveal a number of differences between Sephardi and Ashkenazi traditions. For example, in Baghdad both men and women attended a circumcision ceremony, while in Calcutta only men are usually permitted to attend. Both Calcutta and Baghdadi Jews celebrate *muftir*, the first public Torah reading, in the synagogue, and bar mitzvah at home with just the close family; Ashkenazi Jews combined *muftir* and bar mitzvah at the synagogue. In Calcutta and Baghdad on Shabuoth morning, Jews ate *kahii* (flour piratha cooked in deep oil) served with *halwa* (a mixture of semolina, raisins, sugar and oil) and/or date juice. In Calcutta, to celebrate an engagement, the groom's family sent, or took, seven trays with various items to the bride's house and the groom's mother placed the ring on the bride's finger. In Baghdad, there were not always the seven trays and the groom placed the ring on the bride's finger. The engagement was a religious wedding and, thus, breaking an engagement necessitated a divorce. After a death in the house, according to Sephardi tradition, all drinking water was thrown away because nobody knew in which container of water the Angel of Death had washed his sword; Jewish neighbours to the left and right of the bereaved house also threw their water away.

During a recent visit to Calcutta, I had the opportunity to meet General J. Jacob. The general produced a Hebrew book outlining superstitious beliefs that his great grandmother had brought from Baghdad. It appears that superstition played an important role in the daily lives of the Baghdadi and Calcutta Jews. In Los Angeles, Rabbi Ben Zaquen and his colleagues are studying portions of this book that I photographed to determine its historical relevance.

With this new compilation of both common and unique practices of the Baghdadi and Calcutta religious and secular lives, it will be possible to establish which of them still survive in the contemporary communities of Calcutta Jews in London, Los Angeles, and Sydney. In order to make this data readily available to a wide audience, I propose to publish this information with a selection of archival and present-day photographs.

Jordan IS Palestine

From *Jewish Chronicle*

Sir,

Joseph Witriol appears to be "slightly confused" himself. First he says that Jordan is *part* of Palestine and then he says that, even before 1948, "Palestine" was used to designate only the area west of the river.

In fact, the Palestine mandate covered both sides of the River Jordan. At the Cairo Conference of 1921, Eastern Palestine was excluded from the area of Jewish settlement. That was an effective partitioning of the country between Arabs and Jews.

Since the establishment of Israel, "Palestine" no longer applies to the area covered by the Jewish State. Today, "Palestine" can only designate a homeland for Palestinian Arabs.

This is the area covered by the kingdom of Jordan, whether in its present boundaries or in its 1967 borders. In that sense, it is quite proper and accurate to say that Jordan is Palestine.

Naim E. Dangoor

Israel's Error

At a recent conference in Jerusalem of the "Jordan is Palestine" International Committee, Environment Minister Roni Milo told delegates that Israeli support for King Hussein during "Black September" in 1970 was possibly wrong.

If the PLO had succeeded in dethroning the king, "I have no doubt," he said, "that everyone would say that only one Palestinian state should exist, and that state is Jordan."



Scribe: General Jake Jacob, who is of Iraqi Jewish origin, was the second-in-command of the Indian army that seized East Pakistan, in the India-Pakistan war of 1971, and created Bangladesh in response to the appeal of its population.

By outflanking the enemy with his tank force, under cover of air superiority, General Jacob closely followed Israel's successful strategy in the Six Day War.

He declined the offer of the Governorship of Assam, preferring instead to go into business.

The quarterly issue of *The Scribe* is always received with great pleasure. The September issue featuring Rabbi Abdallah Somckh was particularly meaningful to me, as the great Rabbi's daughter, Simha, married my great grandfather Isaac Bekhor. I regret that my own father, Saleh Shoua Bekhor, is not with us to enjoy your erudite journal. His many stories of life in Baghdad will always be with me. I herewith enclose £50 towards your future publications.

**Dianella, Beatrice Bekhor Saker
W. Australia**

Thank you for adding my name to your mailing list and I now look forward to receiving each edition in my post box.

The Scribe contains a wealth of information and historical data about our heritage and to read it brings back memories of my childhood and gives me a better understanding of what my parents and grandparents used to tell us.

As soon as I receive *The Scribe*, I try to read it from front to back all in one go and then I read it again and again at leisure. Thank you so much for the most interesting of journals, which I am sure means so much to the worldwide community of Babylonian Jewry.

Munich Flora Slatter (Abdoo)

Scribe: Nice to hear from Flora Abdoo after so many years and to note her continued interest in Community matters.

Allow me to congratulate you on the high standard of *The Scribe* and the wealth of information it contains. Your journal caters for the taste of Sephardim with different backgrounds and it is a people's journal. I wish you and the Exilarch's Foundation success and self-satisfaction of a job well done.

I am very interested to make contact with my father's people who hail from Baghdad, through the medium of your journal.

I have very little detail, with the exception that my great-grandfather, Saleh Aharon Khazzum, came to Sydney, Australia as a young man in 1856. He died and was buried in Sydney in 1904. His father's name was Aaron and his mother's maiden name was **Ester Abraham**. His wife, Rebecca (Rufka) daughter of Jacob, came to Sydney with her son Aaron after many years.

The Jewish traveller Rabbi Ibn Saphir mentions them in his book *Ibn Saphir*.

Since as late as 1868, Rabbi Bekhor Hossein wrote a letter to a Hebrew magazine *Hamagid* seeking help to locate my great-grandfather in Sydney.

My grandfather, Aaron Saleh Khazzum, married Rahael (known as Chahla) - her mother was called Hannah. They had three sons: Jacob, Moshe (my father) and David . . . and three daughters: Ramah, Mozelle and Rufka.

My grandmother, Rahael, was related to the Nahoums, the Gubbays, Ezras, Sassoons and the Bahars, and her grand uncle Nuriel Effendi.

Your help in this direction, through the courtesy of your journal, will be greatly appreciated.

Sydney, Australia Aaron Aaron

Don Naim Dangoor,
Estimado amigo,

The Scribe, particularly your highly unique and individual interpretations of past and current history, continually provides me with intellectual joy and honest-to-goodness historical chuckles.

I have come to the conclusion that you are one of the rare Jews who has struggled to emancipate himself from his youthful thoughts to such an extent that you have undergone a complete plowing of your previous historical concepts. That this plowing began with your second review of World War I and was completed after your in-depth review of World War II, and always with the wonderful Jewish flavour and humour that emanates from the Middle East.

Also, I suspect that one of your pleasures is tilling the new soil of your intellectual garden concatenating disparate observations and events and coming up with fresh and rare produce. I also suspect that you devised an intellectual filter that sorts out the dregs of popular, corrupt, and half-ass truths.

Who but a Jew from the Middle East with a reorganised and freshly plowed mind could associate the Queen of England with the Caliphate?

Your article on the French Revolution was out of this world. Who but Naim Dangoor could concatenate the Dreyfus affair with the *Barmitzva* of modern France?

I want to thank you for your observations of "Homage to la Marseillaise", otherwise I would not have known that the "Foreign contingent was headed by the PLO float." What a current satire. What a sad irony. What a slap in the face to historical truth.

And I fully agree with your observation: "In its rabid antisemitism, Christianity contains within it the seeds of its own destruction."

To express my thanks and appreciation for the September 1989 *Scribe* I enclose some of the Ladino rhymed sayings of my late mother, Jennie Adatto Tarabulus:

*Ken non aze kuando puede
Non va azer kuando kere
One who doesn't produce when he can
Won't be able to do so when he desires*

*Keres topar las yaves de hohma
Pena i lazdra i da sedaka
To discover the keys to wisdom
Work, struggle, and give to charity*

*Si estas asentado en el kal
El dyo te guadra de todo mal
If you are attending synagogue
God will protect you from all harm*

*Esparse tu sedaka
Kon kavod i sin gaava
Distribute your charity
With reverence and without pride*

*El repozo i la pasensya
Se puede gangar kon la sensya
Repose and patience
Can be gained with knowledge*

*Non desdenyes consejo
Seas joven o vyejo
Don't scorn counsel
Be you young or old*

**Salud i beraha
Bellevue, WA**

**Alberto Adatto
"El General"**

I have enjoyed reading your journal a great deal. The very mention of the names of the Jews of Iraq brought back to me precious memories.

Although myself and my brothers and sisters were born in Bahrain, we are nevertheless of Baghdadi parents and tradition in every aspect of our lives. At home we still speak the sweetly flavoured Jewish Arabic colloquial. My maternal grandmother Aziza **Mashiyah**, was a very close friend of and frequent visitor to the household of our great Gaon, Hakham Yosef Hayyim and his son, Hakham Yaqoob Aleihem Hashalom. She spoke about them with great reverence and love. Moreover, there was no Hakham or family in Baghdad which she did not know.

I knew Mr Percy Gourgey and used to see him at the office of the Zionist Organisation in Bombay before our departure to Israel in 1949 when he and Mr. Cynowitz used to represent Israel in India.

Most Ashkenazim here, and perhaps all over the diaspora, know hardly anything about Babylonian Jewry and their profound contribution to Judaism and Jewish culture. I therefore want to publish in the local Jewish paper in my area some extracts from "Baghdad in 1878" and such other material that might add to their scant knowledge of our heritage.

New Jersey, USA Jack Heskel Zeloof

In a letter to Mr Shaul Sassoon, his cousin in America, Professor Freddie Ezekiel writes:

"I am scheduled to give a talk at our synagogue on the Babylonian Jews. I have been studying and reading on this subject so that I can give a good talk. I did not know much about our history and early contributions to Judaism. There is so much to learn. I am quite excited about this whole matter. You may be interested to know that I am calling myself a Babylonian Jew rather than a Sephardi Jew. *The Scribe* made a great impression on me. We have such a rich heritage. We must be very proud of it. Can you get me the earlier issues? I am amazed that *The Scribe* has changed my complete outlook on our past and present.

Baghdadi Wisdom

(Some are from the collection of the late Mrs Naima D. Ezekiel)

*El imir min Allah wil ishi al jiran
Life from God, but livelihood from the neighbours*

*El jar qubl el dar
Choose the neighbour before you choose the house*

*El kistan sheghlu qatain
The lazy works double*

*El hisab bel qirat wel karam bel qintar
Accounts by the carat, gifts by the ton*

*Lebtana aghla min el wetch
The lining is dearer than the material*

*Izz nafsak wa dhill qirshak
Keep your honour at the expense of your money*

*Adoo aaqil ahsan min sadiq jahil
A wise enemy is better than a foolish friend*

Anguish

by Meer S. Basri

During the years 1967-74, I was chairman of the Council of Jews in Iraq and, since 1971, President of the Community as well. After the 1967 War, our community suffered many tribulations, killings and loss of civil rights. I had to defend the community to the best of my ability, to talk to the President of the Republic, the ministers and other dignitaries and write memoranda and supplications in defence of our co-religionists, to alleviate their lot and help them morally and financially.

It was a hard time and I wrote this poem and many others to express my feeling of despondency and affliction.

يا ملهي، أنا إنسانٌ صغير
يا ملهي، أنا إنسانٌ صغير
صانعٌ يبيع جميع التكررات
لأن صوتي خافت الجرس حير
تنتهي منه بأذني التكررات
قد رأيت الظلم يطغى ويتور
ويدوي في الصياصي كالفرخ
ورأيت الناس مكرى يخبر
عصرت من كرمة العيس الكفيم
وقوادي طامح بالحيرات
صعدت هرباً من شبه اللغات
كطيويف الليل تمضي وتووب
وشكاه جهت بني الشفاه
هل تراها بلقت معج الاله؟
هل تراها، طيه عظم الغيوب؟
بغداد، ١٩٧٣ مير بصري

(translated from Arabic)

O my God, I am but a small mortal
lost among the hordes of vulgar creatures.
My voice is hoarse, barely audible,
its notes reverberating into my own ear.

I have seen Tyranny bubbling and roaring,
striking the high peaks with its thunderbolt.
I have seen men drunken with the
sour grapes of affliction and despair.

My heart is heavy with sighs,
mute and squashed,
comparable to night phantoms
looming and vanishing.

My prayer is frozen on my lips.
Has it risen to thine hearing, O God,
Has it, O Knower of hidden secrets?

Baghdad 1973

Health Warning on Low-Fat Spreads

Low-fat spreads can damage your health, medical experts say, as eating large amounts of poly-unsaturated fats increases the danger of clotting vital arteries.

Mono-unsaturated fats, such as olive oil, provide a much better replacement for high-risk foods like butter and margarine, which contain damaging cholesterol



At the Remembrance Service and Parade on 12 November 1989 at Shepherds Bush. On right of Standard Bearer (Mr H. Foreman); Mr P.S. Gourgey, M.B.E., current Chairman of Hammersmith AJEX and on the left is Capt. S.A. Shemtov-Reading, M.B.E., its past Chairman, both of Babylonian Jewish origin.

Freedom for Syrian Jews

The American State Department announced in November that the Syrian government is showing more flexibility regarding the treatment of Jews living in Syria and that it has undertaken to look positively into applications for emigration from Jews who have relatives abroad.

The Syrian government will also give serious consideration to applications for exit visas from Jews who cannot find marriage partners in Syria.

The American announcement adds, "The US government, which has often conducted talks with Syria on these important issues, welcomes Syria's more flexible attitude in the treatment of this humanitarian problem."

New Readers

- Naim Shaul, Bnei-Brak, Israel
- Harry S. Nathaniel, T.M.R., Canada
- Menashe Eany, Ontario
- Mozly Shamic, Kiriat Ono, Israel
- Robert K. Sassoon, Ramat-Aviv
- Sophie Channon, Paris
- David Shemie, T.M.R., Canada
- Deborah and Nissim Sadka, London
- Charles Shamash, Jerusalem
- Professor Efraim Sadka, Tel Aviv
- Benyamin Gur Arych, Ramat Hasharon
- Abdullah K. Zilkha, Zurich
- Naim Toeg, Jerusalem
- Philip Sopher, Geneva
- Dr. S. Schafner, Hebrew College, Brookie, Mass.
- B. Yehuda, Great Neck, N.Y.
- Stella Sauna, New York
- Naim Menashi, New York
- Joseph Mosseri, Brooklyn, N.Y.
- May Stein, Sydney

Nazzah, Nazzah!

An Iraqi Jewish lady in London was recently teased by a Christian acquaintance from Baghdad, "You Jews came from *Sug Hannun* (an old poor Jewish quarter) and now you are well established in Britain and very prosperous." The Jewish lady retorted, "We didn't come from *Sug Hannun* but from *Abu Sifain* (an even poorer quarter), but at least we didn't carry a long staff when we went about our business." That was a dig at the Christians of Baghdad, many of whom were Talkefis, whose general occupation was to empty cess pits, walking the streets and alleys very early in the morning shouting "Nazzah, Nazzah!" They used to carry an axe and a long staff by which they measured the depth of the pit to give an estimate.

Apart from being the filthiest of occupations, cleaning the cess pits and going naked into the quagmire was apparently very dangerous, and that is why the custom was to pay for the job in advance rather than at the end. "*Welalokh, Welalokh, adhat aqrab bi thindalokh,*" one such operator shouted up to his wife when he was bitten by a scorpion.

Old-fashioned cesspools filled up quickly and had to be emptied once or twice a year, but modern septic tanks consist of two compartments and, if properly constructed, become continually self-cleaning - the water seeps into the second chamber and evaporates, and the bacteria destroy the remaining concentrated solids.

With the construction of sewage systems in Iraq, all Talkefis have emigrated to Europe and America - especially to Detroit where they form a large wealthy community of 200,000

- Selim Korine, Great Neck, N.Y.
- Fuad Khazzam, North Hill, N.Y.
- Souad Gubbay, North Wales
- Gladys Shuker, Bayside, Wisconsin
- B. Levy, Edgware, Middlesex
- S. Aslan, London SW5
- Zvi Tzipper, Israeli News Agency

Tbeet

by Alice Shashou

Tbeet is cooked chicken and rice. It is a party dish and is the great love of all Iraqi people.

Ingredients:

1 med. size boiler chicken (4-5lbs) with the small yellow eggs usually found inside
3 cups basmati rice
½-cup of mazola oil
2 peeled and cut tomatoes
3 cardamom
Salt to taste

Stuffing ingredients:

¼-cup basmati rice
½-cup chuck steak coarsely cut with a knife
1 heaped tablespoon tomato paste
1 diced tomato with the peel
1 tablespoon margarine
1 heaped teaspoon of special *Tbeet* spices
¼-teaspoon cardamom in powder
Salt to taste
Small yellow eggs from inside the boiler chicken

Method:

Soak the ¼-cup of rice. In another pan soak the 3 cups of rice for about 2 hours. Salt the chicken inside and outside. Boil the small eggs and let them cool. Combine all the ingredients for stuffing and stuff the chicken loosely to allow for expansion. Sew the opening or join with small skewers.

Place the chicken in a heavy-bottom pan. Add the oil and sauté on medium heat until all sides are golden brown. Add the peeled and cut tomato and sauté until soft.

Add plenty of boiling water and cook for about 3 hours or until tender, turning the chicken occasionally to cook evenly. Add more boiling water as needed. When the chicken is cooked, transfer to a plate.

Drain the 3 cups of rice and add it to the boiling stock. Add 2 tablespoons of tomato paste and 1 cup tomato juice (Libby's tomato juice), salt and 2 whole cardamom. The cooking stock should be about 5 cups. Cook for about 10 minutes or until all liquid has been absorbed.

Transfer the cooked chicken to the centre of the cooked rice, pushing it to the bottom of the pot.

Sprinkle a little *Tbeet* spice on top of the rice (optional).

Avoid stirring the rice.

Place the covered pan in a preheated oven 400F or 200C for about 40 minutes. A golden crust will form.

Uncover the pan and, with a knife, push the rice away from the sides. Sprinkle water around the pan near the edge only.

Reduce the heat of the oven to 275F or 140C and leave it covered for another 2-3 hours, being careful to check it from time to time to prevent it from burning. Reduce temperature to 100C until you serve.

(Avoid using an oven with a ventilator, for it will dry it out).

Remove the pan from the oven and dip it in cold water for a few minutes. Then cover with a heavy cloth for about 20 minutes. This way the golden crust should lift easily.

Put the chicken in the centre of a pyrex dish or plate. Heap the rice around the chicken taking care to arrange the golden crust on the top.

Pull the thread out from the stuffed chicken before placing it on the table.

Spices for Tbeet:

300gms cardamom
150gms dried rose petals
250gms cinnamon
50gms ginger
100gms nutmeg
50gms cloves
100gms kababa

Kichree

Kichree, or *kedgerie*, is a rice dish that derives from India, where it is eaten mainly for breakfast. The rice should be well dried so that it can absorb a good deal of butter which improves the dish.

Fish *kedgerie* has always been popular in England for Sunday breakfast. When well made it is suitable for a party dish for luncheon or supper. Fish and rice ought to be in equal proportions, the most suitable fish being smoked haddock.

Oriental *kichree* is made without fish. In the Baghdad version, garlic and cumin are fried, at the last minute, and added to the dish. The sharp, distinctive aroma sets the palate for the enjoyment of the dish.

Recipe by Alice Shashou

Kichree, or rice and lentils - especially good for vegetarians and it is so delicious!

Ingredients:

2 cups rice
1 cup red lentils
2¾ cups water
8oz butter or 1 packet
Salt to taste
About 2-3 tablespoons tomato paste
About 5 cloves garlic
2 onions
1 tablespoon cumin
1 packet haloumi or mozzarella cheese

Method:

Crush the garlic and fry with 2 tablespoons mazola oil. It fries quickly. Remove the pan from the flame and add cumin.

Slice the onions and fry. Leave garlic and onions on the side.

Mix water, salt, tomato paste and half the butter in a non-stick pan and bring to the boil. Drain the soaked rice. Wash the lentils. Mix them together and add to the boiling stock.

Cover the pan and cook until all liquid is absorbed. Add remaining butter and let it simmer over very low fire.

Mix gently so that the butter and rice are blended evenly.

Put a cloth under the lid and let it steam for about 1 hour.

Just before you serve, add the garlic mixture and mix gently.

Arrange the fried slices of onions in the bottom of the non-stick pan. Cover with thin slices of cheese. If using haloumi cheese, dip for a minute in hot water.

Pile the *Kichree* on top. The cheese melts quickly.

Turn the pan upside down on a serving plate and serve it with yogurt.

Other recipes

Kichree

Put in a basin 2 breakfast cups of lentils and 2 breakfast cups of rice. Wash both together by pouring tepid water over it and rubbing it between your hands. Let the water run out. Chop 2 large Spanish onions, put in a saucepan and fry in oil till light brown, add ½lb butter and stir till onions are dark brown. Take pan off fire. Pour the rice and lentils into pan, mix, add 1 tablespoon salt, 1½ teaspoons pepper and 1¼ tablespoons turmeric and mix. Add 2 pints water and mix. Put pan on fire. Stir now and again to prevent it from catching, wait till it boils up and let it boil for a couple of minutes or so. Take pan off, put lid on and place it on the stove to steam till cooked. Look at it now and then, stir lightly, making a heap in the centre, sprinkle water over when it gets dry and stir. *Kichree* must be kept a little more moist than plain white rice.

Kidgerie

Boil ¼ pint rice. Bone and break into small pieces 3 cooked whiting, or any fish. Melt 3oz butter. Chop, not too finely, 2 hard-boiled eggs. Put rice in a small saucepan, add butter, fish and eggs and mix. Sprinkle salt, pepper and ½ teaspoon turmeric. Stir over fire till slightly browned.

Tips

by Alice Shashou

When frying with butter or margarine, add a little oil in order not to burn the butter.

When making *kibbi bel siniyah*, if there is excessive shrinking from the sides of the pan, not enough burghul was used.

Tarts: To prevent a tart sticking to the bottom of the baking tin, dip the bottom of the tin in a little cold water as soon as you take it out of the oven.

Olive oil can actually reduce the cholesterol level in the blood and is a good source of Vitamin E. Never use olive oil for deep frying.

The best quality olive oil comes from the first or "cold pressing," meaning no heat or water is used when the olives are squeezed. It is low in acidity and called "extra virgin." "Virgin" oils will have a slightly higher acid content. "Pure" olive oil is produced from the pulp of previous pressings.

An unrisen soufflé means either that the egg whites were beaten into the mixture rather than folded in with a metal spoon, or that the egg whites were not beaten stiffly enough.

Test with a skewer, the cake is cooked if it comes out clean.

Resting the batter of pancakes before cooking gives lighter pancakes. Let it rest one or two hours before use.

When making sponge cakes, if recipe tells you to cream butter and sugar together, it is more successful if you cream the butter first and then add the sugar.

Sprinkle nutmeg on mashed potatoes for better taste.

Eat especially more cabbage, broccoli, brussel sprouts and cauliflower to decrease your chances of developing cancer.

Don't shop when you are hungry.

