



The SCRIBE

JOURNAL OF BABYLONIAN JEWRY



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A HAPPY NEW YEAR 5752 TO ALL OUR READERS AND FRIENDS

20th Birthday

This special issue No. 50 marks the 20th Birthday of *The Scribe* which was started in September 1971 by Naim Dangoor and Percy Gourgey.

After 12 issues, publication stopped; but it is a sign of the underlying need for this journal that after ten years of cessation our magazine reappeared in 1983 and has been going from strength to strength since. It is now sent out to over 2,000 subscribers all over the world. Two features of our journal are – that we charge no subscription fee: we don't want any dues to come between us and our readers; and we accept no paid advertising.

Percy Gourgey acted as editor and then as editorial adviser, but since 1990 Naim Dangoor has assumed this responsibility in addition to writing most articles and providing the necessary finance. Percy continues to make regular contributions of signed articles.

We hope that *The Scribe* will continue to provide a world-wide medium for Jews who left Iraq and their descendants, as well as for other interested readers●

Samir Naqqash

Samir Naqqash, the well-known Baghdad-born Israeli writer, has kindly sent us a complete set of his 12 books which were published over the last 20 years. They comprise novels, plays and short stories, all in Arabic and some of them in the Iraqi-Jewish dialect. He was the first to introduce this dialect into written Arabic literature. Two of his books won the Prime Minister's prize for Arabic writing and his style has been acclaimed by Egyptian critics.

Mr. Naqqash is seeking someone to translate some of his books into English and other Western languages. In fact, books written in a special dialect lose much of their impact in translation. And while our dialect remains very much a spoken medium in the Diaspora as well as in Israel, very few now can read Arabic writing, especially when it tries to convey the Baghdadian slang.

The initial course to follow would be to put some of Samir's writings on cassette which would be the cheapest and most popular way of introducing his genius to members of our communities in Europe and America.

His novel, *Lodgers and Cobwebs*, in the Baghdadian vernacular, published recently within Dr. Davide Sala's Library for Jewish Authors from Iraq, is a masterpiece of 100,000 words that lends itself to producing several enjoyable recordings●



The above photograph shows Captain S.A. Shemtob-Reading, MBE, of Babylonian Jewry, saluting President Herzog during a recent visit of AJEX Solidarity Mission to Israel. The President immediately recognised the "Palestine Medal" that Captain Shemtob-Reading was wearing.

The AJEX Group was given a comprehensive briefing at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem covering Israel and the Gulf War. Some of the highlights were the possibilities for a greater Jordan for the Palestinians, the return of the Hashemite Kingdom to Iraq and full autonomy for the Kurds.

During the month of Rashid Ali in 1941 and the *farhud* that followed, Captain Shemtob-Reading was a British officer stationed in Iraq. He hopes to write a report on his experience of that fateful period and his encounters with the Regent Abdul Ilah, when the 50-year secrecy period is over●

I owe it to my fellow Iraqi Jews in Israel, and myself, to take up the challenge posed by Professor Khabbaza of Great Neck in *The Scribe* of July 1991 ("Where are the Jews of Iraq?"), in which he linked Saddam's Scud missile attack on Israel in 1991 to the 1941 *Farhud* in Baghdad, and chided us for not speaking up on this particular linkage.

Well, Prof. Khabbaza, there was a lot of dark humour bandied about during those grim days of sealed rooms and incoming missiles, but no one in his right senses over here could ever think of the term *looting* as a cardinal issue, this being the exact meaning of *farhud*. There was so much more to think about, such as poison gas and massive loss of life, than the Iraqi Jews and their properties (sic) in Tel Aviv and Ramat Gan. What's more, the one and only direct casualty of the Scuds (some say the Patriot anti-missiles) was **not** an Iraqi Jew.

But if Prof. Khabbaza's comments were meant to be taken as a joke, then as such they would at best be deemed too far-fetched; at worst, insipid.

Can you hear me now, Professor?●
Ramat Efal Ezra S. Soffer, B.Sc.

Scribe: The meaning is that the Scud attack on Ramat Gan was a continuation of the anti-Jewish riots in Baghdad in 1941●

Recently I got a copy of *The Scribe* through my parents Naim and Marge Gubbay of Bombay, India (both with Iraqi origins). The journal, which I thoroughly enjoyed, is a valuable and rich source of information about my heritage and therefore one I cannot do without●

Milan, Italy Irith Gubbay Alcalay

I love your Newsletter●

Jewish Bible
Quarterly
Jerusalem

Sue Tourkin-Komet
Academic Secretary

I relate to the great Darwish family which moved to Israel from the land of Babel in 1950. Our heritage and traditions date back to the 11th century. I have been attending classes in Jewish Babylonian Heritage, given by Rabbi Yaacob Menashe in New York. I have always been interested in my roots and would like to know more about our rich past.

Please put me and my mother Mrs. Leah Leshem of Northbrook, Illinois on your mailing list, and send me some back issues●

Chicago, USA

Benjamin M. Leshem

Ever since the oil blackmail by the Arabs in the wake of their defeat in the Yom Kippur War in 1973, colossal sums of money went into their coffers. The bulk of this wealth was earmarked to enrich the pockets of the few, to acquire arms aimed against Israel and to support terrorism. The Arabs have been able to conduct a systematic campaign through all the branches of the media that are not only propagating straight lies, but are also trying to re-write certain parts of history in a way to suit their paymasters.

The object of this summary is simply to set the record straight. The chances of achieving genuine peace in the region would be greatly enhanced if and when people will require and admit the truth.

At the end of World War I, the victorious allies divided the territories conquered by them from the Turks amongst themselves and then went on to create political entities based on what they considered to be their future interests. Vast territories were allocated to so-called Arab allies who proved to be ever ready to betray both Britain and France, the two dominant powers in the region after the War. In 1917, the famous Balfour Declaration was made by H.M. Government allocating Palestine to be the "national home for the Jewish People." However, the British Foreign office thereafter pursued an anti-Jewish policy in that region which continues to this day. From 1919 to 1948, when their Mandate of Palestine came to an end, they managed to accomplish certain objectives, mostly by resorting to irregular means. The consequences of these policies were:

- 1) The detachment of a large part of Palestine to create an Arab emirate, later granted independence by Britain in 1946, known today as Jordan. That action was unilateral and outside the scope of the terms of the Mandate.
- 2) Until the end of the Mandate, severe restrictions were imposed on Jewish immigration, even into the small part west of the river Jordan, whilst the flood-gates were opened for Arabs to come and settle wherever they wished. The restrictions on Jews were maintained in spite of the tragic events in Europe in World War II when tens of thousands of Jewish lives could have been saved had they been able to go to Palestine.
- 3) By concentrating on appeasing the Arabs and favourably responding to their every whim, Britain encouraged the Arabs to believe that the Middle East was an exclusive Arab domain and, over the years, many people have come to accept this erroneous concept. The Middle East is in fact home to many nationalities and religions. The Arabs are but one of them and, in some cases, late-comers. There are the Kurds, the Jews, the Armenians and the Christians, each of which have their own traditions, culture, heritage and aspirations.
- 4) Britain rewarded her so-called Arab allies with territories, independence and support both military and financial, even though they attacked her in the years leading to the Second World War when both the Iraqis and the Palestinian Arabs under the Grand Mufti A) Hussini, sided with Hitler and waged war against the British. The fact that the Jews in Palestine fought alongside the British did not prevent betrayal on every possible and conceivable occasion. To crown it all, the Arab Legion which attacked the newly reborn State of Israel in 1948, was not only armed by the British, but also under the command of a British General and British officers. At the same time, Britain refrained from supplying Israel with arms to defend herself against the invading Arab armies. Ironically, it was mostly the Czechs who supplied Israel at that time.
- 5) Contrary to common belief by many, brought about by successful propaganda campaigns, the Arab animosity towards the Jews did not start with the recreation of the State of Israel. Many massacres in peaceful Jewish population centres took place with no provocation on various occasions well before 1948.
- 6) After 1948, the Arab countries initiated the principle of population exchange by expelling or causing the departure of ancient communities of nearly one million Jews who were mostly absorbed by Israel despite her very limited resources. The second leg of this exchange has yet to be completed by the Arab countries who

Israel and the Arabs

The real facts

by Moshe Kahtan

have used the refugees as a political weapon against Israel.

7) The partition plan devised in 1947 was utterly rejected by the Arabs who went to several wars to eliminate the State of Israel. In each and every attempt, Israel emerged militarily victorious only to find itself fighting the plots of the next round.

8) The Arabs' refusal to recognise Israel is one of the most comic attitudes supported, unfortunately, by some of the most respectable democracies who have other interests in mind, not to mention the tin-pot dictatorships who often sit in judgement of Israel. For the benefit of both the Arabs and the ignorant, this Arabs' refusal did not prevent them from asking Israel for a cease-fire everytime they lost another of their aggressive wars. These cease-fires were signed with the State of Israel.

9) Even though Israel, the only democracy in the area, is willing to sit down and negotiate a peaceful settlement with regimes that do not know the meaning of the word democracy, all her efforts have been frustrated because of two factors: a) many countries, subjugated by the oil blackmail, formed a block in the United Nations to oppose everything that Israel tried to do, and b) the Arabs do not have the political maturity to conduct anything by themselves; hence their insistence to bring others who are not a party to the dispute in order to benefit from their pressure as they did in the past.

10) During the Yom Kippur war when Egypt and Syria attacked Israel and the State was losing ground in a battle for survival, the UK did not find itself in a position to ask the UN for a halt in the hostilities. However, when the tables were turned and Israel reversed its earlier setbacks, the British Ambassador to the UN found in himself remarkable energy to achieve a call for a cease-fire which was not to Israel's advantage at that time. Furthermore, the EEC countries followed by a Resolution condemning Israel.

11) Contrary to the general assumption that in 1967 Israel made a pre-emptive strike against Egypt, the fact is that by closing the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping, Egypt committed an act of war according to International Law.

12) Until today, Israel is not admitted to the Security Council. But countries like Cuba and Yemen are.

13) The terrorist organisation, the PLO, was created at a time when Jordan was occupying Judea and Samaria which put paid to the argument that their aim is to recover only that part of the land. Moreover, throughout 19 years of occupation no effort was made by Jordan to create a "Palestinian" state but rather proceeded with the unlawful annexation of the area.

14) Although accorded diplomatic and other courtesies by several countries who claim affiliation to civilisation, the PLO and its various offshoots are organisations which are principally engaged in international terrorism, drug trafficking, murder, kidnapping for ransom, and amassing sizeable fortunes for the elite members of the leadership who, whilst claiming to act for "the cause", enjoy a standard of living unparalleled in its level of luxury.

15) Whereas it has become acceptable that Arabs under present Israeli administration can

riot and commit acts of murder and violence, there is always a big outcry when Israel responds to restore order or to exercise its duty to defend the safety of its citizens. This is a most peculiar phenomenon not applied anywhere else in the world. Many try to confuse the issue by invoking human rights or the Geneva Convention. Nowhere is there a requirement by any authority, administration or government to stand idly by and allow anarchy to rule. In Arab countries, Arabs hang! In Israel, they do not!

16) The United Nations, supposedly a neutral body, is always ready to issue its condemnation of Israel but turns its head the other way when horrendous atrocities are committed by any other country against its own civilian population. The examples are legion but to cite a few like the Hama massacre in Syria, the massacre of Arabs by the Jordanians in 1970, the gassing of the Kurds by Saddam Hussein, not forgetting the series of killing and devastation perpetrated by the PLO against the people of Lebanon for over 16 years. Conclusion: Arabs may kill Arabs, Christian or Jews without anyone lifting a finger; but if an Arab is killed by a Jew even in self-defence, then all hell breaks loose. To the discredit of the UN, it passed a Resolution in 1975 equating Zionism with racism. Whilst in itself this had no practical bearing, it demonstrated the lengths to which the organisation was prepared to go to accommodate Arab pressures against Israel.

17) The Holy See has seen fit to maintain dialogue with the PLO but cannot find its way to recognise the State of Israel. The Pope had several meetings with Yassir Arafat at a time when his flock in Lebanon was being slaughtered on a daily basis by Arafat's forces. No protest made!

18) During the Gulf War when Iraq attacked Israel without any provocation and despite the fact that it was not a participant in the conflict, Israel was urged by the world and his wife not to respond in order not to disturb the fragile but unholy alliance with the Arab partners of the coalition. No sooner had the guns fell silent than the same countries turned on Israel demanding that it provide the concessions asked for by the Arabs.

19) A massive boycott of Israel was set up by the Arabs which also extended to third parties who deal with Israel. Most countries, big and small, with Japan as a notable example, comply with it directly or under the guise of looking the other way and claim inability to influence the judgement of commercial management. Only the United States, and more recently, France and Holland have passed legislation that render it illegal to comply. The UK seems in no hurry to harmonise on this particular issue. In fact Britain maintains a very strict embargo against Israel, which even extended to gas masks before the Gulf War. Whilst it continually supplies the surrounding hostile Arab countries with the latest armaments.

20) The term "West Bank" which was invented and gained popularity after the 1967 War, is a gross misrepresentation. The West Bank of the Jordan extends all the way to the sea and cannot reasonably only cover an irregular slice of territory restricted only to Judea and Samaria, the actual names of the region since time immemorial. Those who advocate setting up a second Palestinian state there, should bear in mind that, subsequent to such an event, the Arabs may yet again claim that they have been misunderstood in the intended meaning of their definition of "West Bank".

The total area of land between the river

Jordan and the sea is about 28,000 sq. km., about a quarter of the pre-1917 Palestine. The area of over 20 Arab League countries is in the region of 14,000,000 sq. km. Food for thought for the "Land for Peace" advocates.

These are the facts as they happened. Many are trying to portray events in a different light. Israel has to stand fast and resist these manoeuvres which sometimes are presented outright and sometimes in disguise. Above all, world Jewry, including Chief Rabbis, have the duty to stand solidly behind the State of Israel in this her hour of need. This, incidentally, also extends to the Jews living in Israel, some of whom do not seem to appreciate exactly what is at stake, and that is that Israel is the home of last Resort for all the Jews!

Naim Dangoor comments: The official view of the British Foreign Office is that Transjordan was never intended to be covered by the Balfour Declaration. So, is Jordan Palestine? What was the extent of the Jewish national home? These questions are now purely academic, especially as the Jews no longer have any ambition in trans-Jordan. In the run-up to the Mandate the Zionists tried and failed to include part of the east bank in the area of the Jewish national home.

After 1948 when Britain abandoned the Mandate and the Arabs rejected all partition plans and tried to extinguish Israel, new realities came into being. What is beyond dispute is that the whole of Palestine west of the river was earmarked for Jewish settlement. This area is now firmly in Israeli hands. However, the Palestinian refugees pose a double problem. The Arabs and their friends use it as a lever against Israel, demanding self-determination for the Palestinians. For Israel too the refugees constitute a demographic threat.

Peace will be possible if the refugee problem can be solved.

We should give up the "Ashkenazi" approach of Jordan-is-Palestine in favour of the "Sephardi" approach of population exchange, in spite of the reluctance of the Israeli establishment to use this argument.

Before the Six-Day War there were no Palestinian refugees inside Israel. All Arabs were accepted as Israeli citizens. After the Arab states launched their attack on Israel in 1967, Israel occupied Judea, Samaria and Gaza and inherited the Palestinian refugees of the West Bank and Gaza. It is as if these refugees who had left Israel in exchange for the Jewish refugees from Arab countries, have come back to Israel and are again in Israel's lap.

Justice demands that in any peace negotiations, all neighbouring Arab countries that waged successive wars on Israel should assume responsibility to take to their lands these refugees, currently stated to be 400,000 in the West Bank and 400,000 in Gaza. Such a step would solve the refugee problem as well as Israel's demographic problem and would also solve the dilemma of well-meaning but ill-informed Jewish critics of Israel.

Some may say that there is an alternative solution - namely, Israel relinquishing the "occupied territories". This would also solve the refugee problem and Israel's demographic problem. The answer to that is that aggressors cannot recover at the conference table what they lost in a war of their own making.

Secretary of State James Baker accuses Israel of obstructing peace by building settlements in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. Does this mean that, while Arabs can live in Israel, Jews cannot live among the Arabs? Jews have the right to live in any country and in any part of the Middle East. If they can't, then Arabism, not Zionism, is racism!●

N.E.D.

To Sir Horace Seymour
Foreign Office, London 25th September, 1941

I am anxious to do what I can to help the Baghdad Jewish community. As you know, this community has for long justly prided itself on its culture, its enterprise and its admiration for British ideas and institutions. The names of Sassoon and Kadoori are only the best known of many Iraqi Jews who have done well by their community and Great Britain.

2. Recently, Bagdad Jewry has fallen on evil days. This is largely due to the unfortunate reactions of Zionism. Despite the proviso of the Balfour Declaration safeguarding the rights of Jews in other countries, those of the Bagdad community never seem to have been taken into consideration. Inevitably, though quite falsely, they have been regarded as Zionists, and have paid the price, not only in "benevolences" running into thousands of pounds, but also with their blood. They are naturally bitter at the attitude of the Zionists towards them. While I was in Palestine, the *Palestine Post* reported that three Iraq Jewesses had been fined for demonstrating outside the premises of the Jewish Agency, when the Agency had refused them immigration certificates, and I learn that even so moderate a man as Rutenberg when the murder of the Bagdad Jews was mentioned, replied: "That is their contribution."

3. I have mentioned this background, because not only is Zionism in great measure responsible for the present difficulties of the Jewish community, but it also makes it vitally necessary for us to be most careful how we assist the community, if both helper and helped are not to be involved in a common charge of being Zionist agents.

4. At the moment, what the Jewish community here chiefly wants is English teachers in their principal school, the Shamash School. This school receives a subvention from the Anglo-Jewish Association. In 1938/39 the report shows that it received £752 but at present I am informed that they receive only £635. For this and other reasons the salaries which the School offers are much lower than those offered by the Iraqi Government, namely £27 to £30 a month compared with £40 to £50. They are very keen on maintaining their high standard of English; but their staff has lately been depleted, and consequently their successes in the London Matriculation have diminished. It was suggested to the School that they should obtain English teachers from Palestine, but this step, which seems such a natural and economical solution, is out of the question owing to the position I have outlined above. The school has, however, four students in England who were sent there out of a benefaction established for the purpose; and I am given to understand that they have finished their courses of study and are ready to return to the staff of the School. Their names are:

Naim H. Basri,
Reuben Ephraim Dabby
Salim Ezra Nakar, and
Ezra N. Somekh.

The School authorities have asked for their return to be facilitated and expedited. Is it possible for this to be arranged? Whereas we are, despite war conditions, providing the Iraqi Government with a number of English teachers, the Jewish community have so far received no assistance at all from us, and that we are quite justified in helping them to help themselves.

5. It seems to me also that the British Council might be interested in the School. They have, I believe, given it a present of books but no other assistance. I appreciate that the Council may possibly feel that in a Moslem country they should not be too forward in helping a Jewish community, but on the other hand this Jewish community does place a high value on English ideals and English studies. But of course here again, for the reasons given above, the greatest discretion must be used in offering any help.

6. Finally there is the Anglo-Jewish Association. As I say, they subsidise the School and are no doubt interested in the general welfare of the community. The Council consists of the leaders of Anglo-Jewry, some of whom may be known to you personally. I would rather leave it to you to decide just what approach to make. Of the members of the Association's Council I personally know, none could be called an ardent Zionist. On the other hand, there probably are some Zionists on the Council; and if the matter came before them officially there is a danger that they might try to make a "case" out of the plight of Bagdad Jewry. Perhaps, therefore, it might be wiser to sound some discreet member of the Council first, before suggesting any definite way in which they might help.

7. We do want to help the Jewish community and they are anxious to help themselves. If we can get their teachers back for them, that will be much. As regards further help, either from the Anglo-Jewish Association or the British Council, we shall have to go very carefully; but I hope that some assistance, however small, may be forthcoming from either or both these bodies●

Sir Kinahan Cornwallis
Ambassador

Scribe: A masterpiece of double-talk●

From the Foreign Office
To the British Council 27 October, 1941

I send you herewith a copy of a letter from Cornwallis describing the difficulties under which the Jewish community in Iraq is at present labouring, and dealing in particular with the Shamash school at Baghdad.

In view of Arab susceptibilities it will obviously be necessary to go very carefully in a matter of this kind, and I doubt whether it would be prudent, even if the money were available, for the Council to give the Shamash school a subsidy, either direct or through one of the Jewish organisations that support it in this country. I understand, however, that it has managed to preserve a high standard of efficiency, and we should be grateful if you would consider whether there are any other ways in which the Council could help. Would it, for instance, be possible, if the school authorities wish to go on sending students to this country to complete their education, for the Council to give scholarships for the purpose, so that the existing resources of the school could be relieved of this burden?

If you feel the case is one in which the Council could take an interest, and would like to discuss the whole question with someone here who knows about the school, I would suggest that you get in touch with Mr. Brotman of the British Board of Deputies. He was, I believe, the first headmaster of the school and in our dealings with him on other subjects we have found him sensible and reliable●

From the British Council
To the Foreign Office 20 November, 1941

As a result of the report which has been presented to me after discussions with Mr. Brotman, I have come to the conclusion that it would not be propitious at the present time for the Council to give any direct financial assistance to the Shamash School.

I am convinced, however, that the return to Iraq of the four students who are at present in this country is a matter of some urgency. I assume that the difficulty must be that these young men do not wish to travel in a British or Allied ship, and that it has been found so far impossible to obtain accommodation for them in a neutral vessel●

Sir Malcolm Robertson

The Foreign Office wrote to the Embassy in Baghdad that there was nothing more they could do●

50 years ago

From the Public Record Office, Kew

British Embassy
Baghdad

The Jews of Egypt

by the late **Felix Benzaken**, who was lawyer of the Supreme Court of Egypt, Judge of Alexandria's Rabbinic Court, and Chairman of B'nai B'rith Lodge of Alexandria. The article first appeared in 1961 in *The Candelstick*, published in New York by the congregation "Sons of Israel." Condensed from *Goshen*, Bulletin of Egyptian Jews in Israel.

What a strange attractiveness Egypt has always exerted upon us! Is it not there that, some thousands of years ago we were under hard oppression? Conscious for the first time of ourselves and aware of our being as a distinct nation? We then attained freedom by escaping our oppressors and we pledged before God that we would never come back again! Nevertheless, we came back very often and every time we played a big part.

When Jews reached the Promised Land and the old State of Israel was well established there, and had become powerful, a military alliance was concluded between them and their previous oppressors - an alliance which lasted many centuries.

It was because of Israel's faithfulness to the terms of this alliance and the determination to fulfil this pledge (in spite of Jeremiah's sad but clear-sighted prophecies) that our sacred land was razed by Babylonians, our Temple destroyed, and our people drawn into captivity in Babylon. Jeremiah and some followers, well-treated by Nebuchadnezzar, took refuge in Assuan, upper Egypt, and there a Jewish community was settled which flourished.

Some centuries after the Persian invasion of Egypt, Alexander the Great conquered Egypt and Jews helped to found Alexandria, which became the axis of the civilised world, through their wide intellectual and cultural activities. Among these Alexandrian Jews arose Philon, the Jew, founder of Neoplatonism, whose writings and ideas deeply impressed Christianity in its beginnings.

Almost seven centuries later, when Arabs invaded Egypt and submitted it to their domination, Jews displayed the most prodigious activity in all fields, especially in politics and culture. **One of them, Jacob Ibn Killis, great vizier of Fatimid Sultan El Aziz, founded El Azhar, the big Mosque of Cairo, which is still the bastion of militant Islamism, and himself taught Mysticism (Kabala) to a large audience of students and followers.**

Later, under the Ayubid Dynasty, shone the spirit of Maimonides with all his majestic brilliancy. He had been honoured by King Fadel, son of Saladin, who nominated him to be his physician and private counsellor, and who was revered by all the people as a saint. The spiritual impact left by Maimonides in Egypt was so tremendous that his Eighth Centenary was officially celebrated under the auspices of the late King Fouad with great pomp in the Opera House in Cairo and in the numerous synagogues of the country.

The Turks succeeded the Arabs in Egypt, and the anarchy which prevailed, probably prevented the Jews from unfolding the deep resources of their inherent genius. Yet, the "geniza" of old Cairo could one day reveal traces of our activity

during this dark period. It was, nevertheless, under Turkish omnipotence that the legendary story of the Jewish Duke of Naxos took place. He was committed to rule Egypt as Sultan's deputy, but failed to overcome anarchy.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, Jewish activities were resumed and went on growing. They displayed again all their skills in all fields and participated to a great extent in economic, financial, industrial, town-planning, cultural, and even the political rebirth of the country. They were, in this revival of Egypt, the king-pin of any progress achieved there. Concerning exports, chiefly of cotton and cereals, Egypt owed the opening of numerous outlets mainly to the cleverness and knowledge of the Jewish people. In liberal professions they always were counted among the most eminent physicians, engineers, lawyers, university professors, etc. They erected numerous institutions such as schools, yeshivas, temples, dispensaries, asylums, houses for refuge, hospitals, philanthropic associations, etc. In politics, too, we were promoters. The first publicist who dared to rebel against the despotism of Khedives Ismail and Tewfik had been the Jew Sanoua - very popularly known under the nickname of "Abou Nadara" (the One Who Wears Glasses). He was strongly supported by two Islamic chiefs, Sheik Mohammed Abdou and Sheik El Afghani, deeply revered in the Islamic world. All three were expelled but they pursued their activity in Paris through journalism. Sanoua's articles were highly praised because of their sarcastic humour. Some years ago, an Egyptian nationalized newspaper summarised his biography and it was funny to read that, although he was a Jew, his mother, when she bore him, devoted him to work on behalf of Islam. This was in fulfilment of a promise she made to God in return for keeping him alive, as her previous children had died in infancy.

Later, after the British occupation of Egypt, it was also a well-known Jewish lawyer, Daoud Hazan, son of the great Rabbi of Alexandria Eliahu Hazan, who founded the national party with Mustapha Kamel the famous Egyptian patriot, whose strong action resulted in the withdrawal of the no less famous Lord Cromer, British High Commissioner, an implacable colonialist. It was the first positive step in the path of emancipation.

In 1925, under King Fouad, Joseph Cattawi Pasha, chairman of Cairo's community, was appointed Minister of Finance and Communications. He was compelled to resign because of his friendship with a leading nationalist and outstanding opponent to the Palace.

Under Kings Fouad and Farouk, Nahum Effendi, of Turkish origin and last Grand Rabbi of Egypt, won great prestige in official and private spheres. King Fouad

relied on him often to solve difficult private or public issues. In November 1956, when the attack on the Suez Canal occurred, his impressive personality was of great weight in bringing officials assuming power to a better understanding of Jewish feelings and attitudes.

Partly due to his high moral standing and partly due to the inherent tolerance of the Egyptian people, Jews had never been urged in any way to repudiate Zionism. They were loyal citizens and never attempted to do any harm to the country. Actually, they did their best to promote the prosperity of the land they and their ancestors loved so much through five thousand years of history - in spite of the great frustrations they had to suffer periodically. For Egyptian leaders, Islamism is the more dynamic element of Arabism, and Arabism has to get its revenge for its many centuries of humiliation - since Arabs had been rejected from Europe and treated as a defeated nation. Jews shared with Arabs the humiliations of these many centuries. Although this is the behaviour of those who are in power in Egypt, the people of Egypt, and by "people" we mean the Moslems, had not departed from their traditional tolerance towards Jews and it was with deep regret that they saw the Jewish people leave and wished them a quick return.

Thus, history was repeating itself: **When our first Exodus took place under Moses' command, Egyptian people wept at our departure and the expression of regrets was so eager that Pharaoh changed his mind, but it was too late.** One day we will come back in peace to resume our unalterable friendship with the people. For, is it not an Egyptian proverb which says that one who once drank the Nile's water will drink it again?●

A historian in search of history

Dr. Victor D. Sanoua, Professor of Psychology, would like to contact a number of Egyptian Jews for the purpose of writing some oral histories.

Please contact him at:

**Dept. of Psychology
St. John's University
Queens, N.Y. 11439
U.S.A.**

He will be able to conduct the interviews in New York, London, Paris and Milan.

I was always fascinated by our Jewish Iraqi language and its wise proverbs. The influence of foreign languages is evident in our language though not always recognised by us. Examples:

Insurance = Sigorta
Crowd = Qalbaligh
Flag = Bayraq
Mahasha = Dolmah, Yapragh
Bed = Charpaya
Den = Neem
Colour = Reng

Our idioms and proverbs convey such a deep meaning that it is of interest to remind our young generation of the wisdom of their forefathers in Iraq●

**Great Neck, Prof. Albert Khabbaza, MD
N.Y.**

The SCRIBE

JOURNAL OF BABYLONIAN JEWRY

COOKERY CORNER

by Alice Shashou

Iraqi Salona

A sweet and sour fish. It is a party dish.

Ingredients:

3lbs haddock or fish of your choice
1 green pepper, sliced
2 aubergines, peeled in alternate strips
4 large onions, sliced
2 tomatoes, sliced
2 tablespoons parsley, finely chopped
Curry powder (optional)
5 tablespoons oil

Ingredients for the sauce:

1 cup lemon juice
About 6 tablespoons sugar or to taste
Salt
Tomato paste

Method:

Clean and salt the fish. Cut into serving slices and place in a greased overproof dish. Slice the aubergines and salt it. Let it stand for half an hour in a sieve and then fry. Next fry the onions and sauté the green pepper. Sprinkle the fish with curry powder. Add the onions, green pepper and aubergines. Place the sliced tomatoes on top. Sprinkle the parsley over all.

The Sauce:

Mix all the ingredients for the sauce in a small saucepan and cook until slightly thick. Pour over the fish in the oven-proof dish. Cover with foil and place in a moderate oven. Remove the foil after about 15 minutes. Taste the sauce and adjust seasoning. Place it back in the oven without the foil until most of the sauce has evaporated and the fish is cooked.

Note: The fish for the *Salona* can be fried. You can also prepare it without aubergines.

Chinese Rice or Fried Rice

Ingredients:

2 cups basmati rice
4 portions roaster chicken marinated in cognac and soy sauce
1 sliced onion
1 stalk sliced celery
½ sliced green pepper
2 eggs
1 grated carrot
2 cups sliced mushrooms
1 or 2 tablespoons soy sauce
Salt and pepper to taste

Method:

Cook the rice in the usual way.
Bake the portions of chicken. Shred.
Stir-fry the onion, celery, mushrooms and green pepper on a high flame, Chinese style.
Beat the eggs and fry in a separate pan until soft but not too well done. Take them off and slice them into small pieces.
Now put all the vegetables, rice, chicken, eggs, onion, etc. in a pan. Add soy sauce to taste. Stir gently, simmer until needed. Serve hot.

Pavlova

Ingredients:

4 egg whites
Pinch of salt
8oz caster sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla essence
1 teaspoon white wine vinegar

Method:

Preheat oven to gas 7, 425°F, 220°C. Line a baking sheet with bakewell paper and mark out a 7 inch circle.

Place the egg whites and salt in a bowl and whisk with an electric mixer until stiff. Add half the sugar, a spoonful at a time and whisk again until stiff and standing in peaks. **Using a metal spoon, carefully fold in the remaining sugar,** then the vanilla essence and vinegar. **Do not beat again.** Pile the mixture into the centre of the marked circle. Smooth it out. Turn the oven down to gas 1, 275°F, 140°C and place the **Pavlova** on the centre shelf and cook for about 1½ hours.

Remove from oven and leave until completely cold. Peel the bakewell paper and place on a serving dish. Then, just before serving, spread the filling on top.

You can use a filling of your choice.

Raspberry Pavlova

12oz fresh raspberries, mashed
¾ pint whipping cream, whipped
Keep a few whole raspberries for decorating the top of the **Pavlova**

Coffee Pavlova

¾ pint double cream
¾ pint single cream
Icing sugar to taste
4 teaspoons powdered Nescafe

Whip the cream with all the dry ingredients. Spread over meringue. Decorate with chocolate vermicelli.

Strawberry Pavlova

10oz strawberries
¾ pint whipping cream

Hull the strawberries; wash lightly, then chop roughly and add caster sugar to your taste. Whip the cream with the sugar and spread over meringue and cover with the strawberries. Decorate with half strawberries.

Pineapple Pavlova

You can use a big tin of pineapple in syrup and a few strawberries sliced, 2 chopped bananas covered in cream and slices of Kiwi fruit.

Apricot Cheesecake

Ingredients for base:

6oz digestive biscuits
2oz butter
2 tablespoons soft brown sugar

Filling:

8oz cottage cheese
8oz Philadelphia cream cheese
Juice and rind of 1 lemon
3oz caster sugar
3 tablespoons water
1 level tablespoon gelatine
1 can apricot halves
¾ pint double cream
1 level teaspoon cornflour

Method:

Finely crush the biscuits with a rolling pin. Melt the butter in a saucepan, add biscuits

and brown sugar. Mix and press into the base of a deep round 8" loose bottomed cake tin.

Sieve cottage cheese, add cream cheese, juice and lemon rind and sugar and beat together until light and fluffy.

Place water in a basin, sprinkle on gelatine and leave to soften for 5 minutes. Place bowl in a saucepan of hot water over medium heat and stir until dissolved. Drain apricots. Reserve syrup. Add 4 tablespoons of the syrup to dissolved gelatine.

Whip cream well. Fold gelatine mixture and cream into cheese mixture. Turn into cake tin; level top and chill until firm. Arrange apricot halves on top.

Place cornflour in a saucepan. Gradually blend remaining apricot syrup. Stir over low heat until this mixture thickens and boils.

Cool slightly and then brush over apricots in cake tin.

Leave in refrigerator to set.

Tips

Did you know that the captain and his co-pilot never eat the same meal on a plane in case of food poisoning? For they have to think of the pilot's well being.

Use a little baby oil on a soft cloth when dusting wood. It gives a beautiful shine.

Peel vegetables over a sheet of old newspaper. It can then be folded and thrown away with no mess to clear up. Remember to wash them before cooking.

A little white toothpaste rubbed on to white leather shoes will clean them nicely. Then just wipe with a damp cloth.

Wine should be kept out of direct light. Never store wine in the fridge. It kills the flavour.

Do not stuff a chicken unless completely thawed.

For fan-assisted ovens, heating time should be reduced by 5 minutes.

Tuna fish has a stronger flavour than white fish because its natural oils are distributed throughout the flesh. In white fish the natural oils are stored in the liver. Fresh tuna is ideal for grilling as the oils act as a natural baste.

It is thought by many that to eat every two hours rather than eating big meals is a good way of staying healthy. Get into the habit of eating only when you are hungry.

Bay leaf: It is one of the only herbs that is better used dry than fresh. Because after it dries the flavour intensifies. It loses flavour if kept too long. Tear leaves slightly before using.

If tomatoes are too ripe to slice properly, soak them in a bowl of salted water for half an hour and they will become firmer.

After making cakes or pastry, rinse floury bowls in cold water first. Hot water just hardens the flour and makes it difficult to remove.

Broil fish very close to the broiler flame. Fish weeps if it's far.

Always adjust your recipes to your liking. For better health, reduce your meat consumption and increase your intake of fibre and reduce your intake of sugar and fat and eat greens.

The latest research suggests that the nicotine in cigarettes can suppress the parts of the brain that control learning, memory and emotions.

BOOKS

Fountain of Blessings

by Dayan Dr. Pinchas Toledano

This Compendium provides a wide range of instructions for the daily life of the Jew.

The importance of bread

The book highlights the paramount position of bread, out of all food, in Jewish religious observance. The essential feature of a meal, as opposed to a mere snack, is the consumption of bread. Before partaking of bread (if not less than the size of an olive) one has to wash one's hands, pronounce the blessing of *hamotsi*, and, at the conclusion of the meal, recite the Grace after meals.

The hands have to be washed up to the wrists. A suitable vessel from which to pour the water is necessary. A tap is not considered suitable for this purpose. It is necessary to say the blessing of – *al netilat yadayim* – before drying the hands.

It is forbidden to partake of food without first reciting a blessing. The blessing of *hamotsi* is pronounced over bread. No interruption by talking or otherwise may be made between the washing of the hands and the blessing of *hamotsi*.

It is customary to put some salt on the bread, because the table represents the Temple altar, and the food an offering, and it is said, "with all your offerings you shall offer salt" (Lev. 2:13).

The blessing of *hamotsi* can only be said over bread produced from the five species of grain which grow in the Land of Israel (Deut. 8:8): spelt, oats, wheat, barley and rye.

The Torah gives precedence to the feeding of animals over that of man. Consequently, if one has a pet in the house, one may not partake of a meal unless one has fed it first.

The blessing of *hamotsi* over bread generally covers all food eaten during a meal, dispensing with the need for separate blessings, with the exception of wine, which requires the blessing of *borai peri haggefen* because of its importance. On Shabbath and festivals where the kiddush over wine is recited prior to the meal then no blessing is required for wine drunk during the meal.

Tea and coffee drunk after Grace require the blessing of *shehakol* to be recited first.

Fruit or compote eaten after the main course as dessert, before Grace, require a separate blessing as they are not considered part of the meal.

At the conclusion of the meal, before Grace is recited, some have the custom to wash the fingers, because in ancient times powerful salt from the area of Sodom was used and this could be harmful to one's eyesight. Although this reason is no longer applicable, some still retain this custom.

It is customary to remove knives from the table before reciting Grace, as the table is compared to the altar, concerning which it is written, "You shall not lift up any iron upon it." (Deut. 27:5).

Grace after meals is a biblical command and should be recited sitting down and with reverence. It is preferable to recite Grace

in Hebrew. However, it is permitted to recite it in any language that one understands.

Apart from the Grace after Meals there are two other shorter concluding blessings to be said after eating or drinking where no bread is included. By "bread" is meant something made from one of the five species mentioned above kneaded with water only. However, if dough contains enough eggs or oil or any other liquid to give it a flavour then it is not treated as bread.

The above may be useful in order to understand and follow the correct ritual of a strictly observant Jew.

The reason why bread is given a unique place in Jewish diet goes, in my opinion, to the time when Adam discovered wild wheat and other grain and by establishing agricultural settlements started, by definition, our present civilization. Adam also started monotheism and was accorded the honour of being called the First Man.

Adam is greatly revered in Islam and is reputed to be buried in Hejaz●

Naim Dangoor

The Jews of Iraq in the Twentieth Century (Ha-Yehudim be-Iraq Bemeah ha-Isrim)

by Nissim Qazzaz (Machon Ben-Zevi, Jerusalem, 1991).

Reviewed by Meer S. Basri

A new history of the Iraqi Jews in the first half of the twentieth century has appeared in Jerusalem (in Hebrew) by Dr. Nissim Qazzaz, a well-known scholar of Baghdadi origin. This is a meticulous study of the Jews of Iraq during the last years of the Turkish Regime and under the British Occupation and the Arab Hashemite Kingdom by an expert Iraqi who left his country as a young man and completed his higher studies in Israel.

The Jews prospered in the Land of the Two Rivers for many centuries. They looked to Jerusalem as their spiritual and religious orbit, reiterating its name in their daily prayers. But, like their forefathers before 2500 years, they have been reluctant to forsake its rich shores for their ancient homeland. In fact they considered it as the cradle of their race where the Patriarch Abraham was born and from where brides were brought for Isaac and Jacob.

When Sir Arnold Wilson, Acting Civil Commissioner in Mesopotamia after World War I, told the community leaders the good news, as he put it, of the proclamation of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, he found them unmoved. They preferred to remain where they were living, but asked the British Government to assist in the country's prosperity by implementing new economic projects.

In 1919 Sir Arnold was asked by the British Government to sound the Iraqis' views as to the government they would like to have. He sent his local secretary and interpreter Sion Gourji to the Jewish leaders to request them to petition H.M.'s Government asking them to extend their protection to them. However, the leaders were reluctant to comply with the Ag. Commissioner's suggestion. They answer-

ed that, being a minority, they preferred to accept any government in power agreeable to the majority. (But they did petition – Ed.)

Dr. Qazzaz found new untapped sources from which he gleaned a wealth of information, especially the unpublished memoirs of the eminent Elkabir brothers kept in the Babylonian Heritage Centre in Or-Yehuda. Abraham Elkabir, for many years Accountant General and Director General of Finance, wrote two prolific treatises, viz. *My Government Life or a Story of a Dream* (Ms. 1964) and *My Communal Life or Death of a Community* (Ms. 1967). His elder brother the businessman Heskell, who went to live in London and Paris in 1932, wrote *Relations between Arabs and Jews*, Paris (Ms. 1967).

These memoirs throw a shining light on the life and activities of the Iraqi Jewish community up to the exodus of 1950-51. They present indeed a valuable assessment of the community's ascent and decline in the 1900-1950 era.

Nissim Qazzaz also publishes as an appendix to his book a unique interview by Sasson effendi, the Jewish member for Baghdad of the Turkish Parliament (later to be known as Sasson Heskell (Eskell), the first Minister of Finance of Iraq in 1920), published in March 1909 in the Hebrew paper *Haolam* (The World) of Vilna, Poland. The paper gave a short biography of the Baghdadi deputy and said that he was the tallest member of the "Majlis". His features and discourse showed an austere gentleman of high intellect and moral sincerity. In spite of his European style, he depicted a discernible Arab upbringing.

Sasson effendi said that the Jews in Baghdad numbered 45 to 50 thousand and considered themselves as the descendants of the Babylonian Jews who failed to return to the Land of Israel after the first Exile. They had adopted the Arabic language and mode of life and were integrated in Iraqi society. The rabbis only knew the Torah and they acquired an eminent position in the religious life of the country and the East.

Relations between Jews and Arabs were not so good in Sasson's opinion, the main reason being that the Jews were more enlightened than the fanatical and illiterate Moslems.

Asked about the new Zionist movement in Poland and Russia, Sasson effendi had no specific knowledge on the subject. He thought that Hebrew was merely a religious language and there was no useful purpose in adopting it as a daily tongue. He suggested, if at all possible, to have a Jewish spiritual centre in Palestine.

The interviewer concluded hoping that the Baghdadi member of Parliament if he is not with "us", he will not be against "us" and that, in the course of time, he will have a better knowledge of the "Jewish Nationalists" and their aspirations●

Scribe: We understand that a year ago, just before he invaded Kuwait, Saddam Hussein appeared on television and praised the work of Sir Sasson Heskell, the first finance minister of modern Iraq. He then awarded him posthumously the Order of Rafidain, First Class, which is Iraq's highest decoration●

Adi-Zahab

(Ornament of Gold)

Commentary on the Chumash by the late Chief Rabbi Ezra Reuben Dangoor of Baghdad – 2 volumes, 670 pages – in Hebrew. Published by The Exilarch's Foundation. Printed in Jerusalem.

Reviewed by

Dayan Dr. Pinchas Toledano

One of the outstanding rabbis which Iraqi Jewry has produced is Rabbi Ezra R. Dangoor who was a disciple of the renowned Gaon Rabbi Abdullah Somekh, the author of *Zibhei Zedek*.

Rabbi Dangoor came from a long line of rabbis, among them the Renowned Gaon Rabbi Elisha Dangoor who was Chief Rabbi of Bagdad.

Unfortunately at the age of ten he lost his father and despite this heavy burden which stunned his family, nonetheless he occupied himself with Torah study. At an early age he became a qualified Sopher, Shohet and Mohel.

After a short while he left Bagdad and became the Rabbi of Burma but after two years he returned to Bagdad and dedicated himself to communal work. Because of his outstanding qualities of kindness, dedication and tolerance towards the Community he was loved by all Iraqi Jewry. No wonder, therefore, that in 1923 he was elected the Haham Bashi (Chief Rabbi of Bagdad) and since then Jews and Arabs respected him and sought his advice.

It is said that when King Feisal visited the old Synagogue of Bagdad, the King asked Rabbi Ezra – "please tell me whether the Iraqi Jews are Zionists or not?" Rabbi Dangoor, with a sense of humour but with firmness, replied that "all Iraqi Jews are Zionists since we pray to the Almighty God three times a day, and each time, we pray for the restoration of Israel and the Temple." This sharp answer had indeed pleased the King.

Rabbi Dangoor, who was modest in his ways, refused to be paid for his communal work and when the Community insisted that he should be paid and a salary was fixed, he distributed his salary to the poor of Bagdad.

Long before he became Chief Rabbi of Bagdad it was his ardent ambition to publish many Rabbinic books in order to spread the knowledge of the Torah among his people. It did not take long before his dream became a reality, and in 1903 he received permission from the Sultan to establish a printing house and through this new venture dozens of Rabbinic books were published which became famous not only among the Iraqi Jewry but throughout the world.

Despite his manifold duties as well as writing many "responsa" on Halacha he decided to write a commentary on the Torah which has recently seen the light through the generous aid of the Exilarch's Foundation of the author's grandson Mr. Naim Eliyahu Dangoor.

Rabbi Dangoor methodically arranged his commentary and illustrated many of his comments by examples. Sometimes embellishing his comments from the Midrash and sometimes from the Talmud. His style is

lucid and the Hebrew is reminiscent of the classical commentaries on the Torah. Following in the footsteps of Rashi and other classical commentators he examines every obscure word and then gives two or three explanations as to the exact meaning of the word. From time to time we see him discussing an obscure word from a grammatical point of view and through the aid of Arabic he was able to shed light on many obscure words.

With regard to the Creation of the world mentioned in Genesis he interpreted many verses philosophically. In this respect he follows the views of Jewish philosophers (without mentioning them by name) that G-d created everything *ex-nihilo*.



Hakham Ezra Dangoor

On the question of sacrifices in the Third Book of Moses, Leviticus, Rabbi Dangoor quotes Rabbi Shmuel D. Luzatto who believes that at the beginning long before the Torah was given, people used to sacrifice to their gods either to give thanks to them or to bring an offering in order that the god should fulfil their wishes. They believed that they should deal with their gods the way they deal with a king. They also believed that the only way to know as to whether their gods received their offering is only by burning the animal.

When the Torah was given, G-d in His infinite wisdom realised that man's understanding is limited and He, therefore, did not command for the complete abolishment of sacrifices as this would not be accepted by them since this is the only way they knew how to worship a Deity. He, therefore, commanded them to carry on the sacrifices but from now on all offerings must be made to the G-d who brought them out of Egypt. In this respect Luzatto is in line with Maimonides views in his book *The Guide to the Perplexed* who believed that the sacrifices were purely a concession on the part of G-d to the Israelites.

Rabbi Dangoor concludes that although Luzatto's reasoning behind the sacrifices is not as simple as he thought, for no doubt there are deep reasons which are hidden from us, nevertheless according to the *Peshat* it is in order to accept Luzatto's explanation.

In conclusion it is certainly a book worth acquiring for it is full of *Peshat*, Midrash, philosophy and Kabbalah. A book which will satisfy those who are thirsty for the knowledge of the Torah.

Let us thank the author's grandson Mr. Naim E. Dangoor who spared no efforts in publishing this beautiful commentary on the Torah. May the *zechut* of the author stand with him and his family ●

Reviewed by Rabbi Yacob Manasseh of Midrash Ben Ish Hai, New York

From the time of the destruction of the first Beth Hammiqdash (Temple) in 586 BCE, when our forefathers were led into captivity and exile to Babylon, till our forced evacuation from, what is now referred to as Iraq, Babylonian Hakhamim lit the eyes of all Israel with their teachings and instruction.

The Midrashim and Yeshiboth in which our scholars studied day and night, those of Nehardea and later, Sura and Pumbeditha, are now legendary. The monumental task of the compilation of the Gemara (Talmud Babli) at the end of the fifth century, and its subsequent expansion during the sixth and seventh centuries, was to emerge from there.

In time (by the eighth century) the heads of the Academies of Sura and Pumbeditha would have the title of Gaon. It was the Geonim who would make a stand against the Karaites, who rejected the Oral Law as laid down in the Talmud.

Eventually, Babylon would temporarily *cede power to other authorities, such as* Egypt and Spain, who would continue along the lines laid down in Babylon. By the 18th century, however, Babylon's prominence would be resolutely re-established.

It was at this time that the great family of Hakham Moshe Hayyim *Alaw Hashalom*, although already well known for some generations, come very much to the fore. His son Hakham Eliyahu Hayyim a"h would continue his work and would be followed, in turn, by his son, whose works would light the eyes of all Israel for all time – Rabbenu Hakham Yosef Hayyim (some refer to him as the Ben Ish Hai), may his merit protect us. Amen.

Hakham Yosef Hayyim a"h, was one of the many great Hakhamim to grace the walls of Midrash Beth Zilkha. The Midrash was founded by the great Hakham Abdallah Somekh a"h, together with Menashi Hesqel Reuben Menashi (of Mnashi Zbeda) a"h (who is a great great grandfather of the author of this article).

Among the eminent Hakhamim to have studied and taught at Beth Zilkha, was one who was to be remembered as an inspiration at the time of terrible religious upheaval for the Jews of Babylon. Hakham Ezra Dangoor *Alaw Hashalom*, (1848-1930) was to make a contribution of major importance, to the spiritual well-being of Babylonian Jewry.

The prayer-books that he published are a testimony to the importance he placed in preserving all aspects of our religious heritage.

These prayer-books are a source of much information and Halakhoth, and one cannot help but be moved by his dedication

to maintaining the purity of an age-old tradition. It is a pity that so many of the new Siddurim (prayer books) appearing today, do not share this dedication to preserve our holy customs.

Happy is the one who has a copy of these Siddurim of Hakham Ezra Dangoor, to pray from.

It is a great day for all Israel when a major new work by a great Rabbi is published. How much more so, when the work that is published is an "Ornament of Gold" (Adi Zahab), written by Hakham Dangoor, which had, for many years, remained in manuscript form – hidden from the world – and has now surfaced as a publication, ready to light the eyes of all who read it.

The work is an extensive commentary on the Five Books of Moses. While Hakham Dangoor, in general, does not show his sources, they appear to encompass a very wide range of Mefarshim (Rabbis who expounded on and explained the Torah, such as Rashi), plus his own Hiddushim. Let us take this opportunity to look at a few examples.

In Bereshith Parasha, Hakham Dangoor comments on the use of the words *Waykhal* and *Waiyishboth* (finished and rested) in the *Pasug*, "And (G-d) finished (*Waykhal*) His work on the seventh day which He had made, and He rested (*Waiyishboth*) on the seventh day from all His work which he had made." (Genesis 2:2). In Hebrew these two words have similar meanings, and Hakham Dangoor wishes to clarify why they were both necessary.

He says that *Waiyishboth* implies that work was stopped, even though not completed, whereas *Waykhal* indicates that the work was actually completed and over with. And the reason why both words are necessary is because, had only the word *Waykhal* been written, we might have understood that G-d finished His work because it was completed and that, subsequently, he would start something new. But the word *Waiyishboth* comes to teach us that he *stopped in the middle of his work*.

And for this very reason we understand why we were commanded for all generations, that when Shabbath comes, we are obligated to stop in the middle of whatever we may be working on and must not continue thinking about *Melakha* (servile work).

Hakham Dangoor adds that there is no doubt that the *Melakha* was completed on the sixth day, and from that time on there was no new creation. However, even though all the *Melakha* was completed on the sixth day, G-d did not yet complete a matter that was very dear to him, which was, in fact, more essential to the world than all the items created so far. And it was only through this "cherished" matter that His work was truly completed.

What was this matter that was so dear to him? G-d did not wish to simply create this world and then abandon it, but rather, His purpose was to dwell in it so that there would be *Debequth* (togetherness) with all the works of his hand, be they celestial or worldly. And "worldly" can only refer to Man, of whom it is written, "... [Was created] in the image of G-d." In other

words, G-d sought to have *Debequth* with man.

On the seventh day, G-d decided that he did not wish to leave the world in the hands of nature, but would watch over his creatures, and perform miracles (which go against the course of nature, such as the parting of the Red Sea and other miracles seen throughout the ages), and this is made possible through the *Debequth* that the Holy One Blessed Be He has with his creations.

Had man consistently gone in G-d's ways, then His glory would have always been seen in the world, as it was when Adam was created and G-d spoke to him and blessed him. But since man turned away from His ways, this contact stopped and His glory was removed from them.

Nevertheless, in every generation until Abraham Abinu, *Ataw Hashalom*, there were chosen individuals with whom there was *Debequth* with G-d's glory, such as Adam, Seth, Hanokh, Methushela, Noah and so on, until, as we mentioned, Abraham Abinu.

With Abraham Abinu G-d made a covenant that his seed would be the *chosen* ones in the world, and that His presence would dwell amongst them and that He would perform *Nisseem Weniflu-oth* (miracles and wonders) for them (that would go against the laws of Nature). And that is why they were commanded to keep the Shabbath, to show that they are a holy nation and that through them His cherished ambition would be fulfilled.

Hakham Dangoor adds that if G-d's glory is not in the world, there is no *Menuha* (rest or ease) for man and one is constantly sad and depressed by the hardships of life. But when there is *Debequth* in the world and the *Shekhina* (Holy Presence) of G-d is amongst the people, then there is true *Simha* (happiness) and *Menuha*.

It becomes apparent, when reading this two-volume set, that just as Hakham Ezra Dangoor was able to communicate at various levels to people of various backgrounds, so too, this important work is intended for people of all levels. It truly contains something for everyone.

One who simply reads the text of the Five Books of Moses, has very little insight into the true and often hidden meanings of the Torah. Hakham Ezra Dangoor, as mentioned above, has drawn from the explanations and points of view of many of our great Rabbis and teachers, but he has done so with immense skill. He has brought them together in a clear and concise form, to give the reader, in lucid terms, a precise and "to the point" understanding of what they have written.

We were truly blessed to have had a Hakham of the calibre of Hakham Dangoor who was a guiding light to the Jews of Babylon and many surrounding areas. This recently published work will surely find an important place in Jewish homes of all backgrounds, Sefardi and Ashkenazi, to be read, enjoyed and learned by many generations to come.

Reviewed by Meer S. Basri

"Moses received the Torah from Sinai. He passed it to Joshua, Joshua to The

Elders, The Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets passed it on to the men of the Great Synagogue . . ."

Since then, for two thousand years, hundreds of commentaries and dissertations have been written on the Torah. It was related that Moses asked God if his people were still studying the Torah. The Almighty took him to watch Rabbi Akiba's college where the students were discussing in heated debate. And wonder of wonders! Moses could not follow up their deliberations. God reassured him: This is indeed your Torah, Moses, they are studying. But on every tittle they construct heaps of *halakhoth* (practices).

In his preface the Rishon Lezion Rabbi Obadiah Yosef, former Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel, lauds the commentaries and extols this treasure of knowledge.

Rabbi Ezra Dangoor, my maternal grandfather, was born in Baghdad in 1848 and died there in 1930.

The late David Sulman Sassoon wrote his obituary in the *Jewish Chronicle* of London (14th February, 1930). He concluded his long article saying: "With Habam Ezra Dangoor one of the last of the illustrious and venerable Hakhamim of Baghdad has passed away, and we are the poorer for his loss."

The commentary opens new vistas to the readers' minds. The method followed by Rabbi Ezra Dangoor is to refer to the week's portion and explain the meaning of words and paragraphs with special reference to the linguistic and moral concepts of the Divine Word.

Rabbi Dangoor was not a mystic nor was he attracted to the Zohar and the Kabbalah. His commentaries bear on the plain meaning of the Torah (*galuy* or *pashut*), shunning the hidden connotations (*nistar*) of Gematria (*numericals*), the Sephiroths (*spheres*) and the eerie shadows of the hereafter.

Naim Dangoor writes: The passage that attracted my attention in my grandfather's commentary is where he says that when God created the Universe He also created Time. In another passage he asserts that God created the Universe out of nothing – *ex nihilo*. Now this is very much in line with the most advanced scientific thinking.

Although the Jewish calendar starts from the Creation, it is conceivable that before the world was created there was an earlier time when there was no Universe. But the Theory of Relativity asserts that Time, Space and Matter were all created together out of Nothing. Conversely, all things add up to Nothing. "Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity".

Nowadays we take such concepts for granted, but the Greek philosophers of antiquity held a completely opposite view. They believed in the eternity of matter. It is true that the laws of Thermodynamics assert that matter can neither be created nor destroyed. But Judaism always realised that the laws by which we are bound do not apply to the Almighty.

It is interesting to note that when Alexander the Great was on his way to conquering the world, when he was only 23, he passed through Judah in 333 BCE and

Continued on page 9

LETTERS

Never again

I was very impressed by the comments of Naim Dangoor in the July issue of *The Scribe* "Newton and the Holocaust".

The concept that the Jews must either conquer or suffer the wickedness of others is hardly convincing. You may also imagine that those six million Jews would enjoy a great deal of happiness in heaven after their death so that their slaughter on earth was justified. What about that little girl who screamed on her way to the gas chamber: "I want to live"? She was one of one million children who perished in a similar way. Did you hear me? One million children! They must have committed horrible crimes before their birth and therefore their punishment was justified also. As justifications continue, one can compare the relationship between men and animals to that of God and men. Man slaughters animal for the sake of food, not for the sake of inflicting harm. From the animal perspective, man is harsh and cruel for their mind cannot grasp the purpose of the killing. By the same reasoning, God's permission of the Holocaust must have a goal the human mind is unable to decipher. The slaughter was only a by-product.

All of these and other speculations are no more convincing than yours. Nothing can be.

Your attempt to find positive values in the Holocaust is interesting and useful. But you failed to mention two of the most positive aspects of the aftermath of the Holocaust, namely, the establishment of the State of Israel and the appearance of the slogan: Never Again. But for the Holocaust, the declaration of the State of Israel would have probably been delayed many decades.

You sound somewhat pessimistic in mentioning a repetition of the Holocaust by neo-Nazis. No more can the world be deaf and silent to the slaughter of Jews as was done during the Holocaust. If all the leaders of the world, writers, novelists and journalists will keep silent in the face of an impending second Holocaust, Israel will not! Silence is sometimes a sin. As long as Israel exists, Never Again!

Great Neck, Prof. Albert Khabbaza
New York

Naim Dangoor comments:

1) No one is suggesting that the Holocaust was justified – far from it. We are simply looking for cause and effect.

2) Your analogy of man and animal, and God and man is interesting. But God's "permission" may have been not for a goal but for a reason. The Book of Jonah tells it all. Jonah was asked to warn the people of Nineveh. He first tried to run away from his mission and became a scapegoat – like the Jews who did not take up their mission and were hounded from pillar to post. (The Koran says that when God gave the Jews the Torah, He told them not to keep it to themselves but to spread it).

Afterwards, Jonah prophesied on Nineveh and warned them. They repented, acknowledged God, and were saved. But Jonah couldn't understand why God spar-

ed these people. He was angry and made himself miserable. The Book of Jonah also doesn't make the moral of the story clear. The Christians and Moslems have accepted the God of Abraham. We have to accept them and together march towards the universal Kingdom of God.

3) Was the establishment of the State of Israel really worth the lives of 6 million Jews? I look at it in the opposite way. The attempt to establish the Jewish national home in Palestine was the main cause of the extermination of Europe's Jewry. The British Foreign Office refused them entry to the Middle East and the Mufti of Jerusalem managed to convince the Nazis not to let the Jews leave Europe.

4) You say, Never Again! But why even once? The reason why the neo-Nazis are denying the Holocaust is in order to prepare the ground for a repeat performance, and I am afraid of them. Notwithstanding Israel, and perhaps because of Israel, we now have more enemies than ever before. One is reminded of General Foch's message to headquarters during the Great War: "I am outnumbered and surrounded on all sides. My rear is exposed; my flank is giving in; my situation is hopeless. Therefore, I shall attack".

The return to Israel has been brought about not by universal justice but by persecution – first in Europe, then in Arab lands and now in Russia. The Jews who have sought refuge in the small sanctuary that is Israel are not unlike the Jews of York who ran to the safety of the tower and were surrounded by howling crowds seeking their life. Israel is likewise surrounded on all sides by enemies seeking its destruction. The mass suicide of York's Jews is reflected in the Massada determination of the Israelis. May it never have to be tested.

5) Some people try to discover why God did not prevent or stop the Holocaust. If I walk in Central Park in the dark I am liable to be mugged. Who is at fault? I can hardly blame God for not protecting me. And if I am at fault for not being cautious, then this does not absolve the mugger from being a criminal. But it is useless to chase octogenarian war criminals now. Our duty is to stifle neo-Nazis in the bud and not rely on the future sympathy of other people who may be otherwise engaged.

If anything, your publication is getting better with each issue. You have no axe to grind, and you can always speak out and say the whole truth and let whoever the cap fits, wear it!

Freemasonry: I too come from a family of Masons and remember the first time I was in the Lodge in Baghdad. I may have been 7 or 8, and I took my small "Meccano" set to repair one of the exhibits (I won't say what!), but many years had to pass before I was initiated as a Brother in Sfat. Appropriately, the Lodge was called "Zohar". Since then, I have advanced to be Master of my Lodge in Ramat Gan and I belong to 4 Lodges and am now Chaplain. Recently I had the unusual honour of giving two speeches in one evening. The first was about Isaiah Ch.43. I alluded to the great prophecies there: "I gave Egypt as thy ransom," "I will bring thy seed from the

east, and from the west will I gather thee." I saw both these prophecies come true in my own family. Then recently we saw, in the return of Russian and Ethiopian Jews, how "the north had to give up and the south to surrender." I dwelt on the empires that had disintegrated and disappeared so that Israel might rise and its people re-gathered. The Nazi empire, from the Atlantic to the Urals. The British empire, on which the sun never set. The French, the Italian, Nasser's dream of "empire" ("from the Ocean to the Gulf"), the Ethiopian and the communist empire of Russia – not to count the untold empires of antiquity!! (and Saddam's doomed effort).

My second lecture that same evening was on Mozart and *The Magic Flute* with its Masonic implications.

I should further add that my two elder sons are both Masons and I hope my youngest will also be initiated as soon as he finishes his army service.

In answer to Rabbi Hugo Gryn and Mr. Naim Dangoor, may I misquote an Arab poet?

كَمْ قَوْمٌ مَّخْلُوعُونَ كُنَّا حَقِيقًا لَكِي نَفْسٌ عَذَابًا

I wish your publication was ten times as long, or issued weekly.

Herzl 75,

Dr. Maurice Saltoun
Migdal 'A', Apartment 15,
Ramat Gan

I was interested in the review of Ahmed Osman's book *Stranger in the Valley of the Kings* about Joseph's Jewish connection to old Egyptian Culture, Faith, Practices, as well as History.

While on a tour at the Luxor Temple about three years ago, we were (our Tourist Group) led by an Egyptian guide, who was also a professor in Egyptian Archaeology, Dr. Mahmoud, who read and explained to us the hieroglyphic writings on the walls and on stones. One explanation struck me most which mentioned a certain Son of a Pharaoh by the name of *Moice* or *Moyce* who was spared death after the passing away of his father the Pharaoh thanks to a minister who was a friend and protector of his mother. The respectable doctor added that most of the Pharaoh's sons were called *Moice* which was a common practice at that time. Also it is known that heirs to the deceased Pharaohs were usually chased and killed to eliminate a claim to the throne especially when the seizure of this position of a king is other than the heirs. They also obliterated all mention and/or writings about them on their existence and deeds.

Moice's mother had a powerful minister friend who not only kept her son alive, protected him, he also saw to it that writings (probably the only one of its kind) about him were spared.

I am amazed at the vast knowledge you so nicely depict to the readers and wish to congratulate you on your work and endeavour in this respectful venture. Good luck.

New York

Josh Horesh

I find Alice Shashou's pull-out Cookery Corner page very useful. Now I can just keep them in a file.

Montreux

Sheila Lyons

The Scribe is a valuable document to me and to my friends. It is like the Books of Ezra and Nehemia to the exiled Jews of Babylon. *The Scribe*, however, has excelled these two books by two main features: Firstly, they did not have a remarkable lady like Mrs. Alice Shashou who writes about *kouba*, *kufra* and other Iraqi food. I wonder if there are still some young Iraqi housewives who have the time to do these cookings. Secondly, *The Scribe* is now an excellent media in which many Iraqis find the time to write some past recollections. In your July issue I found very interesting the recollections of Mrs. H.Z. Shasha about the rivers of Babylon. Equally interesting is the story of Hassan Al-Aswad by Mr. A.A. Shasha. No doubt many Iraqis have similar recollections about a sort of Hassan - Aswad Abiadh or with other exotic colour.

I still remember the cold winter nights of Baghdad. Our family used to sit down around charcoal stoves (جافوق), eating roasted chestnuts and boiled turnips and beet. We used to listen to stories from my late grandfather about prominent Jews of that time. How David Sasson ran away from Baghdad. How his brother-in-law, the late Khedhuri Zilkha, opened the first Jewish bank in the last decade of the 19th century and determined to make it similar to the Rothschilds. My late grandmother told us about her uncles, the late Benjamin and David Shasha who left Baghdad to England at the end of the 19th century. My late father used to tell us about his escape to India at the break of the first world war.

Such stories are not found in historical records but show the experience of this community in that environment. They really generate much excitement among readers. This yearning to the past is fairly described in the following lines of a classic poet:

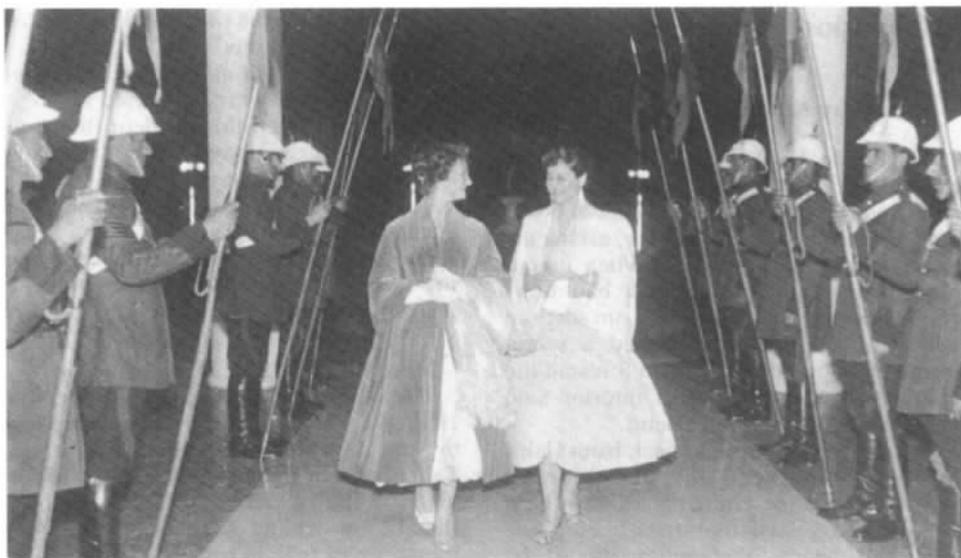
وكم من منزل يصحبه العنى ابداً وحنينه لدول منزل

From 586 BCE Babylon was the first Diaspora in the history of the Jews. The Jews of Babylon survived all the wars and the political changes. Today, though most of the Iraqi Jews live in Israel, the rest, however, are scattered all over the world. In Canada, there is a small town in the North Pole on the top of the world; its day is six months and its night is six months. Surprisingly, in that remote town there is an Iraqi Jewish family.

The survival of this community begs the question if Iraqi Jews are in fact a special type of people. Perhaps: Two Israeli scientists published in 1954 an article in a scientific journal titled: "Blood in Jews of Iraq". (J. Gurevitch and E. Margolis in *Ann Eugen*, London 1954). The article was based on the analysis of blood samples taken from all Iraqi immigrants as part of a medical check-up during the exodus from Iraq in the 1950s. The conclusion is that the blood of this community has some characteristics different from any other race!

I would like to comment on two of your articles.

1) In the January issue you had an article "Superstition among the Jews of Baghdad." One may find this kind of superstition in many communities, though in different ways.



January 1957. Stella and Renée Dangoor arriving at the Amanah Hall, Baghdad, for a Gala event

It is interesting to note that between 177-257 CE there was among the Jewish community of Babylon a famous rabbi who was also a physician. His name was Samuel of Nehardea or Mar Samuel. He tried to ban the widely held notion that an evil eye could cause illness, holding instead that disease was caused by miniscule particles that entered the human body through air, water and food.

How many thousands of years he was ahead of his time?

2) In July 1991 issue you published the letters of Mr. Naim Dangoor to the Foreign Secretary. As mentioned, the British favoured the Arabs in the split of the Ottoman Empire. This was done despite the suffering of many British soldiers at the hands of Arab tribes in the battle of Kut Al-Amara in southern Iraq. In that area, the British were tightly besieged by the Turks. As some British soldiers tried to escape, hoping for some help from the Arab tribes, instead they found themselves bought and sold by the Arab sheikhs.

The report on this battle was kept secret by the government until mid 1940s. Finally a Dutch journalist was given access to it and he reported the story. See Pierre Van Pazen: *The Forgotten Ally*

Nepean, Canada

Sami G. Sourani

Scribe: Pierre van Paasen was author of the letter to the *Herald Tribune* on "Iraq's recurring threat" which appeared in our issue No. 48

Recently I have learned of your interesting magazine from Fiona Chitayat in Taipei (Taiwan) and I would like to become a subscriber. Could you please send all the necessary information to me

Hackensack,
New Jersey

Nahum Meir

I would appreciate your putting Judge Blanche Kay on your mailing list. Judge Kay is the daughter of the late Dr. Ezra Haddad, the well-known scholar and historian and the headmaster of the Wataniya school of Baghdad

Kiriati Ono, Israel

Judge David Muallem

Congratulations

The following notables were honoured in the Queen's Birthday List, 1991:

Professor Elie Kedourie, CBE

on the occasion of his retirement as professor at the London School of Economics

Professor Eric Moonman, OBE

Senior Vice President of the outgoing Board of Deputies of British Jews

Mr. David Elias, BEM

Leader since 1950 of the Eastern Jewish Community in London. Mr. Elias, of Stamford Hill, North London, is the founder and vice-chairman of the Stoke Newington Jewish Police Liaison Committee who has worked increasingly for 39 years to strengthen links between the Jewish Community and the police

Amnesty International's 1991 Annual Report devotes several pages to alleged human rights violations in Israel, most of which exist only in Palestinian imagination, but pays scant attention to the plight of Syrian Jewry.

Amnesty should have taken President Assad to task on his inhuman treatment of the 4000 Jews in Syria as confirmed in the following extracts from a *Ma'ariv* article of 21 June:

Torture dungeon of Damascus Jewry

In the heart of the old Jewish quarter in Damascus - called *Harat al-Yahud* - there is a two-floor building which once belonged to the Geradi family that managed to get out to the West, and which is the local headquarters of the Syrian security police, the Mukhabarat. From the cellar of the building, which is used for torture, one can sometimes hear the screams of area residents called in for interrogation.

A delegation of Syrians in Israel met with Prime Minister Shamir to discuss the issue. The Prime Minister assured them that Israel is working in every possible channel to bring the Syrian Jews to Israel, and he even expressed optimism

Wembley Park

Ruth Willers

On Our Mailing List

Mrs. A.S. Cohen, London
 Juliette Rashty, London
 Y. Shamash, Elstree, Herts
 Mr. & Mrs. Kelly Saul, London
 A. Mowlem, New Rochelle, N.Y.
 Karen Levy, London
 Mrs. M. Simon, London
 Mr. & Mrs. E. Zilkha, Geneva
 Joseph Moradian, Zumikon, Switzerland
 Naim Reouven, London
 Cy Jaffe, JIA, London
 Maurice Rassaby, Sydney
 Mr. & Mrs. Ikc Tassie, Sydney
 Mrs. M. Tawil, London
 Mrs. B. Zubaida, London
 Mrs. F. Shashou, New York
 Dora Kamara, Beverley Hills, USA
 Lydia Tadmor, London
 T. Harkham, Surrey Hills, Australia
 Mrs. Rachel Sopher, Geneva
 Sam Edelstein, Couiza, France
 Dr. & Mrs. Kattan, New Jersey
 Denise Cattan, London
 Jeff Zilka, Pinner, Middlesex
 Mr. & Mrs. Harry Daniel, London
 A. Ben-David, London
 A. Habib, London
 A. Jacobi, London
 Leon Lawee, Albertson, N.Y.
 Violet Darwish, Kew Gardens, N.Y.
 Tamara Coty, Westfield, New Jersey
 Sally Nissan, New York
 Mrs. L. Attar, London
 J.E. Benjamin, Spain
 Nazhat Terzi, Ashford, Middlesex
 Salima Gabbay, Tel Aviv
 Rabbi Walter Rothschild, Leeds
 Marcelle Ezra, Bnei Brak, Israel
 Mrs. Shoshana Jacob, London
 Joseph Masri, London
 Mark Brahm, Rose Bay, Australia
 Mandy Pollack, The Hague
 F. Chitayat, Montreal
 Nimrod Raphaeli, Falls Church, Virginia

Members of the Jewish Board of Deputies

Moss Amias, West Kensington
 Walter D. Bentley, London NW11
 David Berens, London NW2
 Raymond Berkley, Ilford, Essex
 Miss Emma Crossley, Hiltel House WC1
 Lt. Col. Mordaunt Cohen, Edgware
 Margo & David Cashdan, St. John's Wood Park
 Eli Fachler, London NW3
 Joe Gellert, London NW4
 J.M. Gottesman, Colchester
 Henry C. Grunwald, London NW2
 Arieh L. Handler, London NWS
 Mrs. Barbara Harding, London N2
 Arthur F. Hill, Highgate
 Danny Handler, Edgware
 Mrs. Esme Cohen, Leeds
 Mrs. Eve Kugler, Guildford
 Barry S. Hyman, Bushey Heath, Herts
 Miss Raic Jager, London NW4
 Dr. Leonard Kurzer, London NW3
 Jack Lennard, Hull
 Dr. S. Levenberg, London NW6
 Mrs. Angela Landau, London NW11
 Gabe Marks, Southgate N14
 Lawrence Nerva, Wembley
 Woolf Perry, London NW7
 Malcolm Rose, Leeds
 Michael Spungin, Nottingham
 Martin Savitt, London N3
 Paul Shrank, London NW11
 Henry I. Tankel, Glasgow
 Dr. A.S. Veeder, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
 Jack Wolkind, Stanmore
 Leo Winter, Edgware
 Monty Miller, London NW11
 Mrs. Freda Kosmin, Kenton
 Michael Harris, Surrey
 B. Martin Cohen, Kenton

Board of Deputies

The following letter was sent to Judge Israel Finestein on the occasion of his election as President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews:

"On behalf of all the five Iraqi Deputies, I extend to you heartiest congratulations on your election to the Presidency of the Board with such a decisive majority. We now look forward to the implementation of your lofty programme of reforms. Let us also hope that your term will be marked by unity of purpose among the Community.

"Our urgent task is to put to rest the controversy surrounding the Chief Rabbi's unfortunate interview which has divided our Community and created unnecessary bitterness between two well-meaning factions.

"This can best be done by a simple statement of fact, namely, that the right of the Palestinians are firmly linked to the reciprocal rights of the Jews who had to leave Arab countries,

"With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,
 Naim Dangoor"

Iraqi Deputy Avihou Ben-David, the poet laureate of our community, also sent him the following rhyme which he composed for the occasion:

כרכות רבות כבוד השופט
 כשיר הלל מפרי העט

וגם אחול לך נשיר
 תפילות תרועה בקול אדיר

עדת כבל בך תתמוך
 והם יודעים על מי לסמוך

תפקיד נכבד לך יאה
 וכל העם צופה רואה

תפעל תשאף ל כל ל אחוד
 לצליל אחד ינעם רקוד

דרך - ארץ היא הצלחה
 זו דרכך הנה בשוחה

הנך מנהיג עם ראש צלול
 נתיב ישר כביר מסלול

תהילה ורוב שבה לא ל
 ראש ונשיא הוא "ישראל"

I read *The Scribe* with great interest and would like to receive it regularly. Although I do not belong to the Babylonian Community I have many associates who are and would be known to you.

Ealing, London
 Jeremy Fraser

I found the information that your magazine provides very useful, particularly as many of us know very little about the ancient Babylonian community, as well as how the dispersion is affecting them at present.

Harrow, Middlesex
 Rabbi Simon Franses

It is of very high quality in style and content. I would also like to have more information on the Babylonian Community.

Edgware
 Dr. Sidney Jones
 Chartered Psychologist

Khedhour Shasha

The charitable foundation of the late Khedhour Shasha has offered the Sephardi Synagogue in London, through his grandson Rick Sopher, £600,000 for improving the educational facilities at Lauderdale Road, but it is a pity that terms could not be agreed with the Elders and the offer may no longer be available.

Mr. Meer Basri has sent us the following reminiscences of Mr. Shasha:

The late well-known merchant and financier Khedhour Shasha (1892-1988) told me when I met him in London several years ago that he came to England in 1912 aged barely 20. At that time the Jewish Baghdadi merchants were concentrated in Manchester and held Ottoman nationality.

In November 1914 the war broke out with Turkey and immediately all Ottoman subjects in England, including the Jews of Baghdad, were rounded up and interned.

Mr. Shasha told me that he conferred with the other Jewish merchants and suggested to submit a joint petition to the camp commandant stating that they were merchants of Baghdadi origin, a vilayet remote from Constantinople, and that they took no part in politics or military intelligence; that they had been living in England for some years and were therefore entitled to tolerant treatment.

The old Jewish merchants derided the young man and told him there was no point in submitting such a petition. So Shasha wrote a personal supplication to the commandant pleading his case. The commandant called him and said that a prominent person, Lord Headley, president of the British Islamic Society, will visit the camp soon and Shasha's request will be passed on to him for consideration.

The old merchants again mocked the young Shasha and said, "Indeed the Moslem lord will release the young Jew!"

After a few weeks Lord Headley came and called Khedhour Shasha to see him. Shasha reiterated his plea and, after some questioning, the Lord ordered him to be released.

Shasha told me: "I gained my liberty and returned to my business which prospered during the War years. After four years, at the end of the War, my old friends who jeered me were at last released, forlorn and miserable, and embarked on rebuilding their lost fortunes".

A very delightful journal
 Westbourne, Leonard Brown
 Bournemouth

I really enjoy this marvellous magazine
 London
 Barbara Harding

I have read the July edition and found it both absorbing and interesting
 Salford
 Joe M. Nathan

A special binder to hold 60 issues of *The Scribe* is available from The Exilarch's Foundation at £6.

