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The SCRIBE

JOURNAL OF BABYLONIAN JEWRY
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Loyalty and Faith
The Sassoons and Rothschilds
Jews and Shanghai remember
Lord Kadoorie remembered
The Treasures of Tutankhamun
The Jews of India & Burma
Who killed Jesus?

No. 62

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A Happy New Year 5755 to all our Readers and Friends



The Ark of the Covenant, which contained the Two Tablets of the Ten Commandments. Its specifications and making are described on page 26. Recent reports suggest that the Ark has been located at Gilgal near Jericho.

Sketch by Betina Caro after Exodus 37

Loyalties

The tragedy of the Jewish people is that our religion got mixed up with our nationhood.

by Naim Dangoor

When I asked my four-year-old son, Elie, years ago, whom did he love most? His answer was, "First, myself, then my parents, etc." Original, I thought, but sensible! Since then, in similar vein, I have often reflected on human loyalties. To whom do we owe our first loyalty – to our family, to our community, to our trade union, to our country?

There can be no doubt that our first loyalty must be to God, our Creator and Sustainer, and by inference, to our Faith that attempts to bring us nearer to God and to do His will. Patriotism comes much lower in the scale of priorities. Nurse Edith Cavell may have been thinking on similar lines when she said, as the Germans were about to execute her in the First World War, "Patriotism is not enough!" Patriotism can result in the absurd situation when a French Jew and a German Jew stabbed each other in the trenches of the Great War. As they lay dying they both recited the Shema prayer and each realised to his horror that he had killed a co-religionist!

Jews are often accused of having dual loyalties. But, according to Churchill, a person can have any number of loyalties without ill effect. True enough. But the problem arises when these loyalties may happen to clash. I heard Lord Goodman say at a lecture that if war broke out between Britain and Israel, he would fight on Israel's side, because, he explained, "Israel would need me more than Britain would!"

Goodman makes the right choice, but gives the wrong reason. Our commitment to Israel goes beyond helping the weak against the strong. Our connection and commitment to Israel are those of religion, which is deeper than mere patriotism.

The priority of Faith over Patriotism was decided for us as long as 4000 years ago when Abraham received the Divine command "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy birthplace, and from thy fatherland, to the land that I will show thee." Here Bible commentators miss a fine point. God was simply telling Abraham, "Give up your patriotism for you faith." For if Abraham were ready to compromise his beliefs for material gains, he would have risen to prominence in Ur of the Chaldees.

(Golden Rule: Those who give up their principles for material gains will in the end lose both their principles and the material gains).

According to Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks: Religious faith is central to a humane society, and, paraphrasing a rabbinic saying he adds: If we have only a secular society, even a secular society we will not have.

Our faith gets mixed up with our nationhood when we call the Passover the season of our national freedom. When Moses led us out of Egypt, because we were not yet established in Canaan, we tend to look on our Exodus as the season

of our national freedom. In fact it was a bid to worship the One True God, for if this were not so, we could have stayed on to enjoy the plentiful fish and onions, the cucumbers and melons and the fleshpots, and eventually mingle with the Egyptians, instead of subsisting on our meagre desert rations.

We were chosen to become a "nation of priests" to propagate the knowledge of God to all mankind, but we were complacent. God did not choose us to become His sleeping partners. But we didn't know how to go about it. We offered the clumsy seven rules of Noah but they did not catch on. Because we did not conquer, we were conquered.

In the early days of his mission, Mohammed exhorted his followers that, if they found themselves persecuted in one place because of their faith, they should move to another more tolerant place in God's spacious land. Unfortunately, we could not afford that luxury, because we were not yet established in Canaan, our country of origin. In old Israel, religion and state continued to be in each other's way and, in the fashion of the times, we tended to look upon our One True God as a national Deity. The exiles in Babylon would at first moan in despair – *Ekh nashir eth shir Hashem al admath nekhar* – How can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? But later we realised in Babylon that we could lead a satisfactory Jewish life without being in a country of our own and realised the universal nature of our God.

Our religion got mixed up with our patriotism at the time of the revolt against Rome 66-70 CE. But during that revolt, Rabbi Johanan Ben Zakkai was among the peace party in Jerusalem and was conveyed from the city by his pupils in a coffin. According to legend, he then approached Vespasian and predicted his accession to the Imperial throne. As a reward he was permitted to resume his teachings. He founded in 68 CE the Jabneh Academy which became the spiritual centre of Judaism and the seat of the Sanhedrin. After the fall of Jerusalem, under his influence Judaism survived the cessation of the Temple cult.

Josephus estimates that 1,100,000 perished in the siege of Jerusalem alone. The total of captives taken throughout the war (66-70) numbered only 97,000. Of those who survived the siege, the combatants, the aged and the feeble were killed. 11,000 prisoners died of starvation before their fate could be determined. The death toll was to continue to mount with those sent to the mines, or dispatched to the various provinces to be killed in the theatres by the sword, or torn limb from limb by wild beasts.

The casualties at Jerusalem were heavy because the population of the city was swollen by refugees who sought safety there, and by pilgrims who had come to worship in the Temple and were caught by the Roman encirclement.

At the beginning of the revolt the Gentiles of Caesaria slaughtered in one hour all the 20,000 Jews of that city and Jews were killed all over Judea and Galilee.

Who is a Jew?

Eventually "Jew" came to signify both a follower of Judaism and a member of the Jewish Nation. Although Jews have later accepted converts, others, such as the Parsees, still do not accept converts in any shape or form.

Christianity and Islam have not suffered from these constraints and quickly developed as universal religions, each claiming a billion followers.

We must break out of our mould by distinguishing between religion and nationality, such as by calling one Mosaic and the other Jew.

Monotheism was started by our great ancestor Adam as the world was emerging from the last ice age 9000 years ago, long before nations came into being.

Adam's faith contained many of the dogmas and features of our present religion. The oneness of God, Man's free will and responsibility, the seven day week, etc. These beliefs survived in various pockets in the Middle East, such as Melchizedek in Salem (Jerusalem). They were adopted by Abraham, and by Isaac and Jacob his descendants.

When Monotheism became the official religion of the Hebrews, it lost much of its universality – the known world was already divided into violently opposing nation-states, each with its national deity.

We had to declare, "Let every nation walk in the name of its god and we will walk in the name of Jehovah our God."

Religious faith must remain in the personal domain and enjoy complete tolerance.

But as national barriers come down, first in Europe and then in the rest of the world, will the South be free to march on the North? Will the third world be allowed to destroy our civilisation? Are those who brood freely going to inherit the earth?

The way for the future of mankind must be to allow the emergence of exclusive economic communities protected by a world government. The wealth of each community is shared by its own people to the exclusion of newcomers.

The expected Mashiyah must have a profound knowledge of economics.

It is interesting to note that Islamic fundamentalism started in earnest after the Arab defeat in the Six Day War with Israel. Moslems interpreted the brilliant Jewish success against heavy odds as being God's approval of Jewish faithfulness to their religion.

It is also interesting to note that in a recent opinion poll only one per cent of the Japanese people put patriotism as top of their priorities. Top of the list was "the family", displacing employment as the top loyalty.

Who is a Jew?

by **Baroness Miller**

This article is not about the complicated question of converts, but about the acquisition of the status of being a Jew by descent.

Originally, as one would have expected in a patriarchal society, a Jew was someone descended from a Jewish father. Otherwise, King David would not have been a Jew, and neither would the children of Moses.

The situation changed in the Middle Ages when pogroms and the Crusades resulted in the wholesale raping of Jewish women. It was then that the descent was deemed to be acquired exclusively from the mother because "you always knew who the mother was".

That argument, excluding the father, is no longer justified in view of the new science of genetic fingerprinting, which proves in all but the remotest chance in *billions* who both parents are.

The orthodox community, while accepting one Jewish ancestor (the mother) as the qualification, rejects this test on the grounds that the rule cannot be altered because it is now a "tradition." Aside from the fact that every tradition was once an innovation, which legislature can claim to bind future ones for all eternity?

Paradoxically those who reject the father as a valid Jewish ancestor still insist that the status of being a Cohen or a Levi is acquired via the father. Men are called to the Torah as the son of their father. Is there in any Jewish cemetery a headstone reading "*son of Avram and Sarah*"? Mothers' names are rarely, if ever, mentioned.

Even the argument about "knowledge of parenthood" is readily abandoned in the interests of expediency. I do not only refer to the "blind eyes" and "corner cutting" applied to 'Russian' immigrants to Israel.

I mean that when huge waves of refugees from Russia, Poland and Lithuania arrived in Britain and the USA at the end of the 19th Century, they had no passports, or birth or marriage certificates. They would turn up at a Jewish community where someone would vouch for them as being Jewish.

Who is Jewish?

Another question is the validity of the Jewish descent of the Ashkenazim.

Drawing on "*Ha' Kuzari*" written by Judah Ha'Levi (1071-1141 C.E.), Arthur Koestler records in his book "*The 13th Tribe*" that around the middle of the 8th Century C.E., when the King of the Kazars was being pressed to convert his pagan people to Christianity and Islam, he asked both sides, "if you were not a Christian (or a Moslem), what would you be?" The answer in each case was, "a Jew." So he converted them all to Judaism.

It is from this Caucasian Tribe, not from the "seed of Abraham" that most of the Ashkenazim are descended!

David Dangoor adds: Where the father is not Jewish they call up the person in his mother's name●

Scribe: Baroness Miller is now a Tory Whip in the House of Lords●

Disraeli and Faith

In the sceptical age in which he lived, Disraeli continued to preach the necessity of Faith. "Man," he declared, "was born to adore and obey. Without something to worship he would merely fashion his own divinities and find a chieftain in his passions." A prophecy, horribly fulfilled by the totalitarian creeds which arose from the ruins of the Age of Reason. "If no 'church' comes forward with its title deed of Truth, sustained by the traditions of Sacred ages and by the convictions of countless generations to guide him," he told the graduates of Oxford, "Man will find altars and idols in his own heart and his own imagination."

The scientists have not touched the central rock of religion. Battle was joined between those who labelled man an ape and those who believed him an angel. Disraeli came down on the side of the angels.

"Material progress meant nothing for Man, a spiritual being, if not accompanied by moral purpose and enlightenment. Otherwise, the gifts with which science was enriching humanity would prove not instruments of life but of destruction. Religion invigorates the intellect and expands the heart. He who has a sense of his relations to God, is best qualified to fulfil his duties to man."

In an age when thinking Englishmen were taught to regard their highest institutions as anachronisms, a Jew made it his life's work to educate the British people in an understanding of the true tradition of their country●



Avihu Ben-David

The sudden death of Avihu Ben-David has deprived the Iraqi Jewish community of one of its finest members and one of its five representatives on the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

He was born in Baghdad in 1932 and died in London on 14 April 1994.

He was a Zionist youth leader in Baghdad, a risky activity, before he emigrated to Israel as a young man. Her served with distinction in the Israeli Army and worked for a time in the office of the military attache at the Israeli Embassy in London.

On retiring from the army, he moved to Britain and entered business. He was a gifted poet in Hebrew and Arabic. He is survived by two daughters and a grandson.

Aubrey Rose, a vice-president of the Board of Deputies, writes: Avihu Ben-David was a rare person, a poet at heart, writing expressively. He was also a good friend, who helped scores of people●

P.S.G.

Français

France has passed legislation forbidding the use of English words in advertising, in conferences, in newspapers, radio and television where a French equivalent can be found. The penalty can be a large fine or up to six months in prison. It is a drastic and belated measure to stem the rising influence of English worldwide.

Before the war, French was the acknowledged medium of international diplomacy. Many factors, however, worked to the advantage of the English language: Hollywood films, new technological terms, American involvement in world affairs. The refusal of the British to speak or learn foreign languages has contributed to the ascendancy of English, which was aided by Britain's imperial and maritime past.

The struggle between French and English is most apparent in bilingual Canada. France is taking a leaf from that country by requiring any trade slogans in English to be repeated in French.

In modernising its vocabulary Hebrew tends to incorporate foreign words, while Arabic continues to create new Arabic equivalents. But neither Hebrew nor Arabic have a future in the international league because words change their construction and because of a difficult alphabet, in the case of Arabic.

The universal language of the future will not be Esperanto, but a European language evolved and mellowed by centuries of use. The front runners remain French and English, but the outcome need not be a foregone conclusion. There is scope for improvement in both tongues. While French grammar is quite regular, it can be improved immensely by simplifying the conjugation of verbs and by removing the masculine and feminine in inanimate objects – why is a table feminine and a flag masculine, for example. Many years ago I wrote to President De Gaulle on this point and shortly afterwards, perhaps by coincidence, he appointed Georges Pompidou as protector of the French language.

English too has much room for improvement in the fields of spelling, grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. This will be a challenge to work to in the next six years to present a new-look English language for the next millennium.

Over the years language usage does change, and therefore it can be revised. When King Charles II visited the newly-constructed St. Paul's Cathedral he complimented its great architect Sir Christopher Wren by telling him, It looks awful (meaning awe-inspiring) artificial (meaning artistic) and amusing (meaning interesting)●

N.D.

scribes in an essay as "the historical prototype of a European Economic Community, the first EEC." She continues: "He had a vision of a network of European countries collaborating and improving their communal lot. He had a vision of the emancipation of the Jews, with his five sons as the successful promoters – the emblem of European and personal prosperity."

The founder of the Rothschild Common Market and his sons based their highly successful enterprise on a few well defined principles, beliefs and facts.

- 1) They were fervently against war and conflict, believing that the prosperity of Europe and their own enterprise depended on peace.
- 2) They insisted on family unity and confidence in each other.
- 3) They adopted an international outlook but understood and respected national diversity, character and ambitions.
- 4) They undertook honest, prompt and dependable service.
- 5) They were the best informed men in Europe. This reflected their extraordinary ability in organising continental inter-communications.

If you only consider those who are gathering together now in Frankfurt, you will see many members of my family – you will forgive me please if I limit my references to those who bear the name Rothschild – who continue our tradition of excellence in banking whether it be Guy, Elie, David, his brother Edouard, Eric or Eddy, and more recently my brother Amschel at NMR, chaired with such single-minded determination by Evelyn. Eddy, beyond banking, has shown extraordinary imagination with large projects such as the Churchill Falls in Canada.

Edmond has his own successful banks in Paris and Geneva and carries on the great traditions of his grandfather Baron Edmond, without a doubt the most creative philanthropist of all in our family through his pioneering work with settlements in Palestine, later to become the State of Israel. All the signs are that Edmond's son Benjamin will follow in his father's and great grandfather's footsteps. Nadine, his wife, is tireless in her efforts as chairwoman of the Israel Museum and is about to publish her seventh book. Her first book sold no less than 2 million copies.

Then you have my cousin Philippine who with incredible vitality has carried on from her father Philippe, who raised Mouton Rothschild to its proper position of first growth status.

Eric has just received the Wine Spectator magazine award for his distinguished stewardship of Chateau Lafite Rothschild.

You also have that great character Elie who preceded Eric at Lafite with such distinction, and his wife Liliane who surpasses us all in her knowledge of and interest in Rothschild history and heritage. Their son Natty is the first member of the Rothschild family to live and work in the USA.

My Lord Mayor, on behalf of the sons of Mayer Amschel, I thank you for your great compliment in asking us to sign your Golden Book ●

The paths of the Rothschilds and the Sassoons crossed with the engagement of Edward, only son of Sir Albert Sassoon, and Aline, daughter of Baron Gustave de Rothschild. Edward thought his fiancée was as pretty and elegant as his own aunt Louise, and fell madly in love with her. He spent days searching Paris for a wedding gift before he found a superb pearl necklace for which he paid £9000.

Sir Albert was delighted with the match which he announced in advance to the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII), the Duke of Connaught and the Shah of Persia, who happened to be in London on a visit. Each sent valuable gifts.

The wedding took place in October 1887 at the Synagogue in rue de la Victoire when the Chief Rabbi of France

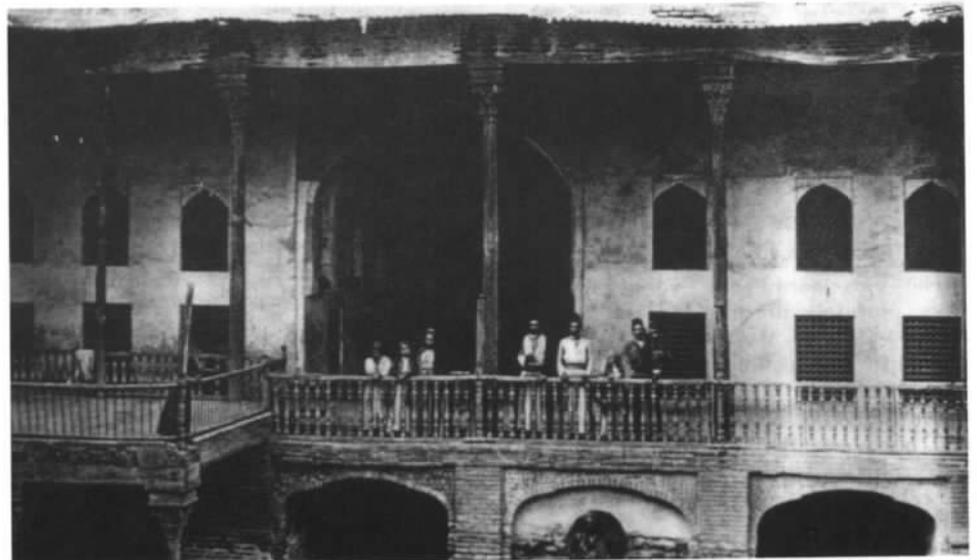
officiated and the choir of the Paris Opera sang to the multitude. The wedding was attended by the High Society of England and France and the entire Corps Diplomatique.

Twelve hundred guests attended the reception afterwards at Baron Gustave's mansion in the Avenue Marigny. The streets were clogged for several hours with the most imposing cavalcade of carriages seen in Paris since Napoleon III's wedding.

Sheikh Sassoon had seven sons. The first, Reuben, died young. Only the second, David, kept the family name of Sassoon. The others who did not leave Iraq, continued under the names of Lisha'a, Saleh, Shmoon. Abul Timman and Shaul. ●



The head of the family with three of his eight sons, Elias, Abdullah and Sassoon David Sassoon. The photograph was taken shortly after the Indian Mutiny. A few months later, 'S.D.' left to open the firm's London branch. He was the first of the clan to wear western dress ●



The large house of Sheikh Sassoon in Baghdad, known as "Beit Abu Ruben", with its lower terrace (Sateh el Nassi), where the Succah was built, and upper terrace (Sateh el Eeli) ●

BOOKS

Wotan, my enemy

by Leo Abse

Published by Robson. 274pp. £18.95.

Extracts from a review by George Brock.

According to wartime Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, President Roosevelt reckoned that the treatment of post-war Germany should be brutally simple. "We have got to be tough with Germany and I mean the German people not just the Nazis," FDR opined exactly fifty years ago. "We either have to castrate the German people or you have got to treat them in such a manner so they can't just go on reproducing people who want to continue the way they have in the past."

The present European Union is no guarantee against German attempts to dominate their neighbours by force of arms or by economic clout. Germans are under suspicion of harbouring expansionist and racist dreams not because of history, geography or culture, but by virtue of their birth.

The author emerges with the conclusion that, until Germany submits to a complete transformation of its national psyche, the country cannot and should not be trusted. We can't live together until we have sorted out the German character.

Abse implies that a proper expiation would include the surrender of any German claim to a state of their own. He does not need to invoke the subconscious to criticise Chancellor Kohl's sluggish and taciturn reaction to the rise in Neo-Nazi violence. He is not the only commentator to be appalled by the blackmail used by Germany's leaders who forced Europe's governments to recognise Croatia and Slovenia in early 1992 and thus helped start the war in Bosnia.

Scribe: It appears that President Clinton is applying the principle that if you can't beat them join them. During his recent visit to Bonn he announced his desire to switch America's special relationship from Britain to Germany. Britain must respond by promoting Russia's influence within Europe to balance the German menace.

Note: WOTAN is a mythical Germanic war god.

Eminent Men of Letters in Modern Iraq: History of Modern Iraqi Literature

A new book by Meer S Basri

Published by Dar al-Hilema of London (in Arabic). Printed in Beirut.

The two hard back volumes, 620 pages, profusely illustrated, carry a foreword by Dr Jalil al-Attiyah of Paris and an English introduction by the author.

The book deals with the revival of Arabic literature in Iraq in the 20th century. It covers all forms of literary arts: poetry, belles-lettres, history, theology and religion, the press, novel and short story, etc.

The author, who knew many of his fellow writers and biographers, writes mostly from personal knowledge and appreciation.

This book and some other books by Mr Basri, viz:

Eminent Politicians of Modern Iraq

Eminent Kurds

Life's Journey from the Banks of the Tigris to the Valley of the Thames

Songs of Love and Eternity

Iraqi Jewish Notables (2 volumes)

may be obtained from:

Dar al-Hikma Publishing & Distribution

88 Chalfont Street, London NW1 1HJ

(Tel: (071) 383 4037)

Reviews by Percy Gourgey, MBE, FRSA

The Jews of Aden

A lavishly illustrated brochure produced by the London Museum of Jewish Life & the Kadimah Youth Movement.

This book is based on the exhibition "The Jews of Aden" produced in April 1991 by the London Museum with the assistance of the Kadimah Youth movement (of Aden youth). It describes the fascinating history of Aden Jews going back over 100 years, their particular customs and strict observance of all the *mitzvot*, making them a cohesive and united community.

It refers to the visit by the then Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII) in 1921 and to the administration of Aden by British Raj from Bombay till 1937, when it gained its own colonial government.

In 1947 many Aden Jews were killed by the Arabs in the riots resulting from the UN Palestine Partition Plan, although they were totally innocent. It refers to the efforts of Barnett Janner M.P. to assist them. In 1967 after the Six Day War, the remnant of the community left for Israel.

Will we have Jewish Grandchildren?

Jewish continuity and how to achieve it.

by Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks.

Published by Valentine Mitchell.

The Jewish people, having survived for thousands of years in the most adverse circumstances, is today threatened by intermarriage and assimilation. Dr Sacks here issues an inspiring summons to collective action in this his first book since becoming Chief Rabbi of Gt. Britain and the Commonwealth. He points to the alarming statistic that Anglo-Jewry is "losing ten Jews a day through assimilation" and the community has in recent years dwindled from 450,000 to about 300,000. One way of dealing with this appalling state of affairs is through adult education.

Assimilation is the greatest problem which must be tackled, as it amounts to a spiritual holocaust, heaven forbid. For over a hundred years every Chief Rabbi has rightly stated that education is the main aspect of his term of office. What has gone wrong is that insufficient attention has been paid to organising adult Jewish education and particularly that of parents, as a child can go to the best Jewish day school, but coming home to a non-Jewish atmosphere, will result in that education being negated.

Scribe: Education alone will not stem the ebb of our dwindling numbers.

At the beginning of the Common Era, 2000 years ago, Jews constituted ten percent of the Roman Empire and ten percent of the Persian Empire. Because we were overtaken by Christianity and Islam, we now constitute only one percent of the Western world. But let us rejoice that in our daughter religions we triumphed over paganism. We continue to survive because our mission is not yet completed.

As a minority everywhere outside Israel, we tend to think that anyone who is not a Jew is either a Christian or a Moslem. This is not so. We are not alone in our malaise. More and more churches are getting empty and many Moslems pay only lip service to their faith.

Jewish continuity must not mean just perpetuating our race. For that we are accused of being racist. Jewish continuity must mean the survival of the Jewish people as carriers of a mission. Jewish education must be coupled with easier conversion.

Instead of saying that those who are not with us are against us, our motto should be that those who are not against us are with us!

Victoria

I don't know whether you read only an English summary or the entire original Hebrew edition. I expected it to be translated first to Yiddish, because it became the best seller due to deliberate promotion by the Ashkenazi sector. They found an opportunity to relieve their jealousy and envy of our great honest hard-working ethnic group. They tried to put us down when we arrived in Israel; but, we excelled and proved ourselves in every field, be it science, banking or administration, to name a few.

When and where did Iraqi Jewish families live the life of incest, philo rape, adultery, prostitution, abuse? I hope it is not the family of the author of the book, or is it? If it is his life experience, I am ashamed and surprised.

Beverly Hills, California
Dr Abraham Kattan

Scribe: Next to our review of *Victoria* we published the author's letter saying that the novel was all a figment of his imagination.

It is possible that in the early days young Communist recruits were encouraged to harbour such revolutionary ideas of free love that went against the norms and rules of society. The book must be seen in this context. Such ideas were not practised in a strictly conservative community.

From the author of VICTORIA

As one of the many readers of *The Scribe*, I feel obliged to express to you my genuine admiration of the wonderful work you are doing. I appreciate greatly the wise words that you have written about *Victoria*. Only very few critics and students of literature have succeeded in comprehending the subtle points that you have succeeded in discerning in the first chapter only.

The Scribe has managed to conserve the Jewish heritage of Iraq that is on the verge of extinction.

Victoria is being published in English, and on its appearance, I will visit London to address the Iraqi Jewish community and to discuss my literary work.

Haifa

Sami Michael

Eat and be satisfied

A social history of Jewish Food

אוכלת ושבעת |

by John Cooper.

Published by

Jason Aronson Inc., New Jersey.

The author talks about Iraqi bread, examines the differences between Palestinian and Iraqi food, drink and style of cooking, quoting Mishnaic authorities. There is a mention of *bania kulah* eaten by Indian Jews of Baghdad descent and of a dish of white boiled turnips eaten on Shabbath by Iraqi Jews which may be descended from recipes in the Talmud.

He points out different customs among different streams of Jewry with regard to what may and what may not be eaten on Shabbath and he gives the origin, *Hillek*, the equivalent of *Haroset* among Syrian and Iraqi Jews.

Whereas Palestine belonged to the Mediterranean world with its dietary pattern of wheat, wine and olive oil, the Babylonian climate, particularly in the south, was unsuited to the cultivation of the vine and the olive tree, their place being taken by the production of beer and sesame oil. In Babylonia passers-by were allowed to consume wild dates, and the Palestinian sages envied the low cost of living of the Jews of Babylonia, blessed with a plentiful supply of grain. R Johnson attributed the good health among the Babylonian Jews to their frequent bathing and their eating of beets and drinking of beer (*Ketubbot 77b*). Different kinds of oil were used by different Jewish communities. "What would the Babylonians do that have only sesame oil, what would the Medes do that have only nut oil, what would the Alexandrians do that have only radish oil" (*Tosefta Shabbat 2:3*). Because of the abundance of fish in the Babylonian rivers and canals, fish were also consumed on week-days in Babylonia and unlike in Palestine, were not reserved just for the Sabbaths and festivals. Beer was also commonly drunk in the southern portions of Babylonia, the fine quality being from barley and being known as medium beer, while another cheaper kind of beer was manufactured from the locally grown *cascuta* plant and from dates. According to R.J. Forbes, by the 6th century BCE fermented date juice had succeeded in replacing beer as the most popular strong drink in Babylonia.

Scribe: Sesame oil was used exclusively by Iraqi Jews until modern times and was called *Sheraj* (*Sighaj*).

To produce *Rashi* (*tahina*), flour is added to the season-seeds during crushing.

Moslems, who used butter and lard in all their cooking, used to taunt us for using what we now know is the healthy natural oil of sesame seeds.

It is interesting to note that *Leviticus 3:17* states: "It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings, that ye shall eat neither fat nor blood."

Leviticus Chapter 11 lists clean and unclean food. God commands us, "Be Holy for I am Holy."●

Moses said "The inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away."

After the Six-day War when Israel regained Judea, Samaria and Gaza, thousands of Palestinian Arabs fled from the occupied territories to Lebanon, Kuwait and other Arab countries, as well as to many other destinations. I always maintained that, given time, the rest of the Palestinians would have "melted away" and Israel would have been able to annex the territories without demographic worries, just as she annexed East Jerusalem.

But the Israel government and people, short-sightedly, gave full and assured employment to the Palestinians, not as a gesture of kindness and reconciliation, but simply as a source of cheap labour – to pick oranges and to help in the construction industry. As a result, while there were 200,000 unemployed Israelis, 200,000 Arabs used to cross every day to Israel and take back good money to so many families.

I now realise that the vision of Moses was also that "the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away." After the miracle of the Red Sea crossing, the Song of Moses declared:

The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil;
My lust shall be satisfied upon them;
I will unsheath my sword, my hand shall destroy them ...
Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed;
Thou hast guided them in thy strength unto the holy habitation.
The people shall hear and be afraid;
Pangs shall take hold on the inhabitants of Philistia.
Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed;
The mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them;
All the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.

The war of 1967 was no less a miracle than the Exodus from Egypt, but the inhabitants of Canaan were not allowed to melt away. In the past 27 years, while one million abortions were performed by the Jews, the Arab population of the Territories increased by that number, and in addition according to the new peace accord, the 1967 refugees will be allowed to return. No wonder the Israeli Jews feel uneasy and insecure.

The Bible does not fail to remind us that "If you will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come to pass that those which ye shall let remain will be pricks in your eyes and thorns in your side and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. Moreover, it shall come to pass that I shall do unto you as I thought to do unto them." (*Numbers 33:55-56*).

Take heed to thyself lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land wither thou goest let it be for a snare in the midst of thee." Exodus 34:12.

What is the justification for this harsh policy? The justice of it is that we belong to the region from time immemorial and when we have come to claim our inheritance in peace, whether 3000 years ago or in our lifetime, we were denied our rights.

The Arabs want all or nothing, and since they can't get all, they must end up with nothing.

The following simple test can prove conclusively that, in coming to Canaan, the Children of Israel were returning to their country of origin:

In what language was the Torah given at Sinai? The Torah was obviously given in the language that the Israelites spoke in Egypt. Now since the Torah was given in Hebrew, it is obvious that the Israelites in Egypt spoke Hebrew.

Hebrew is the Israelite dialect of the Canaanite language, hence, the Hebrews of the Exodus originated in Canaan.

In the past 27 years the Palestinian problem was allowed to fester and in the end Israel's military might was no match for the stone-throwers of the Intifada. Terrorism as always has prevailed over democracy; Israel had to sue for peace. It appears that the Arabs have emerged as the overall winners in their 50-year confrontation with the Jews.

However, the prospect of the peace process remains wide open. If the Arabs are sincere in their wish to cooperate with the Jews, then the Middle East will have a bright future. But if Arafat continues to aim for Jerusalem and the PLO covenant continues to call for the dismantling of the Jewish State, then Israel may yet have the option to annex the Territories, as Yitzhak Rabin continues to declare and remind the world. In that event no one could blame Israel for not having given peace a chance●

Islamic Terrorism

In the escalation of Islamic terrorism against Jewish targets, retaliation, however tempting, is not an option that we can follow.

In 1914 everyone believed the war would end by Christmas. When it dragged on to 1915 and 1916 with thousands of young soldiers killed every day, thus becoming an elimination exercise, the Allied generals reasoned that they will have ultimate victory because the populations of the Allied countries were greater. If the Central Powers fought to the last man, the Allies would still be left with a remnant to spare! What a prospect. That is why it was said, "War is too serious a business to be left to the generals!" When Russia withdrew from the war in 1917, the Balfour Declaration went a long way towards bringing America into the equation.

The Moslems must be thinking 1000 million Moslems minus 15 million Jews would still leave a comfortable 985 million Moslems to survive. Unless ...

Moderate Arabs now find themselves in the same boat as Israel, facing the menace of Islamic fundamentalists. Only an overall settlement can bring lasting peace in the region●

N.D.

I want to compliment you and thank you for your very informative and interesting publication. It is very unique. It keeps the Iraqis in touch with their roots, history and heritage●

Montville, N.J.

Esther Soussa

Jews and Shanghai remember

Shanghai was the venue for a unique event last April when many Jews returned there to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the haven from Nazi persecution they were given there.

The city of Shanghai honoured the approximately 20,000 Jews who fled and survived the Holocaust there.

Because Shanghai was a free port, one of the only cities in the world that did not demand visas or travel papers, it became a sanctuary for Jewish refugees.

During World War II, the European Jews were kept under armed Japanese guard in the occupied city, in a bombed-out slum known as the Hongkew Ghetto. But they were free to leave the area during the day and could apply for three month work papers.

The Japanese rounded up the Jews to appease their Nazi wartime allies but refused a demand to carry out the "Final Solution" there.

"Shanghai people will never forget the role of Jews in helping to build our City," a Chinese official told about 50 guests at a private ceremony. "We hope the Jews will not forget Shanghai. We share both the tears and joys of Shanghai's past."

A stone tablet unveiled at a small park in Hongkew, an outlying district of Shanghai that once served as the Japanese concession, commemorates the one-square mile ghetto.

Jews have a history in Shanghai dating back to the mid-19th century. The Kadoorie, Sassoon and Hardoon families, immensely wealthy Jewish clans of Baghdadi origin, helped build the city under colonial rule. Their lavish mansions, synagogues and schools stand as local landmarks.

Rena Krasno, a Californian who came back to Shanghai for the first time since the war ended, was born here in 1923. Her parents fled to Shanghai to escape Russian pogroms. Ms Krasno's 1993 book, *Strangers Always*, based on her war-time diaries, helped mobilise support for a Jewish memorial in the city.

Israel and China established diplomatic relations in 1992, though China maintains its traditional alliances in the Arab world.

Pan Guang, dean of Shanghai's Institute for Sino-Judaic Studies, who helped organise the ceremony, said the peace accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation helped pave the way for this ceremony.

Among others who found haven in Shanghai and attended the ceremonies were General Yehuda Halevi, executive vice president of Israel's Bar-Ilan University; David Zysman, vice president of Yeshiva University in New York; and New York businessmen; Mr. & Mrs Fred Ezekiel, and Mrs Maisie Meyer.

The following is an abridged version of the speech by General Halevy, the former head of the Bond Organisation in the USA, an Iraqi Jew born in Shanghai, who recently visited China and was guest speaker at the Seminar.



Top table at the Conference. From right to left: David Zysman (Vice President Yeshiva University), Dr Marcia Ristaino (Researcher on Jewish Refugees in Shanghai during WWII), Prof. Yao Yien (Expert on Sholem Aleichem), Prof. Steve Hochstadt (Bates College, Maine), Rena Krasno (Sino-Judaic Institute), Chinese Members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ●

I was born in Shanghai in 1937. My parents came to Shanghai from Iraq via India in 1929. We left Shanghai in October 1949 for Israel.

Contemporary Jewish settlements consisted of Jewish communities which came to China in waves.

Baghdadi Jews came to Shanghai from Iraq via India from mid-19th century (1844-1930).

Russian Jews came during the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese war in 1905, during World War I and the aftermath of the Russian Revolution 1914-1917, through Manchuria via Harbin and Tientsin.

Refugee Jews came from Central and Eastern Europe, especially from Germany, Austria and Poland as early as 1936 onwards.

Antisemitism is contrary to the spirit of the people of China. The ideological roots of antisemitism lay in religious prejudice and racial discrimination. These ideological roots never existed in China.

The Sephardi Jewish Community in Shanghai

Elias David Sassoon arrived in China in 1844 from Bombay and was probably the first Jew in contemporary times to arrive in Shanghai.

Synagogues: Religious organisation of the community began in all seriousness by building the first Sephardi synagogue named *Beth El* in 1887. A second synagogue was built in 1900 and was called *Sheerith Israel* founded by David Abraham. This synagogue eventually included a *Talmud Torah* (afternoon Hebrew school) and a *Mikveh* (ritual bath).

In the 1920s and 1930s, when the life of the Sephardi community reached its zenith, two beautiful synagogues were built. The first *Ohel Rachel*, the successor to *Beth El*, was built in 1920 by Jacob Sassoon, in memory of his wife. The second synagogue *Beth Aharon* was built in 1922 on Museum Road and was built by Silas Hardoon in memory of his father. Hardoon himself had little connection with the religious life of the Jews. He married a Chinese woman and adopted 12 children (11 Chinese and one Jew).

Newspapers: *Israel Messenger* was established in 1904 and was edited by Edward Ezra for 37 years. This was the first Anglo-Zionist newspaper which made a great contribution and impact on the Jewish community and the development of

Zionism in Shanghai.

The Shanghai branch of the Zionist Palestine Organisation was established in 1900. Its chief leadership for many years was N.E.B. Ezra, together with Kadoorie, who was one of the active leaders. In 1903 the Sephardi community sent a delegation to the Sixth Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland.

Ezra's greatest success was achieving the support of Sun Yat Sen, the first President of the Republic of China. Sun Yat Sen recorded early the great contributions made by the Jews to the development of China and reciprocated with his support to the Zionist movement. In a letter dated 24 April 1920, Sun Yat Sen wrote to Ezra: "I have read your letter and the copy of *Israel's Messenger* with much interest and wish to assure you of my sympathy for this movement, which is one of the greatest movements of the present time.

All lovers of democracy cannot help but support and welcome it with enthusiasm, the movement to restore your wonderful and historic nation which has contributed so much to the civilisation of the world and which deserves an honourable place in the family of nations."

David Sassoon, Hardoon and Kadoorie served as members of the Shanghai Municipal Council, as well as the municipal councils of the international settlements and the French Concession. They were involved in the development of Shanghai in all areas, including Chinese schools, colleges, hospitals and nursing homes for the elderly.

The Sephardim had a major impact on the development of the textile industry, promotion of technology, transport, building of the gas pipeline and other elements of economic and industrial infrastructure. The Jews and the people of China treated each other with respect and dignity. The Jews enjoyed warm relations with the Chinese in all periods of their settlement in China.

The respect of the Chinese people can be expressed in the words of Dr Sun Yat Sen: "I am dying for China and for my people. Many foreigners will want to attend my funeral, but I want a Chinese funeral for the Chinese people and therefore only Chinese people should attend. The only exception is that I authorise the attendance of my Jewish friends, especially my adviser General Cohen."

Extracts from the speech by Maisie Meyer at the Seminar

We are here today to remember that over 18,000 European refugees sought a haven in Shanghai by 1939 and we are also here not to forget that some 800 Baghdadi Jews, part of the host community, were initially largely responsible for the overwhelming task of absorbing the newcomers.

In order to combine all the relief agencies, representatives of all Shanghai's Jewish religious and charitable institutions were invited to join the Committee for the Assistance of European Jewish Refugees (CFA) in October 1938. Sir Elly Kadoorie, D.E.J. Abraham, his son Reuben, and Ellis Hayim were prominent on the Board. They helped set up the machinery necessary for the organisation of funds to house, feed, clothe and rehabilitate the refugees.

The *Beth Aharon Synagogue*, which was made available as a reception centre, played a central part in the lives of many refugees, particularly some 300 Polish students of the *Mir Yeshiva*. Initially Baghdadi women attended to the children and set up a soup kitchen which fed about 600 refugees, three times daily. In early 1939, Sir Victor donated the first floor of the Embankment building to accommodate some 400 refugees. In June 1939 Sassoon replaced it with a more suitable property in Hongkew which was able to accommodate 2,500. Generously supported by a large number of Baghdadians, notably Hayim, Kadoorie, Abraham and the Joseph brothers, the Fund loaned money to the refugees to set up businesses. Given Shanghai's languishing economy, it was no mean feat that it enabled some 1,400 refugees to become self-supporting. Perhaps the greatest achievement of Shanghai Jewry was the Kadoorie School established for 300 refugee children in June 1939 at Kinchow Road. A Club adjacent to the school was more than a social centre; crafts were taught and sporting activities were encouraged.

Sassoon House, Capitol Building, Edward Ezra, Haroon and the Somekh buildings, located in the heart of the city: "... are all worthy monuments to Jewish enterprises, which have helped to make Shanghai what it is today the Paris, or as some would say, the Tel-Abib of the Far East."

Much of the wealth generated by trade was invested in real estate in the Foreign Concessions. Baghdadians, like Benjamin David Benjamin, reputed to have owned more than one quarter of the International Settlement from 1879 to 1883, and Silas Haroon, showed their confidence in the future of Shanghai by investing money to foster local trade and industry. Many of them believed they were making a vast contribution to the development of Shanghai and regarded China as their permanent home and therefore invested in real estate. Besides fulfilling practical needs, the splendid buildings they erected reflected their business acumen and were a testimony of wealth and power to themselves and to those around them. Baghdadi merchants were proud to be identified with the development of the British Empire and acknowledged that it was largely un-

der the British flag that they had progressed. Given the jostling for economic and political domination in China among the foreign powers, notably Britain, America, France, Russia, Germany, Holland and Japan, it was advantageous for Britain to be associated with wealthy Baghdadi entrepreneurs.

As early as 1873 David Sassoon and Sons realised the potential of the Bund, then a muddy waterfront, as a location for their firms. On record is the ceremony of laying the foundation stone for the new building which replaced the old one on the same site. A brass plate was laid bearing the inscription: "Foundation Stone Laid 11th Ab 5633 Jewish Era 4 August 1873 Christian Era by Miss Flora Gubbay, 37th year of Queen Victoria 11th year of Tung Che ..." It is significant that the Jewish calendar date is given precedence, suggesting that at this time they considered themselves Jews first and then members of the wider society.

Sir Victor Sassoon transferred millions of dollars from Bombay to Shanghai in the late twenties and invested heavily in real estate. At this time three of the tallest buildings were owned by Baghdadians: the Palace Hotel, Sassoon House and Broadway Mansions, a lasting tribute to the energy and business acumen of the founders. Metropole Hotel, Embankment House and Hamilton House suggest that Messrs E.D. Sassoon and Co made the largest single contribution to accelerating the growth and development of the International Settlement between 1910 and 1940. It was responsible for the renowned Cathay Hotel. As the historian Nicholas Clifford observed: "washbasins and toilets built to last as long as the Empire itself, but which have outlived the Empire, a triumph of plumbing over politics."

This architectural legacy forms an important part of the history of the Baghdadi Jewish Community of Shanghai. Even after the demise of the Foreign Concessions, they remain monuments to Jewish commercial enterprise, and are one of the few remaining testimonials of a once vibrant community. They seem to establish an enduring presence of Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai, particularly as Jewish tombstones and cemeteries are no longer distinguishable and their communal records are untraceable. Although the Baghdadian Jews promoted their own interests, there can be no doubt that in so doing they also strengthened the economy of China and made a contribution, which was the most significant of all – their humanitarian efforts in trying to alleviate the difficult situation of those around them.

Maisie Meyer (congratulations on her son's wedding) adds the following comments:

The Reunion of Jews in Shanghai was attended by some 60 Westerners among whom were representatives of the once thriving Jewish communities in China. The efforts of our Chinese hosts to ensure that their guests would be comfortable were apparent from the moment we stepped into the Jinjiang Tower Hotel (a five star hotel by any Western standards).

On 19 April Huang Yuejin, Head of Hongkew District People's Government,

and T Kaufman, President of the Israel-China Friendship Society, unveiled the bronze and stone monument inscribed in Chinese, English and Hebrew – the first memorial to Holocaust victims in China. This historic occasion to honour over 18,000 refugees from Nazi persecution who found refuge in the open port of Shanghai 50 years ago, was attended by several Chinese dignitaries. There were numerous poignant speeches both in Chinese and in English. The ceremony was conducted with much pomp and splendour – flowers were presented to, and beautiful red rosettes worn by, all participants. The repertoire of the all-female band included Yiddish and Hebrew tunes.

In the afternoon we toured the Hongkew district, where the refugees had been confined by the Japanese in 1943. The banquet in the evening, hosted by the Hongkew District People's Government, epitomised the hospitality for which Chinese are renowned. Chinese singers entertained the guests with arias from famous Western operas.



Maisie Meyer in front of the Ohel Rachel Synagogue Memorial plaque●

By courtesy of Steve Hochstadt.

For me the highlight of the trip was a visit to the *Ohel Rachel Synagogue*, which had hitherto not been open to tourists. The empty wooden panelled *Aron Hakodesh* evoked visions of the past when some 30 *Sephrei Torah* rested here. Although the *bimah* and seats had been removed, Yehuda Halevy and Alfred Ezekiel, who as children attended services in the Synagogue, gave us a graphic description of the way things used to be. For the Russian delegates the visit to the Jewish Club was a moving experience. Probably for all of us the most astounding event was the visit to the Children's Hebrew Class whence beaming Chinese pupils entertained us with popular Hebrew songs. This perfect day ended with a night cruise on the Huangpu River. The illuminated monumental buildings of the Bund was an impressive reminder of the heyday of the International Settlement. This memorable conference was undoubtedly the huge success its organisers, notably Pang Guang, dean of Shanghai's Institute for Sino-Judaic Studies, had aimed to achieve and hopefully paves the way for closer ties between Chinese and Jews●

LETTERS

German Wartime Atrocities

May I respectfully thank you for the very enjoyable *Scribe* which you continue to send to me.

I have just returned from Riga in Latvia where I attended the Biennial meeting of the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture seeing the Jewish community and discussing financing of their old age homes, school etc. It was a very important conference and I was terribly shocked when I saw what the Germans had done in the war. They had shot in the woods behind Riga 7000 Jews per day and thrown them into trenches. Those Jews who remained were burnt alive in the Synagogue on New Year. Some of the few survivors were introduced to us. They are now of course quite old. They have formed a fantastic choir and they sang for us. Age range 70-90. We also saw many of the young children who still learn Yiddish in school and sang beautifully and danced. It was extraordinary because I have never been in an area of Europe where Yiddish is the main language and the Jews are not Latvian but Jews of the "Jewish nationality". One third of the population are still without Latvian nationality including the Russians.

There will come a time when the Iraqi/Jewish community should look at a method to sort out all Jewish communal properties in Iraq, make certain that it is fully registered so that when the nightmare there is over, the community can one day claim back what is their inheritance.

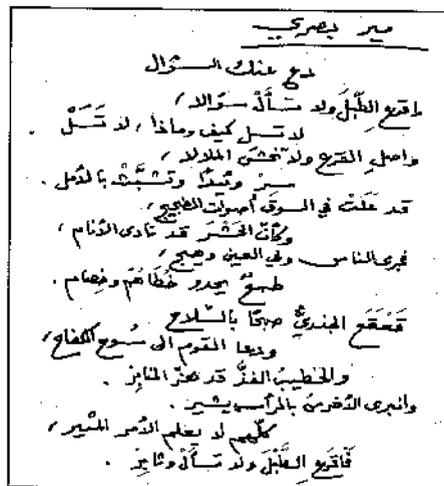
During our Board meeting recently in Stockholm someone mentioned to me that when Iraq becomes "normal" and their oil is needed in the United States, pressure could be put onto the State Department to give them most "favoured Nation status", only if they would pay a percentage of their oil revenues into a trust fund for refugees from Iraq. I think you know so many Iraqi families in the United States and elsewhere that perhaps you ought to at some stage form a group to deal with this, or perhaps this is already being dealt with? I think something similar would apply to the Jews from Iran. Obviously it may seem today impossible to do this but when the Claims Conference was started by the Anglo Jewish Association in this country and one or two other groups, the War was still on with Germany and the lawyers from those countries were brought together to build up a group of people. This is why the settlements were concluded already in 1950. The work to build up such a claim is enormous.

I enjoyed working with your brother-in-law Alan Rose (Vice President of the Canadian Jewish Congress).

London Clemens Nathan

Scribe: We understand that the Latvians themselves assisted the Germans in their wartime crimes against the Jews.

The rule that Latvian nationality is very restricted and now excludes the many Russians who live there, was in fact introduced by Russia herself when in 1721 Sweden ceded Latvia to the Tsar. As



a result, many Sephardi Jews who had found refuge in Latvia had to leave and some emigrated to the Ottoman Empire and eventually to Baghdad.

I have presumed to write to you to ask for your assistance on behalf of a couple who are clients of mine and who find themselves in some difficulty.

Originally our client's name was Tarik Jaafar-Al-Ansari and his wife was Suhad Jaafar-Al-Ansari. However, they have recently been naturalised, being originally Iraqi citizens, and they have changed their names to David and Sue Solomon. They told me that they both believe they are of Jewish descent and that some, at least of their recent ancestors were Jewish of birth and descent, and therefore, it may well be that according to the Religious Law they are themselves Jewish. Mr Solomon's father bears the name of Mohammed Ali son of Jaafar. His great grandfather, the father of Jaafar was David, his great great grandfather, the father of David was Solomon, and Solomon's father was Ovaïd, who I am told, was definitely Jewish. He also says that the word was in the family that they were really Jewish but they kept it quiet and some of them practise the Moslem religion.

Mr David Solomon's mother is Fatima Ebrahim Ahmed Al-Hilaly and his wife Sue's mother was Fatima's sister Makiya, so that David and Sue Solomon are first cousins. Clearly, the status of my clients is going to depend entirely upon the religious status of the Al-Hilaly sisters, and David Solomon tells me that he has a friend Sami-Shluah Khdouri Al-Hilaly who was also from Iraq but is now resident in Israel and accepted as Jewish.

Is there anyway in which you can point him in the right direction to obtain confirmation that the Al-Hilaly family are Jews, or whether the two sisters, who are the mothers of my two clients, would be recognised as Jews. Both of the mothers are still living in Baghdad, and indeed, at least one of them is a practising Moslem.

Clearly if we can find some information out about this they may be able to avoid the difficult and lengthy process of conversion.

10a Kings Walk
Nottingham NG1 2AE

M Spungin

Scribe: In view of the lapse of generations and the lack of connection with a Jewish mother, I do not see any way out except by conversion.

Do not ask

Translated from (Arabic)
by Meer S Basri

Beat the drum, do not ask questions,
Do not ask why and what, do not ask.
Continue beating, do not be bored,
Walk gently and entertain hope.
In the market place rose a great commotion
As if the Day of Resurrection has called the
human race.
The people ran, a glitter in their eyes,
Their steps driven by greed and squabble.
The soldier rattled his sabre at dawn,
And called the people to the war field.
The illustrious orator shook the pulpit,
And the dumb came forth convulsing his head.
All of them do not know the exciting event,
So beat the drum, do not ask and continue on
and on.

My name is Ronald Haron. I am the son of Sylvia Haron (nec Stiel) and Arthur Eric Haron (nee Akram Haron Fattal), and I was born in London in 1960. I am 33 years old and live and practice law in Washington D.C. I am writing to you because I have been trying for the past year to research my father's family history and also trying to locate his relatives from Baghdad. So far I have been unsuccessful.

I know nothing about my father's life while he lived in Baghdad, and I do not know anything about his parents or his other relatives. I have never been able to obtain this information directly from my father. Unfortunately this is because my parents divorced in 1960-61. I have never had a chance to know my father or his family. Therefore, I am appealing to your readers to write to me if they might have known either my father or any of his relatives.

This is what I know so far: my father was born in Baghdad on 28 June, 1928. His name was Akram Haron Fattal. His father was Haron Fattal, but I know nothing else about my grandparents. My father attended the Baghdad Alliance and I believe his family lived at 15 Bestan El-Khass in Baghdad. My father left Baghdad and came to New York in 1947 when he was 19. He first attended the University of Minnesota for two quarters in 1948 and then attended the University of California in Los Angeles from September 1948 to June 1952, graduating with a B.A. in Philosophy. A year later in June 1953 my father became a naturalised U.S. citizen. At that time he changed his name to Arthur Eric Phillip Haron. IN 1958 he and my mother married and moved to London. My father attended Oxford University (Maudlin College) where he received his Ph.D in Mathematics, in January 1961. After returning to the United States in the early 1960s, he became a mathematics professor at Hunter College in New York where he taught through the 1970s. In the late 1970s or early 80s, he moved to France and has, I believe, lived there ever since. He now lives in the Montmartre section of Paris, but I do not know what he does.

If any of your readers might have known my father or any of his relatives, I would be grateful if they could write to me at 1301 N. Ode Street, Apartment 131, Arlington, Virginia 22209, USA, and also include their address or phone number so that I may contact them.

Arlington

Ronald Haron

In a recent issue I read with some appreciation someone trying to quote the Kabbalah. Firstly, the Kabbalah is full of quotations of various texts. Secondly, people who talk about or quote the Kabbalah have not fully grasped the principles of this study. The Mishna, the Midrash and the Talmud deal with tractates of Jewish teaching. I have been a student of the Kabbalah for the past ten years, as well as the origins of Religions. For those who talk of free will in Judaism should know that we have as rigorous a discipline as Catholicism, who copied ours.

One of the basic rules of the Kabbalah is that there must be perfect balance and harmony in Nature. Once an imbalance is created then mayhem rules.

The thing to understand is that Prophets are messengers, sent to their respective people to instruct them in the message of God. This they did in a manner which their communities could understand and accept for their culture and civilisation there is no right or wrong only different ways of conveying the same message.

Twickenham

N.M.H.

Recently my paternal and maternal families have suffered many mortalities in quick succession, here in the United States and in Israel.

Since on many of these sad occasions I was unable to be present to recite the Qaddish and give eulogies at their graves, I thought that the best I can do to commemorate and honour them is to offer the following eulogy:

Highland Park, New Jersey

Jack H Zeloof

تأبين فقداً

كزهرة الجنان كانى بتبريح القلوب وتسر العيون
 اختار من جمالها كل مناهد وسيد خنون
 منهم من كان فضلاً في عفتوان السحاب
 كالنوكب الساطع تستضيء به العباب
 ومنهم من ناضل اعقاباً وأحدثك الحياة
 دون ان تشنيه المراقص حتى الممات
 يستقبلون استنطاق العجز باستنار وابرام
 على خرقه تزهج يد الملائك حاملة امر القدر
 لتقطف بمخالبها فلذات القلوب وحيد البشر
 فيظنن النبراس وليم الوجوم زيود الظلم
 وتندبر تحت النرى كمو المقاصد وعذوة الالههم
 لا تعزية لي يقولهم ان الملائك هناك قريب
 وقلبي الان على فقيدى منهم يا امر الالههم
 يا قصر الناس ليس لنا في التورى سوى ذكريات
 نفيسى بها وبذكرى من حباب وغات
 فالتقى اذن باعمال فداً الصالحات
 حتى تحل لهم قداسة هذه الذكريات
 ورحمة الله واسعة على ارواح التراحيلين
 من احراق قلوب التاكين والتهقين - ابن

يعقوب عيسى زلووف

Your last *Scribe* was very interesting and stimulating. The number of photographs you published brought back the past and make us feel that we are "in touch" with our parents and friends, otherwise they would have remained in memory only.

Regarding lighting the candles on Friday night, it is always stressed that lighting the candles is the traditional expression of our Jewishness. This is absolutely fine. In my view, the other side of the coin demonstrates the fact that God likes the light as stated in the creation of the world "*Wehan Elohim eth Haon Ki Tob*". Therefore we light the candles as our invitation to the Almighty to visit our candlelit home and we pray to him to extend his blessings to all those who love him.

London

Nathan Saatchi

I admire the tireless work you are doing in publishing *The Scribe* and I am convinced that you will continue to keep up the good work of this priceless treasure for many years to come, for the benefit of the Babylonian Jewry and their descendants.

Ramat Gan

Meyer Nissan, Advocate

I would like to thank you for the many editions of *The Scribe* that you have sent me. I find it a very interesting and well produced magazine, giving much information and knowledge of the famous Babylonian community. There seems to have been a wealth of great men, Rabbonim Tzaddikim and religious lay leaders throughout your history. Some of the photographs amaze me! I have certainly learnt a lot from your paper.

Nevertheless, unfortunately, I have decided to withdraw my name from your mailing list. Many times I would have liked to write to you to oppose your ideas and opinions on many religious issues and beliefs, which are the cornerstone of our religion, and which you seem to misunderstand. Your re-writing of the history of Creation, and your recent request to recognise Mohammed, to name but a few! I am positive that those Tzaddikim about whom you write would disagree with you entirely.

London

J H Hirsch

Scribe: What we wrote was a matter for debate. Our Babylonian Rabbis were never narrow-minded. They always discussed opposing opinions of view. Our Baghdadi Rabbis used to say of Islam, quoting Maimonides (who at one time was forced to embrace Islam;) *Ain Yihud Keyihud Hayshmaelim* (There is no Monotheism like that of Islam.)

A EULOGY TO THE DEPARTED

They were like flowers in paradise delighting hearts and pleasing sight. Onlookers and masters of art alike in amazement stood thrilled before them.

Among them were those vibrant with life and in the prime of youth as well like shining stars they profusely shed their light on kith and kin.

Anticipating the dawn's first light, they happily received it when it came, Retiring, they slept content with what The Supreme Provider had given to them.

Suddenly the hand of fate came carrying its inexorable demand, to pluck with its claws hearts' desire and the best of mankind.

Then the lamp became extinguished, gloom descended and darkness reigned, Sublime aspirations and sweet dreams forever the earth embraced.

It is no consolation nor comfort to me when they say a rendezvous is waiting above while here, now, my heart for my last beloved is tormented with fire.

My fellowmen, know that in this world we possess nothing whatsoever but memories, by them we live and of those who have passed and long since passed and gone.

It therefore behoves us to imitate the good deeds of those of whom we are bereft and to immortalise their memories and sanctify their names.

Here is a prayer from the heart of those who will sooner or later follow, for those who had traversed the path that God's mercy may embrace their souls.

Menashy Shashoua

Percy Gourgey writes: Menashy Shashoua, who died in May in the United States, was born in Baghdad in 1909, the youngest among the children of Shaul and Farha Shashoua (nee Gourgey).

He went to school in Baghdad, and in completing his later studies at London University, he entered his father's extensive business in property and trade. He married Mozli, daughter of Eliahu Meir, and they had three children.

He served on the Jewish Council of Baghdad under the presidency of Meer Basri, and was also a member of the Administrative Committee of the Baghdad Chamber of Commerce.

In 1921 King Feisal I of Iraq, who was crowned that year, rented the Shashoua house on the banks of the Tigris until the Royal Palace was built three years later.

He and his wife were fortunate to be able to leave Baghdad in 1990 and were thus able to attend their grand-daughter's wedding in Canada.

I was fascinated by the picture on page 17 of your issue No.61 of the two horse trams travelling in the same direction on the Baghdad tramway – with either a second track or a passing loop, visible in the background. The Imperial War Museum has a photo in its collection showing one car on this tramway, but I have never seen this particular picture before.

Do any of your readers have any recollections of this tramway – the fares charged, the length of journey, etc.? I have also found in *The Locomotive* for 1918 pictures of trains on the Baghdad-Samarra section of the intended Berlin-Baghdad railway, as captured by the British (and Indian) forces.

Regarding the cross-desert road service from Baghdad to Damascus (via Rutba and the pumping stations on the pipeline), I have come across several accounts of travel by this route; during the war the RAF took over the service and employed at least two giant Marmon-Harrington tractor-trailer units, which apparently were provided with all modern conveniences. These vehicles just crossed the desert surface, not following any road – according to one rumour at least one bus set off into the desert and was never seen again. Does anyone know any more?
Leeds Rabbi Walter Rothschild

Scribe reply: The picture published was taken from the Imperial War Museum. The fare on the tramway was ½ anna. The length of the tramway was about 6 kilometres, as per enclosed map. This tramway was constructed in 1869 by the famous Midhat Pasha, Wali (governor) of Baghdad at the time.

Also enclosed are photocopies of some information on the Iraqi railways taken from the Iraq Directory of 1936.

The late Hayim Nathaniel was the general agent of the Iraqi State Railways, appointed by the British, and who used to charge a commission on all commercial traffic using the Iraqi railways.

We have no information on "the lost" Naim bus which you mention. There was another service run by a Syrian company using American limousines and was called Quwwatli and Taweel.

I just returned from Bristol, England, celebrating the *Brit Milah* of my first grandson. When the people of the Bristol Hebrew Congregation heard of my background, they mentioned your name and your honourable position in the Iraqi community. They spoke of your Foundation and of your journal, *The Scribe*.

My profound love and respect of my Jewish heritage brought me to dedicate my life to teaching the language and culture of the Jewish people, and through my advanced studies, I have researched the history of Iraqi Jews. For my doctoral dissertation I had the privilege of translating from Arabic to English, Yusuf Rizk Allah Ganima's *A Nostalgic Trip through the History of the Jews of Iraq (Nuzhat el Mustashq)*, which has, as far as I know, never been translated. The only available copy of the original book is at the university of Michigan. The book was published in 1924 in Baghdad and is currently in public domain.

Your suggestion to update Ganima's book in Arabic is well received and we decided to print the book in English and in Arabic.

Our additions will include an introduction about the relationship between Judaism and Islam throughout the generations, and a biography about Ganima. In the end of the book, we will add a chapter regarding the last 70 years (1924-1994) of Iraqi Jewry.

My friend and colleague, Mr Shlomo Alon, National Supervisor of Arabic in the Ministry of Education in Israel, well known to the educational institutions in many Arab countries, writer of several books in teaching Arabic in Israel including a Hebrew/Arabic dictionary, will be translating the additional chapter and the introduction so we may publish it in Arabic as well as in English.

I would like to thank you for encouraging me to finish the English version of the book with the updated pictures (at least 20 pictures, including some from the latest visitor to Baghdad in July/August 1993, Mr S Cahnman, a journalist).
Evanston, Illinois Dr Reading Dallal

Whilst reading the September 1993 issue of *The Scribe* it came to mind that most, if not all, of it referred to people from Iraqi background. All this makes very interesting reading, but there are others not of our faith who were as close to the Jews of Bombay as the Jews themselves. The most prominent amongst these was the late Abbass Dehdashty known as "Abbass" by almost every Jew from the Fort and Colaba areas and by many who resided in Byculla/Nagpada. He was known to both young and old and was well loved by all.

Although Abbass was an Iranian Moslem, he was so much integrated into our community that he was always taken to be Jewish. He was a staunch member of the Fort Jewish Club and could be seen there most evenings. He was a member of my family – the Sophers and the Hillels – and was always welcomed even on occasions for Sabbath evenings.

I was therefore very sorry to learn of his sudden death on the day of my departure from Bombay.

London

Fred Sopher

Lag-ba-Omer

What are the rules concerning not holding weddings and other celebrations during the Omer period of seven weeks between Passover and Shavuot observed by various Jewish communities?

London

Hanna Shasha

From Sephardi Chief Rabbi Dr Abraham Levy:

The first thing that has to be pointed out is the fact that there is nothing sad about the Omer itself. Historically, at the time of Rabbi Akiva, a plague attacked his pupils and this occurred during the Omer period.

Different communities observe different periods of mourning between Pesah and Shavuot.

The custom in the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish Community of London is to observe the mourning period only between Rosh Hodesh Iyar and Lag ba-Omer.

Scribe: A total of 17 days.

Rabbi Abraham Gubbay writes:

The Gemara (Yebamoth 62B) tells us that 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiba died between Pesah and Shabouoth. Mainly, for this reason we keep these days as a period of semi-mourning. Therefore, it has become the custom not to celebrate weddings during this time, also not to have haircuts or shave. We also do not listen to music, etc.

There is some dispute as to the precise days that the students died. According to the tradition the deaths took place in 33 days. Therefore, we count the first 33 days of the Omer period as days of mourning and prohibit weddings, etc. From the 34th day onwards weddings are permitted. This is the opinion of Rabbi Joseph Karo in Shulhan Arukh, and is the Sephardi practice. The Ashkenazi custom as cited in "Rama" is to start counting the days of mourning from the second day of Rosh Hodesh Iyyar (leaving out Lag La Omer, the 33rd day, as on that day no deaths occurred and is a day of rejoicing) until the 3rd of Sivan, the first of the 3 days of preparation for receiving the Torah at Sinai. Hence, the two customs, the Sephardim allowing weddings on and after the 34th day of the Omer. The Ashkenazim, on the other hand, permit weddings after Pesah until Rosh Hodesh Iyyar, on Lag La Omer and then only after the 3rd of Sivan.

Scribe: The custom in Baghdad was that the abstention from festivities was observed from the Eve of Passover to the 33rd day of Omer (Lag La Omer). The period between Passover and Shavuot was in ancient Israel a period of harvest, and people were not encouraged to busy themselves with other activities. The linkage with the tragedy of Akiba's students can only be symbolic. On that basis, what period of mourning should we then allow for the 6 million who perished in the Holocaust? Perhaps the whole year may not be enough.

I get *The Scribe* through a friend who gets it herself through another friend.

I find it a very interesting publication that deals not only in our Iraqi traditions, but almost in every field: politics, Judaism, cookery, etc. I always wait impatiently for the next issue.

Hod Hasharon

Daisy Gourji

I was most interested to read in *The Scribe* that the Emperor Julian asked the Babylonian Jews to help him in his war with Persia and that they refused.

This does make good sense and I would be very grateful to know the source so that I can make use of the information when lecturing on the period.

I am, of course, aware of Julian's letter to the Jewish Patriarch of Galilee in which he addressed him as "my brother" and promised to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem "with my own hands" when he returned from his Persian campaign. There is, however, no mention of Babylonian Jews in that letter; and historians usually ascribe Julian's desire to rebuild the Temple as a sign of respect to sacrificial cults in general and to his passionate hatred of Christianity – Julian the Apostate, as he is now known●

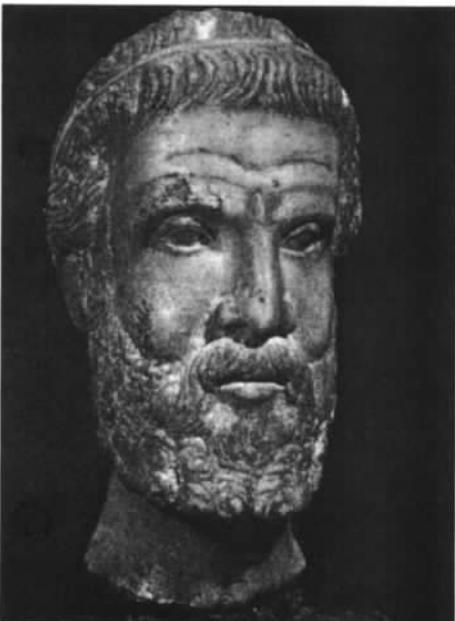
(Name and address supplied)

Scribe: The source is Dr Jacob Neusner's six-volume work, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia*. Vol. 4, page 29, states:

When Emperor Julian (361-363) came to power, his favour toward the Jews came as a refreshing respite. All religions were to be equally tolerated. He may have done this for hate of Christianity or out of love for Judaism. In practice pagan cults were fostered. Julian may have hoped to win over to his side the Babylonian and Mesopotamian Jewries in preparation for his contemplated invasion of 363. In his letter "To the Jewish community" he goes on to say "... When I have successfully concluded the war with Persia, I may rebuild with my own efforts the sacred city of Jerusalem that you may glorify the Most High God therein."

It is clear that the message reaches Babylonian Jewry and that the Persians were informed.

Julian, in order to stir up the Christians and to convict the words of Jesus regarding the devastation of Jerusalem, he ordered the Jews to go up to Judaea to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. Many went even from Mahoza, the latter were pursued by Shapur's troops and killed.



Roman philosopher – Emperor Julian

A rare portrait head recently exhibited at the Israel Museum. We rejected his advances to Babylonian Jewry●



We recently celebrated the twin *Bnai Mitzvot* of my sons, Joshua and Zachary – as shown in the above picture – with members of the family.

Left to right (standing): Dr William Basri, his wife Nancy, his son Ross, Joshua, Carole Basri, Zachary, Ava Basri, Dr Raymond Basri.

Sitting. Dr Albert Basri (brother of Meer Basri), Dayna Basri, Annette Basri.

You do a great service to the Babylonian community and singlehandedly you keep us in touch with our heritage. *Kol Hakavod*●
New York

Carole Basri

Whenever I think of all the modern household appliances which make the life of the present day housewife easier (such as refrigerators, blenders, microwaves, vacuum cleaners, electric irons, telephones, TV, etc.), I cannot help remembering how hard the Jewish women in Iraq worked during the first half of the 20th century, i.e. less than 50 years ago.

For the benefit of our young generation who did not live in Iraq and may not be familiar with the hard life led by their mothers and grandmothers, here is what I remember.

The Jewish women in Iraq, in addition to being treated as a second-class person compared with her husband or brother, was also very much overworked. She toiled the whole day like a slave, whilst the man, after the day's work, spent the evenings in coffee shops (for men only of course) playing backgammon (*tawli*) or dominoes and smoking cigarettes or hubble-bubble (*nargila*).

An average Jewish family used to have five or six children and their mother had to take care of them, in addition to the house work. Her working day started early in the morning. Before preparing breakfast for the whole family, she had to light up the charcoal heater (*jafoof*) in winter. During the day she had to cook over oil stoves and wash clothes in a (*tasht*) in the open-air yard of the house. Her duties also included preparing stocks of food in earthenware pots (*beghniyi*) since there were no refrigerators at that time. One pot would be filled with heavily salted cheese, another with boiled and strained butter, and a third would contain strong vinegar (*khall kaskin*). Jam was made and stored in huge quantities by boiling prunes in date syrup (*treng b'cilan*). There were also big jars full of

pickled cucumber and bright red pickled turnip (*mkhallela*).

In summer the woman had to carry water up to the roof (where the family slept) in jars called (*jagha*). She also had to tie a screen made of white linen (*kalla*) around the nuptial bed on the roof, to protect the couple from mosquitoes and to provide them with a measure of privacy, since they were usually separated from their neighbours only by a low wall (*tegha*).

Iraqi Jewish women did their most back-breaking work on Friday in preparation for the Sabbath (*tbeet*), they had to bathe all the children, one after the other, in the *tasht*, the water being heated on oil stoves. Ironing was done with charcoal-heated irons.

The only day of rest was Saturday, when women of the lane (*koucha*) would gather on low wooden boards (*takhta*), cracking seeds and exchanging local news and gossip.

New York

Salim Khabbaza

Scribe: Our men were not slave drivers. But after generations of experience, the division of labour was found best to keep the family together and to protect our daughters from temptation and sin. Our womenfolk did their chores as a labour of love. However, many families had living-in help.

Very often daughters were married at the early age of 16, 14 or even 12 to preserve their chastity●

Baghdad-born Shaul M Shuker has been elected to the Board of Deputies of British Jews for a third triennial term. He now represents Woodside Park area, London●

The Elie Kedourie Fund

Mrs Regina Allen writes:

An elegant summer evening reception at the home of Rabbi and Mrs Abraham Levy was addressed by Lord Beloff – one of the many distinguished sponsors of this Fund to honour the memory of Elie Kedourie CBE.

Professor Kedourie, who died in 1992, was Professor of Politics in the University of London from 1965 to 1990, as well as holding teaching and visiting posts all over the world. He is regarded as one of the great scholars of our time, a modern historian and political philosopher, having been elected a member of the British Academy in 1975.

It is the British Academy which will administer the Fund in his honour. The aims, as explained at the reception by Mr Peter Brown, the Secretary of the Academy, will be to establish an annual lecture in Modern History as one of the series of British Academy endowed lectures. More than this however, Professor Kedourie's family wish the Fund to be able to make grants to young promising scholars of any nationality in support of all aspects of research into Middle Eastern and Modern European History.

Contributions have already begun to arrive for these purposes and encouragement and good wishes from all over the world. The sponsors of the Fund include such scholars and statesmen as Lord Beloff, Sir Isaiah Berlin, Elie Wiesel, Pierre Trudeau, and the Vice President of India.

The Anglo-Jewish Community was honoured and enriched by Professor Kedourie's presence in it – as was the world of scholarship – and contributions to this Fund should reflect awareness of that.

Cheques should be made out to *The British Academy Elie Kedourie Fund* and sent to The Finance Officer, The British Academy, 20-21 Cornwall Terrace, London NW1 4QP. The British Academy is a Registered Charity●

I wish again to thank you for your unparalleled work in getting Babylonian Jews from all corners of the world to get to know their heritage, and to re-establish contacts sometime. Myself, a previous teacher and educator in Alliance School in Baghdad, have had a wealth of letters and information from previous students and friends, all through what *The Scribe* prints. *Chen, Chen* as we say here in Israel●

Jerusalem

Jacob Bekhor

The Scribe is the only magazine I ever read from cover to cover. I am very impressed with your work which gathers up our lost Iraqi Jews all over the world in one big circle.

I have a sister in Sydney and a brother in Boston. We usually discuss every issue of *The Scribe* with each other●

Don Mills, Toronto

Flo Urbach

Your relentless effort to produce this excellent periodical enhances the dignity of our community of Babylonian Jews from ancient times to the present day.●

Montreal

Joshua Nathaniel



The above is a photograph taken in September 1991 at Columbia University, New York, when the late Professor Elie Kedouri, C.B.E. was visiting Professor at the University.

Sitting (L to R): Audree Haim, the late Prof. Elie Kedouri, Margorie Peress.

Standing (L to R): Prof. Ed Nawy, Rachel Nawy, Sylvia Kedouri, Madeleine Ftaya, Sason Peres. Not in the picture since he photographed it was Selim Haim●
New Jersey

Edward G Nawy

Jewish assets in Arab countries

To the Foreign Office, London:

One of the tasks that the Middle East peace negotiators will have to deal with is the frozen assets of Palestinian Arabs who left Israel in 1948 and the frozen assets of Jews and Arab countries who subsequently left their countries of origin.

Israel hopes to set off one against the other. However, according to international law, Israel cannot set off claims against Arab countries of Jews who are not Israeli citizens. These are advised to claim through their countries of residence.

When I left Iraq and came to live in the UK all my assets were frozen and later confiscated. When I acquired British citizenship last September, I was told that Britain would not protect me while I happen to be in Iraq. Does this exclusion cover the help of the Government in reclaiming my assets in Iraq?

Naim Dangoor

Foreign office reply:

Unfortunately, we cannot take up a claim unless the claimant is a UK citizen, and was so at the time of the incident. It appears that as you were an Iraqi citizen when your assets were confiscated in Iraq, we cannot take up your case.

You may, however, like to pursue your claim with the Iraqi authorities directly. As diplomatic relations between our countries were broken off in February 1991, you should, in the first instance, contact the Iraqi Interests Section at the Jordanian Embassy in London.

You might also consider taking your case to the Iraqi courts. I give the address of a lawyer in Baghdad which you might find useful: Al Mukhtar Law Office, Plot 6, Quarter 120, Street 11, P O Box 580, Baghdad●

Lauderdale Road Synagogue

Lauderdale Road Synagogue, in London, will be 100 years old in 1996. To celebrate this it is intended that there will be a number of different activities taking place throughout the year. One idea is to produce a commemorative booklet of the history of the synagogue and its members.

A significant development has been the arrival of the Babylonian Jews, who now constitute a third of the membership and account for nearly half the Finta.

Members are requested to write and send in their recollections of their involvement in, or experiences of, events at the synagogue. These should be sent to:

Mrs Nicole Garcia
48 Hamilton Gardens
St John's Wood
London NW8 9PX●

I was born in Bombay. Both my parents were born in Baghdad. They left for Bombay where they met and got married. My father, Ezra Sion Mattuck, left for Kobe, Japan in 1933 for business and soon we all followed.

There I met my husband Edward Sherbanee, who had left Baghdad as a young man to join his Uncles, Salim and Sassoon Rubin's business in Kobe. We were married by a Rabbi from Shanghai in 1937.

Our four daughters were born in Kobe. We stayed till the end of the Second World War. We then left for India and later on to Bangkok, where our son Stanley was born. Then left for London and arrived in Canada in 1953.

My late husband founded the Sephardic Synagogue in Vancouver.

I enjoy reading *The Scribe*●

Vancouver

Eliza Shawn

A young American lady and I

by Meer S Basri

In 1967 a young American lady came to Baghdad to undertake a research for a book she subsequently published under the title *The Modern History of Iraq*. She was connected with Harvard University.

She interviewed the Ministry of Education, several other institutions and personalities, amongst whom myself, introduced by the well-known lawyer and journalist Yahya Qassim.

In 1968 the Baath regime came to office after a bloodless coup. The new President Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr proclaimed that no US or British spy shall be left in Iraq, and ordered to detain Jewish, Moslems and Christians accusing them falsely of spying for Israel and the Western powers. The small Jewish community was especially persecuted. The only voices raised in its defence were that of the Community President, Chief Rabbi Sasson Khedhour, and my own voice in my capacity as Chairman of the Jewish Council. Rabbi Khedhour was an octogenarian and, in order to stifle his protests, his son Shaul Naji was detained and subjected to horrible torture in the infamous Qasr al-Nihayah prison.

In January 1969, before the odious trial of the pitiable "spies" began, it was time to chasten me. I was detained on the New Year without a legal injunction as having given an interview to the young American "spy" who came to see me a year before. I told the security police that the lady in question was a genuine university re-

searcher, and that anyway I knew no political or military secrets to impart to her. My plea was apparently accepted, but I remained in prison for almost two months, until after the conviction and execution of the "spies". Late in February I was released.

I left Iraq finally with my family in October 1974 and settled in London. I wrote a letter to *The Times*, published on 24 November, 1975 indicting the Iraqi Baath regime and its leaders Al-Bakr and Saddam Hussain, not only for their atrocities against the Jews, but also against their own people. The Ambassador of Iraq wrote to *The Times* denying my "allegations", but *The Times* did not publish his letter, stating that "it contained nothing of interest to the paper and its readers."

And the years passed on. We were well established in England and obtained British nationality. My detention in Baghdad became a faded memory in my mind after so many years.

Then came 1991 and heralded the Iraq-Kuwait War. The American and British media gave prominence to the statements of an American adviser on Iraqi affairs to the Pentagon and State Department, Dr Phebe Marr, who seemed to be an admirer of Saddam.

I wrote her a letter on 26 May, 1991 c/o the Pentagon, Washington D.C., and asked her if she was the young lady who interviewed me in Baghdad many years ago.

Ms Marr's answer came, surprisingly, after three years. She wrote to me on 11

June, 1994 stating "Yes, I was the woman who called on you with Yahya Qassim many years ago. I was!" She said she was appalled to learn of my arrest shortly thereafter. Her trip and questions were innocent. She was merely writing a scholarly history of Iraq and was grateful for the interview. Her book *The Modern History of Iraq* has since been published.

She added: "Needless to say, I was no spy, and at that time had no connection with the US Government whatever. I was connected to Harvard University ..."

Finally, she stated emphatically she was no supporter of Saddam. She said this came from the press which wrote a good deal of nonsense about which they knew little during the Gulf War. "Don't believe everything you read in the papers." In fact, she said, the newspaper articles she wrote about Saddam were such that she was not given a visa to visit Iraq for 20 years.

Concluding her letter she said: "London is full of Iraqi oppositionists - with whom I am sympathetic - who like to put the blame on others, especially the US Government for many of their own failings ..."

Can I call this a wonderful "saga" enacted over many years from Baghdad to London and Washington?

Scribe: The imprisonment of Meer Basri and of Shaul Sassoon, son of the Chief Rabbi, were intended by the government to silence the leaders of the community for the brutal hangings of January 1969●



1914 Picturesque homes of wealthy Jews along the river Tigris in North Baghdad●



Baghdad 1914 - Landing from the river steamer●

Courtesy of Freddie Khalastchy



Three Jewish women in traditional izaghs outside Shorja Bazaar, Baghdad●

The Shrine of Ezra near Basrah●

Betina Caro

An exhibition of the well known artist Betina Caro was recently held at Furse House, Kensington. It was sponsored by Renee and Naim Dangoor in conjunction with the Balfour Diamond Jubilee trust.

The exhibition was opened by Lady Cocks, wife of the Chief Government Whip at the House of Lords. It was addressed by Eric Moonman, Deputy President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

The Reception and Exhibition was attended by 300 members of the community●



Pictured left to right: Lady Cocks, Naim Dangoor, Renee Dangoor, Eric Moonman and the artist Betina Caro, standing beside an oil portrait of Hakham Ezra Dangoor painted by the artist●



Some postage stamps of Jewish interest from the collection of Freddie Knoller of State of Israel Bonds●

LORD KADOORIE REMEMBERED

by Francis Mocatta
(by request)

A stuffed Humpty Dumpty used to sit on Lawrence Kadoorie's desk in his office as a reminder to him of what could befall one in life and indeed twice did so in his. The first anniversary of Lord Kadoorie's death at 94 on 25th August, 1993 is a fitting time to remember a great but modest man whose unassuming manner and approachability was perhaps a reflection of his experience of life's strange unaccountability.

Sir Elly and Sir Ellis Kadoorie, Lawrence's father and uncle, had left Baghdad to work for the Sassoons in Shanghai in 1880. Under the name of Kelly – until Elly Kelly understandably reverted to the surname of Kadoorie! – the brokerage firm of Benjamin, Kelly and Potts was established and the family prospered until by World War II, the Kadoorie interests and fortune seemed secure.

With the outbreak of war in the Far East, Lawrence, with his young wife Muriel Gubbay, and their children Michael and Rita, entered a Japanese camp in which they were interned for the duration of the war. To adapt to camp's privations from the height of wealth and privilege in Shanghai, a city where entry to the parks read; No dogs or Chinese allowed and whose opulent style of living was never to be repeated, required vision, faith, resilience and optimism. Lawrence was blessed with these qualities which were needed no less after the war when he surveyed the loss and devastation of those years. Lawrence and his younger brother Horace were faced with re-starting the family businesses from their ruins.

Sir Elly, Lawrence's elderly father, had died in internment in Shanghai, Horace caring for him whom the Japanese had allowed to move freely in and out of camp. Elly had long since been pre-deceased by his wife, Laura Mocatta, having died in a fire when their two sons were still in their teens. The Mocattas, whose history went back to the expulsion from Spain and who arrived in England when Cromwell allowed the Jews re-entry in 1657, had retained their prominence in the country and their coat of arms is carved in marble over the front-door of the Kadoorie home in the New Territories.

It was some 30 years after Sir Elly's death that Sir Lawrence, as he then was, had been seeing Den Xiao-Ping in Peking to sign a nuclear-power treaty on behalf of China Light and Power, the Kowloon electricity Company and the family's principal interest. Returning via Shanghai for the first time since its occupation by the Communists in 1949 and its closure as an international city, Lawrence was asked if there was anything he would like to see while there.

Lawrence replied that he would like to see his old home and visit his father's

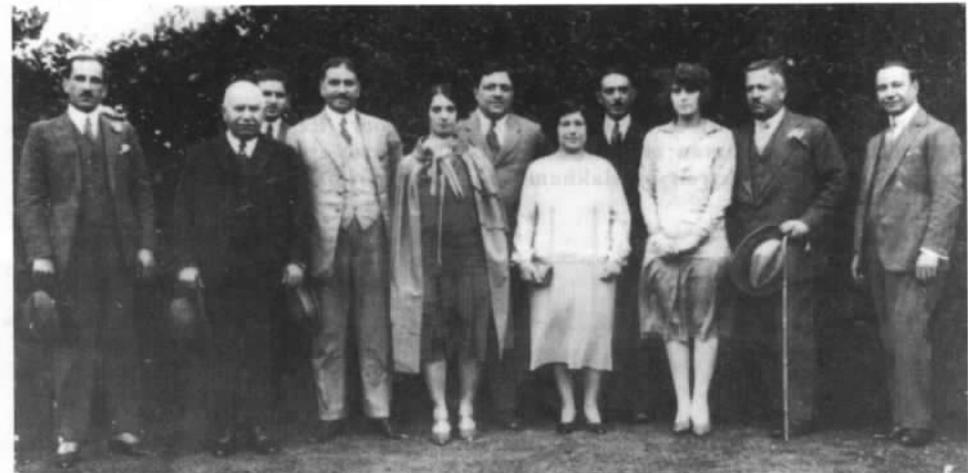


King Feisal I with Sir Elly Kadoorie●



1926: Front row, left to right (sitting): Sir Elly Kadoorie, Naima, wife of Nuri Al Saeed, Crown Prince Ghazi, Mrs Abraham Nahom, Prime Minister Jaafar Al Askari, Horace Kadoorie, Abraham Nahom, Ivor Gourgi●

Photos supplied by Mrs Bertha Fattal●



Left to right: Horace Kadoorie, Sir Elly Kadoorie, Lawrence Kadoorie, Abraham Nahom, Nuri Pasha's wife, Jafaar Al Askari, Mrs Abraham Nahom, Nuri Pasha, Victoria (wife of Ivor Gourgi nee Elias), Sabih Neshaat (Minister of Finance and Ambassador to Turkey), Ivor Gourgi●

grave. Marble Hall with its banqueting room large enough to seat 400 for dinner, had been taken over as a Children's Palace and was remarkably as it had been left. Lawrence was then taken to his father's grave which he anticipated would be totally overgrown. To his astonishment he found it beautifully kept. An old servant who could never have thought to meet a member of the family again had for all those years tended the grave of his old master, traditional Chinese ancestor worship going hand in hand with the Jewish religion's respect for its dead.

Sir Elly Kadoorie and Sons' office had been opened in Hong Kong before the second world war. With the closing of Shanghai and the loss of huge assets from which many families never recovered, Lawrence and Horace, who were so close they shared one bank account all their lives, had again to re-build and re-direct their energies, widely diversifying their interests over the next 40 years. The famous Peninsula Hotel, built by Sir Ellis, has stayed within the family's control. St. George's Building, a low Colonial-style office next to the Mandarin Hotel on the



10 April 1946 – Alliance Girls School, Baghdad

“Brevet” exams graduating class Photo supplied by Mrs Eileen Khalastchy.

Left to right – *Front Row* 1. – 2. Blanche Jiji (Belboul); 3. – 4. Louise Nessim Shakarchi; 5. Renée Mahlab; 6. Daisy Akérib (Silver);

7. Eileen Dangoor (Khalastchy);

Second Row 8. Bertha Dellal; 9. Khatoun Yadoo; 10. – 11. Madame El-Kebir; 12. Madame Barmaimon; 13. Yvonne Shirazi (Shina); 14. Bertha Zeloof; 15. Yvonne Shina; 16. Annette Iny (Basri);

Third Row 17. Doris Elias; 18. Violette Elias; 19. – 20. Clara Mouallem; 21. Espérance Aboudi; 22. – 23. Doris Koubi (Korin); 24. – 25. Farah Dangour. 26. Marcelle Shohet (Akram Ezra); 27. -;

Fourth Row 28. Blanche Barmagh; 29. Aliza Smouha; 30. Flora Hanouka; 31. Clairette Shina; 32. Khatoun Dalah; 33. Marcelle Zakri; 34. Doris Zeloof (Aboudi-Khazam). 35. Madeleine Namordy (Albert Yona). 36. - ; 37. - ; 38. -●

water-front, is now a modern building in keeping with Hong Kong's development and Esso's involvement with China Light and Power has enabled it to keep pace with the Colony's astonishing growth and demands on it.

During the Cultural Revolution which started in China in 1966, the Red Guards tried to incite the Hong Kong Chinese work-force to revolt. The Kadoories had ploughed back a vast amount of their wealth into the welfare of the immigrant Chinese who were arriving penniless in Hong Kong in the 1950s in large numbers. It was said that it was this help to the settlement of some 400,000 refugees which contributed to the refusal of the workers to join the Red Guard anti-establishment movement with its damaging consequences for China.

On a recent trip to Holland with Sir Horace, knighted for his charitable works while Lawrence had become Hong Kong's first peer, the writer and Sir Horace had dinner one evening in a Chinese restaurant. When the young owner learnt whom he was entertaining, he asked Sir Horace if he would be his guest as a small “thank-you” for what he had done in re-settling his parents when they had fled China.

Lord Kadoorie had married Muriel Gubbay in 1938. Her life-long support of Lawrence was of inestimable value to him in his public life as it was in his private life. In this he quietly assisted any Jew in

the Colony in need and as President of the Ohel Leah Synagogue, built by the Sassoons but preserved by the Kadoories, he kept the peace between the differing factions wanting to use the synagogue while maintaining as far as possible its Sephardi origins.

“Be not afraid of greatness. Some men are born great, some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them”. Lawrence would in modesty have said his greatness was thrust upon him but neither his heritage nor his achievements can be denied. Lawrence was buried quietly by his family whom he loved so much, in the Hong Kong Jewish Cemetery, a peaceful end to the long, distinguished and tasking life of a man whom it was a privilege to know.

Scribe: Among the important benefactions that Sir Elly Kadoorie had made to the Jewish community in Baghdad were the Laura Kadoorie Girls School (picture overleaf) for over 1000 students, and the Laura Kadoorie Social Club, which was opened in 1926.

The cost of building the Alliance Girls School was donated by Sir Elly Kadoorie and opened by the Wali (Governor) of Baghdad, Ahmed Jamal Pasha (later called “the Assassin”) for his atrocities in Syria. A new book claims that Jamal offered in 1916 to pull the Ottoman Empire out of the war if the Allies would recognise him as the Sultan of Turkey with Damascus as its capital.

After the mass emigration of the community, the building was used by Palestinian refugees until 1958 when it was burned down completely during the July revolution.

It is interesting to note that the Iraqi flags hanging around the balcony of the School were the early design and is identical to the flag now being used by the Palestinian authority.

Prime Minister Nuri Said, in a vindictive mood, levelled to the ground in 1948 the Laura Kadoorie Club which was situated on the south side of Rashid Street, at the same time that he levelled the red light district at the north side of the street. The Iraq government paid the Kadoorie family £250,000 compensation for the Club.

How appropriate it would be if the Kadoorie family, whose fortune is reputed to be worth £3 billion, would commemorate Lord Kadoorie's name by building a centre for the Iraqi Jewish community in London of over 8,000.

The Bible tells us that Jacob's sons were taken aback when they realised that their long-lost brother, Joseph, had become rich and powerful in a distant land. Joseph told them not to be afraid. “God sent me hither to give you a remnant on the earth and to save you alive for a great deliverance. And He hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and ruler over all the land of Egypt”●





British Girls School, Baghdad ●



Alliance School 1925.

From left to right. **Front Row** 1. Khatoon Nissim (Khdouri Zilkha's niece); 2. Marjorie Ezra Menashi; 3. Naima Shohet; 4. Marcelle Hillawi; 5. Henriette Ezra Khedouri; 6. Lilian Meer Karagulla (Peres).

Second Row 7. Probably the daughter of Sion Mansour; 8. - 9. Suzanne Saleh; 10. Violette Kattan; 11. Rachel (niece of Khdouri Zilkha); 12. Mistress, Rachel Isaac. 13.- 14. Rachel Isaac ??; 15. - ; 16. - ; 17. daughter Mathalon;

Third Row 18. Habiba Heskeli; 19. - ; 20. Fahima Dangoor; 21. Rima Alika; 22. Habiba Shaaya; 23. Renée Cohen; 24. Saïda Shuker; 25. - ; 26. - ; 27. - ; 28. ? Dellal; 29. ? Shohet;

Fourth Row 30. - ; 31. Flora Murad; 32. - ; 33. - ; 34. - ; 35. Marcelle Shashoua; 36. - ; 37. - ; 38. Saïda Yehouda Nounou; 39. Fahima Masri (Zelouf). 40. Farha Ruhaïma. 41. ? Shabi. ●

I congratulate you on the tremendous progress *The Scribe* is making - a true forum for a dispersed community.

The issue of May 1994 evoked so many memories!

To start with, Henri Sasson (now in Brussels), the son of M and Mme Sasson, the Principals at the Alliance Schools in Baghdad. He was in my class when we were both at the girls school, though he was moved a class higher when he transferred earlier to the boys school. We were of similar size (ages about 6/7). Mme Sasson, his mother, in order not to disturb his studies during the study period, ordered that I be taken to the "Atelier" to get fitted for a shirt that was being tailored for Henri. I never forget or forgave that imposition because Farha Noory, the one in charge of tailoring operation, helped me out of my complicated shirt but did not help me get dressed again. I had to struggle to get dressed and was thrown out of the dressing room, half dressed, as some ladies came in for a fitting and they needed the dressing room.

I remember Henri well and his brother Albert, as our parents were also friends and visited our home quite often. His father and mine conversed in Persian, my father didn't speak French and Mr Sasson spoke less than broken Arabic.

Thanks for publishing a picture of the "Old Bridge". Until I saw this photograph I was under the impression that it was quite a feat on my part to swim across the Tigris river, little realising how relatively narrow it was in the summer months ●

Harrison, N.Y

Sassoon Peress

Germany's bad odour

Germany's desire to be invited to the various events commemorating the D-Dy Normandy landings, to put an end to the vicious regime of Hitler, reminds me of the following anecdote:

In a crowded railway compartment a careless passenger made a bad smell. In a flash everyone became active. Those who were snoozing suddenly woke up. Those who were reading folded their papers to fan their faces. People started talking to each other. There was an air of festivity. One lady brought out her perfume bottle and gave a little to each one with the exception of the culprit.

The latter pleadingly said to her, "Why miss me out, madam? After all aren't I the cause of this *simcha* (celebration)?"

Germany's crimes against peace and humanity must not be forgotten and having failed to capture Europe in to bloody wars, Germany must not be allowed to achieve her purpose through the back door ●

London

Abdullah Anwar

I was very glad to receive a big *Scribe* of 20 pages. The nostalgic pictures were very impressive. May your work be blessed to continue for a long long time to come ... and more frequently.

I have just completed my manuscript entitled *Three Years in Hell* which deals with the situation of the Iraqi Jewish community in the years 1948-1951, as seen by the teenage girl I was at the time. The Jewish underground, the arrests, the terror and persecution, the massive aliya, etc ●

Ramat Gan

Esther Mercado

I was delighted to see in the recent issue of *The Scribe* the article concerning Yvonne Cohen's part in helping the International Sephardic Education Foundation to educate bright young Israelis from disadvantaged homes in the Sephardic community.

ISEF is proud to count many young men and women of Iraqi origin among its 500 annual scholarship winners. A considerable number of these students have had to struggle to overcome the double handicap of severe economic deprivation, and social prejudice in Israeli society. Some of our most brilliant young scholars have told us heart-rending stories of being stereotyped and dismissed as worthless pupils by teachers and principals. Their perseverance in the face of all obstacles is testimony to their intellectual ability and their tenacity of spirit. ISEF's students are truly a remarkable group of young people.

We are very eager to help more bright young Israelis of Iraqi parentage. I would be most grateful if any of your readers wish to assist us in this vital work, by adopting some of ISEF's scholarship students, either at the universities in Israel, or pursuing their doctoral degrees at prestigious universities abroad ●

ISEF

Nina A Weiner

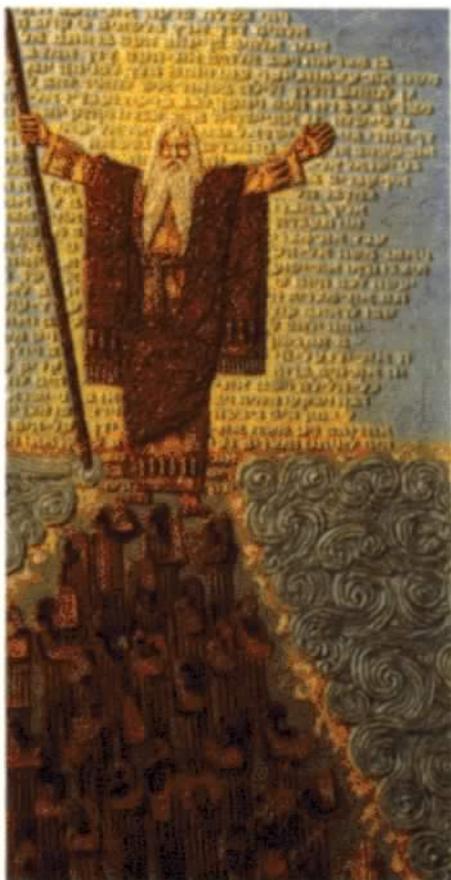
114 Avenue of the Americas President
New York, N.Y. 10036-7798, USA

We find *The Scribe* to be very enlightening to say the least. Keep it going.

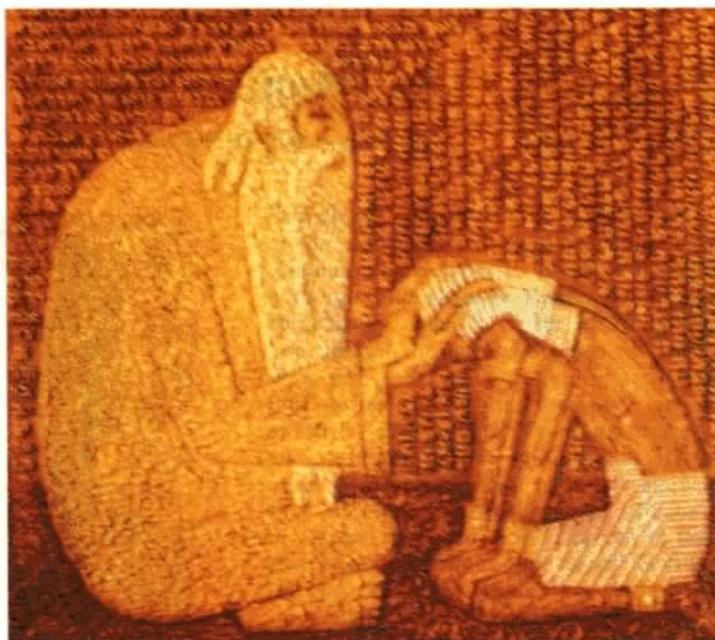
My family came from Antab, Turkey. My father's name was Yousef Shasho. I am curious to know the origin of the name SHASHO! Turkey or Iraq? ●

New York

Irving Shasho Levy



Moses parting the Red Sea●



Isaac blessing Jacob●

The art of the late Ovadia Agassy

Ovadia Agassy died in 1988 at the age of 68. He was born in Baghdad to a wellknown rabbinic family and studied painting at the Iraq Academy.

In 1950 he arrived in Israel by devious means. During the years 1957-1971 he produced a collection of 73 oil paintings of Bible subjects, which were on exhibition in various venues.

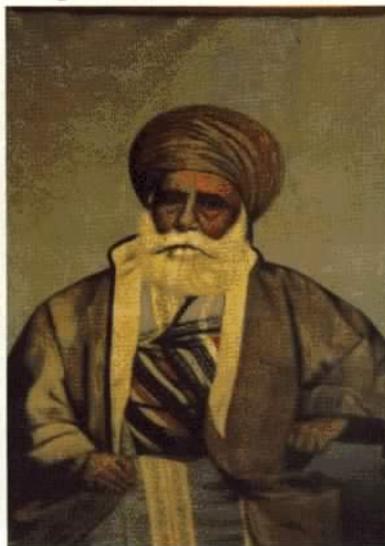
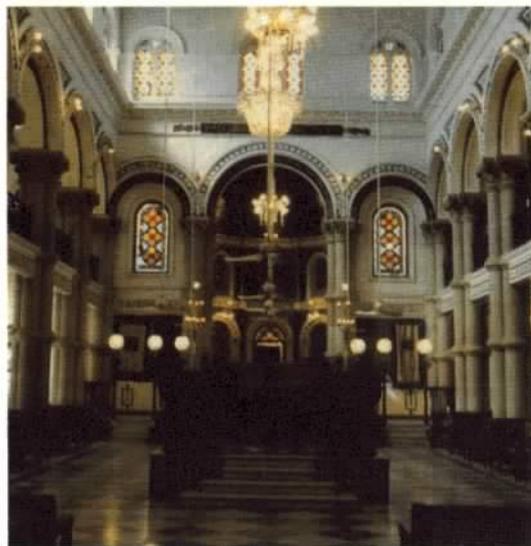
Dr Zvi Yehuda of The Centre for the Tradition of Babylon writes:

The artist Ovadia Agassy tried to recreate and preserve in his work the reality of life under change, of relation to values and objectives that were changed, the world that does not exist any more.

For the accomplishment of his life he was awarded a prize by the A.H.Y. Association in 1985.

Scribe: For further information on the paintings that are for sale, please contact Mr Moshe Dangoor, 13 Bet Alfa Street, Tel Aviv 67219●

Baghdadi Jews of Calcutta



Above centre. David Joseph Ezra (Baher) born in Baghdad c.1796, died in Calcutta in 1882.

He first visited Calcutta with his father Joseph in 1820. They returned to Baghdad, but David later settled in Calcutta, where he built up a vast fortune through trading. Father and son were among the signatories in 1825 to the constitution of the original Neveh Shalome Synagogue in Calcutta.

Around 1856, David was the co-builder of the Beth El Synagogue, Calcutta, with another wealthy merchant from Baghdad, Ezekiel Judah.

Two streets in Calcutta were named after David, of which Ezra Street still exists.

He and his descendants were leaders of the Jewish community of Calcutta for the best part of a century.

His son Elias (1830-1886) became the first Jewish Sheriff of Calcutta, an office also held subsequently by his son Sir David Ezra.

In 1884 Elias built the Maghen David Synagogue in Calcutta in memory of his father. It is probably the largest synagogue in the East and one of the most magnificent in existence anywhere, and a fine example of Italian Renaissance style architecture.

Above left. A view of the interior of Maghen David Synagogue, showing its marble flooring and the *tebah* (pulpit) in the centre. Unusually for a synagogue, it has a steeple, which is a landmark in the area. At the far (western) end is the *Hekhal*, leading to the Ark, where the Scrolls of the Law are kept. The massive pillars are made of Mirzapur stone, with intricately carved capitals. The ceiling, not visible in the picture, is more than 50 feet above floor level.

Above right. A view of the interior of Beth El Synagogue, constructed around 1856, the first purpose-built synagogue in Calcutta. An extensive reconstruction of the synagogue was carried out towards the end of the last century at the cost of Elias Shalome Gubbay, scion of a distinguished Baghdad family, in the course of which the heavy stone pillars in the synagogue were replaced by the elegant iron columns seen in the picture●

The Central Jewish Board of Bombay

by Percy Gourgey

The Central Jewish Board of Bombay was founded in 1943 initially to deal with anti-Zionist and anti-Jewish attacks in the press by pro-Arab elements. The Board was the equivalent of the Board of Deputies of British Jews in both its representational and functional aspects, consisting mostly of synagogues and meeting every month to discuss and take action on matters of interests to the community. At the time the Bombay Jewish community numbered about 25,000 with many communal institutions – apart from synagogues – such as the Jewish Relief Association (for European Jewish refugees), the Bombay Zionist Association (of which I was Honorary Secretary for a time), the Etz Haeem Yeshiva in Byculla, Maccabi, Habonim, WIZO, Jewish Women's League, etc.

There were various problems dealt with. For instance, in 1946 there was an influx of Jewish refugees from Afghanistan with which the Board had to deal with. Many of them wished to settle in Palestine, under British Mandate at the time, and contact was established with the World Jewish Congress (British Section) in London with Lady Reading as President, to facilitate their emigration to Palestine. Both India and Palestine then were under British rule in those years.

When India became independent in August 1947 and a Congress government was installed in Bombay Presidency, as it was then known (now the ex-provinces are states in the Indian Union), the Board immediately established relations with the government. One problem which arose, as it was under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi, was that liquor was banned and the Board made representations for having wine for kiddush which the Congress government agreed to once the reason



1994 – The Shrine of Ezekiel at Kifil, near Hillah, Iraq, after completion of the restoration work. Picture supplied by Mr Shaul Sassoon●

was clearly explained to them. Its prohibition policy was later discarded.

The first President of the Board was Sir Victor Sassoon. He was succeeded by Dr E Moses, a former Mayor of Bombay and member of the 2000-year old Bene-Israel community. He in turn was succeeded by Mr Meyer Nissim, of the Baghdadian Jewish community, and also a former Mayor of Bombay. I served as Honorary Secretary of the Board under his Presidency.

In all their religious observances the Jews of Bombay followed, like their brethren in Calcutta and elsewhere in the East, the *Minhag Babel*, the Baghdadian or Babylonian form of prayer, which they continued to observe in the countries to which they emigrated●

Shaaya

Referring to *Scribe* No.61 of May 1994, page 15, please advise the "young man in New York" to contact the undersigned to advise the first name of his father. From the description in the newsletter, I have not been able to identify his father and maybe with additional information I hope to be able to help him.

Please have him contact me at (310) 652 1611 so that I may offer him all the information that I have●

Moussa Shaaya
Wilshire Plaza Management Co
8797 Beverly Boulevard, Suite 315
Los Angeles
California 90048, USA



Jewish Girls' School Girl Guides, Calcutta, 1 November 1915.

(Picture taken by Sydney Glazer of the 3rd Kent Battery, Home Counties Brigade, R.F.A.)

Left to right, front row: Ramah Jacob, Diana Isaac, Lily Levi, Sarah Luddy, Sarah Ferris, Noam Silliman, Ruby Jacob, Victoria Silas, Ettie Joseph.

Middle row: Florrie Elias, Sarah Sugarman, Kitty Nawe, Seemah Ferris, Lily -, Mozelle Musleah, Ramah Judah, Georgina Silas, Mozelle Levi, Noam Meyer, Sarah Abraham, Tryphosa Levi.

Standing: Mrs Banerjee (teacher), Mozelle Moses, Kitty Moses, Hannah Menahem, Rachel Moses, Seemah Mordecai, Stella Levi, Ramah Nasarullah, Lily Nissim, Rachel Nissim, Kitty Silliman, Sarah Einy, Aziza Mordecai, Kitty Judah, Ettie Cohen●

The treasures of Tutankhamun by N.D.

Were they the work of Hebrew craftsmen?

When the Children of Israel embarked on the Exodus, the Scriptures tell us that "They emptied Egypt." It was a night of great drama.

Every Hebrew household had slaughtered its pascal lamb and roasted it whole, daubed the doorpost with blood to warn the "angel of death" to "pass over" their houses, and packed their belongings ready for the dash for freedom.

It is likely that Moses had first presented his demands to Pharaoh that he gives up idolatry, worship the One True God, and free the Hebrews from the bondage into which they were plunged as a result of the over-enthusiastic fiscal measures that Joseph had introduced a few generations earlier.*

When the demands were rejected, Moses began to ask, "Let my people go." As Pharaoh finally relented and gave his go-ahead for the Israelites to depart, they stampeded out of Goshen in the small hours of 15 Nisan under a bright full moon, over six hundred thousand men on foot, beside women and children.

It is very likely that Akhnaton learned his Monotheism from Joseph. But, as he could not promote an invisible God, he offered the Sun for worship as the visible source of all life.

We may surmise that the young Pharaoh was personally sympathetic to Moses's demands, but was stopped by his own priesthood whose vested interests would be threatened. We come to this conclusion, firstly because Pharaoh made himself accessible to Moses at all times and, secondly, because Pharaoh's last words to Moses were "and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said, ... and bless me also." Moses had tactfully explained the purpose of wanting to take the children of Israel to the desert, that it was to worship the Eternal God. Pharaoh's request would seem comic and incongruous unless it underlined a yearning towards the belief of Moses.

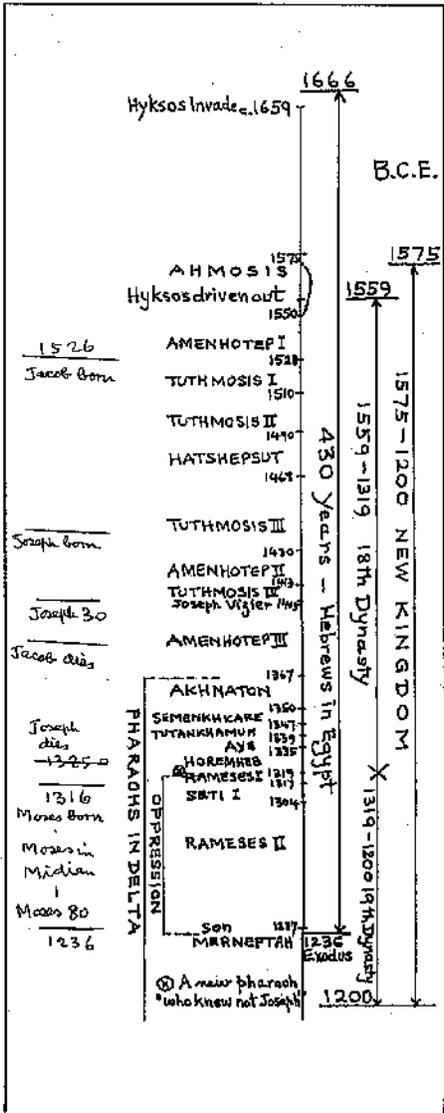
As the Hebrew slaves departed they plundered everything on their way.

According to our Passover Haggadah, what was in the houses was taken in Egypt, and what was in the warehouses was taken at the seaside. Egypt was rendered as a pool without fishes and as a silo without grain. This paragraph (see box) is contained in the Baghdadi Haggadah only, in the middle of *dayyenu*, on the authority of the Babylonian Geonim Rav Amram and Rav Saadia.

When Pharaoh realised the extent of the disaster, he immediately gave chase but it was too late. His chariots and cavalry were bogged down in the marshes of Yam Suf and he and his army were drowned in the Red Sea.

It is also interesting to note why we eat Matza at Passover. The official reason given is that in the hasty departure the dough had no time to rise. There may be another reason: unleavened bread was the traditional food of the Hebrews, yeast being an Egyptian invention. During Passover,

וְהַמִּצֵּן שֶׁנָּתַן לָנוּ אֵת מִצְוַת שְׁחַמְרָא וְהַמִּצֵּן אֵת מִצְוַת עֲשׂוּתָא דְּמִצְוַת. שְׂאֵין פֶּה דְּגִימִים: דְּכִר אֲחֵר עֲשׂוּתָא דְּמִצְוַת. שְׂאֵין פֶּה דְּגִימִים: לָמָּה מִחֲשָׁב הַתְּרוּכִים. בְּזַת הַיָּם חֵתֵר מִבְּזַת מִצְרַיִם: אֵלָּא מָה שְׁהוּהוּ בְּחַתִּים. נִטְלוּ מִצְרַיִם: וְהָיָה שְׁהוּהוּ בְּחַתִּים הַשְׂרָאָה. נִטְלוּ עַל הַיָּם: וְכֵן הוּא אֹמֵר מִפְּנֵי חֵתֵר נִחַפָּה בְּחַסְתָּי. זֶה בְּזַת מִצְרַיִם: וְהַבְּרִיתִים בִּדְרָגָה הַרְוִץ. זֶה בְּזַת הַיָּם: וְהַרְוִץ הַתְּגִדְלִי הַחֲבוּאִי. זֶה בְּזַת מִצְרַיִם: בְּצִדֵי צְדִיקִים. זֶה בְּזַת הַיָּם: חֲדָרִי וְהָיָה נִצְעָה לָּן. זֶה בְּזַת מִצְרַיִם: עִם נִקְדוּת הַחַסְתָּי. זֶה בְּזַת הַיָּם:



*The nationalist Pharaoh Rameses I who had come to power in 1319 BCE to start the 19th Dynasty and "who knew not Joseph," released all the Egyptian slaves but kept the Hebrews in bondage. The most likely date of the Exodus is 1236 BCE in the first year of Pharaoh Merneptah, son of Rameses II who had reigned for 67 years during which Moses was in exile in Midian. "And it came to pass after a very long time that King of Egypt died," must refer to the long reign of Rameses II. When a new Pharaoh came to the throne, there was a general amnesty and Moses was able to return to Egypt. In Israel too there was a general amnesty when a new High priest started his reign.

And Moses gathered the Children of Israel and asked them to make voluntary offerings unto the Lord of whatever they had for the construction of the Tabernacle and its furniture and appurtenances according to the patterns shown to Moses on Mount Sinai.

And Moses said unto the children of Israel: 'See, the Lord hath called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And He hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship. And to devise skilful works, to work in gold and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all manner of skilful workmanship. And He hath put in his heart that he may teach, both he, and Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. Them hath He filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of workmanship, of the craftsman, and of the skilful workman, and of the weaver in colours, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any workmanship, and of those that devise skilful works.'

'And Bezalel made the ark of acacia-wood: two cubits and a half was the length of it, and a cubit and a half the breadth of it, and a cubit and a half the height of it. And he overlaid it with pure gold within and without, and made a crown of gold to it round about. And he cast for it four rings of gold, in the four feet thereof: even two rings on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it. And he made staves of acacia-wood, and overlaid them with gold. And he put the staves into the rings on the sides of the ark; to bear the ark. And he made an ark-cover of pure gold: two cubits and a half was the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. And he made two cherubim of gold: of beaten work made he them, at the two ends of the ark-cover: one cherub at the one end, and one cherub at the other end; of one piece with the ark-cover made he the cherubim at the two ends thereof. And the cherubim spread out their wings on high screening the ark-cover with their wings, with their faces one to another; towards the ark-cover were the faces of the cherubim.'

ver, the season of our Liberation, it is reasonable to eat what was our national fare.

This is evident from the fact that even on the first Passover, while still in Egypt, we were required to eat unleavened bread when we had plenty of time to leaven the dough.

Once safely at Sinai, the Children of Israel began to take stock of their assets. They had taken with them "flocks and herds, even very much cattle." They were also loaded with gold, silver and brass and all kinds of precious stones, silk and linen, leather goods and rare woods and plenty of arms. Someone must have had the keys to the treasure houses.

'And he made the breastplate, the work of the skilful workman, like the work of the ephod... And they set in it four rows of stones: a row of cornelian, topaz, and smaragd was the first row. And the second row, a carbuncle, a sapphire, and an emerald. And the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst. And the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper; they were inclosed in fittings of gold in their settings. And the stones were according to the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet, every one according to his name, for the twelve tribes.'

Now Bezallem and Aholiab did not learn their craft in the desert, but were already master goldsmiths and artists in Egypt which suggests they and other fellow Hebrews were engaged in the manufacture of all the precious objects for the Pharaohs.

It is therefore not surprising to find resemblance between the articles made in the wilderness and the treasures of Tutankhamun and other Pharaohs found in the museums of Cairo, London and Paris.

The Tabernacle was completed and inaugurated one year after the Exodus and everyone of the Twelve Tribes brought presents of elaborate and artistic gold objects, presumably made in the desert workshop of Bezallem and Aholiab.

The fact that Jews have worked as goldsmiths all over the world since time immemorial, enforces the connection between the art of Egypt and the art of the wilderness.

In a letter from the British Museum, the Keeper of Egyptian Antiquities could offer no evidence, for or against, my theory that treasures of Tutankhamun may have been the work of Hebrew craftsmen



The above type of portable chest, with its retractable handles, found in Tutankhamun's tomb, is the only example known to have survived.●

Readers' clangers

People don't have to show their appreciation. They know you are doing *The Scribe* for your own pleasure. M.K.

*20 Pages! Is this meant to be your last issue? London E.E.S.D.

*Your Journal is always interesting. Who is going to produce it after you? London H.N.

Naim Dangoor writes: Every issue I say this is the last. But I continue by force of habit and duty. With pleasure, but not for my pleasure.

As regards a successor, such will have to emerge spontaneously, willing to carry the literary and financial burden of this publication●

We acknowledge with thanks receipt of voluntary and generous contribution from:

Mr M Gourgey, London
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 Mrs B Young, Toronto
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 Miss J Akerib, New York

Mrs S Sanua, New York
 Mr N Bekhor, New York
 Mr A Abraham, Los Angeles●

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 Mrs J Abraham, New York
 Mrs L Baher, Sydney
 Mrs L Moradi, Los Angeles
 Mrs L Meer, New York
 Mr S Khazzam, Montreal
 Mr E Murad, Tel Aviv
 Mr E Sharon, New York●

The vision

For some time now, a small group of Christian friends of the Jewish people have felt it would be appropriate to find a way of acknowledging their indebtedness to the Jews for the spiritual heritage they have received from them. The group, headed by members of the Sainsbury family, whose fortunes are reputed to be worth over £2,000 million, decided to offer a gift which would be supported by both Christians and Jews in London to express this desire. It seemed right to them that this gift should take the form of a meeting place in a small town where large numbers of new immigrants were to live.

It was decided to build a Community Centre in Ma'alot at a cost of £1 million. The building will provide a meeting place, a simple restaurant, a library, classrooms where Hebrew can be taught and, in general, an excellent centre run, broadly, on "village hall" lines. Jews and Arabs (both Christian and Moslem) will be encouraged to use the facilities for social gatherings. They want the family centre to be used as a home from home for the many immigrant families from the far corners of the earth who are being housed in Ma'alot.

We are living in extraordinary times and many of the promises of the prophets are being fulfilled in our lifetime. One of those which we see happening in Israel today was spoken by the prophet Isaiah (Ch.43:5-7).

"Do not be afraid for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south 'Do not hold them back.' Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth - everyone who is called by my name whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

Ma'alot is in the mountainous region of Northern Galilee where there is already a movement towards cooperation between Jews and Arabs.

It may be recalled that some years ago a number of Jewish school-children were murdered by terrorists. The traumatic effect of this act of terrorism was to draw the local Arab village into close sympathy with the Jewish community. Now they run two small towns jointly and they work very happily together, which is encouraging. Ma'alot is expanding rapidly.

The Committee for the Community Centre in Israel Project believes Ma'alot is an appropriate place for our first effort●



The celebration of the Barmitzvah of Richard, son of Henry and Dalia Sehayek, which took place at the London Hilton earlier this year.

Some of the children appearing in the photograph are:

Davina and Ronald Soffer, Gil Rabbie, Lara and Michael Birshan, Justin Marshall, Elliot Arwaz, Danielle and Emma Levy, Amanda, Natalie and Karina Sehayek, Chloe Woolf, Fay Salama, Michelle Shamash, Karen Lawee, Michelle Hakim.

Proposing the toast to the Barmitzvah, his cousin Karina said: Richie has always been so perfect, so tonight is the night for retribution. In a normal family with a boy and girl of similar age, the boy gets into trouble and the girl gets away with it. In our family it was the other way round. His girl friends will have to compete with his mother. *Wee abdaloo el Richie*●

I am the granddaughter of Emile Widler born in Palestine in 1882 but lived most of his life in China. Rena Krasno advised me to write to you concerning my Shanghai, Jewish Widler family. I am looking for Ethel Widler and her child, both born in Shanghai. About a year and a half ago while I was studying my family history, I discovered for the first time that my family had Jewish ancestors. My great grandfather David Widler was Jewish from Constantinople, married a Russian Jew and died in Shanghai. His obituary appeared in *Israel's Messenger*, 16 December, 1904.

I have located two Widlers in Netanya, Israel. They are Agnes Andrews Widler and her son David. David is the son of Elly Widler who died in Jerusalem in 1960. Agnes married Elly, aged 61, when she was 21. Both Agnes Andrews Widler and her niece Ethel by marriage attended the Shanghai British Municipal School.

My grandmother was Agnes Korin Widler (she was baptised Russian Orthodox and insisted that she was White Russian). She said that there is a family member living in British Columbia and their last name is Gall(?). I don't know enough exact information to trace Ethel, the daughter of Ned Widler. *Can you provide or direct me to Jewish birth records of the Widler family in Shanghai?*●

2820 12th Avenue NW
Albany
Oregon 97321, USA

Diana
Widler Wenzel

I came across a Kurdish fellow by the name of Ismail Hakki, who used to work as a clearing agent at the Iraqi Customs and who used to make a lot of money from his Jewish clients. He was very friendly with Naim Dangoor's father, who advised him not to waste his money but to use it to educate his children. Ismail had nine children, eight are alive now, five doctors, three lawyers and one was killed in Kurdistan. The doctors are a cardiologist, cardiovascular surgeon, urologist, orthopaedist and dentist, and two daughters are lawyers. The father always enquires about you all and says he never forgot the favour that Naim Dangoor's father did him.

I know all the family and one evening I was at a nightclub and met a bunch of Iraqi doctors, among whom was Hady Hakki. We became very good friends and he calls me his adopted mother. I am very proud of him and consider him like one of my own children.

Let me introduce myself. My name is Suzette Somekh Khedouri, my late husband Shaul was the brother of Eliahou Meir and David Charpai

Ft. Lauderdale **Suzette Khedouri**

Scribe: Much of the credit goes to Ismail Hakki himself in heeding the advice, for as King Solomon says in his Proverbs: "Wisdom cries in the streets and no one answers."●

Love thy neighbour as thyself

This is an impossible order and indeed a wrong translation of *Leviticus* 19:18. The difference is between *Ahavta otho* = Love him, and *Ahavta lo* = Wish for him. *Ve ahavta le-re'akha kamokha* means wish for your neighbour as for yourself.

Hillel the Elder of Babylon puts it in a different way: what is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour.

The Talmud explains why Hillel's version of the Golden Rule is in a negative form.

To ask someone to love is a tall order. It is better to start by not hating your neighbour and then work your way up in stages towards the goal of loving your neighbour.

The Rule is repeated in *Leviticus* 19:34 concerning the stranger saying *ve ahavta lo kamokha*. We cannot be expected to love even the stranger as ourselves, which confirms that the meaning is to wish for him as for yourself●

I am indeed fascinated by your journal. I enjoy reading *The Scribe* very much and I hope to continue doing so for many years to come●

London

Amal Rejwan

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

The death last June of Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, was deeply mourned by the Lubavitch movement in particular and world Jewry in general. For over fifty years he devoted his immense energy to the promotion of Torah study and practice.

Many regard him as the outstanding rabbinic figure of the current millennium; thus, to look for a comparable loss one has to go back to the death of Hai Gaon in Baghdad in 1038 CE (see adjacent report).

Rabbi Schneerson died without nominating a successor. Moreover, while his followers believed him to be the King Messiah, he very wisely, but to the disappointment of his followers, refrained from making such a claim himself, realising by his deep knowledge and genuine honesty the high qualifications and criteria required for such a position.

In a pamphlet produced by "Operation Judaism" to demonstrate that Jesus was not the expected Messiah, a list is given of all the Scriptural prophecies that the Messiah of Israel is required to fulfil:

- 1) The Messiah will bring an end to all wars. (Isaiah 2:4).
- 2) Families will live in perfect harmony. (Malachi 3:24).
- 3) Even wild animals will become docile. (Isaiah 11:6-8).
- 4) There will be no more illness. (Isaiah 35:5-6).
- 5) Nor more sorrow. (Isaiah 65:19).
- 6) No more death. (Isaiah 25:8).
- 7) The exiles of Israel will all journey to the Promised Land. (Ezekiel 39:25-28).
- 8) These will include the ten lost tribes. (Isaiah 27:13).
- 9) Even the dead will rise from their graves to return. (Ezekiel 37:12).
- 10) The nations will be gathered for judgement. (Joel 4:1-2).
- 11) No sin will be found among Israel. (Jeremiah 50:20).
- 12) The cities of Israel will be rebuilt with precious stones. (Isaiah 54:11-12).
- 13) Among them will be Sodom (at present submerged beneath the Dead Sea). (Ezekiel 16:55).
- 14) The Divine Presence will return to Israel. (Ezekiel 37:27-28).
- 15) Joy and peace will reign in Jerusalem. (Isaiah 65:18-23).
- 16) All Jews will keep the Law. (Ezekiel 36:27).
- 17) Sacrifices will again be offered in the Temple. (Malachi 3:3-4).
- 18) There will be no more idolatry. (Isaiah 2:18).
- 19) All the nations will unite under one rule. (Daniel 2:44).
- 20) All mankind will worship the One God of Israel. (Isaiah 66:23).

The pamphlet continues:

Have any of these things happened.

Clearly not. Remember that all these are prophetic utterances – the word of God. So when Messiah comes these things just HAVE to happen!

However, Maimonides did not foresee any dramatic changes in the world on the advent of the *Mashiyah*●

I write to tell you that Heskia enjoyed reading every word in *The Scribe*, from the story of Ezekiel to Alice's international cookery●

London

Mary Nathaniel

From *Chronicles of the Past* Nisan 4798 (1038 CE)

Death of Hai Gaon ends 70-year reign

Two days ago, on the Seventh Day of Passover at noontime, our revered spiritual leader, Hai Gaon, the "Father of Israel", having guided and inspired two generations of Babylonian Jewry, was laid to rest. He was in his 99th year when death came, and he is deeply mourned by the Jewish communities in Israel and abroad.

Thousands upon thousands of men and women from all walks of life came to pay the Gaon their last respects, forming a cortege such as has not been seen in Babylonia in many a day. Among those who followed the great man on his final journey were a large number of Arab notables, as well as representatives of the Christian community.

Head of Beth-Din at 18

The deceased Gaon began his distinguished career early in life. The son of Sherira Gaon, he was appointed at the age of 18 as *Av Beth Din* (head of the religious court), one of the highest positions in the land, and 12 years later, on his father's death, succeeded him as Gaon.

It did not take Hai long to prove that he was entitled to the Gaon's seat not merely by dint of his ancestry, but as a sharp-minded Torah scholar in his own right. He also distinguished himself as a man of wide interests and considerable knowledge in several of the arts and sciences, particularly in architecture, engineering and medicine. His was a double crown: the Crown of Torah and the Crown of Science.

He held that Israel's sages should not try to draw a dividing line between these two fields of study and activity – that, on the contrary, neither was complete without the other.

Urged General Training

"True piety", he used to say, "can be found only among those who engage in the pursuit of both Jewish and general knowledge and wisdom – not among those whose interest is purely one-sided."

Hai Gaon also evinced great love of poetry, and he collected and avidly read the poems, parables and proverbs of Israel and other nations, adding several of his own.

I was born in Shanghai, and I believe the first Sephardi twin to be born in that city, and left there for England in 1949. Now retired to Ashkelon with my wife, I am very much involved with various voluntary activities locally.

I am pleased to inform you that there is a small but thriving community of ex-Indian Sephardim upholding our Baghdadian traditions in Ashkelon●
Ashkelon Maurice Ezekiel

The photographs in your last issue of the pontoon bridge, the Guffas on the River Tigris, brought back happy memories.

I was born in Baghdad in 1912. I well remember the occupation of the city by the mainly Australian and Indian troops. The family left Baghdad for Britain in 1920●

Manchester

J J Marshall

Heskia appointed Gaon and Exilarch Nomination hailed by Babylonian Jewry

The heads of the Pumbadita Yeshiva and other Jewish leaders in Baghdad have named Heskia, great-grandson of Exilarch David ben-Zakkai, as the new Gaon and, simultaneously, nominated him Exilarch (political ruler of the Jewish diaspora). The decision came at a convention called to consider the problem of the succession to the vacated Gaon's seat.

Heskia has already begun to serve in his new double-capacity.

The word from Baghdad is that the appointed was well received in Jewish circles there and in other parts of the Babylonian Exile, as representing an opportunity for the Jews in Babylonia to continue to hold the reins of spiritual and political leadership of the Jewish Dispersion.

In modern Babylonia

In modern times the closely knit Babylonian Jewry was blessed by a long line of eminent Rabbis, notably Hakham Yosef Hayim of Ben Ish Hai fame, who were regularly consulted by the communities of Persia, India and the Far East.

In 1930 the death occurred of Hakham Ezra Dangoor, the last of a generation of prominent Rabbis who studied under Hakham Abdallah Somekh. According to the *Baghdad Times* and the four Arabic dailies, ten thousand people walked behind the cortege which started from the Great Synagogue of Baghdad. Jewish schools, shops and businesses were closed for the day and eulogies were said to packed synagogues for seven days●

In 1936 when Iraqi families in London could be counted on the fingers, Mr Moshi Horesh and his wife Gurjii (nee Smouha) offered great hospitality to many students who lived in London. Among the young men who enjoyed the Horesh's hospitality on the eve of the Sabbath was a slim and rather austere Iraqi Muslim known to us as Abdul Karim. I still remember him vividly as highly intelligent, highly articulate and greatly politicized. He would discuss at length the role of parliament and the functions of the back benchers.

After his return to Baghdad, I never heard of him again until recently when I met the Horesh's son Bobby. He told me that Abdul Karim the student of pre-war years was none other than Abdul Karim Kassim who staged the 1958 revolution which culminated in the murder of the king and royal family of Iraq.

Kassim was kind-hearted and politically naive. When Col Aref, a fellow conspirator and unscrupulous and ambitious officer, plotted against him, he had him imprisoned but not for long. He himself went to the military prison and had him released against the advice of a former Jewish officer, Colonel Salem Saleh (Abu Ghazi) who warned him that Aref will be his killer. He was and had him killed in cold blood. Abdul Karim had a strong affinity and love for his Jewish compatriots●

London

Abdulla S Dangoor

Memories of Burma and India

by Solly Saul

I was born in Rangoon, Burma, in 1928. My father, JOSEPH ROBERT SAUL, was born in 1895, in Calcutta. My mother, LILY JUDAH SAUL, was born in 1907 in Baghdad.

My earliest memories are of my home in Phayre Street, close to the railroad station. My father travelled a great deal throughout Burma and going to the station to see him off and meet him on his return became routine. I cultivated the habit of reading at a very early age. Participation in any kind of athletic activities was almost nil. To be a Sephardic Jew meant to be an observant and orthodox one. The Sabbath and festivals were fully observed as also keeping a kosher home. The festivals were always a joyous occasion – new clothes – special dishes, and a vacation from school, since I along with most of the Jewish children attended the community-supported Jewish English school. Purim was a fun time when Haman was hanged in effigy in the school grounds. Families exchanged trays of baked delicacies and the children were given cash presents.

My most vivid memories are those dealing with school: education was taken seriously with a thorough grounding in all subjects – one classroom teacher who taught all the subjects in that particular grade except for Burmese and Hebrew. Discipline was self-instilled. Students respected the authority of the teacher.

Some members of the Jewish community, in order to commemorate the *yahrzeit* of a loved one, would provide what amounted to a "gourmet meal" for the school children. At the conclusion of the meal, prayers for the departed were recited by Mr Einy, our Hebrew teacher, who was also a shohet.

The boys played soccer on the school grounds with a tennis ball. Some played with marbles and tops. Our school did not possess a library. Nevertheless, we received an excellent education. I was a member of a Jewish Boy Scout troop formed just prior to the outbreak of the war.

One of my recollections has to do with my early youth and our synagogue.

A small group of boys, organised into a choir, sang Hebrew religious hymns and songs from the *tebah*. We were all dressed in a special outfit – that of a British sailor – cap and all!

Each Saturday afternoon, families took their children for a walk to the jetty to enjoy the evening air, watch the sampans, ferries and ships moored along the dock and listen to a military band.

Little did we realise that the bombing of Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941 by the Japanese would result in us leaving Burma just a few months later.

The bombing of Rangoon by the Japanese will not be forgotten. Taking shelter in the stairway of our apartment building, we heard the thud of falling bombs. There were many who were machine-gunned to death as their curiosity found them on the streets.

Since the school was closed, many in our community left their homes and took shelter in the school.

My father, who had long been in the employ of British companies, was convinced that the Japanese would never get as far as Burma. A majority of Jews were evacuating by sea. It was not easy, to say the least, for people to padlock their apartments, leave their life's possessions behind and set sail for Calcutta.

The war situation took a turn for the worse. Singapore fell, the Japanese kept advancing toward Thailand and much to our misfortune, sea evacuation to India had ceased. Getting out of Rangoon now became a matter of extreme urgency.

My father's brother lived in Mandalay in Northern Burma with his family. It was decided to head north with as much of our possessions as we could carry. It was a large family group that left the railroad station.

In Mandalay we stayed with our uncle and his family. Before too long, the British government organised an evacuation – the overland route from north-west Burma into Assam in India. Transit camps were set up for the refugees. The journey, lasting approximately a month, encompassed travel by foot, ferry, sampan, mounted elephants, the last leg of the journey being by train to Calcutta. For me and my brothers, this evacuation became a great adventure in our young lives.

We were soon to learn upon our arrival in Calcutta that refugees still in Mandalay were airlifted to Calcutta after our departure. Imagine our surprise when upon arriving in Calcutta we were met by our father and others who had remained in Mandalay when we departed.

I must rest content with reliving in my imagination the mostly happy memories I possess of the city and country of my birth: the peaceful days, the happy and friendly Burmese, the torrential rains, the rich vegetation, the tropical fruits, the imposing Pagodas, the City Hall, my school, teachers and fellow students, my synagogue and my home.

Calcutta – 1942-1950

I can well remember the day I arrived in Calcutta and found myself in my grandparents' home. One sad note was

that the day coincided with the funeral of Mr Ralph Arakie, head of the Elias Meyer School and Talmud Torah, the community-supported school for the majority of the Jewish boys in Calcutta, and he was the driving force behind the institution for many years.

It wasn't long before my brothers and I were enrolled in that School where we continued our schooling without too much adjustment. New friends were made and, looking back on it, my school days were joyful and carefree. But the war was still in progress and Calcutta was subject to air raids.

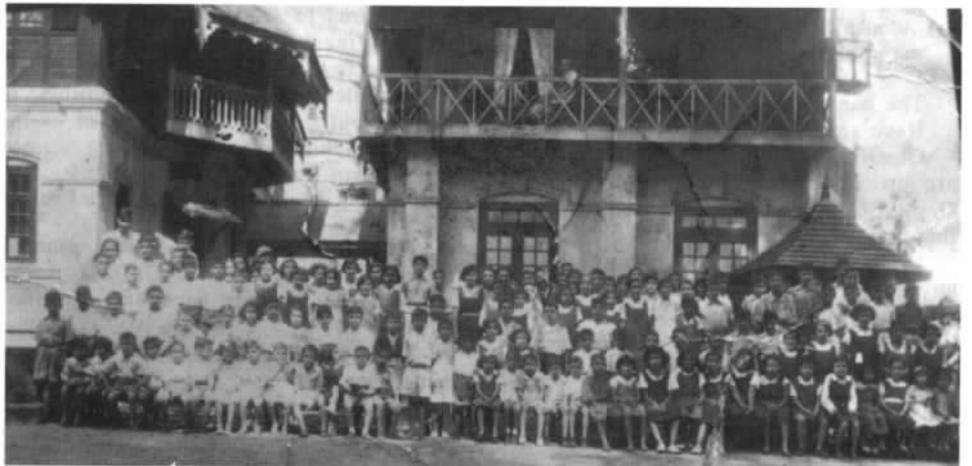
I do remember my teachers quite well. As my Principal and teacher throughout my high school years (1942-1946), Mr Claridge left an indelible impression on my young mind and he saw me through the successful completion of the Junior and Senior Cambridge examinations. Mr Raphael Isaac, the Principal at the Jewish English School in Rangoon when we evacuated, succeeded Mr Claridge.

The Japanese advance was halted in N.E. India – the beginning of the end – and with the reverses Japan suffered in the naval battles in the Pacific and the defeat of Nazi Germany, it would not be long before the war would be over. But before that time, Calcutta was to experience the devastating famine of 1943 and the rationing of essentials. The presence of English and American military personnel in the city, the air raid shelters and the blackouts made us acutely aware that the war was still on.

Jewish community life in Calcutta was almost a mirror image of the kind we experienced in Rangoon.

One organisation that very quickly drew my interest was the Habonim movement – a Zionist Youth movement that also attracted many teenage boys and girls. Leaders of the movement, imbued with the pioneering spirit, were among the first group from the community to emigrate to Israel in the mid-40s. Jewish servicemen from the United Kingdom and the USA who had been active in Zionist youth movements in their countries, always lent a helping hand contributing their knowledge and time in furtherance of the teaching of Israeli songs, etc., during our weekly meetings. Our Sunday morning meetings, our outings, the annual camping trips established a comradeship among us lasting to the present day.

We find ourselves all over the world.



Student Body, Jewish English School, Rangoon, Burma 1937●

My travels to London, Israel and Sydney have been a source of much happiness because of the warm welcome I have received. Neither the passage of time nor the long distances separating us have diminished our interest and concern for those we consider our friends.

My sister's marriage resulted in the emigration of our family a few years later to America. The US Army maintained a supply depot on the outskirts of Calcutta which afforded employment opportunities to the local populace. Both my mother and sister worked at the depot. My sister met her future husband there – a young serviceman from New Mexico and it wasn't too long before they married, in 1945.

To work toward an intermediate Arts certificate, I enrolled in the fall of 1947 in St Xavier's College, a Catholic institution of higher learning which was affiliated with the University of Calcutta. The teaching staff for the most part included Jesuit priests who were outstanding professors. It will always be a matter of great satisfaction that at the end of my first year in college I was the valedictorian of my class.

After passing our examinations, another student and myself were appointed as assistant teachers at the Elias Meyer School. We were young, eager to teach and conscientious about our duties and it was not surprising that we earned the respect of our fellow teachers and students.

The time was now drawing near when my life would undergo a radical and unplanned change. With India having achieved her independence and Israel achieving statehood, the Jews of India began emigrating to other countries to better their lives and those of their children. My father wished to be reunited as a family with my sister and her family in America. Many other families began planning to leave for the United Kingdom, Australia, Israel, Canada and the United States. The prospect of travelling to a distant country was an exciting one.

My father, stepmother, both my brothers and myself left Bombay in February 1950 bound for England. After a two-week stay in London we left Liverpool in March arriving in New York after a twelve-day storm-tossed crossing of the Atlantic.

I dedicate this very brief autobiography of my youth to my children – Lilian, Ilona, David and Leonard and my granddaughters – Marsha and Johanna. I hope that these writings will give them some small knowledge of the generations that preceded them.

Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA

Scribe: 100 years ago the government granted the Rangoon community a piece of land to build the synagogue and when land valued soared, shops were built around it. Because of that, the government demanded payment for the value of the land. The community appealed to Queen Victoria who ruled that the community should pay for the value of the land but that the government should return the money as a donation!●

I wouldn't give up *The Scribe* for the world. Besides, it is wonderful keeping up news of your immediate family as well●
Tel Aviv **Estelle Hillaly**



Rabbi Shmuel Sadqa, whose picture appeared in *Scribe* 37, was my father's great grandfather.

Above is a photograph of young Jewish boys and girls who were friends and neighbours growing up in Bombay in the 1930s, which could interest several of your readers.

Front row (L to R): Sue Butterfield, Molly Joseph, Stella Joseph, Katy Moualim, Dolly Dayan.

2nd Row: Archi Gourgey, Nancy Dayan, Mary Dayan.

3rd Row: Margaret Dayan, Kitty Cohen, Helene Hillel, Ivy David, Ivy Butterfield, Percy Gourgey, Mr Byramji.

4th Row: Ernest David, Daisy Hillel, Helen Benjamin, Molly Gourgey, Rachel Hillel, Juliet Gourgey.

Back row: Sonny Cohen, Joe Cohen●
Sydney

Dolly (Dayan) Shadler

Once again I am indebted to you for a fascinating issue of *The Scribe*. Despite the fact that I receive and study a range of other Jewish publications, all of high standard, your publication remains unique for its fascinating glimpses into a Jewish world of which the average reader has scant knowledge. Moreover, in terms of world politics you are singularly well-informed. I learn much from every issue●

Rose Bay, Australia **Mark Braham**

Doctor David El-Kabir, Baghdad born, aged 67, has recently been awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List, for his extensive services to the sick and homeless, in residential care in London.

His pioneering method, which is unique in the U.K., looks after the welfare of the patients, as much as curing the disease.

Doctor David, whose children are also doctors, is the son of Renée Elkabir and the late Abraham Elkabir, OBE●

It gives me great pleasure in the fact that *The Scribe* is uniting Iraqi Jews displaced all over the world who, along with their children, would have been deprived of news concerning their origin.

By airing and sharing their views, you have created a bridge, thus enriching our knowledge and culture. Continue with your good work●

London **Bertha Fattal**

I enjoyed reading *The Scribe* of May 1994. I left Baghdad in 1941 as a young teenager and came to the U.S. where I entered high school and went on to graduate from New York University. I retired to Florida in 1986. Your publication brings nostalgia and joy to the reader●
Boca Raton, Florida **Stephen Shakerdige**

I have just learned (from Sara Manasseh) of the journal of Babylonian Jewry, *The Scribe*, and I would be extremely interested to subscribe to it.

As a writer and musician I have a particular interest in Iraqi Jewish music and also in the history of the community of Mosul (my father's birthplace)●

London **Dena Attar**

After consulting with our Jewish Division, they have decided to continue receiving your publication. I am sending this letter along as an official confirmation of our decision●

New York Public Library **Rafael Ocasio**
Acquisition Division
New York

The Baghdadi Jews of India

Part 2

by Rachel and Sarah Manasseh

Calcutta. Meantime a parallel development was taking place in the Baghdadian community in Calcutta – then the capital of India, until 1912. Business activity flourished, side by side with religious life. Calcutta was in contact with Jewish communities in other centres, such as Chinsura (under Dutch rule), Chandernagore (French) and Madras, in India, Mulmein and Rangoon (in Burma), and Singapore (Straits Settlements). In these places too, the majority of Jews were Baghdadians, a small minority from Aleppo and Yemen. They depended for their religious life on Calcutta, which referred to the Chief Rabbinate in Baghdad, and the visiting Hakhamim from Baghdad.

The Calcutta community's export trade was varied, and developed in silks, muslins, rice, tea, jute, cotton goods, sugar, spices, indigo, precious stones and opium. The export of opium, then a legal, lucrative business with the Far East, was dominated by Jewish merchants in Calcutta and Bombay. This trade was later banned, early in the twentieth century, but before then the Sassoons of Bombay had switched over to the textile trade and industry, and the Calcutta Jews to the booming real estate business.

David Joseph Ezra founded in Calcutta what was to become the most outstanding family in the city, almost as prominent as the Sassoons in Bombay. (The family is also known as *Khleif*, or *Baher*, indicating that they had come over the sea, the Persian Gulf, to India). David's father, Joseph, had earlier set up business connections in India and returned to Baghdad, perhaps after 1826. His sons, David and Nissim, preferring the freedom in India to Muslim oppression, settled in Calcutta. David was very enterprising in commerce and later in real estate. At the time of his death in 1882, he was the biggest owner of landed property in Calcutta, and two streets in the Jewish quarter were named after him – David Joseph Lane and Ezra Street.

In Calcutta and in Bombay, the main traders were wealthy men; they had a deep concern for the community, among whom were both white collar workers and the needy. The first concern was for a place of community worship, the synagogue. Moses Duek, who was the leader of the Calcutta Jewish community, maintained a house of worship. In 1825, two Baghdadians, Ezekiel ben Elijah Musleah and Benyamin ben Abraham Solomon David, were instrumental in buying a site for a synagogue "Neveh Shalom". As this later became too small for the growing community, David Joseph Ezra and Ezekiel Yehuda, (merchant/trader and son

of the famous Hakham Moshe. Hayeem), arranged to build a second synagogue, also called *Neveh Shalom*, with Moses Duek as leader. On his death in 1861, this became known as "Beth El", "*siaht il-jedidah*" (the new synagogue) or "*siaht il-kebiri*" (the big synagogue); whereas the first smaller *Neveh Shalom* was known as "*siaht il-'atikah*" (the old synagogue). By 1881 there were almost 1000 Jews in Calcutta and once again a larger synagogue was needed. In 1884 the "Maghen David" Synagogue was dedicated, built once again by the Ezra family, a magnificent structure and the largest synagogue in the East. In 1888, Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy of India, visited the synagogue unannounced. Here, as in Bombay, special thanksgiving services were offered on royal coronations and other state occasions, and for the Allies during the two World Wars.

In Calcutta, among the visiting Hakhamim from Baghdad was a great religious leader, Hakham Shelomo Abid Twena, who came to Calcutta in 1893. Hakham Yosef Hayeem, (1835-1909), spiritual leader of the Jews in Baghdad, said of Hakham Twena that he was as competent and well-versed in the intricacies of Jewish law as himself, so it was not necessary to send queries to Baghdad. Later, Hakham Twena started a prayer hall at his own home, known after his death as the *Maghen Aboth* synagogue. His congregation was inspired by his stimulating sermons, delivered in Arabic.

Both in Calcutta and Bombay careful provision was also made for *mohel* and *shohet*, the *miqwah* and *matza* making in the conditions prevailing. The *matzoth* were made by hand in primitive but carefully supervised conditions – the hand-made, thin round *matzoth* were often enjoyed sprinkled with salt water.

Industrialisation. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, India moved towards industrialisation. In both Bombay and Calcutta leading Jewish personalities were part of the great industrial development. In Bombay, David Sassoon's son, Abdallah Albert, started cotton textile mills, importing the most modern machinery of the day from Europe. He and his brother Elias (Eliyahu) established offices in Shanghai, Baghdad, Persia and England. The sons also continued the extensive philanthropic activity of their father, and Abdallah Albert was knighted by the British Government and then received the Freedom of the City of London. His brother Eliyahu started his own firm in 1867, E.D. Sassoon and Company, with his eldest son Jacob. With the help of his other sons, the business developed further in Hongkong and Shanghai, and also in the West – South Africa and the U.S.A. The firm made great headway, in time eclipsing David Sassoon and Company. Eliyahu and his son Jacob, later Sir Jacob Sassoon Baronet, continued the family's traditions in business and industry, in philanthropy and religious life. Sir Jacob Sassoon also opened cotton and textile mills, and established the Eastern Bank Limited in London, with branches in India, Singapore and Baghdad. He was a noble-hearted person, and his charities, both community and general, were extensive. He built the *Keneseth Eliyahu* Synagogue in Bombay in memory of his father in 1884, the *Ohel David* Synagogue in Hong Kong in 1883 in memory of his mother, and

then the *Ohel Rachel* in Shanghai in memory of his wife Lady Rachel. He set up several trusts for the needy in the community. Sir Jacob died childless, and his brothers in England took over the management of E.D. Sassoon and Co. The offices were then opened on Shabbath and the Jewish staff was encouraged to attend. After World War I, Sir Jacob's nephew Victor Sassoon, (who later inherited the baronetcy), came to Bombay in 1918 and took charge of the Bombay office of E.D. Sassoon and Co. He directed all Jewish staff to attend on Saturdays or be sacked. An orthodox community, little by little gave up their religious traditions. After World War II, Sir Victor Sassoon sold all the Company's assets in India and transferred them to Shanghai. An era had come to an end. By then almost all the family had anglicised and married out – yet a branch remained true.

Meantime, in the original firm of David Sassoon and Company, Sir Albert had retired to London, and handed over the firm to Solomon David Sassoon (his half-brother). Solomon made a great success of the business. Besides his philanthropic and civic activities, he built a fine library with valuable manuscripts. When he died in 1894, his wife Flora Sassoon took charge of the firm till 1900, when the other brothers asked Flora to hand over charge. She then settled in London in Bruton Street with her children, maintaining the family principles of religious learning and Baghdad traditions, bringing Baghdad Hakhamim to teach the children including "Amrani (Hebrew). The tradition continued with this branch of the family, and also later when they moved to Letchworth, and then to Jerusalem.

Sir David and Lady Rachel Ezra. As the Sassoons were to Bombay, so may we say the Ezra family were to Calcutta. We have noted David Joseph Ezra (Baher) remaining in Calcutta early in the nineteenth century, after his father Joseph's return to Baghdad. The family, very enterprising in commerce and real estate, played a prominent part throughout the nineteenth century in providing the Jewish community in Calcutta with synagogues, schools and a hospital. After the nineteenth century, David Ezra, later Sir David Ezra, was the only son of this great family to remain in India. He married his cousin Rachel, the daughter of his aunt Flora and Solomon David Sassoon, in London in 1912, and soon went to live in Calcutta. Their home was more of a communal centre than a residence; here British dignitaries and Indian princes, as well as social workers, charity seekers, and refugees in World War II were welcomed, and the famed Ezra hospitality was extended to Jewish servicemen from many countries in both world wars and in peace time. Sir David was also Sheriff of Calcutta (as his brother Joseph and his father had been), and was knighted by George V in Buckingham Palace in 1927. His wife, Lady Rachel, was an outstanding woman, and headed many communal and civic institutions. She received recognition in her own right by the British Government who awarded her the *Kaiser-i-Hind* Gold Medal in 1947.

We have noted that the turn of the century had seen the development of industrialisation in India. In Calcutta, an outstanding figure, Benjamin Nissim Elias, rose from modest beginnings to become one of India's greatest and wealthiest businessmen, rivalling the Sassoons,

and the leading Indian industrialists, the Birlas and the Tatas. During the first World War he became a major property owner in Calcutta. He also entered the jute industry, and his second jute mill built in 1927, provided the base on which his industrial empire was built. He was the founder and director of B.N. Elias and Company Limited, the National Tobacco Company of India, and several other enterprises through which he gave employment also to hundreds of his co-religionists. He remained a modest, humble man, took a great interest in Jewish communal affairs, and had numerous charities. By the time he died in 1943, India was about to enter the post-world War II period, which would see far-reaching changes in the country and in the Baghdadian community there.

Education. Before moving on to the post-War period, we will note the development of education in the two communities, since the education of the children was a prime concern. In Bombay, provision had been made for a free elementary education, and a hot meal, fairly early by David Sassoon. As noted above, this was expanded by Sir Jacob to become the Sir Jacob Sassoon High School with an education in English up to matriculation. The twentieth century saw the establishment of the E.E.E. (3 E's) Sassoon School and a primary school, the Sassoon G. David School. The more well-to-do families sent their children to the European schools, with a private tutor for Hebrew. It is interesting that subsequent to the emigration of the community, and the exodus of almost all the Baghdadian families for whom the School was founded (some two decades after World War II), the Sir Jacob Sassoon High School was opened to all communities. The School Trustees had resisted the Government's request to do this earlier, as long as there were sufficient children of Baghdadian descent needing an education. Now the School is open to all communities. Also the E.E.E. Sassoon School, with Jewish trustees, continues now with 100% Muslim students, who are most appreciative of the education afforded. The trustees of this school have now opened the Albert Manasseh Memorial Nursery School as a tribute to Mr. Manasseh's long continued dedication and guidance.

Calcutta did not cater for the children's education till later in the nineteenth century. The well-to-do had private instructors; the children of the poor might roam the streets, unable to afford the free-paying non-Jewish schools, which were often Christian missionary schools – in particular the Hebrew Mission School, which actively exploited Jewish children. It was then that a Jewish school became a compelling need. The Jewish Girls' school was started in 1881 for girls and small boys; it was later known as the Jewish Boys' and Girls' School. By December 1915 students were permitted to appear for the Junior and Senior Cambridge examinations. In 1929 Miss Rahma Luddy was appointed principal of the Jewish Girls' School, with excellent results. In



A Memorial Thanksgiving service was held at the Keneseth Eliyahu Synagogue, Fort, Bombay, on Sunday, 13 February 1994 – 2 Adar 5784 – on the occasion of the third anniversary of Albert Manasseh's demise.

In January 1991 Albert Manasseh had completed fifty years of dedicated service as trustee of the Sir Jacob Sassoon Charity Trusts, of which he was also Chairman and life President.

The photograph shows Mrs Rachel Manasseh on the *Tebeh*, seated (to her right, anti-clockwise) are: Moses Sultoon, Mme. Sophy Kelly, Eze Mashal, Nissim, Ezer, Ezra Aboody and Reuben Kelly ●

1882 the Jewish Free School, (originally called the Ezra's Benevolent Institution), was founded by Elia David Ezra. It was later called the Ellis Meyer Free School and Talmud Torah, and Ezra Arakie was a dedicated secretary, treasurer and, later, principal. The Talmud Torah and the Jewish Girls' School made steady progress, and by 1922 the rival Hebrew Mission School was forced to close for a lack of pupils. The schools continued to serve the Jewish community despite Government pressure to open them to all communities. As in Bombay, this was done only after the emigration of the children of Baghdad origin with their families, two decades after World War II.

In Bombay and Poona, and to a lesser extent in Calcutta, the children and youth were also organised in the Habonim religious youth movement founded in Bombay in 1935 by Albert Manasseh and Solomon Ezra. After the establishment of Medinat Israel, youth aliyah groups were organised by Habonim and later by Bnei Akiva. Albert Manasseh was trustee and Chairman of the Sir Jacob Sassoon Trusts in Bombay, and served the Trusts for half a century. Besides his dedicated work for the community, he had a profound impact on the lives of almost every Jewish boy and girl in Bombay through the Sir Jacob Sassoon School and Habonim, imbuing them with a love of Judaism, Israel and our traditions, and a strong sense of identity.

The twentieth century saw a diversification in interests and professions in the Jewish communities in Bombay and Calcutta. Business remained the primary activity, but young people now also studied for the professions, such as law, medicine, engineering and education. Bernard Jacob, from Calcutta, graduated at Oxford and conducted the Philharmonic Orchestra in Britain for many years, and was conductor of the Calcutta Symphony Orchestra. In the motion picture industry Baghdadian Jews of Bombay and Calcutta have left their mark. The late Ezra Mir, internationally famous film director-producer, was born in Calcutta, trained in Hollywood, and lived most of his life in Bombay – the

heart of the Indian film industry. Among the Jewish screen stars was Sulochana (Ruby Meyers) from Bombay, Miss Rose (Miss Musleah), and Ramola (Rachel Hyam Cohen) from Calcutta, besides others. During World War II, Jews in both Bombay and Calcutta joined the Armed Services, although there was no conscription.

Winds of Change. The Baghdadian Jewish community in India is perhaps rare in Jewish history in that it never experienced any antisemitism. Yet, after the second world war and the subsequent twin events of Indian and Israeli independence, the winds of change set in. The Baghdadian Jews in India, despite their loyalty to the land of their adoption, felt the future uncertain, especially the youth. Over the years the communities scattered all over the world – to Israel, to Australia, England, Canada and the USA, among other countries. Very few families, and some older people have remained. The trusts and synagogues are maintained though a *minyan* is difficult. The Jewish schools have non-Jewish pupils.

A special chapter in the history of the Jews of Baghdad has ended; but many who have left India have taken with them the values fostered by the builders of the community, a love and reverence for religious and spiritual traditions, which they in turn now pass on to their children. Whether in London or in New York, in Los Angeles or in Sydney, wherever the Baghdadian Jews of India have set up their own religious institutions – even in this changing world, the traditions of Baghdad are very much alive ●

Miss Ramah Luddy, Principal of the Jewish Girls' School in Calcutta since 1929 until the 80's, died at the age of 93 in London on 7 August.

She was dedicated and devoted to "her girls" and gave her services beyond the call of duty. She will be sadly missed and remembered by her pupils.

A Memorial Service is to be held in London by members of the community and "her girls" to honour her contribution and selfless work to them all ●

The Authors

Rachel Manasseh – born in Bombay, parents from Baghdad. Took her first degree in Bombay; active in youth work; organised Youth Aliyah and taught English at the Sir Jacob Sassoon High School in Bombay, in an honorary capacity. Came to London in 1965, where she took a Master's degree in Education at London University, Institute of Education.

Sara Manasseh – born in Bombay; came to London in 1965.

Ethnomusicologist, researching the music of the Jews of Iraq, with specific reference to women in the field of music. Currently preparing for a Doctorate on this subject. For a number of years was head of Music at London schools, and has been Senior Lecturer in Music and Teacher Education at Kingston University (Surrey) ●

Who killed Jesus?

(Lo ani, Lo ani – Not I, Not I)

by Naim Dangoor

Who Killed Jesus – the Jews or the Romans?

– Neither! The Crucifixion episode was staged by Jesus and some of his closest followers in a foolish attempt to test and prove his messiahship, and taste for a few hours the agony of the cross as the suffering son prophesied by Isaiah. That adventure turned out to be a complete failure.

Christians have been claiming since then that Jesus died to atone for the sins of humanity, but in fact they have cast the Jewish people in that role of scapegoat. The crucifixion of the Jewish people for 1800 years, culminating in the barbarism of the Holocaust, must be viewed in this light. They have made of us a sacrificial lamb for the wickedness of mankind. If Jesus died to bring salvation to the world, then why blame the Jews for it, or anyone for that matter? The Suffering Son has become none other than the House of Israel.

In a new book, *The Death of the Messiah*, published in America by "Father" Raymond E Brown, said to be one of the Roman Catholic Church's most prominent experts on the Gospels, this rascal attempts to fan and rekindle Christian antisemitism so soon after the Holocaust which will stand forever to the shame and ignominy of Christendom and the nations of Europe.

The theme that the book tries to develop is that it had become fashionable and politically expedient in recent times to overlook the Jewish role in the trial and conviction of Jesus and blame the whole thing on the vanished Roman empire and its representative in Judea, Pontius Pilate. But author Brown dismisses that approach "You can't just say there was no Jewish involvement in the death of Jesus," this villain reminds his readers. By picking isolated and convenient quotations from the Gospels, he presents half-truths which are the worst form of lies. I shall try to rebut his claims and then proceed to put together the most likely chain of events that led to the crucifixion. There is no reference to Jesus in any contemporary document, and we must rely on the Gospels, written some decades after the event, but read their statements critically, between the lines and behind the lines.

Brown argues that in addition to political matters the Sanhedrin dealt with matters of religion, and suggests that Jesus was indicted on some religious offence. The statement of the High Priest that it is better for one man to die than for the whole nation to perish shows that he was only concerned with suppressing anti-Roman insurrection. The placard on the cross "Jesus King of the Jews" clearly shows the nature of the offence.

Jesus was not the first to be called "Messiah". The term meant "anointed with oil, i.e. chosen to high office with Divine approval. Jewish kings, high priests and prophets were anointed and King Cyrus of Persia, who allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem, is called God's anointed."

The curse, "His blood be on us and on our children", said to have been uttered by the mob at the crucifixion has no parallel in Leviticus as alleged by Brown. He is clearly trying to falsify the record. The phrase "Their blood shall be upon them" in *Leviticus 20:27* refers to the persons being punished and not to the bystanders.

The curse is obviously a vindictive late addition to the Gospel.

Brown says that in their writings Jews have often accepted responsibility for the death of Jesus, almost to the exclusion of Roman involvement. This is a complete distortion of facts. In all contemporary Jewish sources Jesus is conspicuous by his absence. But later Jewish generations, seeing the sufferings inflicted on them in the name of Jesus, began to regard him as an arch enemy calling him in their writings Yeshu, for *Yimah Shemo* (may his name be obliterated).

Further evidence of who was responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus (albeit it may have been self-inflicted) can be gleaned from the following:

- 1) In his book (*Antiquities XX, IX, 1*) Josephus gives a full report of the execution by stoning, in the year 62, of James, brother of Jesus, who was head of the Nazarene sect, by the order of the High Priest, but the Author is completely silent on the earlier and obviously more important execution of Jesus himself 30 years earlier by the Roman method of crucifixion. Josephus, who was writing his book in Rome as the emperor's protegee, did not wish to offend his Roman patron by noting Roman responsibility and decided to omit the whole episode. Seeing that the high priest could and did pass the death sentence by stoning for religious offences, the fact that Jesus was not sentenced thus, shows that his crime was political and not religious.
- 2) A placard "Jesus King of the Jews" was nailed to the cross to show the nature of the crime. The high priest was unable to persuade Pilate to change it to "He says he is King of the Jews", which shows that Pilate was not being manipulated by the high priest but was acting entirely on his own initiative.

The most likely story of the life and death of Jesus was as follows:

Jesus belonged to the fringe sect of Essenes who, together with other Jews, inferred from the prophecies in the Book of Daniel that the current world order was about to come to an end and the expected Messiah would usher in the Kingdom of God as prophesied in the Bible. Jesus found in himself the necessary qualifications for that role. As a popular preacher and healer he had a good following in

Galilee.

He went down to the River Jordan and was baptised by his cousin John the Baptist. That formality was the symbol for his claim that he was now the "Messiah" ("the Anointed one" – in Greek "the Christ").

He chose twelve disciples to represent the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jesus became convinced that to demonstrate his messiahship he had to go to Jerusalem, be rejected and killed and be raised again the third day.

Judas Iscariot was the only Judean among the twelve disciples of Jesus. While the other eleven were provincials from Galilee, Judas was more sophisticated and most committed to Jesus's ambitions. For this reason he was the trusted treasurer and secretary of the movement.

Jesus had come to the conclusion that every successful religion must have an element of myth that can appeal to the masses and decided to perform all the scriptural prophecies concerning the expected Messiah – riding on an ass into Jerusalem, being betrayed to the authorities and being rejected, and undergoing suffering for the sins of the people. Jesus secretly made all the necessary arrangements for this drama: a ready donkey at the entrance of Jerusalem, a house to hold the Passover Seder. Unbeknown to the other disciples, he arranged with Judas to "betray" him to the High Priest as claiming to be the Messiah and King of the Jews, knowing that such claim would be tantamount to rebellion against Rome and would carry the death penalty by crucifixion.

The agony on the cross usually took several days but Jesus made sure he would go to the gallows on Friday so that he would be brought down after only a few hours before Sabbath comes in.

The Last Supper took place at the house of the only other Judean present, the "beloved Disciple" who sat very close to Jesus. Thus there were 14 at the Last Supper and not 13 as superstition has wrongly assumed. The term "beloved disciple" gave rise to the speculation that Jesus might have been a homosexual, being still unmarried at over 30.

At the Last Supper Jesus said to the amazement of the company that one of those present would betray him to the authorities. This was not a prophecy but a pre-arranged plan with Judas. One by one

the disciples asked, "Is it me, Master?" But Jesus told Judas, "Go and do what you are supposed to do." Judas dutifully went to the police court of the High Priest, told them Jesus was in town claiming to be the Messiah King and to make this "betrayal" look genuine he agreed to take 40 pieces of silver as a bribe to tell them where Jesus was hiding. In the meantime Jesus and his disciples were waiting at the garden of Gethsemane where Judas arrived at the head of a mainly Gentile police contingent. By a pre-arranged signal Judas kissed Jesus to identify him and Jesus was promptly led away. When it suddenly dawned on the faithful Judas the disastrous possibilities of what Jesus had put himself into, he could not face development of events, returned the 40 pieces of silver and hanged himself.

When at the magistrate court Jesus answered, "Yes, I am the Messiah!", the High Priest rent his tunic, as a sign of sorrow that a capital offence had been committed – not against Jewish law but against Roman law. The Jewish autonomous authorities were aware of the tense anti-Roman feelings among the populace and were anxious to maintain the peace with Rome by avoiding any incident that might start a popular uprising against Roman occupation. By sending Jesus to the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, High Priest Caiaphus said, "It is better that one man should die than the whole nation should perish."

It was mid-morning on Friday when Jesus was summarily put on the cross.

Another pointer to the indictment of Jesus being political and not religious is the sign I-N-R-I – Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews, nailed on the cross in Latin, Greek and Hebrew. Caiaphus asked Pilate to change the wording to: "He says he is King of the Jews", but Pilate refused on the grounds that according both to Jewish and Roman laws, a capital sentence is passed on the evidence and not on the confession of the accused. Two hours later by another pre-arranged signal he said, "I am thirsty." One of his followers pushed a sponge to his mouth which had vinegar, apparently laced with a drug. He appeared to be dead and was promptly taken down and carried away by a wealthy follower to a cave. The plan was that Jesus would be revived and on the third day, Sunday, he would claim to have risen from the dead in accordance with the scriptural prophecy.

Jesus may have died on the cross, or he may have survived for a while. But when his disciples visited the cave on the following Sunday and found it empty, the rumour spread that Jesus had risen. The "resurrection" of Jesus based solely on the evidence of the empty tomb is the main foundation of Christianity. Paul, and all Church leaders ever since have declared again and again that without Resurrection there is no Christianity.

It is interesting to note, in passing, that soon after the crucifixion of Jesus, Caiaphus the High Priest and Pontius Pilate, the Governor, were both dismissed by Rome, apparently in an attempt to placate the resentment felt by his many followers and fans at the sudden loss of a popular figure, not realising, of course,

that the whole episode was engineered by Jesus himself. People refused to believe that Jesus had died and the New Testament stories of how his followers imagined seeing him everywhere and would not come to terms with that tragedy – on the streets of Jerusalem, at the Sea of Galilee, by Paul on the road to Damascus, must be genuine and are very moving.

I experienced that kind of feeling once many years ago in Baghdad. We used to have an occasional help who sometimes brought her 10-year old son with her. He was so jolly and vivacious and full of life. One day my mother told me that the lad died of a sudden illness. I refused to believe it; my mind would not register it; and, seeing my agitation my mother comforted me by telling me that the boy was still alive, although I knew deep down that he was dead.

Thus began the idea and the belief in the spiritual "resurrection" of Jesus which is accepted by many Church leaders today as the basis of their Christian faith. Thus Jesus managed to achieve by his unplanned death what he failed to achieve in his lifetime.

The messianic movement continued to grow in Judea and, 25 years later, we find the Nazarene community well established in Jerusalem headed by the brother of Jesus, Jacob (James), who too was put to death. The leadership continued for some time in a kind of caliphate among the family of Jesus.

Then in the year 66 CE, the terrible Jewish revolt against Rome flared up. The tragedy that the Jewish leaders had tried to avoid and prevent finally came to pass. Those who could move to Jerusalem took refuge there but all over the country Jews were massacred wholesale by Romans and other gentiles. Over one million Jews perished in Jerusalem alone when the capital fell in 70. In this unequal confrontation with Imperial Rome Jews were hoping that God would intervene on their side. But while Jews were fighting among themselves inside the City, God had other plans. Christian Jews (I prefer this term to the more common "Jewish Christians") did not take part in the fighting, but they died with the rest of the population.

After the fall of Jerusalem the Christian following became mainly Gentile and was regarded by the Roman authorities as a rebellious and troublesome element, while Diaspora Jews were always willing to live at peace with the temporal Power of the day provided it respected our religious beliefs, in accordance with Jeremiah's advice "to seek the peace of the countries to which the Jews have been dispersed." Thus, after the fall of Jerusalem, it was Christianity and not Judaism that was banned by Rome. It must be remembered that at that time Jews constituted ten percent of the total population of the Roman world, just as Babylonian Jewry constituted ten percent of the population of the Persian Empire. Both Armenia and Adiabene had Jewish sovereigns.

Jews of the Roman world tried to distance themselves from the Christians – this resulting hostility was prompted purely by political and not theological considerations, just as the attitude of the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem had been for political and not theological consid-

erations.

In retrospect it must be seen that the Christian expectations were to blame for the death of Jesus and by sowing the seeds of discontent and agitation, the Christians were likewise responsible for the tragic and untimely destruction of the Jewish state, a tragedy from which the Jewish people have not yet recovered.



Most of the Gospels were written long after the events – when the gap was widening between Jew and Christian. In an attempt to seek Gentile converts, the Gospel writers slanted the reports in order to whitewash Roman involvement in the Crucifixion and to accuse the Jews of being guilty of deicide. In fact, the real reason was that the Jews rejected Pauline Christianity.

In much that he anticipated Jesus was mistaken, and before long the Church had to face the problem of the postponement of his expectations by spiritualising them.

Christianity is much too close to the Paganism over which it scored a technical triumph. Jesus as much as any other Jew would have regarded it as blasphemous the manner in which he is depicted as god in the Fourth Gospel.

In the case of Jesus there was no trial. The Sanhedrin met to formulate (an indictment in Mark). It was not the theology of Jesus that was at issue, or any offence against the Law of Moses, but his political pretensions. By saying before the Sanhedrin that he was the Messiah, the foreordained King of Israel, Jesus had committed a blasphemy not of God in Jewish Law, but of Tiberius Caesar in Roman Law. The Sanhedrin acted not as Jews but as Roman subjects.

The calumny that the Jewish people were responsible for the death of Jesus, has all along been an antisemitic fraud, perpetrated by the Church when it became paganised.

When at last Jesus says on the cross, "It is finished," John's Gospel declares, "That all things were now accomplished that the Scriptures might be fulfilled."

The suffering Just One, the Son of Man. His public activities lasted little more than a year.

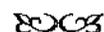


Other views that appeared in *Manna*:

Jesus was crucified by the Romans for the same reason that so many other Jews were crucified – because he was the leader of a messianic movement aiming at liberating the Jews from Roman rule.

His pacifistic sayings in the Gospels were inserted or slanted by later editors in order to portray him as utterly harmless to the Romans who are shown as benevolent and just.

Hyam Maccoby, author of *Revolution in Judea, etc.*, and Librarian of Leo Beck College.



Jesus deliberately committed high treason against the Roman Empire when he rode publicly into Jerusalem just before Passover as "King of the Jews." He was secretly arrested by the authorities acting for Rome so that the Jewish people

should be in complete ignorance of what was taking place. The crime for which he was sentenced to be executed by the antisemitic Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate, was affixed to his cross: "This is Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

There is no future for Christianity in its present form. You can fool most of the people some of the time, or some of the people most of the time, but you can't fool all the people all the time; you can't fool God!

In the end it was the Roman Empire which died. Jesus and Israel live on.

Hugh J Schonfeld, author of *The Passover Plot – new light on the history of Jesus.*

N.E.D.: The author while supporting the view that all the events leading to the crucifixion were planned by Jesus himself, fails to give Judas Iscariot the benefit of this theory.

Schonfeld also suggests that when Jesus uttered his last words "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", he was in fact reciting the 22nd Psalm which begins with these words. This is untenable. Jesus was speaking in Aramaic and not in Hebrew, and no devout Jew would have recited the scriptures in translation. They were, in fact, the words of a disillusioned man.



Since 6 CE when Judea became a Roman protectorate, the first obligation of the Jewish leadership, both to Rome and the populace, was to prevent the outbreak of signs of insurrection which would lead the Romans to intervene directly and bloodily. Joseph Caiaphus, who at the time of Jesus had been high priest for eighteen years, was the most successful in pursuing this policy of pacification. The true source of opposition to Jesus and his movement was the high priesthood.

Professor E.P. Sanders, Professor of Biblical Exegesis at Oxford University.



Jesus fully shared the Jewish people's developing messianic expectation. He came to grant himself some kind of positive place in the inaugurating of God's reign. Were this not the case, we should have no way to explain how the Romans saw fit to kill him, in the role of pretender, "King of the Jews," as testified in all four Gospels.

As matters turned out, he was unable to actualise messianic reality: no catastrophic deliverance by God ever took place. Jesus was not a false messiah, he was a failed messiah. To spiritualise the death of Jesus is completely to betray Jewish messianic-historical consciousness.

A. Roy Eckardt, emeritus professor of religious studies, Lehigh University, Pennsylvania, and a clergyman in the United Methodist Church.



Quotes:

The man who did more than anybody else to distort and subvert Jesus's teachings was Paul – **A N Whitehead.**

I hold Paul to have been the first great corrupter of Christianity – **J S Milne.**

A God who died for our sins; redemption through Faith; resurrection after death; all these are counterfeits of true Christianity – for which that disastrous, wrong-headed fellow, Paul, must be held responsible – **F Nitche.**

It is frankly disappointing to see how Paul hardly ever allows the real Jesus of Nazareth to get a word in – **C J Jung.**●
Condensed from *The Scribe* No. 22

The Cruci-fiction

by **Ahmed Deedat**

Islamic Centre, Durban, South Africa

As against the teachings of Jesus that salvation only comes through the keeping of the Torah (*Matthew* 19 : 16-17), Paul claims that salvation can only be obtained through the death and resurrection of Jesus. "If Christ be not risen from the dead, then our Gospel is vain and your faith is also vain." (1 *Corinthians* 15 : 14).

In a nutshell, **NO CRUCIFIXION! – NO CHRISTIANITY!**

To the Christian claim that unless we accept the redeeming blood of Jesus we do not have salvation? We can offer the shattering reply of the Quran, "*wama qataluhu; wama salabuhu; walakin shubbiha lahum*". "But they killed him not; nor crucified him; but so it appeared to them."

The Christian world has been unjustly persecuting and hounding and killing our Jewish cousins for nearly two thousand years for a crime they did not commit.

However, the dogma of 2000 years standing cannot be summarily dismissed, especially as the Christians do not believe in the statements of the Quran. So, let us investigate for evidence in the Christians' own Bible.

Jesus had failed to heed the warning of the Jewish authorities to curb the perversity of his disciples (*Luke* 19:39). The Jewish leaders feared Roman reprisals and decided to hand him over to the Roman Governor and abandon him to his fate.

They reasoned "It is expedient for one man to die for the nation and the whole nation perish not." (*John* 11:50).

The events of "Good Friday" and after show that Jesus did not die on the cross. Contrary to common belief, he was not nailed to the cross but bound, if at all, like the other two. Because of the approaching Sabbath he was on the cross for only three hours, from noon to 3 p.m. – not long enough for a man to die. When Joseph of Arimathea together with a sympathetic Roman centurion went to Pilate to claim the body, "Pilate marvelled if he were already dead". (*Mark* 15:44). Jesus was not buried but put in a burial vault belonging to the rich Joseph of Arimathea. On the following Sunday Mary Magdalene went to visit the tomb and was amazed to find that someone had already removed the stone, the tomb empty and the shroud left inside. Jesus was not far away. He called her and said, "I am not yet ascended unto my Father." (*John* 20 : 17). That very day, on the way to Emmaus, Jesus joins two of his disciples. On reaching their destination, he joins them for a meal. "And they went and told it unto the residue (of his disciples) who did not believe them." (*Mark* 16:13).

Back in Jerusalem, Jesus "appeared unto the eleven (disciples) as they sat eating". (*Mark* 16:14). After the due greetings of "shalom", Jesus calms the disciples' fear for taking him to be a ghost. "Behold my hands and feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit has no flesh and bones, as you see me have ... And he showed them his hands and his feet." (*Luke* 24:39-40). However, "doubting" Thomas was not with the disciples when Jesus came and when they told him they saw their master alive he did not believe. Eight days later Jesus finds Thomas and tells him "*Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands' and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing.*" (*John* 20:27).

The foregoing is the result of my years of study and research from which it is clear that Jesus did not die on the cross.

N.E.D.: If Jesus actually survived the cross and was seen alive by his disciples, this remained unknown to the rest of his followers. He may subsequently have gone into hiding or exile. It is rumoured that he is buried in Kashmir.●

A Christian coming out of church came across his Jewish friend and hit him on the head. "You killed Jesus," he said angrily.

"It is not true," protested the Jew, "and in any case this happened 2000 years ago."

"Really?" asked the surprised Christian: "I have only just heard!"

Certain parts of the Gospels are anti-Jewish propaganda and should be banned from being read in public as racist invective●

A way to diminish antisemitism

by **Dr Albert Khabbaza**

During the last few years the increasing upsurge of antisemitism in Europe has been alarming. Add to this the fascists' recent gain of important political power in Italy.

Pope John Paul II, Polish born, was a small child when he had seen how the Jews were rounded up by the Nazis in Poland in World War II. He could do nothing at that time. But Pope Pius XII of the 1940s could, but didn't. Much has been written about his indifference towards the slaughter of the Jews.

Pope John Paul II has declared: "The attitude of the Church towards the people of God's old testament – the Jews – can only be that they are our elder brothers in the faith. I have been convinced of that from my youngest years in my native town of Wadowice."

The Pope also spoke of the "right of the Jews to return to Israel," the land of their ancestors.

There is no stronger influence upon the people in the whole world, for better or worse, than theology. And the Pope and his clergy are now making the struggle against antisemitism as part of their present mission. Of course that would not end antisemitism overnight.

But if Pope John Paul II would on Sunday declare from his balcony that antisemitism is a SIN against the Christian religion, that would diminish to a great extent antisemitism among Catholics and non-Catholic Christians, who do care about their religion. This would be one of the greatest achievements of the present Pope, perhaps the greatest●

Gene efficiency

by Naim Dangoor

All processes in nature are less than perfect. To obtain energy from fuel, the efficiency is less than 50%.

Similarly, every time we copy a sound tape or a picture, we lose part of the clarity. If this is repeated a thousand times, the result would be unrecognisable.

Ever since my schooldays I often marvelled in amazement how the reproductive system in nature is maintained at virtually 100% efficiency over many millions of years and millions of generations, with the result as good as the original, and even improved by natural selection.

The answer, we are now told is to be found by analogy with the digital telephone system!

David Dangoor explains. Until recently, telephones used "analogue" codes. Modern telephone systems use "digital" codes. In an analogue telephone system, fluctuating sounds are converted into fluctuating waves of voltage in a wire. At the other end of the line these voltage waves are reconverted in the earpiece directly back into the corresponding sounds. All possible voltages, within certain limits, may pass down the wire. The problem with this is that the signal fades over a long wire and has been boosted – re-amplified-repeatedly along the wire. Each boosting introduces more distortions so that long distance calls become less clear, the longer the distance.

In a digital telephone, only two possible voltages, representing either 0 or 1, pass down the wire. The information lies not in the voltages themselves but in the patterning of zeros and ones. The actual voltage received at any one time need not be exact, because the receiving apparatus will round it off and assume the nearest

expected voltage. The voltages for 0 and 1 are far enough apart, so that random fluctuations can hardly ever be misinterpreted at the wrong level by the receiving instrument. Therefore what emerges at the other end of the line can be perfect even if the transmission along the line is poor.

We now know that genes themselves, within their minute internal structure, are long strings of pure digital (4 instead of 2) information. They can therefore be copied and recopied down thousands of generations with almost perfect accuracy, and with just enough occasional errors to introduce variety which is then obliterated or encouraged by natural selection.

Because of their digital nature, genes can self-copy for 10 million generations and not degrade. Only a digital genetic system could have been capable of sustaining life over hundreds of millions of years.

Blessed Who performs works of creation.

Naim Dangoor continues:

Another scientific phenomenon which has puzzled me since I was 15 concerns optical vision. We are told that the eye is like a camera and objects are pictured on the retina upside down. The brain adjusts the signal making it the right way up. But why do we see the picture where the object is and not inside our head?

I put this question to Mr Brotman at Shamash School in Baghdad, where he was Physics teacher and headmaster. But I do not remember getting a satisfactory answer, but it must be due to the action of the brain. In any case, when we see a horse running we do not actually see the horse but a hologram of the horse projected by the brain to where the horse is.

(Mr Brotman returned to England in 1932 to become Secretary to the Board of Deputies of British Jews, a position which he occupied for many years)●



Ruby Ezekiel and Ike Isaac, whose grandparents came from Baghdad, got married in the magnificent Beth El Synagogue in Calcutta on 19 December 1943, and celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary on 19 December 1993 in London with their children, grandchildren and many friends with a dinner and dance●

I have been trying to trace my first cousins for over 20 years without success.

They emigrated to Israel about 1952/53 and we corresponded for a while, but lost touch when we both moved. I try each time I go to Israel and still cannot find them. They have left Israel as they held also British passports.

Details of the family are as follows: They were all born in Rangoon, but also lived in Calcutta, and we met in London on their way to Israel. Father was Charlie Hai, wife's name unknown. Cousins Menachem and Judah, both now 60-65. Menachem married Lily in Israel, they had two sons. Isaiah now 35, and Selah now 30. My father Abraham and Charlie were brothers. The families historic origins were Baghdad.

Anyone knowing their whereabouts, please contact me●

**18 The Polygon
89 Avenue Road
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Joseph Hai

I am currently working on a history of Sephardi settlement in south Manchester from 1850-1940, and as my good friend and collaborator, Lydia Collins, has indicated, many Baghdadians were prominent in the rapidly expanding Sephardi community.

I was wondering whether I could appeal for information through *The Scribe*. I am interested in personal reminiscences of Baghdadian (and indeed other) families in south Manchester – family, religious, social life and the way the Baghdadian community organised itself. Any photographs reflecting any of this would be more than welcome●

**305 Buxton Road
Macclesfield, Cheshire SK11 7ET**

Basil Jeuda



Baghdadi Hanukkiya carved in wood by the late Ovadia Agassy● (see p.24)

Migration of Iraqi Jews

by Dr Heskell Isaacs of Cambridge University.

Abridged from a paper read in London at the International Academic Conference held recently.

Few cities capture the imagination more than Baghdad and fewer countries have played a more important role in shaping the Jewish religion than Babylon.

Following the Arab conquest of Iraq, the Jews remained the oldest of the ethnic communities of that country, the only unchanging element in a floating population of ethno-religious groups. They adopted Arabic as their vernacular, introduced it into their religious services and wrote it in Hebrew characters.

As the centre of Ottoman power was far removed from Iraq, non-Muslim minorities felt uneasy and sometimes insecure. That was a "push" factor impelling some Jews to emigrate.

In the Ottoman polity non-Muslims were allowed to organise their own communal affairs under their own leaders, who enjoyed wide judicial and administrative powers in respect of their communities, each of which was left free to follow its own religious law in matters of personal status, i.e. marriage, divorce and inheritance. This is the well-known *millet* system. The *millet* system was, to some extent, a factor contributing to the stability of the Ottoman Empire and demonstrating both the humane flexibility and the practical good sense of the Ottoman administration.

It was around the mid-nineteenth century that the Alliance Israélite Universelle ventured to establish schools in most towns of the Ottoman Empire where a sizeable Jewish community lived. The accent of the curriculum was mainly "secular", but it still retained its religious characteristics. Instruction was in French, given by scholarly teachers who were selected from the ranks of the brightest and trained in the *Ecole Normal Israelite Orientale* in Paris.

Such educational activities were instrumental in producing a growing number of educated Baghdadi Jews – men and women, well-versed in French and English, and well-informed on European culture. The attainment of such a standard of education, along with contacts with the few Europeans who travelled to the East, led to an increased awareness on their part of what was happening in the outside world. This may have been a "pull" factor that had contributed to emigration.

Settlements in India

Arabic-speaking Jewish traders settled in India sometime during the eighteenth century and established a colony in the port of Surat, 165 miles north of Bombay, under the leadership of Shalom Obadiah Ha-Kohen, who hailed from Aleppo where Jews were employed by British factories in the Levant.

In the early days the factory at Aleppo stood almost on a footing of equality with that of Constantinople, and from the point of view of trade probably surpassed it. The business transacted was purely wholesale and it was dominated by Jews who then controlled most trade in the Levant. Such trading expertise helped these early settlers to achieve success in their dealings with already established British houses of commerce.

In 1730, Joseph Semah, of Baghdadi origin, moved from Surat to Bombay. By the end of the eighteenth century he was followed by Soliman Jacob Soliman, a successful merchant who played a leading role in the economic and commercial life of the city. In 1797, some Jews from Aleppo together with other Jews from Baghdad, Basra and Yemen, moved to Calcutta where they built up prosperous businesses. However, it was only after the arrival of the famous David Sassoon in 1832 that the Baghdadi community established itself in Bombay on firm foundations.

The initial activities of the House of David Sassoon were confined to import and export trade with the Persian Gulf. But this was later followed by participation in the opium trade, which was rife, with China. Subsequently, they discontinued this trade and turned successfully to real estate, banking and cotton industries. At the turn of the century Sir Jacob Sassoon was the owner of the largest groups of textile factories in Bombay, employing many thousands of people, including Baghdadi Jews. He endowed a high school in which Baghdadi children received an excellent English education up to university entrance level. He was also one of the principal donors whose benefactions made possible the establishment of the Royal Institute of Science in Bombay. The Sassoons were followed by the Ezras, who established their business in Calcutta as did the Eliases and the Gubbays also. Further east went the Kedouries, the Shahmoons and the Haskells. Jacob Silas Haskell, the founder of the Eastern Bank Limited, established branches in the Persian Gulf, East Africa and Iraq. He died in London in January 1939.

Community life

Although some Baghdadi families did not escape some "Indianisation", most retained the greater part of their native Jewish traditions and mores. In particular they continued to cherish and keep family customs and values. In return for loyalty, the family provided its members with protection and a sense of identity. Jewish values centred on pride in one's family reputation and ancestry, dedication to its religious beliefs, respect for the elders and loyalty to parents in their old age. They also prized generosity, hospitality and individualism, much as they had done in their country of origin. As time passed on, some Baghdadi Jewish families anglicised their names primarily to overcome difficulties in the spelling and pronunciation of original Arabic names. Spiritually and religiously, the Baghdadi Jews remained attached to the teaching and tradition of Baghdad, seeking guidance from

that city's *hakhams* on questions of ritual and law. Very gradually Arabic, which was the language normally spoken at home, was gradually dropped and replaced by English with a broad Indian accent.

The Jews who migrated to India thrived and their businesses flourished, for India was one of the most tolerant countries, and a place where Jews maintained their identity without ever being exposed to antisemitism. From an early stage Baghdadi Jewish traders forged a very good relation with the colonial administration and the Indians with whom they had settled. Such a state of affairs was a "pull" factor in the migration of Jews from Baghdad and Basra to Bombay and Calcutta, where the future was brighter and much easier.

Benjamin Israel, the author of a short history of the Jews in India, speaks with great awe about the Baghdadis: "They had an uncanny appreciation of the directions in which the cities of Calcutta and Bombay would grow; the Sassoons in Bombay and the Ezras in Calcutta bought up at rock-bottom prices extensive real estate which within a short time became ripe for development and provided enormous capital gains." It was the same with the Smouhas – an astute Baghdadi family which migrated to Egypt in the latter half of the last century and bought marshes outside Alexandria, drained them and built a beautiful estate known as The Smouha Villas.

Sir Bartle Frere (Governor of Bombay 1862), who was eager to get the help of the rich Baghdadis for his education and health institutions, wrote of the Baghdadi Jews of Bombay: "They are the most valuable link between us and the natives, oriental in origin and appreciation, but English in their objects and associations and, almost of necessity, loyal."

Baghdadi Jews in Britain

The few Baghdadi Jews who settled in Britain in the last century gravitated to Manchester, where large Arabic-speaking communities from the Near East and smaller ones from the Maghrib had already established themselves in the cotton trade and shipping. They were readily able to integrate with other Sefardim, such as Jews from Aleppo and Damascus, or even with the Ladino-speaking Spanish and Portuguese Jews.

Sir Mark Sykes – the famous Sykes of Sykes-Picot Treaty – who was then the official responsible for Middle Eastern affairs, records that on a visit to Manchester, he attended a meeting of the Manchester Syrian Association. Of those present, there were ninety Jews from Aleppo and Baghdad.

Once again I would like to congratulate you on a marvellous job and the pleasure that you bring to us all in *The Scribe*.

Even though my children were born in Canada and they know very little about Iraq, they get thrilled to read the wonderful articles and all the anecdotes about how life was in Baghdad.

Montreal

Steve Acre (Akerib)

Healing with Hypnosis

by Gila Khabbaza, R.Hy.

The body, being a dynamic creation, has a miraculous ability to heal itself. The role of the professional healer, therefore, is guiding the client in facilitating the body's natural inclination towards health and well being.

Countless people are now striving unsuccessfully to seek help in freeing themselves from mental and physical suffering. Orthodox medicine with its emphasis on medication, seems to be treating "symptoms only" without involving itself with the root of the problem. Also, the many medications prescribed have left patients with unpleasant side effects for which even more unnecessary medication is given!

Since prescription medication can be draining to both one's health and finances, most people have turned to some form of alternative medicine, either in place of conventional medicine or as a complimentary approach to health care. Many people with chronic problems have found drug-free relief through proper diet, exercise, chiropractic adjustment, acupuncture, weight loss, nutritional supplements, herbal remedies, psychotherapy and the healing science of hypnotherapy.

Rather than going for a quick-fix solution, alternative medicine is helping people to overcome their suffering by going to the root of a problem. Increasing in popularity, hypnosis is now widely used as an alternative and/or complimentary procedure to conventional medicine. Given the rapid cure rate in recent years, its benefits can no longer be disputed. The modern use of hypnosis by doctors, dentists, psychologists, psychiatrists, hypnotists, and other medical professionals, is leading to a time in the future when, having a family hypnotist will be as common as having a family doctor.

History: Although hypnotic techniques have been in use since pre-historic times, it was the excellent report by the British Medical Association in 1955 which proved the remarkable power of hypnosis on the human body. This prompted recognition of its benefits by the American Medical Association in 1958. Since recent discoveries of the mind-body connection, the psychosomatic nature of most stress-induced illnesses (e.g. ulcers, migraines, diabetes, high blood pressure, etc.), and the healing power of emotions over our body, hypnosis has been even more prevalent than ever.

What is hypnosis? Hypnosis is an effective, short-term, safe, non-invasive therapy as a basic preventative for both physical and mental disease. It is proven to be a natural, relaxing way for us to allow our body to do the job it was intended to do.

Although the word hypnosis is derived from the Greek word for sleep, hypnosis is not sleep as we know it. During hypnosis, the conscious mind is dormant thus enabling the subconscious to respond. In fact, hypnosis produces a profound state of relaxation, which creates an environment of inner focusing which can significantly increase concentration. Therefore, hypnosis is the state of focused attention

where a person is totally aware of what is going on around them, except that nothing around them is important enough to break their train of thought.

While in a hypnotic state, we are able to both move, talk and walk. The state is so profoundly relaxing and pleasurable that the subject chooses to stay in that state and thus tune out their surroundings. In other words, the state of hypnosis refers to a state or condition in which the subject becomes highly responsive to suggestions.

The hypnotized individual seems to follow instructions in an uncritical, automatic fashion and attend closely only to those aspects of the environment made relevant by the hypnotist. If the subject is profoundly responsive, he or she hears, sees, feels, smells, and tastes in accordance with the suggestions given, even though these may be in direct contradiction to the actual stimuli that impinge upon the subject (e.g. a subject could experience water as alcohol under suggestion and feel drunk).

An overweight person with low self-esteem can be given a suggestion under hypnosis which will tape over the negative self-image they have of themselves, thus enabling them to view themselves as attractive. This will enable the overweight person to think thin and thus choose healthy, nourishing foods rather than find comfort in fatty foods. The smoker might be given a suggestion to have an aversion towards cigarettes and knowing how it endangers his health, no longer has any craving for cigarettes.

Are we a hypnotised society?! We have all been hypnotised into bad habits either by peer pressure or by watching our parents behaviour in a certain situation. There are two reasons for bad habits: rationalization of reality (I drink because my job is stressful / I will quit next year, etc.); and/or denial of reality (I don't have a drinking problem, I only drink every evening and all weekend!!), the latter being an ego defense.

Self-Confidence - While raising confidence and self-esteem, hypnosis is an effective way of tapping your inner resources for leading a more satisfying life.

Behaviour - modification - Nail biting, stuttering, overeating, sexual problems, alcohol and drug abuse.

Improving Memory - Forensic Hypnosis, memory improvement, studying for tests.

Pain Reduction - Reduction of pain resulting from accidents, arthritic conditions; preparation for surgery; alleviating post-surgery pain.

Weight Loss - Weight loss and weight maintenance. The only thing gained here is self-confidence and the knowledge that you are in control of your body and mind. A dislike for fattening foods is developed and countered with a desire for food which nourishes the body and gives it high energy and good health.

Smoking - Smoking can be stopped either gradually or cold turkey depending on the person's desire and will to quit.

Motivation - Exercising, getting organised, sales motivation, goal setting, etc.

Hypnobirthing - Natural child birth is preferred with hypnosis for alleviating pain.

Regression - Finding the root of psychological problems which are blocked out by the conscious mind.

Stress Management - Many people do not know how to relax and we all know that stress is the major contributor to many diseases including: diabetes, ulcers, high blood pressure, migraines, heart disease, etc. Through stress management, we find a new way of dealing and releasing stress before it turns to DIS - EASE.

Misc - Attracting prosperity, stage fright, fear of public speaking, frigidity, scratching, various obsessions and compulsions, inferiority complexes, loss of memory or burn out, are amongst other things hypnosis is used for.

Why are so many people turning to hypnosis?

It is painless, has no side effects, feels good, and is a wonderful too to be able to be that which we want. Bear in mind that no person can be hypnotised against their wish as the subconscious mind rejects any suggestion that is contrary to its morals and ethics. In fact, the subject could even lie under hypnosis just as easily as they can lie in their daily life. Also, hypnosis can be stopped at any given time.

Since the body has a miraculous ability to heal itself, a Hypnotherapist is probably more capable of altering human behaviour than any other practitioner, because the patient is able to have direct communication with the subconscious mind in order to get rid of any UNWANTED BEHAVIOUR. I have personally reversed the effects of diabetes by self-hypnosis and a change in diet and life style. This prompted my fulfilling quest for aiding others in achieving ultimate health and well being. Every client I have worked with since being licensed, is now successfully able to address the problems with weight loss, smoking, stress management, etc.●

**New York Licensed Hypnotherapist
National Guild of Hypnotists**



The above picture is of Obadia Hakki who came to California from Iraq in 1946 to study music.

He plays the violin and oud (lute) and has recorded on compact disc and cassette "Iraqi Jewish and Iraqi Music". He earned a reputation in New York performing Middle Eastern music, even helping to popularise the belly-dance craze that overtook America in the early 1960s●

COOKERY CORNER

by Alice Shashou

Spinach and Mushroom Lasagne

(A party dish)

Ingredients:

4lbs (2 kilos) fresh spinach
1lb (450g) mushrooms, sliced
2½oz (62g) butter
7oz (200g) lasagne
4oz (100g) Gruyere cheese, grated
4oz (100g) Parmesan cheese, grated
1 tablespoon lemon juice (optional)

White sauce:

2½oz (62g) butter
2½oz (62g) flour
8fl.oz double cream
2 pints milk, boiled
Salt, black pepper, nutmeg and (celery and basil seasoning)

Wash spinach in water several times. Remove stalks and cook in a covered saucepan until tender without adding water. Press out liquid. Chop coarsely.

Heat a non-stick frying pan. Add mushrooms, butter and lemon juice and saute until dry.

To prepare white sauce:

In a saucepan, melt butter over a gentle heat.

Remove pan from heat and add flour. Mix well until smooth. Return to heat and cook for 1 minute, gradually adding the boiling milk. Let it simmer until thickened stirring continually. Add cream and seasoning ingredients.

Assemble the lasagne in a rectangular baking dish 14" x 9". Start with a thin layer of white sauce. Top with a layer of lasagne. Next spoon spinach and mushroom. Sprinkle with cheeses. Keep some Parmesan cheese for the top of lasagne. Repeat once more until all ingredients have been used ending with a layer of lasagne sandwiched in white sauce. Cover with foil and bake at 180°C (350°F) for 30 minutes. Remove from oven, sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and bake again uncovered for a further 15 minutes or until lightly browned and bubbling.

Scribe: the recipes and tips in the last issue were written by Alice Shashou●

Artichoke and Hearts of Palm Salad

(Serves 8)

Ingredients:

1 14oz (400g) tin artichoke hearts, drained and sliced.
1 8oz (225g) tin hearts of palm, drained and sliced.
1 11oz (300g) tin red pimentos, drained and sliced.
1 firm avocado, sliced.
1 cup celery, washed, trimmed and chopped.
½ cup spring onions, chopped.

For the garnish

2 tablespoons parsley, finely chopped.
Few black olives.
1 head of lettuce, shredded to line the salad platter.

French dressing:

1 teaspoon mustard.
3 tablespoons white wine vinegar.
4 tablespoons oil.
4 tablespoons virgin olive oil.
1 teaspoon salt.
1 rounded teaspoon caster sugar.
Freshly ground black pepper.

Mix all the salad ingredients together.

Spoon the dressing ingredients into a screw top jar. Shake until thickened. Taste and adjust. Then drizzle over the mixed salad. Refrigerate covered until needed.

Just before serving, dry the shredded lettuce with kitchen towel and place in a large flat platter and top with the refrigerated salad ingredients.

Sprinkle with chopped parsley. Garnish with black olives.

Tip: Prepare this salad a few hours before needed to enhance the flavour●

The "Tips" in the May 1994 issue of *The Scribe* state: That potatoes are low in calories because they contain no fat. Potatoes contain almost only carbohydrates – a form of complex sugar. The statement is as absurd as saying that honey is low in calories because it contains no fat!

Also you advised your readers to take vitamins with food in order to combine with the enzymes. Even if they do they rely on the enzymes the body forms, not on the enzymes in the food. All enzymes taken by mouth are usually destroyed or inactivated by the strong acidity of the stomach.

The wisdom of "cook first and add salt later" is not clear. If it is a matter of taste, the Iraqi Jews know better, and do the opposite in order that the food must "*yakel melhu*" (absorb the salt).

Please mention the source of your future tips.

Great Neck, N.Y. Albert Khabbaza, MD

Scribe: The term "*yakel melhu*" (absorbs the salt) was used only in connection with koshering meat and poultry and not in connection with cooking food.

Some say that it was the custom to keep meat half-an-hour in salt if koshering is done by a man, and one hour if done by a young woman.

In reply Alice Shashou writes.

All these tips are taken from well-known magazines.

Potatoes are healthy to eat and low in calories, although they contain carbohydrates. Potatoes also contain fibre especially if eaten with the skin.

Taking vitamins on an empty stomach makes people feel sick. Most doctors advise to take their vitamins and medicine with their meals.

If you add salt in the end of cooking you need to use less and is therefore healthier, although it tastes the same●

Riz Macedoine

Ingredients:

2 cups basmati rice
½ cup dry vermicelli
2 onions, finely chopped
1 tomato peeled and chopped
1 tablespoon tomato purée
½ teaspoon black pepper
½ teaspoon cardamom in powder
½ teaspoon cebeet spices or mixed spices
1 chicken cube
3 tablespoons oil
1½lb. (700g) or 2 packets frozen mixed vegetables
Salt
2¾ cups or 3 cups water

Wash the rice and soak in enough water to cover for 2 hours with a little salt.

Heat a non-stick frying pan. Add 1 tablespoon of oil. Heat and fry the onions until slightly coloured. Add the tomato and sauté until soft. Add the tomato purée, frozen vegetables, cardamom, pepper, mixed spices and salt and sauté for a minute.

In a non-stick saucepan, fry the vermicelli in the rest of the oil. Add water and crumble in the stock cube. Bring to the boil.

Drain the rice and add to the pan. Add the onion and vegetable mixture. Mix all together and cover the pan. Return to the boil, then turn down to gentle simmer.

Fold a double kitchen towel and place between lid and pan.

Continue to cook gently until a nice golden crust has formed. Turn out carefully into a warm serving dish.

Serve with Roast chicken.●

To: Alice Shashou in appreciation of her Cookery book:

It was a genuine thrill and real pleasure to receive your book, as well as your nice letter. In all honesty, the book, in my opinion, is a very valuable document to preserve the traditional Iraqi cooking recipes, specially when this community is being scattered all over the world and their new generations are gradually losing their identity and source. Your book is also very impressive and reflects the immense character of the writer. A job well done.

As I held the book in my hand, I started flipping over the many pages, going hastily over the titles, which made me feel the taste of those forgotten names, and my mouth started watering. I came over names that are no longer everyday household names, and tastes that have long disappeared and diminished. As the appetite started awakening, I started kind of challenging the book saying, I bet she forgot all about the *Kichri* or the *Tbeet* and the like, then I realised it was all there. Trust me, I will remember you every time I will attempt to try any one of your recipes

New York

Norma Zekaria

Scribe: Alice Shashou's new cookery book is obtainable from the author: Flat 43 Abbey Lodge, Park Road, London NW8 7RL. Price: UK £20 + £3 p&p. Overseas: US\$30 + \$7 p&p.●