

# *The* SCRIBE

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A Happy New Year 5761 to all our Readers and Friends



The procession of His Royal Highness The Exilarch on his weekly visit to the Grand Caliph of Baghdad, ALMUSTANJID BILLAH, accompanied by Benjamin of Tudela (12<sup>th</sup> Century) who wrote in his diary that the Caliph knows all languages, and is well-versed in the law of Israel. He reads and writes the holy language (Hebrew) and is attended by many belonging to the people of Israel. He will not partake of anything unless he has earned it by the work of his own hands. The men of Islam see him once a year.

In Baghdad there are about 40,000 Jews "dwelling in security, prosperity and honour and amongst them are great sages, the heads of Academies engaged in the study of the Law. At the head of them all is Daniel, The Exilarch, who traces his pedigree to King David. He has been invested with authority over all the Jews in the Abbassid Empire.

Every Thursday he goes to pay a visit to the great Caliph and horsemen, Gentiles as well as Jews, escort him and heralds proclaim in advance, 'Make way before our Lord, the son of David, as is due unto him'. On arrival the Caliph rises and puts him on a throne, opposite him, which the prophet Mohammed had ordered to be made for him. He granted him the seal of office and instructed his followers to salute him (the Exilarch) and that anyone who should refuse to rise up should receive one hundred stripes."

# THOUGHTS & AFTERTHOUGHTS

## REFLECTIONS ON THE HOLOCAUST

The murder of the six million Jews by Germany during World War II was not just an anti-semitic and racist genocide. Hitler was under the delusion that it was the Jews who were the enemies of Germany and who made Germany to lose World War I. In his attempt to re-kindle the flame of German aggression, he saw the Jews standing in his way. So, in 1939, as the signs of war were looming in the horizon, Hitler made the clear threat that if World Jewry and in particular American Jewry, shall embroil Germany in another World War, then Germany would exterminate all the Jews of Europe.

It is clear therefore that European Jewry were held hostages for the free world and, as often happens, hostage takings end up in tragedy. This is the significance of the Holocaust to the free world and this is the basis on which all people should commemorate and observe the massacre of 6 million innocent Jews by Germany.

Letter sent to The Rt Hon The Lord Janner, Chairman of The Holocaust Educational Trust:

Dear Greville,

When a Holocaust memorial was created in Hyde Park, I asked myself, "Why should Britain be involved in that crime, since Hitler's genocide never reached these shores?"

The explanation usually given is that the purpose of remembering the Holocaust is to prevent it happening again. This explanation fails on two counts. Firstly, there are not enough Jews in Europe for another Holocaust, and secondly, ethnic genocide has been taking place throughout the world regardless.

There is in fact another significance to the Holocaust which is overlooked. In 1939 Hitler threatened to kill all the Jews of Europe, if World Jewry would embroil Germany in another world war. He was thus holding the Jews of Europe as hostages for the free world in an attempt to achieve world domination.

The Six Million, therefore, died

as martyrs for the free world and should be remembered and honoured throughout the world as such.

### Naim

His reply:

Dear Naim

Thank you for your interesting and important letter. Yes, I agree. The prime purpose of our Holocaust Memorial Day is precisely along the lines you suggest - together with our hope that by remembering what happened to the Jewish people, we may do something to prevent any future recurrence of this hideous tragedy.

Thank you again for writing and with best wishes.

### Greville

Naim Dangoor's reply:

Thank you for your letter regarding my suggestion that the victims of the Holocaust should be treated as having died as hostages for the free world. In your reply you say that this idea is interesting and important, but you go on to say that "The prime purpose of our Holocaust Memorial Day is precisely along the lines you suggest".

I should be very grateful if you would kindly let me know how this idea is being presented by The Holocaust Memorial Day since I have never heard it mentioned that the six million were taken as hostages by Hitler at the beginning of the war, and that he put them to death to fulfill the threat that he made in early 1939. German treatment of the Jews is further demonstrated by the demand in 1944 for military trucks in exchange for saving the lives of the Hungarian Jews. When the free world rightly declined to give the trucks he sent 300,000 Hungarian Jews to the death camp.

### ADDING INSULT TO INJURY "And you who are attached to the Lord your G-d are all alive today"

Jewish religious thinkers often try to find some explanation and justification for all tragedies befalling the Jewish people. Starting with the premise

that G-d cannot do wrong, they try to put the blame on the victims themselves. They say for example that it was the vain hatred among Jews that caused the destruction of the second Temple and that the laxity in Torah observance was the cause of the Holocaust. This is not acceptable and adds insult to injury. It also makes Hitler an agent of G-d's punishment on the Jews which is absurd. Our religious leaders have to think again and come out with a credible and meaningful explanation. Did the Allies know?

Recent revelations have shown that British and American intelligence were aware in 1943 that the German government ordered the military in Rome to round up the Jews of Rome and send them to the concentration camps, but the Allied authorities did nothing to alert the Jews and give them a chance to save themselves.

This is not surprising because throughout the war the Allies were very careful not to let Germany know but they were able to break its code. A day before Pearl Harbour, The State Department became aware that Japan was about to launch a surprise attack but decided to do nothing about it in order to continue to break Japanese secret messages throughout the war.

Moreover, the liquidation of European Jewry suited the wartime policy of the Allies in the thought that by letting Germany be busy with the Jews would detract her war effort. That is why the Allies refused to bomb Auschwitz and refused to publicise what was going on there.

The mass murder of ten thousand Jews a day was an open secret fully known to the media, diplomatic missions and the Church. I lived in Istanbul during the war and I could see from time to time Jewish refugees arriving from Europe with terrible stories.

I can go further and say that the second world war was engineered or manoeuvred into being by the oil interest of the West in order to get rid of the Jews of Europe in the mistaken belief that they would thus save the vast oil reserves of the Middle East from falling into the hands of a new Zionist state populated by East European Jews who were regarded as Communist sympathisers.

When I was a student at London

University in the early 30's, I was tormented by the case with which Hitler was allowed to re-arm and prepare Germany for a major war when he could have been knocked out by a feather in his early days.

My own teenage explanation at that time was - either that the Allies wanted to bring a decisive end to the First World War, or that the merchants of armament were again getting active to profit from selling their deadly weapons, or that the whole purpose was to liquidate the Jews of Europe under the cover of war. In the event, the last probability was the only concrete result came out of the Second World War.

## THE DILEMMA OF OVADIAH YOSSEF

Baghdad born, 80 year old, Harav Ovadiah Yossef has made a great name for himself as the highest authority on Halacha and the sources. He has become the rallying point of the Sephardi majority of Israel which gave his Shas party no less than 17 seats in the Knesseth which may become one day the largest party in the Israeli Parliament.

In his regular Saturday night radio programme, he recently had to answer the question - "Where was G-d during the Holocaust?" By taking a narrow view of this controversy Rav Ovadiah had only two options: Either that the Holocaust was an act of G-d, or that G-d does not take any interest in human affairs.

Rav Ovadiah was obliged to opt for the first option stating that the Holocaust was an act of G-d and was a punishment for the sins by these people in previous lives. This immediately caused a huge furore everywhere which obliged the learned Rabbi to retract his regrettable statement which still left an unpleasant impression all over. Some people saw in it an attack on Ashkenazim who were the main victims of the Holocaust. Others thought it would promote atheism. By claiming that the Holocaust was an act of G-d, he made Hitler and his Nazi criminals the agents of G-d.

Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks expressed the view that the Holocaust must remain a mystery. But how can the Chief Rabbi follow a mysterious religion which he cannot explain or understand? On the other hand, when the late former Chief Rabbi Lord Jacobovitz was asked

where was G-d at the Holocaust, the answer he gave was where was man at the Holocaust? This may appear to be an evasive reply but what Lord Jacobovitz was saying is that the Holocaust was not the act of G-d but the act of man which may mean if you like that since G-d gave man freewill, he takes no direct interest in the day-to-day events of history.

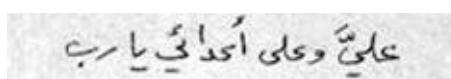
This fact can only be ignored at our peril.

## WHERE WAS GOD?

When I shall go to the Synagogue on Yom Kippur, when the gates of Heaven are wide open, enabling us to communicate directly with the Almighty, I shall ask G-d one question and then leave, "Where were you during the Holocaust?"

## THE SAMSON OPTION

Let me die in Palestine



It has become customary for all officers graduating in the Israeli Defence Forces to be taken to the fortress of Massada and made to swear an oath there that Massada shall not fall again.

That is a reference to the besiege of Massada in the year 70 by the Roman army who were unable for two years to take that hide-out of some 200 Jewish fighters. When in the end they occupied the fortress they found all the people there had committed suicide, rather than be tortured by their Roman enemies.

This has become known as the Massada option. But why should this be a model for the Israeli army? I prefer the Samson option when the hero of ancient Israel managed to bring the Palestinian Temple down and thus kill with himself thousands of the enemy.

Today, Israel is one of the strongest military powers in the world and should try to flex her muscle when dealing with her neighbours.

Barak or Mu-Barak? The Arabs have found Prime Minister Ehud Barak tougher than Netanyahu, knowing Israel's nuclear potential and military superiority, Mubarak has been calling for a nuclear-free Middle East hoping to achieve by a little hot air equality with Israel. But according to an Arabic proverb "You cannot fry eggs with hot air".

I thank you for telling my life story in "The Scribe" (No. 72, P. 38). I must say it was beautifully presented and I am proud to have a presence in the Sephardi community, which I love and admire.

London

Freddie Knoller

## BONANZA TO UK CHARITIES

How a Charity can receive £50 for every £10 you give away

The Finance Act of March 21 2000 contains a little-noticed sensational clause whereby a charity can receive £50 for every £10 one gives away. This is how it works:

If one holds a quoted share that has gone up £50 in value, one sells the share to the charity at cost price. The charity makes £50 and one loses £50 less tax equals £30. In addition one receives tax relief on the £50 the charity receives, equal to £20 thus losing only £10, while the charity receives five times that amount.

Donors should now make full use of this generous bonanza.

London

Naim Dangoor

The above letter appeared in the London Jewish News.

## NOTHING NEW

A long time ago, an enterprising grocer in Baghdad claimed that he invented a powder that can be used to get rid of mosquitoes which used to plague the city during the hot, dry summer months and was the cause of spreading malaria.

One Shabbath, an announcement was made as was the custom to inform the people about the new powder, adding that the direction for use would be announced as soon as a sufficient number of people had bought the packet of powder. Three weeks later the announcement was made of how to deal with the powder as follows: catch the mosquito then open its mouth and put a little of the powder in the mouth. It is guaranteed that the mosquito would die in a very short time!

Continued on following page

I remembered the above anecdote when I heard on the radio the other day that New York City had been infested with deadly mosquitoes, causing panic in the city, so that Central Park closed to the public. At the same time an American scientist announced his method in dealing with the epidemic: catch the mosquito and have it operated upon to change one of its genes so that it no longer remains a carrier of malaria and other diseases. Then release the mosquito in the air in the hope that other mosquitoes will follow suit!

## KOSHER THIGHS

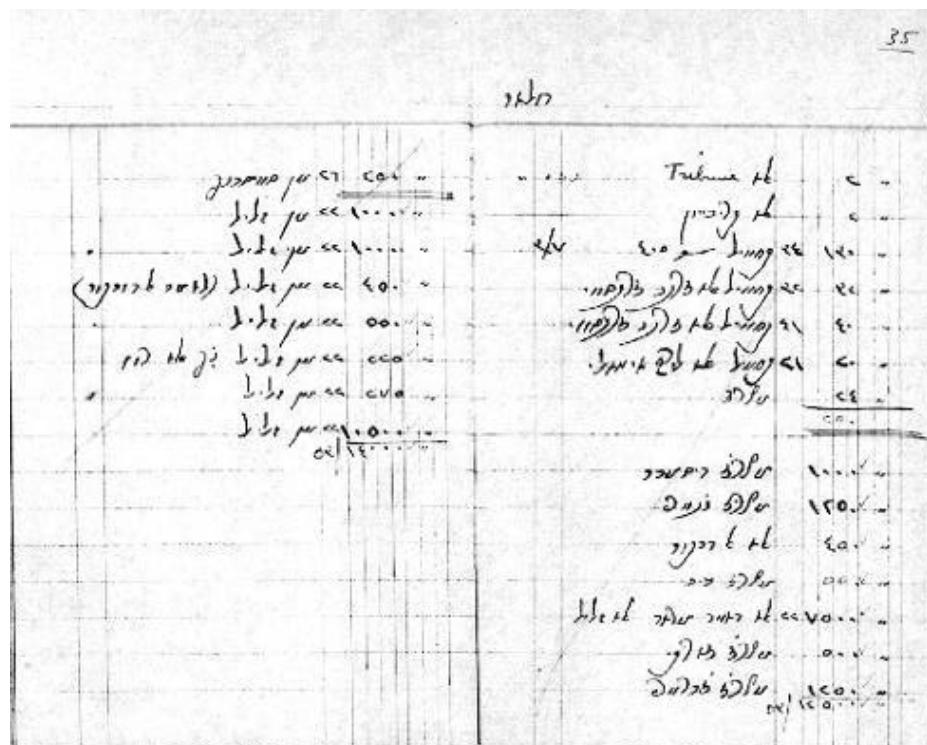
The Jews have a capacity for creating problems for themselves, and Jacob was no exception. One night, while sleeping in the open, he felt a slight cramp in his thigh. As he was in the middle of an important dream, the reality got mixed up with the dream, as often happens, and he thought the angel had touched his thigh. Sure enough, he had a temporary limp when he woke up, and he came to believe that the Angel had touched his thigh. Thus it became a tradition that Jews remove (porge) the leg sinew of animals before cooking. It was not a commandment but merely a tradition. (A simple cure for cramps is to drink Indian tonic water).

Since the war, however, purging became unreliable and it was decided to discard the whole hindquarter of the carcass by selling it to non-Jews who could thus enjoy at reduced prices the best cuts of the meat - steak, kidney, etc., while driving kosher meat prices higher.

So far so good. But there has been a movement in Europe to ban Jewish methods of animal slaughter altogether, as inhumane because it did permit pre-stunning of the animal. The ban started in Nazi Germany; while forbidding the Jewish Shechita, wicked Germans, at the same time, slaughtered six million Jews. They proved themselves to be lower than animals.

Repeated attempts in the British Parliament to ban Jewish Shechita failed because it could not be proved that this method was not humane, but also because of the 2 million Moslems who could also be affected. So now the Anti-Shechita lobby want to try a new tactic. They wish to require Kosher and Halal meat to bear a label stating its method of slaughter. This will only affect Kosher meat because it would make it impossible to

## JUDAEO ARABIC



50 years ago - on his long honeymoon travels with his wife Renée, Naim Dangoor was careful to keep a detailed account book of their daily expenditure. It is noteworthy that the entries were written in Judaeo Arabic, as shown in the page above. This form of writing was used in all his communications with the family, and must now be regarded as completely obsolete.

dispose of the hindquarters in the general food chain.

Jewish communal authorities are considering going to the Court of Europe on the grounds of discrimination. This approach is certain to fail: the Court cannot oblige anyone to buy the rejected parts of Kosher meat. What are the alternatives?

1. To sell the hindquarters to our Moslem brethren who would enjoy excellent shish-kebab at even lower prices.
2. To consider taking a rabbinic decision that Jacob's vision concerning the thigh sinew was just a bad dream and that all parts of kosher animal can be eaten.

If the European Court has any sympathy on us let it remove the total ban on shechita that is now in force in many European countries.

Please if possible send us any copies of The Scribe you can spare. We are in Jewish sheltered accommodation in Manchester. We had two copies late last year and since not heard from you.

May we wish you all the very best and go from strength to strength with your wonderful magazine.

## TOTAL ECLIPSE

In our offices, we have a handyman whose job it is to replace used electric bulbs. He goes around, carrying a ladder, and looks up to see which light bulb needs replacing.

At the rare total eclipse of the sun, last August, as the moon slid to cover the sun's disk, a most poignant scene was the sight of our handyman outside my window with his ladder under his arm, looking up in the direction of the darkened sun, as if thinking "Do I have to climb the ladder to replace that bulb?"

Some Ladder! Some bulb!

**NOTE:** Until recently, electric bulbs used to go off very frequently, and the long-suffering British public never complained. Since Britain joined Europe, specifications have been noticeably improved.

Religion goes further and deeper than reason, but Religion must not contradict our G-d given Reason.

Religion must adjust to scientific discoveries.

## THE DANGOOR SYNAGOGUE



In March 2000 an agreement was signed between the Spanish and Portuguese congregation and the Exilarch's Foundation for the construction to establish within the main synagogue complex the Dangoor synagogue in memory of the late Khatoun and Eliahou Hakham Ezra Dangoor.

The Dangoor synagogue, seating over 100 worshipers, is intended to be used for weekday morning and evening prayers and for children's services on Shabbath, as well as Thursday Barmitzvah and Sunday Batmitzvah services. The Dangoor Synagogue is part of a major development costing £1 million.

The above photographs show Mr Lucien Gubbay, President of the Elders with Mr Naim Dangoor, Head of the Exilarch's Foundation at the signing of the agreement at the offices of the Foundation, taken below the portrait of Hakham Ezra Dangoor, Chief Rabbi of Baghdad in the twenties.

### The opening of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (painted between 1925-1927)



The painting shows The Earl of Balfour addressing the 7,000 people present at the opening of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem on Mount Scopus on 1st April 1925. Among the dignitaries present were the British High Commissioner Sir **Herbert Samuel**, Field Marshal Viscount Allenby, Chaim Weizmann, Ahad Ha'am, Chaim Bialik, as well as representatives from many governments, universities and academic institutions worldwide.

## JEWISH ASSETS IN ARAB COUNTRIES

Abridged from *Jerusalem Report* September 1999

After the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948, and the wave of Arab nationalism and decolonisation sweeping the Middle East, the Jews of the region were uprooted and most made their way to Israel, abandoning assets ranging from modest family homes to prosperous businesses, as well as communal property like schools and synagogues. Since then, a wall of war and enmity has separated them from those former assets. Nevertheless, these families, many reduced to working-class status, have always hoped that with the advent of regional peace they would be able to claim their rightful inheritance.

Except that now incensed Sephardim in Israel and abroad are claiming that the Israeli government - with neither the legal nor the moral authority to do so - is getting ready to bargain away those personal inheritances. In a trade-off for the Palestinians' dropping their gigantic property claims against Israel, they say, is preparing to waive future Jewish claims to assets in the Arab countries - assets worth billions, maybe tens of billions, of dollars.

Work on the register of Jewish assets in Arab lands began toward the end of the Netanyahu administration. But it is quietly continuing under Ehud Barak's government - as a way of countering, a similar project by the Palestinians, begun several years ago, to list assets left behind by Palestinians in Israel in 1948. And although individual would-be Sephardi heirs contacted by The Report are horrified by the equation, and dismayed too at the prospect of countries like Iraq, Syria and Libya getting off the hook, several Sephardi organisations are co-operating: "We are performing a service for Israel," says Leon Levy, president of the American Sephardi Federation.

For their part, Palestinian officials insist that they have no intention of reducing their demands for financial compensation from Israel because Jews lost assets in the Arab world. "There is no linkage here. Israel has to negotiate directly with Lebanon, Morocco, Egypt," says Daoud Barakat, the Palestinian Coordinator of Refugee Negotiations. "I don't represent those countries."

Says Bobby Brown, who deals with Diaspora affairs in the Prime Minister's Office, "An injustice was committed to the Jews from Arab countries, and for 50 years we've been saying that it's not the right time to deal

with this issue. But in a month, or a year, we will be sitting with the Palestinians ..... and negotiating. The issue of restitution will come up. The Palestinians are going to say, 'You owe us X-amount.' That's the moment that the Jewish side must say, 'There was a war. We also have claims. And these must act as a counterbalance.' We have to find a rough justice on both sides."

Sephardi activists in Israel fume that their community is going to be shortchanged by the government for a second time: A generation ago, their parents were settled in remote development towns, and condemned to second-class status, from which many of them are still trying to escape. Now, they fear, the government is playing big brother again, seeking to use their inheritance for its own ends.

"The government will evaluate the property of, say, the Iraqi Jews and then use it to counterbalance the Palestinian claim."

"The property of the Jews of the Middle East is not a matter for the State of Israel," says Yehouda Shenhav, an associate professor of sociology and anthropology at Tel Aviv University, himself of Iraqi descent. "They are manipulating me for an ulterior motive," says Shenhav.

For Jews from the Middle East and North Africa who live outside Israel, the notion is even more absurd and untenable: How dare the Israeli government, which cannot conceivably assert that it represents them in any way, they ask, try to usurp their property claims?

Some Israeli officials have argued over the years that, since the government spent billions absorbing the Sephardi Jews here, they can hardly consider themselves shortchanged by Israel. That argument, too, is rudely dismissed by Sephardim abroad. "They certainly didn't spend billions on me," snorts Naim Dangoor, born in Iraq in 1914, who left behind factories and a house when he moved to London in 1959. Naim Dangoor says, "I happened to be in London with my family in 1964 when all the Jews were given three months to return to Iraq or lose their nationality and their property. Although I had extensive interests in Iraq, I decided not to return, mindful of the Talmudic dictum of not taking personal risks for the sake of money. Although I can now justify a claim of \$5 million, this is insignificant in

the context of hundreds of billions being mentioned by both sides in the final settlement negotiations."

The human, cultural and economic tragedy that befell the Jewish communities in Arab countries was profound. Although circumstances varied from country to country, whole communities, some over 2,000 years old, were uprooted. Some Jews managed to sell their homes - often for far below the market value; others managed to ferret out valuables, stuffing jewels and gold coins into their pockets. But most lost almost everything and, like the refugees from war-ravaged Europe who had preceded them, arrived in Israel destitute.

In Iraq, for instance, on March 10, 1951, a new law impounded the property of all Jews who had renounced citizenship and planned to go to Israel. This included many Jews who, although not Zionists, fled persecution which grew with the establishment of Israel. To ensure that the Jews could not use the brief time-lag between passage of the legislation and its implementation to sell their homes and businesses, the Iraqi government shut down the banks for three days. Jews' shops were sealed and their possessions were confiscated. Jewish merchants and jewellers had their homes searched.

In 1945 there were 870,000 Jews living in the Middle East and North Africa. By 1952, hundreds of thousands had arrived in Israel, and tens of thousands had reached Western Europe and North and South Africa. Estimates on the collective value of the property they left behind vary wildly - from a few billion dollars to more than \$100 billion.

Moroccan-born Amram Attias, who heads the U.S. based Committee of Jews from Arab Lands - set up to help spearhead the registration project- claims that the 130,000 Jews of Iraq, the wealthiest Jewish community in the Middle East, lost nearly \$100 billion, while Egypt's Jews lost more than \$60 billion.

The idea that Palestinian demands for property taken over by Israel could be countered by Jewish demands for abandoned property in Arab lands has been bandied about for years. But few people, even those directly affected, are aware that this hitherto theoretical "linkage" is becoming real - with work on the register under way and the final status talks imminent.

When it does become more widely known, the issue could exacerbate Ashkenazi-Sephardi tensions. David Tal, a Knesset member from the ultra-Orthodox Shas party, of Tunisian descent, warns that if the Sephardim are left empty-handed, "the bitterness will come to the surface, with serious public implications."

Adds a government official whose parents immigrated to Israel from Baghdad, and who asked not to be named in this article, "Sephardim will say that Israel didn't want to bring them in the first place, that it then put them in transit camps, then in development towns - and that now we're being used as a bargaining chip. This will create an explosion. I can't say how big. But it will."

Barak's Labour Party is particularly vulnerable to Sephardi rage. Soon after taking over the party leadership in 1997, in an effort to rid Labour of its elitist, Ashkenazi image, Barak issued a formal apology to Sephardi immigrants for what he acknowledged was the suffering and lack of respect they endured here at the hands of the Labour governments of the 1950's. He owed his election victory last May, in no small part, to the defection of thousands of traditionally Likud-voting Sephardim. A misstep on the restitution issue could aggravate old wounds.

In the eyes of some Sephardim who live abroad, the linkage equation is especially alarming. Even though they chose not to make their homes in Israel, they are now facing the possibility of their restitution claims being cancelled out in Israel-Palestinian negotiations. Why, they ask, should they, of all people, cover the cost of Palestinian losses?

Professor Heskel Haddad, in New York, says he had to leave Iraq "illegally" in 1950 as a young man, and that his parents followed - "leaving behind our house in Baghdad, my father's plumbing business."

It would be a terrible injustice to let countries like Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Yemen and Morocco get off scot-free. "They owe us a debt. They should be made to pay it. They shouldn't be let off the hook because Israel wants to make peace with the Palestinians in a hurry."

Deborah Srour, a 37 year old New York lawyer, chuckles incredulously at the thought that the Israeli government wants to bargain away the casino her grandfather owned in Cairo. King Farouk used to gamble there, she says, along with other celebrities like singer Um Kalthoum. In 1950, she says, her

grandfather was arrested on suspicion of allowing Israeli spies to operate in the casino, and then forced to leave Egypt. After Israel and Egypt made peace in 1979, she and her grandfather travelled to Cairo, and found that the casino building had become an office of the Moslem Brotherhood.

"We're Zionists. We'll do anything for Israel", she says. "But this is like a stab in our back. How can the government of Israel bargain away something it has no jurisdiction over?"

But other Sephardim overseas are willing to have the lost Jewish property used as a bargaining chip. Take the American Sephardi Federation's Levy, who was more than happy to oblige when, earlier this year, he was approached by Israeli government officials and asked to help run the registration drive. The Israelis, he recalls, were "alarmed by the sophisticated search that the Palestinians were undertaking. They wanted to be able to balance those Palestinian claims."

WOJAC was set up in 1975 precisely to push Sephardi claims, but with no conspicuous results.

The Camp David framework agreements, signed in 1978 by Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin, did provide for a "Claim Committee for the mutual settlement of all financial claims" between Israel and Egypt. But Israel has never pursued the matter with the Egyptian government; it may be that Israel feared undermining the delicate diplomatic relationship.

But if the details were lacking, the principle of "linkage" was already being set in place. In a 1951 address to the Knesset, after Iraq nationalised Jewish property, foreign minister Moshe Sharett declared, "An account already exists between us and the Arab world: the account of compensation that accrues to the Arabs who left the territory of Israel and abandoned their property...The act that has now been perpetrated by the Kingdom of Iraq...forces us to link the two accounts...We will take into account the value of the Jewish property that has been frozen in Iraq when calculating the compensation that we have undertaken to pay the Arabs who abandoned property in Israel."

This policy, aimed at offsetting Palestinian refugee claims, has remained consistent over the years.

Diaspora affairs adviser Brown says that the issue took on real importance 18 months ago, when it became clear that the Palestinians were

hard at work compiling their own property register for use in the final status talks. "We knew," says Brown, "that this would be the time to put our claims on the table."

Without going into detail, Brown adds that, if the mutual claims are ultimately written off against each other, Israel will have to "find a way to provide compensation to the Sephardim."

For Shas's David Tal, that vague commitment represents the best hope of preventing an outburst of Sephardi anger over the issue. "If Israel resolves this issues with the Arab world, that's fine. But that's not the end of the account. Israel would then have to give some compensation to the Sephardim. I don't want to draw comparisons, but the Jews who fled Germany and Eastern Europe got compensation. That money helped them establish themselves here. The Jews who fled Arab lands have never got anything."

### Naim Dangoor writes:

The assets I left behind in Iraq comprise among other things the following:

A match factory.

A large furniture factory imported complete from England.

Half share in Dry Cleaning company.

Shares in many industries.

Half share of two freehold blocks of flats in 1.5 acres of prime land in Baghdad.

Half share in various houses.

An office building in the business district.

Half share in a 1,000 Dunum farmland not far from Baghdad.

At the depressed level of 150,000 Dinars for all the above, that amount would have grown now to \$5 million.

In Judaism we believe that riches are a gift from G-d, so I abandoned it all back into His care, and was not disappointed.

## WORRY

Why do we worry?

We worry because our mind is trying to find a solution to a problem,  
We should give it a chance and wait for it to come up with a solution.

## ASSETS LEFT BEHIND BY JEWS AND PALESTINIANS

by Naim Dangoor

As a major potential claimant for my assets in Iraq and on behalf of thousands of Iraqi readers of my Journal, The Scribe, I wish to make the following statement:

In 1951, Foreign Minister Moshe Sharet stated in the Knesset that when the time comes to settle Palestinian claims for property they left behind, account will be taken of Jewish assets left in Iraq.

**Q.1** Since Israel admits holding substantial Palestinian assets, the Israeli Government should be able to pay Iraqi immigrants something on account. Repeated approaches elicited the reply that no payment can be made to the Iraqi immigrants since billions were spent on resettling them in Israel.

**Q.2** Is Israel justified in charging Iraqi immigrants for three years of squalor in tents and transit camps, while later immigrants from other countries were given the red carpet treatment?

**Q.3** The above position can only apply to Iraqi immigrants who came to Israel. What about the thousands who went to Europe and America, whose potential claims are more substantial? How can their confiscated assets be cancelled against the Palestinian assets?

If Israel succeeds in setting-off Palestinian assets on the strength of Jewish assets left in Iraq and other Arab countries, the net result would be that Israel will have confiscated Jewish assets, and makes a present to Saddam and others of Palestinian assets in Israel.

However, Palestinian claims will not go away, they amount to hundreds of billions. Israel will have to pay them something in the end, but will have lost in the process all Jewish claims.

Jewish claims must include our share of the mineral wealth of our countries of origin. These can amount to astronomical sums. At the first WOJAC conference in Paris in 1975, this principle was endorsed and adopted and must not be overlooked. Justice demands that individual claims must be recognised, if only on paper for the time being.



Above - Prime Minister Ehud Barak greeting Mr Naim Dangoor who had forcibly stated the strong case of territorial and financial Jewish claims on Iraq.

## COMPENSATION FOR JEWS OF ARAB COUNTRIES

For fifty years while Palestinian refugees were drumming up their right of return to their homes and their right for compensation in accordance with UN security council resolution 242 and 338, claims by Jewish refugees from Arab countries fell on deaf ears. Even WOJAC, the world organisation of Jews from Arab countries, which was established with so much fanfare some thirty years ago, turned out to be no more than a tool in the hands of the Israeli government in an attempt to bury the rights of Jewish refugees as a way of cancelling Palestinian claims.

But now with America getting more and more involved in the Middle East peace process, plans for establishing an international fund to pay compensation to both Jews and Palestinians are being talked about quite seriously.

President Clinton has said in an interview on Israeli Television that the failed Camp David summit, at least brought good news for the more than 580,000 Jews who immigrated to Israel from Arab countries. Palestinian negotiators agreed that these Jewish refugees should be compensated for the property they left behind or were forced to give up, he said, apparently by a kind of international fund suggested in Clinton's remarks.

Now the cat is out of the cellophane bag. If the compensation is forthcoming, it could help the Israeli government sell a peace deal package to voters of Middle Eastern and North African origin, who are a slight majority among Israelis. They are also largely right-wing and usually suspicious of prospective agreements with Arabs. "It will be very important", says Justice

Minister Yossi Beilin. "It could help people accept the agreement. It would be something tangible."

Jews all over the Arab world faced persecution, fear and anti-Semitic attacks after the establishment of Israel in 1948. Community ties that were 2,000 years old packed up en-masse in the following few years and moved to Israel. Some of the expulsions were accompanied by government seizures of property, from the Iraqi regime in 1951 to Muammar Gaddafi's Libya in 1972.

It is clear, therefore, that the promise of compensation is no more than a carrot, a bribe, dangled in front of Mizrahi Jews to enable them to swallow the bitter pill of the peace process now being negotiated, after which the Arabs will keep asking for more and more.

Where did Israel go wrong? Since the establishment of the State in 1948, Israel fought several major wars not with the Palestinians but with the neighbouring Arab countries. There can be no lasting peace in the Middle East unless all these Arab countries are dragged to the conference table and made to bear their share of a peace settlement.

Old Yemtob in Baghdad had a cock who used to perch on a high wall and crow loudly in the early morning. His owner used to remonstrate with him saying "Lo beek khair unzel Jawa" meaning "if you are brave come down and shout". Mubarak and Assad, Fahad and Saddam, Gaddafi and Lebanon are all prompting Arafat not to soften his demands. They should all be made to take part in the sacrifices that have to be made in achieving a just and lasting peace.

From Time Magazine

## CLAIMS OF JEWS FROM ARAB COUNTRIES

Letter to Mr Abraham D Sofaer in California

Dear Mr Sofaer,

You may remember that we met a few years ago at 25 Albert Hall Mansions, when we discussed the claims of Jews from Arab countries. At that time you did not want to move against Israel's policy of setting off Jewish claims against Palestinian claims. Now things have changed, and it appears that even Arafat admits that Jews from Arab lands have as much right to compensation as do Palestinians. President Clinton himself has said "That's another piece of the good news that I think I can reveal that came out of the summit.....The Palestinians thought those people should be eligible for compensation as well."

Assuming, therefore, that both Palestinians as well as Jews who immigrated to Israel from Arab countries will get some kind of compensation, this still leaves Jewish refugees from Arab countries who did not settle in Israel, and this needs perhaps a special attention to advance their claim for compensation.

These people are perhaps the wealthier section of the community and the total amount of their claims can be very substantial. I for one can easily substantiate a claim for \$5 million of lost assets to which one may add the general benefits we were deprived of in our country in which we lived for tens of centuries. The climate for pursuing such claims has never been more favourable and I wonder if you would now reconsider whether you are willing to take up this matter at an early stage so that our voice can be heard together with the others in this regard.

With warm regards.

Yours sincerely

**Naim Dangoor**

20 August 2000

Dear Mr Dangoor,

I remember very well the lovely evening I had with you and your family and friends in London. The situation has indeed changed, and the time may be ripe for action on the claims issue.

I talked last week with Ben Porat in Israel about your letter, and he and his colleagues also agree that

something should be done.

The problems are numerous, but the biggest is getting some person and team committed to the project. Recoveries from the Swiss banks, and the German companies and government, were made possible because lawyers were given authority to represent groups of Jews, and they brought cases and worked with the US government to bring about the pressures necessary for settlements to occur. I am prepared to round up a team, but you and the community would have to commit to that team or they would not be willing to work on a contingent basis to bring about a recovery.

Let me know what you think. Meanwhile, I will let you know the next time I am in London.

**Hoover Institution on War-Revolution and Peace      Abraham D Sofaer  
Stanford University      George P Shultz Senior Fellow**

Further letter to Mr Sofaer:

Dear Abraham,

Thank you for your interesting letter of 20 August and I am glad to note it may now be possible to take action regarding compensation. My comments are as follows:

**1. Mordechai Ben Porat's area of claim would be for Jews who settled in Israel. Mine concerns Jews who never went to Israel but who now live in Europe or America.**

**2. How do you plan to go about it? Will it be through the peace process, through the Israeli government, the US government, the United Nations or perhaps even to sue the Iraqi government.**

**3. What are our chances of success?**

**4. What amounts are we talking about? If the claims would be for houses and businesses, etc that would not amount to very much. The ideal would be to claim a share of Iraq which was left behind by our community which was very prosperous and very active in Iraq's economy. That would more than match the billions claimed by the Palestinians.**

**5. Will this exercise end up in a set-off of**

one claim against another?

**6. What sort of initial commitment are you looking for, for the bulk benefit to the lawyers will have to be by a percentage of the amount achieved. This principle of "no win, no pay" is quite common in America.**

I look forward to meeting you again on your next visit to London.

**Naim Dangoor**

**Historical note:** US Judge Abraham Sofaer served for five years as Legal Adviser to Secretary of State, James A Baker and George P Shultz, up to June 1990. He participated in all military actions taken by the United States against terrorism, the settlement of the Taba dispute between Israel and Egypt. He visited Baghdad in connection with the claim against Iraq for attacking the U.S.S. Stark.

## PALESTINIAN REFUGEES

Last November, Prime Minister Ehud Barak came to London on an official visit. Some 15 community leaders were invited to his hotel to an 'around the table' briefing by Mr Barak and his numerous advisors.

Mr Barak touched on the question of Palestinian refugees by stating categorically the official view of his government that there was 50 years ago an exchange of refugees - the near million Palestinian Arabs who left Israel mainly at the instigation of the Arab governments and the near million Jewish refugees who were driven out from Arab countries by persecution and harassment. This is a fact of life that cannot be assailed. There is no question that Jews can safely return en masse to their ancient homes, and, likewise, there is no case to require that Israel should allow Palestinian Arabs to return to Israel and upset the precarious demographic balance of the country.

However, for some unknown reason, the government of Israel refuses to state this publicly, thus encouraging the Palestinians to make a strong public relations issue of their demands as well as of wanting to use Jerusalem as the Capital of Palestine which should never be entertained even if it means not coming to a final agreement with the Palestinians or with Syria.

## MORDECHAI BEN-PORAT AVE



### UNVEILING CEREMONY AT OR-YEHUDA

Hundreds of Or-Yehuda citizens, as well as many other guests, participated in the unveiling ceremony of Mordechai Ben-Porat Ave and Moreshet (Heritage) Square that took place last November at the Babylonian Jewry Center square. Also participated in the ceremony the Mayor of Or-Yehuda - Lawyer Itzhak Buchovza and the "Or-Yehuda Youth Choir" that opened with the song "It's not a dream".

The Mayor said: " It is not customary to commemorate a living person but it is written in the Holy books 'After reaching Jubilee it's allowed to touch'. therefore, I decided that it's only appropriate, especially today, to express the appreciation we have for the history that Mordechai Ben-Porat generated in Or-Yehuda when he established a remarkable town out of a muddy soil and the tents site of Chiriya & Zakkia refugee camps, until what has become of the city of Or-Yehuda today.

Mr Ben-Porat was the first council leader during the years 1955-1969 an he built it all out of nothingness". Mr Buchovza added and said: "Mordechai Ben-Porat contributed enormously to the shaping and the establishing of the Jewish people heritage

and was the centre pillar and the main wheeler of "Operation Ezra & Nehemia", an operation that happens once in 2000 years.

The honouree of the event, Mr Mordechai Ben-Porat said: "I pinch myself to make sure that I am alive because I am used to participate in ceremonies honouring the dead and here I am, standing in front of you". He added and said: "We, the people who lived then in Or-Yehuda, were the first to arrange rides for youth so that they can attend high schools in Petach Tikva and Ramat Gan."

Mordechai Ben-Porat also said: "The Babylonian Jewry Center and the Museum are the diamond of the culture and the symbol of Or-Yehuda - facing all the restaurants in the city. So far, over 260,000 Israelis visited the center, of which 110,000 are youth. This is an accomplishment that enables us all to be proud of, thanks to over 2600 years of heritage, history that connects Israel to Babel for many generations".

As it is publicly known, Mr Ben-Porat had many public functions in Israel, such as a Knesset Member and a Minister in Menachem Begin's government, alongside Mr Moshe Dayan.

**Eran Yoels** The Babylonian Jewry Center  
PR Dept

## THE BABYLONIAN JEWRY HERITAGE CENTER

Beit Hatefuzot in Ramat Aviv is no longer the only museum in Israel dedicated to the Jewish Diaspora. Since 1988, it has been joined by the attractive, well organized and highly informative Babylonian Jewry Museum. This fascinating institution should become a regular stop on visits to Israel.

In the early 1970's, former MK Mordechai Ben-Porat, who had played a major role in bringing the Iraqi Jewish community to Israel after the establishment of the State, proposed the idea of a Babylonian Jewish Heritage Center to the Or Yehuda Council (a town located ten minutes north of Ben-Gurion Airport). The Iraqi-born Ben-Porat was serving at the time as the head of the Council, and his proposal was confirmed. The idea was to establish a museum and a research center devoted to the study and dissemination of information about the first and for many years most influential Disaporan Jewish community. The cornerstone was laid in 1973, the academic council began its research in 1977 and the museum was opened to the public in 1988.

The Babylonian Jewry Museum provides a fascinating overview of the 2,500 years of Jewish history and culture in Babylon (modern-day Iraq).

### OPERATION EZRA & NEHEMIAH

From 1950-52, Operation Ezra and Nehemiah brought almost all the Iraqi Jews to Israel, first by way of Cyprus, then directly to Israel. More than 110,000 people made aliyah. By 1967 only 3,000 Jews remained in Iraq. Today less than 60 Jews remain, all of whom live in Baghdad.

We love receiving the Scribe and thank you very much for a wonderful tribute to our Baghdadi community. I learn something new each time and look forward to the next issue.

Do you know if the Baghdadi community has published a book about dream interpretations? I would love to get a copy; if not maybe we can start compiling one!

New York      Samira Galler (née Balass)

## TIES BETWEEN THE JEWS OF ALEPOO AND OF IRAQ IN THE 18th CENTURY

Abridged from *Nehardea* (Autumn 1999)

In Iraq in the 14th-17th centuries there was a spiritual as well as a demographic and economic decline. This was caused by the Mongol conquests, starting from the 13th century, but chiefly in the 14th and 15th, leading to the abandonment of the region by its inhabitants.

By contrast, the Jewish community of Aleppo in that period underwent no degeneration but the opposite. The exile from Spain brought new forces to Aleppo, which burgeoned and became fortified in spirit, organization, and economy.

From the start of the 18th century the Jewish community of Iraq underwent very significant developments in demography, as more and more Jews entered the region of the Iraqi delta, Basra, and Baghdad. The Ottoman conquest of Iraq in 1638 brought about stability to the region and encouraged Jews to settle there.

The region from Baghdad southwards, namely the Iraqi delta and the Persian Gulf, had been closed to commerce for centuries. The trade route from the Far East to the Persian Gulf and thence to Basra and Aleppo was sealed by the Portuguese who ruled the area. They stationed warships and cannon at the entry to the Persian Gulf with the aim of controlling the trade route between the Indies and Europe. The Portuguese were followed by the Dutch and the French, and only during the 18th century did the British gain mastery of the shipping in the Indian Ocean. It was they who reopened the trade route from India via Basra, the Euphrates river or the Western Desert to Aleppo, and thence to the Mediterranean, Palestine, Egypt, and Europe.

These factors led to the economic growth of Iraq, and Basra and Baghdad became increasingly populated.

There are data from the 18th century attesting to a strong connection with Aleppo. Both local and foreign sources that I found in the archives of the powers that ruled the region then, namely Britain and France, provide proof that Jews from Aleppo reached Iraq, mainly Basra and Baghdad, and assumed very important functions in the community. At this time Rabbi Sadka Bekhor Hussin of

Aleppo was invited to Baghdad by the Jews there. Asked why they turned to a rabbi from Aleppo when they could have approached Istanbul, the Jews of Baghdad turned to Aleppo and not to Istanbul because of the stronger ties with Aleppo.

**Scribe:** The reasons why the Jews of Baghdad turned to Aleppo rather than to Constantinople were:

1. that Aleppo was so much nearer to Baghdad
2. that the Jews of Baghdad and Aleppo were Arabic speaking, as also were the immigrants from Spain, whereas the community in Constantinople spoke Turkish

In time, the movement between Aleppo and Baghdad became a two-way traffic, with Baghdad gradually becoming the dominant partner. So much so that in the Far East the term "Baghdadi Jews" came to refer not only to Jews from Iraq but also to Jews from India, Persia, Syria and even the Yemen. Communities in most of these areas turned to Baghdadi Rabbis for answers to various religious enquiries.

The reason why the Portuguese closed the route through the Persian Gulf, was to promote the sea route round the Cape which had been discovered by the Portuguese Vasco de Gama and was entirely under their control.

## JEWS AND ARABS UNITED BY GENES

taken from *The Times* 9 May 2000

Jews and Arabs are extremely closely related, a new genetic survey has shown.

Wherever in the world they now live, Jewish men carry the same Y chromosome as Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese.

"Jews and Arabs are all really children of Abraham and all have preserved their Middle Eastern genetic roots over 4,000 years," said one of the scientists involved. Harry Ostrer, director of the Human Genetics Programme at New York University School of Medicine. The team analysed regions of the Y chromosome in 1,371 men from 29 populations worldwide. The Y chromosome passes largely unchanged down the male line.

The results, published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, show that the difference

between Jewish and Arab populations is extremely small, considerably smaller than that between North and South African populations, for example. The study confirms that both Arabs and Jews owe their genes to a common ancestor population that predated the Jewish religion.

A second conclusion is that the Jews have maintained their genetic heritage to a remarkable degree, given the Jewish diaspora and the long isolation of small Jewish populations in many places.

"Because Jewish religious affiliation is assigned maternally, our study afforded the opportunity to assess the contribution of non-Jewish men to present-day Jewish genetic diversity," said Michael Hammer, the study leader. "It was surprising to see how significant the Middle Eastern genetic signal was in Jewish men from different communities in the diaspora," he said.

The latest human chromosome to be deciphered in full suggests that human beings may have many fewer genes than previously supposed. Chromosome 21 contains only 225 active genes. The finding suggests that the entire complement of human genes may total nearer 40,000 rather than the previous estimates of between 70,000 and 140,000.

Huge areas consist of apparently worthless DNA. In one stretch of seven million base pairs (the letters of the genetic alphabet), a stretch longer than the entire genome of *E.coli*, there is only a single gene. The full sequence of Chromosome 21 is published online today by *Nature*.

**Scribe:** It is now clear that the Arab is our brother, and we have no other.

## Actions speak louder than words

It is what we do that really matters, not just what we say.

## A bad workman always blames his tools

Good workmanship depends no more on the quality of the tools than it does on the way in which they are used, so to blame the tools for bad workmanship is to attempt to excuse one's own lack of skill.



The exterior of the Iraqi Synagogue called Babylonian Jewish Centre - in Great Neck N.Y. fully described on page 15 No. 72.

## MY VISIT TO INDIA

by: Mordechai Ben-Porat

Abridged from "Nehardea" No. 12

The trip began on February 1999 on an El-Al flight to Bombay, now Mumbai.

We met the President of the Baghdad Jewish Community, Mr Solomon Sopher, who had remained in Bombay and who also serves as the Trustee of the David Sassoon Fund. He is a pleasant, kindly man who has a great deal of energy and who devotes much of his time to the service of the community. He is also the Cantor for the Magen David Synagogue in Mumbai.

The Israeli Consul in Mumbai, Mr Walid Mansur, is a Druse who has served many years in the Israeli Defence Forces and was retired as a Brigadier General. He is well loved by the Jewish Community and has a great understanding of them. On the Sabbath, I visited the Eliahu Synagogue with Mr Mansur. There were about three minyans and a similar number of women. Among the men were representatives of the American Joint who had come for the dedication of a new building for the Jewish Community. In Mumbai there are about fifty people of Baghdadi origin who were born in India. In all of India there are some 5,000 "Bnei Yisrael". In this Synagogue, in the 1950's there were about 700 worshippers. In those days the Bnei Yisrael were not a part of the Baghdadi community but today the Baghdadi Jews are very much helped by the Jews of "Bnei Yisrael" in many ways.

We visited the library named for David Sassoon, the Sassoon family has about 17 trust funds. At the entrance to the library is a statue of David Sassoon and many things written about him. Then

we visited the Magen David Synagogue.

We visited Miss Sophy Kelly who used to be the wealthiest person among the Jews of Bombay but is today in painfully straightened circumstances.

In Poona we went to the Ohel David Synagogue, an impressive structure, within and without. In Poona there are three Baghdadi families. It is heartbreaking to see how badly the Synagogue was burned, together with the Torah Scrolls, by Iranian ruffians who broke in through a window one night and set fire to the building. This was during the Gulf War when missiles were being fired on Israel.

In Calcutta we visited the old and beautiful Magen David Synagogue with the President of the Community Mr David Nahoum. From there we proceeded to the Beit El Synagogue. This synagogue has a ritual bath, an oven for baking matzot and a winery for preparing raisin wine. Outside the synagogue is an area for erecting a tabernacle (succah). Inside there are some twenty Torah Scrolls. Mr Nahoum told me in great distress that in order to save what is left of the Community's property there is a plan to turn it all over to the care of the government: it will then be designated as a protected site.

There are still about 60 Jews in Calcutta and all are over 65 years of age. Each week on Erev Shabbat, prayer services are held, alternating between the Synagogues.

On our return to Mumbai, we were invited by Mr Sopher for Friday night kiddush and dinner. He invited 12 guests, and there were 15 varieties of food well-loved by those from Iraq.

**Scribe:** Mr Ben-Porat's visit to Hong Kong, Singapore and Australia in March

1998 and his visit to India in February 1999 can be regarded as a sequel to the historic visit of the well-known 12th century Jewish traveller, Benjamin of Tudela, who over 14 years journeyed through Europe and the Middle East to record the life and activities of Jewish communities there.

In the case of Mr Ben-Porat his travel had a happy ending in that he married his secretary soon afterwards (see photograph Scribe No. 72, page 30).

## PALESTINIAN POPULATION GROWS AT UNRIVALLED RATE

from *New York Times*

Sent in by Salim Khabbaza - Great Neck, NY

The population explosion in the Palestinian-governed Gaza Strip appears to be unrivalled in the world. Its population of 1.1 million - half under 15 - is expected to double by 2014, which would pose almost unimaginable strains on what is already a highly congested area with few jobs, severely inadequate housing and almost no natural resources. (The current population of just over 3 million in the West Bank and Gaza combined is expected to rise to 5.5 million by then).

Gaza's extremely high fertility rate of seven children per woman is comparable to Somalia's or Uganda's. But unlike those countries, almost all the babies survive and adults live a relatively long life, fuelling a boom that is now forcing difficult choices on Palestinians and their leaders.

Family planning is a central issue in Gaza - central, at least, to many young Palestinians who say they do not want their children to suffer as they did in oversized poor families. But, for the young Palestinian government, with its conservative, male-dominated Islamic society, family planning is culturally sensitive and politically complex. Large families are not only traditional but a point of nationalist pride.

For the five year old Palestinian Authority, the population issue has been a challenge, although one that has not been publicly acknowledged. Officially, Palestinian leaders have long advocated population growth as a way to outnumber the Israelis on the land the two groups share.

## MIDRASH BEN ISH HAI

I enclose as promised, the report of the commemoration by Midrash Ben Ish Hai in New York of the 90th Anniversary of Hakham Josef Hayyim, with three photographs taken on the occasion.

London

Rachel Manasseh

The **Yom Hillula** of Morenu Rabbenu Hakham Yosef Hayyim 'a'h was commemorated at a special event held by **Midrash Ben Ish Hai** on 13 Elul 5759, the 24th August 1999 in New York. Members of the Hakham's family came especially from Geneva and Montreal, with guests and friends from England, Canada and the United States. A crowded audience, including a number of Rabbis, gathered to pay tribute.

Mr Naim Levy from Montreal and Mr Jouri Lawi from Geneva, great grandsons of the Ben Ish Hai - as Hakham Yosef Hayyim is known, after his most famous work - both addressed the gathering with deep emotion. While some of the elder members of the family were unable to come and were missed, some of the younger generation were present, and all were together in spirit. Mr Salman Abraham, also a great grandson, and family were also present. The brothers Jack David and Joseph Hayyim David in London, known as "Beit el Hakham", great grandsons from the male line, though unable to come, appeared on video addressing the audience each with a special message from the life of Hakham Yosef Hayyim, 'a'h.

Dr Samuel E Moshe presented the packed programme, and related several stories from the life of the Ben Ish Hai. The **Midrash Ben Ish Hai choir** directed by Rabbi Ya'aqob Menashe - ages ranging from 7 to 70! - presented a lively selection of some of the many *shbahoth* (*pizmonim*) written by Hakham Yosef Hayyim, with a specially prepared music accompaniment, and was enthusiastically applauded. One guest in the audience even telephoned her father in Brazil during the performance so that he could hear the *shbahoth* being sung!

Videos were shown, courtesy of Mr Jouri Lawi, of his participation in a Hillula a few years ago in Jerusalem - reciting *Qaddish* at the memorial grave at the Mount of Olives and the blessing of

**Continued on following page**



Left to right:

Abdallah and Francine Simon; Naim Levy; Jouri Lawi, his son Roget Lawi; Hakham Ya'aqob with Rabbanith Ruth Menashe



Reciting the Hashkabah prayer for Hakham Yosef Hayyim

Standing in front row from left to right: Jouri Lawi; Salim Abraham; Naim Levy; (great grandsons of Hakham Yosef Hayyim) and Hakham Ya'aqob Menashe



The Midrash Ben Ish Hai Men and Boys' Choir under the direction of Hakham Ya'aqob Menashe, performing Shbahoth and pismonim penned by Hakham Yosef Hayyim, the Ben Ish Hai

the Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu at Hekhal Shelomo. Hazzan Hayim Salman who had come from Israel for the occasion rendered a song he had especially composed in the Iraqi tradition in honour of Hakham Yosef Hayyim, the Ben Ish Hai. A video presentation of Rabbi Sinai Halberstam, supporter and guide of Midrash Ben Ish Hai since its inception, stressed the universal regard for Hakham Yosef Hayyim 'a'h not only in Babylonian and Sephardi communities but also in Western and Hassidic Jewry.

Rabbi Ya'aqob Menashe spoke quietly and feelingly of the long regard for the Ben Ish Hai he had imbibed from his father, and the special choice of the name when founding his Midrash over ten years ago. Then followed the lighting of candles and *Qaddish* recited by the three grandsons present, Mr Naim Levy and Mr Joory Lawi, and Mr Salman Abraham, and the *Hashkaba* by Rabbi Ya'aqob Menashe. The warmth and deep reverence was felt by all the standing audience.

The wonderful atmosphere of the evening was enhanced by the songs and music of the times, the much appreciated Baghidian catering of Mr Aodi Zilkha and a display of the life and works of Hakham Yosef Hayyim especially prepared by Mr Hayim Habousha. The Hillula reflected the organisational expertise of the Hillula committee and the care and devotion of Rabbi Ya'aqob Menashe and Rabbanith Ruth Menashe. As our guests remarked, "It was beyond all expectations" - a fine tribute to the living heritage of our great spiritual leader and sage, Hakham Yosef Hayyim 'a'h, the Ben Ish Hai.

**To: Friends and Supporters of the International Sephardic Educational and Cultural Center (SEC), a Center for all Jews**

**From: Jose A Nessim, M.D.  
Founder and President**

This report is to update you on what is happening at the SEC in Jerusalem, as well as the branches in the Diaspora. The success is unequal in contemporary Sephardic history. For 21 continuous years we are becoming larger, better and stronger.

In February 1999 after negotiating for years with a great deal of



24 November 1958 - Picture taken in Baghdad at a birthday party for Abe Yousef Dali. One is reminded of the school song, "Forty years on when far and asunder parted are those who are singing today".

difficulty, we purchased the three historical buildings we had been leasing for twenty years from the Government of Israel for \$7.5 million payable over three years. We have been paying on time except for one of the payments that was due last April for \$1.1 million. Unfortunately, we were only able to raise \$350,000 by the due date. We are doing everything in our power to awaken and energise the 1.5 million Sephardim living in the Diaspora so that we can complete the payments and avoid risking the loss of this campus to the many other Jewish organisations who are clamouring for the opportunity to bid on this phenomenal piece of real estate in the heart of Jerusalem.

The SEC needs you and everyone you know to make this building campaign smooth and successful. The architectural plans call for a complete renovation of the campus that will make it a world class centre attracting people from around the world, whether on one of our programs or simply touring Jerusalem. The SEC will soon be the beautiful gateway to the Jewish Quarter and the Western Wall.

Aside from the physical premises, the SEC is now a world Jewish movement that is tolerant, not judgmental, and has enriched the lives of tens of thousands of young people around the world. To get better acquainted, please go to the internet and look up [www.secworldwide.org](http://www.secworldwide.org). Specialised programmes for all sizes of groups can be arranged with the SEC's experienced

staff of educators. The Centre is open year around and is ready to meet the needs of your community - whether it be in Jerusalem or in your own city.

Celebrating a Bar Mitzvah at the Kotel, which is just steps away from the Centre, is an experience that is unforgettable and can be arranged by the SEC staff. In September we begin an accredited One Year Programme in conjunction with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

In Diaspora the branches continue to flourish and we have lectures, shabbatons and yearly conventions in North and South America. Over 600 married couples have met at our activities over the years, and now form young married groups in their communities.

Opportunities are now available for you to have your name inscribed in these buildings in Jerusalem for as little as \$1,000.00. We invite and expect everyone to participate in this special project that will keep alive the legacy of our parents in a place they always dreamed of and mentioned in their daily meditations.

Remember that our only goal is to unite and organise the 1.5 million Sephardim living in the Diaspora in order to create the necessary organisational structure that will ensure the Jewish survival of our children and their descendants. All Jews are invited to join this noble and sacred cause. For more information, please e-mail us at [secforever@aol.com](mailto:secforever@aol.com) or visit us on the web at [www.secworldwide.org](http://www.secworldwide.org).

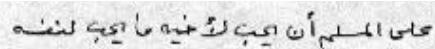
## YEHUDI MENUHIN AND THE NAZIS

Perhaps the reason why, unlike Jascha Heifetz, Yehudi Menuhin was not averse to appearing in Germany and playing under a Nazi conductor, and that Menuhin was not a Rabbanite but a Karaite Jew.

During the war the Nazis did not harass the Karaites, and gave them complete freedom to practice their religion and carry on with their lives. They apparently had a certificate from Cathryn the Great that they were not ethnic Jews and were tolerated in Russia, while the other Jews underwent recurrent pogroms. (See Scribe No. 63).

The Karaite movement began in Baghdad in the 8th Century by Anan Ben David and was the Spiritual successor to the Sadducees, whose party were paradoxically in power in Judah at the time of Jesus.

## MOHAMMED GOT IT RIGHT Continuation of Thoughts & Afterthoughts



Much has been written about the Golden Rule, namely, "Love thy neighbour as thyself". But this is a tall order, as no-one can love a neighbour, less so a stranger, as oneself. Moreover, this is not what the Bible says. The words are - VE AHAVTA LE REAKHA KAMOKHA, and not ETHREAKHA. In other words, the true meaning of the Golden Rule is to wish for your neighbour or even for a stranger as you wish for yourself.

It appears that the true meaning got lost in the translation from Hebrew to Greek and from Greek to other languages. But the Koran got it spot-on; it says,  
(a Moslem has to desire for his brother as he desires for himself).

It is interesting to note that this Arabic dictum is one of the versions of the Golden Rule inscribed on the walls in the Religion Section of the Millennium Dome.

On the occasion of the death of President Hafez al Asad, we publish the above picture which shows the Syrian dictator shaking hands and welcoming the Chief of the Syrian Jewish Community Council, Yousef Kh. Jajati, who gave us this photograph on a visit to London a few years ago.

## MILLENNIUM DOME, FAITH ZONE

Quotations from the Faith in the Future section

### Baha'i

"Blessed is he who preferreth his brother before himself." - Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah, 71

### Buddhist

"Do not hurt others that which hurts yourself." - The Buddha

### Christian

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." - Matthew 7.v12

### Hindu

"This is the sum of duty: do nothing to others which would cause you pain if done to you." - Mahabharata, XIII:114

### Jain

"In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self." - Mahavira

### Jewish

"What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man. That is the law: all the rest is commentary." - Talmud, Shabbat 31a

### Muslim

"No-one of you is a (true) believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself." - Prophet Muhammad

### Sikh

"Don't create enmity with anyone as G-d is within all." - Guru Granth Sahib p. 258

### Zoroastrian

"That nature only is good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self." - Dadistan-i-Dinik, 94.5

The Arabic paper *Free Iraq* published in London, has re-printed in its October issue 1999 an Arabic translation of the last letter which the late Sasson Dallal wrote to his brother David the night before his execution.

That moving letter appeared on page 25 of The Scribe No. 71. It reflected the strong character of the writer and his devotion to freedom, democracy and peace.

## REVIVING THE DEAD

In our thrice daily prescribed prayers, and on all other occasions, we bless our Creator for various mercies, adding, "Blessed art thou O Lord who revives the dead". Where is the evidence? Most people take this blessing with a grain of salt, perhaps as a later insertion to promote the Religion and as a sop for people's sensitivity. Thus, it is noteworthy that people never bow at this blessing, as they do for all other blessings.

Thus, when Rabbi Ezra Basri, Chief Justice of Jerusalem, offered to write an article for The Scribe, I readily asked him to write an article on the revival of the dead as appears in our liturgy. What he wrote was taken from mythology and as he would readily appreciate, could not be accepted as an evidence in a Court of Justice.

However, thinking again and again about the subject myself, I came to what may be a proper answer and a satisfactory explanation.

The answer is in the question or, perhaps, in the bones of the dead. The Bible tells us how our ancestors were very careful to preserve the bones of their dead and to carry them with them when they journeyed to other destinations, such as when the children of Israel carried with them the bones of Joseph when they left Egypt. They knew that the remains were merely bones and yet they attached great importance to them.

The Prophet Ezekiel when visiting a mound of bones in Babylon asked himself, "can these bones really come to life again?"

It appears that the Persians and Babylonians, at that time used this method of burial in the open so that vultures would pick off the flesh and leave only the bones as the valuable remains of the deceased, and thereby avoiding polluting Mother Earth and the environment. Likewise, Jewish religion does not allow cremation so as not to destroy the personal identity of the deceased.

Science has now demonstrated that each individual has a specific number consisting of millions of digits. A milestone has recently been achieved, considered to be the most important of all time in discovering and tabulating the complete human genome. From this it follows that eventually a dead person may be recreated from the DNA taken from his bones. Isn't that fulfilment of G-d's promise of the future revival of the dead?

My father once told me when I was very very young, that his grandfather who lived in Baghdad was the Hakham Abraham Sofaer and that my mother's grandfather was the Hakham Haron Aghasi of Iraq and the surrounding areas. And that Hakham Aghasi was so well-known and respected that when he died, a large part of the Middle East neighbouring Iraq went into mourning.

I am 83 years of age and before I leave this earthly domain, I shall be most grateful if you could enlighten me as to who were these two great gentlemen.

For your information, the actor Abraham Sofaer, who died not so long ago in the USA was my cousin. His father and my father were brothers. Also, the ex-Judge Abraham Sofaer who ruled on Ariel Sharon's case against the "Time" publishers, is my nephew, my elder brother David's son.

I thank you for all the issues of The Scribe you have been sending me which as a source of information and comfort I could now never do without.

#### **Shoresh, Israel Sassoon MeyerSofaer**

**Scribe:** For full information please refer to the book entitled "Yehude Babel" by Dr Abraham Ben Yaacob. We have also sent you some information on Hakham Shimon Haron Aghassi Ben Aba Ben Aba taken from Yehudé Babel by Dr Ben Abraham Yaacob and from Quez Hayamim - history of Babylonian Rabbis Ancient and Modern.

I enclose an article which appeared in the American Jewish paper "Yated NE'EMAN about my grandfather (my mother's father) HARAB SHIMON AGASSI Z.L., as well as a photograph at the unveiling of a street in Jerusalem named after my grandfather.

**New York**

**Violet Gabbay (née Shashou)**

#### **HAKHAM SHIMON AGASSI zt'l**

The year was 5600 (1840). Thousands of pure Jewish children were faithfully learning *Toras Hashem* in the various branches of *Beit Midrash Talmud Torah* that were established by Rabbenu Abdulla Somech zt'l, considered one of the greatest Iraqi rabbonim of recent times. Baghdad's children, who had previously learned at home were now streamlined into a Torah school system.

And then, like a thunderstorm on a clear day, the agents of Alliance Israelite Universelle (*Kol Yisrael Chaveirim*) stormed in to trap the pure souls of the young children. "We only want to promote Torah with *derekh eretz*," they claimed. Rav Yosef Chaim spoke against it. Baghdad, a large city residing in glory in the middle of Babel was a Torah center for hundreds of years. Even after the *Talmud* was sealed in the time of the *Rabbonon Saborai*, it continued carrying the flag of Torah in full strength. For five hundred years the *geonim* of Babel lit up the Jewish world with their Torah, and the light of their

written Torah continues to shine today.

For many years they glorified the eastern side of the Torah world with *gedolim* and *chachomim*, great *poskim*, Kabbalists and *paytanim* whose songs are still sung today in Iraqi communities.

"There was a man in Baghdad, HaRav Shimon Agassi, whose light of Torah spread through the hearts of that entire generation and the those after it. *Gadol bakol kol*," HaRav Yaakov Hillel, *rosh yeshiva* of Ahavas Shalom wrote about him, "in the revealed and hidden Torah, in his vast knowledge and depth of understanding. A great *posek* and *darshan*, a great *paytan* and philosopher, a great leader in *chassidus* and *perishus*, great in his *tzedaka* and kindness, great community activist and great in understanding and vision, great in accepting affliction with love, overcoming *nisyonus*, and above all and in spite of everything, he was a great *masmid*",

In 5615 (1855), the sun began to shine with the birth of a son to Reb Aharon Agassi zt'l, whose parents came to Iraq from Persia. The Agassi family had a paint business, which was an ancient Turkish profession, and wanted the thirteen year old lad, who had just finished *talmud Torah*, to join the business.

The struggle, as the reader can well understand, was difficult. The young Shimon was up against the rich family and their tremendous pressure to utilise his talents, as well as the fact that all his friends decided to continue their studies in the new secular school of Baghdad. In spite of everything, Shimon pursued his one and only goal - Torah!

His parents, who encouraged him the entire times, supported his decision. The decision enriched *Klav Yisroel* with one of the foremost *geonim* of the generation. In the end, he benefited materially too. When his parents observed in wonder how their young boy was growing into a mighty giant, they decided a few years later to give him their house as a sign of appreciation for his great accomplishments.

He began to realise his brave decision in Beit Zilkha: the city of Baghdad's huge *beit midrash* established by HaRav Abdulla Somech zt'l, which became a place where hundreds of *talmidei chachomim* studied Torah diligently, twenty-four hours a day.

Rabbenu was twenty-six years old when he started writing his *peirush* on the Torah, an explanation that began a



Above : At the unveiling of the plaque of Hakham Shimon Agassi Street in Jerusalem. On the left is Aharon Shashou, a grandson.

long chain of outstanding *seforim*: *Zahav Shevo, Imrei Shimon, Bnei Aharon* and *Shem MiShimon* which encompass all parts of the Torah in breadth and depth. As the years went by, Rabbenu became one of the important ones.

Rabbenu did not have pleasure from *Olam Hazeh*, and he described the terrible tragedies that befell him in a sea of tears and blood. He witnessed the tragic death of his three sons, one after the other. Rabbenu refused to be comforted. His students related that Rabbenu did not accept comfort for his oldest son until his last son Ezra Tzion grew up and married his brother's intended wife. Only then, on the day of his wedding, did Rabbenu remove the black turban from his head and rejoice happily.

His son's death gave Rabbenu the impetus to toil in the Torah of *gilgul*, creating for later generations the outstanding *sefer Bnei Aharon* which took him nine years to write.

In 5659 (1899), Rabbenu turned his house, which he inherited from his father, into a *beit knesses*. Six years later, he gave it to a *gemilus chesed* organization to establish a school for orphans and poor children. Many of Baghdad's poor who were in danger of shmad were saved by this outstanding school and eventually developed beautifully.

With *chasidei Hashem*, a philanthropist was found in the city who agreed to Rabbenu's request to dedicate a large portion of his riches to build educational Torah institutions for the young. In a number of places in his *seforim*, Rav Shimon mentioned the *gvir Meir Eliyahu* "who poured money out of his pocket to raise the flag of Torah and return the crown to its former glory." This *mesiras nefesh* saved the generation from the clutches of those who sought to uproot religion from the youth.

Rabbenu succeeded in hiding himself so well that when he went up to eulogise Rabbenu Yosef Chaim zt'l in 1909, some of his neighbours were surprised to see a man whom they considered a simple merchant among the *chachomim* eulogizing. Hakham Shimon died peacefully in 1914.

#### Better late than never

It is better to do a thing after much procrastination than not to do it at all.



The above picture shows Iranian President Mohammed Khatami (Centre) receiving Chief Rabbi Yousef Hamdani Cohen of Iran and Jewish member of Parliament Maurice Mutamed. They were among a delegation of Jewish leaders visiting the Head of State.

Khatami declared that Judaism is an officially recognised religion in Iran and that the 30,000 Jews living in the country represent the highest number in any Moslem State. He claimed that religion played no part in sentencing 10 Jews to various prison sentences as spies for Israel. These sentences are being appealed.

Firstly may I say a big thank you for the latest edition of *The Scribe* which I'm enjoying reading over the web - it's great - well done to the Team!

I believe it was the last edition where we found arabic proverbs and sayings.

I enclose some anagrams which I enjoy and thought I might share them with you and your Editorial Team.

I especially enjoyed the article on stamps in this edition - if ever you need any information on stamps from around the world please don't hesitate to ask my father Joseph Murad as he collects stamps of the world from when they first appeared to today.

Dormitory - Dirty Room  
Desperation - A Rope Ends It  
The Morse Code - Here Come Dots  
Slot Machines - Cash Lost in 'em  
Mother-in-law - Woman Hitler  
Snooze Alarms - Alas! No More Z's  
Alex Guinness - Genuine Class  
The Public Art Galleries - Large Picture Halls, I Bet  
A Decimal Point - I'm a Dot in Place  
Princess Diana - Ascend in Paris

**London**

**Joy Dangoor**

For some reason, I have not been receiving *The Scribe*, for what seems to be a long time. *The Scribe* has been one of the magazines that I enjoy immensely, and in fact, among the numerous publications that I receive, *The Scribe* is the only one that I read from the first letter in the first page to the last letter in the last page. It is indeed a shining star amongst the Iraqi Jews publications. If possible, please resume sending it to me. My best wishes for your continued success. Your service to the Iraqi Jews is priceless.

**Greenlawn, NY      Joseph M Koreen, MD**

I receive regularly *The Scribe* which I find extremely interesting - I have no connection whatsoever with Babylonian Jewry, my family (on both sides) being typical Italian Jews for at least 600 years, possibly more.

The articles in *The Scribe* are very interesting and the book reviews better than in many leading papers.

Please keep me on your mailing list.

**London**

**John S Montefiore**



*George Bush Junior is running as the Republican candidate for President of the United States. The above picture, taken recently at The Dorchester in London shows George Bush senior and Mrs Bush, after a meeting with Renée and Naim Dangoor, the day Mr Bush received a knighthood from the Queen.*

To: Dr Zvi Shtauber  
Foreign Policy Advisor to the Prime Minister's Office  
Jerusalem

It was a pleasure meeting you at the meeting with the Prime Minister, and I enclose herewith a copy of my Journal *The Scribe*, which you may find of interest.

I am glad you took on board the remarks I made at that meeting about the claims of Jews from Arab countries. Not only the personal assets of those who were forced to leave, but the complete rights of our community, which constituted nearly a third of Baghdad's population and was predominant in the economy and finance of Iraq. While the Palestinians clamour to return to their homes in Israel, we cannot now go back to Iraq, but there is no reason why our full rights are not taken into account in the context of a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East.

**Naim Dangoor**



*Shanghai Public School for Girls Reunion  
London, 27 November 1965*

*FRONT ROW, L to R: Mrs F M Gavan (J M's Mother), Mrs D Moffatt, Miss M C Munday, Mrs Aitchison, Miss M Rudge, Mrs A S M Hawkins (Alex), Mrs D Parrott, Miss Margaret MacGregor, Miss D Fredericks, Joan MacKenzie, Renée Dangoor  
MIDDLE ROW: Frances Bomko, Delia Colombo, Mireille Middleton, Frenny Karanja, Peggy Clements, Mabel Chard, Connie Hayward, Betty Parsons, Adriana & Jaooba van Herwijnen, Sarah Ahmed, Madeleine Hardoon, Iris Krass  
BACK ROW: Mr Hawkins, Margaret Heath, Margaret Davies, Lorraine Henderson, Anne Archer, Beryl Davies, Jean Aitchison, Johanna van H, Edith Quayle (obscured), Shirin Petigura, Mr Ernest Parrott*

Last February, the wedding took place in London of Robert, younger son of David and Eileen Khalastchi to Fiona, daughter of Desmond and Anne Rule.



The above picture shows the couple with Robert's parents and uncles.

Left to right: Naim and Renée Dangoor; David and Eileen Khalastchi; Robert and Fiona; Abdullah and Claire Dangoor; Sasson and Stella Dangoor.



As evidence of the rapid growth of the Iraqi Jewish community in London, the picture below shows all of Robert's cousins with spouses.

Left to right: Standing;

Daniel Dangoor; Robert Dangoor; Anna Dangoor; Leif Engdahl; Bibbi Engdahl-Dangoor; Judy Dangoor; Audrey Dangoor; Michael Dangoor; Elie Dangoor; David Dangoor; the couple Robert and Fiona; bridesmaid Gaby Khalastchi; Freddie Khalastchi; Frank Khalastchi; Eric Dangoor; Reuben Dangoor; David Dangoor; Robin Engdahl; Eddie Dangoor; Robert Dangoor; Gary Fox.

Sitting:

Daniella Dangoor; Joy Dangoor; Sandra Dangoor; Eileen Khalastchi; Linda Khalastchi; Astrid Fox; Rosie Khalastchi; Hilary Dangoor; Natalie Engdahl.

Sitting on the floor:

Lauren Dangoor; Jacqueline Engdahl; Alexandra Dangoor; Stephanie Dangoor; Sarah Dangoor.

In September 1998, the Government of Venezuela issued 10 commemorative stamps, as shown, to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the State of Israel. All designs carry background Israeli flag motif.

Sent by Freddie Khalastchi



Ninety percent of inspiration is perspiration

Inspiration is useless without an aptitude for hard work; hence the perspiration!

## VIZNITZ TALMUD TORAH'S FIND SHABBOS AT CARMEL

Taken from the Jewish Tribune 21.1.00

Shabbos Parshas Bo will be etched for a long time in the memories of the close to 100 children and staff of the Viznitzer Talmud Torah in London, who spent this memorable Shabbos in Carmel College near Oxford. The idea, fostered by the Menahel and nurtured by a dedicated team of Mechanchim and assistants, came to successful fruition after many weeks of preparation both by the children and the organisers.

Participation by the children was only possible by collecting tokens over a period of 10-12 weeks. These were awarded for a variety of accomplishments (according to age and ability), such as successfully being tested by heart on Perokim of Mishnayos, achieving a certain level of marks in the weekly tests of their Limudim learning whole Sedorim without interruption, behaviour in class, during Davening and meal times and Derech Eretz.

At 4:00 pm on Friday all boys were assembled in the spacious Beis Hamedrash to say Shir Hashirim and have a learning session to welcome Shabbos Hamalko. After Mincha they were treated to an inspiring Drosho by Rav Shmuel Stern. Mashgiach of the Viznitzer Yeshiva Ketana.

A thoroughly uplifting Seudas Shabbos was experienced by all, interlaced with Zemiros and Divrei Torah. Reb Chaim Moshe Feldman demonstrated his enthusiasm and appreciation to both the children and Mechanchim by honouring the event with his presence and delivering Divrei Torah during the Seuda.

During the Seuda, Divrei Chizuk were heard from Rabbi Dovid Chaim Katx, Maggid Shiur in Viznitz Yeshiva Ketana and, similarly during Sholosh Seudos, from Reb Yisroel Zieg. Rebbe of the top class. Following Sholosh Seudos, the highlight and keynote speech was given by Rabbi Shimon Hirschler.

Motzoei Shabbos was honoured by a Melava Malka and Siyum for the Mishnayos (in excess of 1000 Perokim) learnt by the boys.

After a full day's programme on Sunday, the boys returned in the early evening, tired but happy and spiritually fulfilled, attesting without exception that this was a most enjoyable Shabbos in all respects.

Reb Herzi Stern and Mrs Stern worked selflessly and tirelessly to achieve the resounding success of the event.

## RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION by Rev. Dr. Leslie Griffiths

In a debate in the House of Lords two nights ago, Labour peer Lord Ahmed called for a new law outlawing religious discrimination. He's rightly pointed to a number of anomalies in the way religions are treated. Only Christianity is protected by blasphemy laws, for example; Jews are defined as a race rather than a religion (even though this race includes, as Lord Ahmed put it on this programme the other day, black Falashas, white Russian and brown Lebanese Jews). In Northern Ireland there's already a law against religious discrimination. But not on the mainland. He wants to put an end to these differences; he wants all religious groups protected by the law.

Begging his Lordship's pardon, but I think he's barking up the wrong tree. Anomalies do exist and they definitely need dealing with. But I'd go in exactly the opposite direction from the proposals he's making. It's my view that religions shouldn't seek any special privileges or protections. People should be free to criticise us, misunderstand us, and even make fun of us. Sometimes, no doubt, we'd deserve it whilst at others we wouldn't. We should earn any respect accorded to us and work hard to make our contribution to the good of society understood and welcomed. We should always be invoking the Gamaliel principle: if what we're all about is of merely human origin then it'll enjoy its moment in the sun before fading away. If, on the other hand, G-d has something to do with it, then it's going to be part of the scene whether people like it or not.

Or, put in a somewhat different way, and as I heard a ninety four year old Cardinal suggesting the other day, The Christian Church is facing its second Constantinian moment. In the fourth century, with the conversion of the Roman Emperor, Christianity began a long flirtation with secular power which, many would argue, has had a disastrous effect on our actions and led to the accommodation of huge privileges across the centuries and around the world. But now, the church is fast reaching the point when secular government, post-Christian realities and pluralistic societies make it highly unlikely that such privileges will continue. Good. Let believers in any religion seek their proper protection under the Civil Law. Let all discrimination on grounds of race, gender, orientation or class be anathema.

Let religion take its full place within civil society, a voice and a presence to be reckoned with in the search for justice and the common good. It doesn't need to be cushioned or treated in a special category or given special protection. And when religion loses those swaddling bands of special status, that's when it can stand up on its own feet and offer its unique attractions to a generation which, I'm as convinced as can be, needs them now more than ever.

**From BBC - "Thought for the Day"**

### Hafiz al Asad with Jewish Leader



On the occasion of the death of President Hafez al Asad, we publish the above picture which shows the Syrian dictator shaking hands and welcoming the Chief of the Syrian Jewish Community Council, Yousef Kh. Jajati, who gave us this photograph on a visit to London a few years ago.

The last number of *The Scribe* which we have received is no. 72 of September 1999.

In order not to discontinue such an interesting magazine which is constantly used by our Rabbis and Professors, we would appreciate it very much if you could send us the missing issues at your earliest convenience.

Thank you very much for your co-operation.

### Rita Saccal

**Head Librarian**

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## AFRICAN HEBREWS

I am a Canadian citizen as well as being an African born on the island of Jamaica, West Indies. As the last bit of information indicates, my ancestors arrived in the Western hemisphere via the slave trade. What you may not know, either by choice or ignorance, is that many of the people groups/tribes/clans that were the victims of the african slave trade were from tribes that the local African tribes viewed as recent historical arrivals. Thus the intense animosity that was present among them. Some of these foreign/alien black tribes were known in the African dialects as Hebrews, Jews, etc. It is also a suppressed fact that many of the Africans who were enslaved, besides speaking African languages/dialects, also spoke Arabic as well as Hebrew. Many of their traditions and attitudes were also very "Semitic"(?), but were suppressed by their European and Jewish oppressors and enslavers, mostly by very brutal means.

Therefore when I read about the Lemba people's struggles to be acknowledged by their fellow Hebrews I instinctly (sic) understand, because we are living in a very white-souled world, and most of the white Jews from the Diaspora have been greatly affected by their long stay among the Europeans. We also know that birds of a feather flock together - but so too do people of like souls. We also know that what is a Jew is one thing, but what is a Hebrew is quite another. If the right standard of measurements were used, namely from the Torah, rather than recently developed and anti-Hebrew/Torah standards, then the Hebrews from the Sudan to the very extremes of Africa, including the African Diaspora, would be welcomed home.

Maybe it's not our time to be revealed to the world due to socio/economical/ political implications but we know that as long as the ONE who by prophecy scattered us thousands of years ago, know who we are, and where we, the sons of Abraham are, then at least our children or their children will be finally welcomed home by his prophetic pre-determinations.

Canada

Derrick McEwan

### All that glitters is not gold

Do not judge a thing by its attractive appearance.

## THE URGENT SEARCH FOR JEWISH UNITY

Extracts from an address by Professor Moshe Kaveh  
President of Bar-Ilan University  
As delivered in Cleveland, Ohio last January

My speciality as a physicist is the study of stable and unstable systems. And I am constantly asking myself: Is Israel a stable state? Are the Jewish people a stable system? Will Judaism and Jewish identity be preserved over generations?

To answer those questions, first we need to acknowledge the dangerous gaps between Jews, because reducing these gaps is the way to unity. I think this is the need of the hour, this urgent search for unity.

More and more Israeli columnists, politicians and ordinary people on the street denounce all the Orthodox as medieval or uncultured, to treat everyone who wears a kippa as some kind of dark and evil force.

Lately the behaviour of the Supreme Court of Israel is troubling to many religious Jews, who feel it shouldn't be ruling on religious issues like conversion and matters of Jewish identity. I myself believe that our activist Supreme Court is moving into corners where it shouldn't go. How do we close the dangerous, growing gaps that separate Jews from Jews, especially religious Jews and the non-religious? And how do we build a state that is both Jewish and democratic? We need concrete ideas and concrete action.

Right now, in Israel, there is a battle between the extremists of both the religious and secular camps. The majority of people - who are moderates - unfortunately are getting swept into the fray.

One source of the problem is that there are too many rabbis who believe that *halacha* is *everything* in life, that *halacha* is all encompassing. If so, there is a problem with the notion of a democratic state.

On the other hand, the judges in our Supreme Court and many of our politicians and intellectual leaders believe that civic law and democratic norms are everything that you need in a country.

In physics, we know that you cannot have two bodies occupying the same space simultaneously. And that is the nature of this conflict. We have two

systems of law and authority in Israel and each imperialistically believes that its laws and norms must supercede all others.

According to Isaac Luria, the 16th century Kabbalist, when G-d created the universe he had to withdraw, make *tzimtzum*, from some parts.

We Israelis - and other Jews also - could use a little *tzimtzum* right now. If everyone reduced and contracted their ambitions a bit, if everyone withdrew a step or two, if each side stopped trying to impose its view of the world on our complex society, then we might be able to avoid the explosion of raw hatred that threatens us now.

This means that the rabbis should stop using the *halacha* as the basis for statements about political issues. They should restrict themselves to the *halachic* point of view on *Shabbat*, on prayer, on what the Torah and *Talmud* say about contemporary life, but not politics. That's *tzimtzum*.

In the same way, the Israeli Supreme Court doesn't need to aggressively and defiantly apply civil law to every aspect of life. In a democracy the decisions of the Supreme Court must be obeyed, and for this reason it must abstain from ruling on spiritual matters, that too is *tzimtzum*.

Our religious schools increasingly are afraid to confront or deal with secular culture, which is perceived as inherently corrupt and opposed to a Jewish way of life. As a result, young people in those schools are sheltered and cut off from mainstream Israeli life.

Likewise, most of our secular shelter and cut off their students from any contact with Jewish tradition and Jewish wisdom. The idea that the Torah and the *Talmud* have profound wisdom to offer all Jews, whether or not they believe in G-d, seems to have escaped many of Israel's educational leaders.

We now have in Israel a small but growing number of wonderful dialogue programs. Secular and religious students are meeting each other. They are talking, studying together, developing tolerance, discovering that they have much in common, and Bar-Ilan University professors are actively involved in many of them. We teach that Judaism and democracy are *complimentary* values.

Even in the haredi world, there is a growing understanding that the tools of the modern world - like math, like social work, like computers - will help

**Continued on following page**

young Jews without depriving them of their Jewishness.

We need to develop a stable society whose basic values are shared by those who keep kosher and those who don't, by the young people in the cafes of Tel Aviv and the yeshivah scholars.

An important rule of Jewish life should be the primacy of *Klal Yisrael*, the community of Israel.

In Jewish tradition, we place a great emphasis on the sanctity of life. The sanctity of life supercedes the Torah, we are taught Jewish wisdom and Jewish law indicate that *Klal Yisrael* supercede Jewish life. We go to war and risk our life to protect our loved ones and friends and neighbours and Jews we don't know. But since Jewish life is secondary to *Klal Yisrael*, then *Klal Yisrael* supercedes the Torah.

It's unfortunate that some sectors in the Jewish world believe they and they alone are *Klal Yisrael*, that they and they alone are the Jewish community. In fact, in Israel, *Klal Yisrael* includes the *heredim*, the *dattim* or national-religious, and the secular sectors, each and every Jew. In the United States, *Klal Yisrael* includes the Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist and the unaffiliated. Imagine what our life would be like if our Israeli rabbis understood that Conservative and the Reform Jews are also *Klal Yisrael*. Imagine how imaginative their rulings would be if they believed that, when dealing with the conversion of Reform Jews, *Klal Yisrael* is the supreme value. Imagine how much more welcoming they would be to Orthodox women who want a bigger role in Jewish rituals.

Right now, in Israel, we teach our children to die for *Klal Yisrael* but not to live for it. We do not teach them how to devote themselves to making sure *Klal Yisrael* is preserved in times of peace, as well as in times of war.

#### **Scribe:** The virtue of lying.

It is noteworthy that the Ten Commandments do not contain a prohibition on lying. But some Rabbis believe that a commandment "Thou shalt not lie" is equivalent to all the prohibitions of the Ten Commandments.

In his speech at Cleveland, Ohio, Bar-Ilan President, Dr Moshe Kaveh, came out with another advice, namely that when you have a confrontation between peace and the truth, peace is more important than truth.

As an example he goes on to cite the case of a woman who became

pregnant and had an abortion and then she became religious and married an ultra Orthodox, then gave birth to a "first born" son. There is a special redeeming ceremony (Pediom) which we conduct for first-born sons. Except that the woman knew that this child was not the "first-born fruit of the womb", she had never told her husband of her previous life, pregnancy and abortion. Should she now? She asked Rabbi Obadia Yosef, the leading Sephardi halachic decisor of our generation: "Should I tell my husband? It will cause tremendous pain and conflict." Rabbi Yosef's wise response: "Whenever you have a conflict between peace and truth, peace prevails. Don't tell your husband".

Dr Kaveh's general advice to resort to lies for the sake of harmony and peace is hard to swallow.

Moreover, Dr Kaveh who is an Orthodox Jew was speaking to an American audience composed mostly of Reformed Jews and his whole lecture shows that he was playing to the gallery.

## **HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE**

from a booklet by Professor Moshe Kaveh  
President of Bar Ilan University

When a child enters primary school, and finally begins to learn Rashi, he encounters Rashi's commentary on the verse "And G-d said: Let there be luminaries in the heavens"(Genesis 1:14). The Talmud (Hullin 60b) quotes Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi: "It is first written 'the two great luminaries', and then it is written 'the great luminary.' How is this explained? The Moon said to the Almighty: 'Master of the World, is it possible for two kings to rule under one crown?' The Almighty replied: 'Go and diminish yourself.'

Although this parable has an important moral lesson for all generations, it is also interesting to ask whether there is any relation between the Genesis text and science, or at least the science of the ancient world. The idea that the Earth was destined to revolve around the "two luminaries" generates great curiosity. Is such a thing possible?

Before providing answers for legions of kindergarten teachers and their pupils to the questions listed above, it is useful to survey briefly the history of the

universe and the scientific theory of the formation of the Sun and the Moon.

The universe originated about 15 billion years ago in a violent explosion, popularly known as the "big bang". Immediately after the big bang, the entire universe was filled with radiation. Part of the radiant energy was immediately and spontaneously transformed into the elementary particles of matter, and after only one second (!), protons and neutrons were formed.

Three minutes after the "big bang", the first atomic nuclei were formed, primarily helium. At that time, the temperature of the universe was one billion degrees! Great drama! The physics of electromagnetic waves, elementary particles, and nuclear physics, which constitute about 75% of the physics curriculum for the B.Sc degree in every university, all originated within three minutes!

The rate of the subsequent development of the universe was greatly slowed. About 300,000 uneventful years were to pass after the "big bang" as the universe gradually cooled down. However, when the universe finally reached a temperature of about 6000 degrees, dramatic events again began to happen. The first signs appeared of the the present-day structure of the universe, which consists of different materials.

These scientific findings aroused great excitement seven years ago, when the results of the COBE satellite reached the Earth. This satellite, launched into space in 1989 with the most sophisticated equipment on board, succeeded in measuring the radiation that reaches our planet from a distance of over 500 million light years. (One light year is the distance travelled by light in one year, nearly 10 trillion kilometres). The photographs taken by COBE showed the development of the universe starting from 300,000 years after its origin. How much time had to pass until the formation of atoms, the study of which constitutes the remaining 25% of the university physics curriculum? The first atoms were formed about 10 million years after the "big bang".

When were the Earth, Sun, and Moon formed? Physicists have learned that the solar system came into being about 10 billion years after the "big bang", that is, about five billion years ago. The Sun and planets appeared first, but the Moon was not formed until about 50 million years after the planet Earth.

## **From: Professor Moshe Kaveh**

President of Bar-Ilan University

Ramat-Gan, Israel

When I look back on the past year in Israel, a year of many new beginnings. Last year we launched our major project for the next fifty years - our \$500 million campus extension in Ramat Gan - with advanced construction on the first four buildings.

Four historic lead gifts, all from friends of the university in the United States have jump-started construction on the Gonda (Goldschmied) Brain Research Center, the Ann and Marcus Rosenberg Music Building, the Anna & Max Webb & Family Psychology Building, and we shall finish the Jack and Gitta Nagel Family Jewish Heritage House this year.

We have also made significant progress in advancing essential academic goals in a number of key disciplines. The Center for the Study of Dead Sea Scrolls and Jewish Epigraphy was established in partnership with David and Jemima Jeselsohn of Switzerland and a new chemistry library and research wing is being established by dear friends of the University from Australia. I am proud to note that our campaign to establish doctoral fellowships is gaining impressive momentum.

We also made a major decision to open a new School of Hi-Tech Engineering, and we launched our Virtual Jewish University on the Internet

(<http://bar-ilan.edu>).

I can only be grateful for G-d's blessings and the friendship of our supporters around the world. We have achieved so much.

At this time of the year my thoughts also turn from the university to the broader, the Jewish world beyond - and I find cause for concern indeed.

We seek to bridge between Jews and Israelis of all persuasions by teaching Jewish tradition and ethics in an open, critical manner. Bar-Ilan University's more than 45,000 graduates are testament to our success in this regard.

## **I WOULD CHOOSE DEATH OVER ETERNAL LIFE**

from *The London Daily Telegraph*

"Death may no longer be inevitable," writes Dr John Harris, Professor of Bioethics at Manchester University, and a member of the Government's Genetic Commission. I never expected to read such words written by a serious scientist in my lifetime.

Of course, no one is suggesting the imminent demise of the Grim Reaper, Male life expectancy since 1900 has increased by about 25 years. Announcing the results of the Human Genome Project this week, Bill Clinton gave young Leo Blair an extra 25 years on the spot. Others are already talking about 150

years, the more exuberant 1,000. The abolition of mortality is now semi-officially envisaged on some distant horizon. It will be achieved by meddling around with genes, which will improve the quality of life as well as its quantity.

Many will greet this putative victory over death as a potential triumph. I believe that it would be a tragedy. For death has a purpose, and without it, our lives on earth would be meaningless and devoid of value.

This is not the popular view of death. The decline of religious belief in western Europe has contributed to uncertainty of what becomes of us after it. We fear the unknown, and death itself may hurt. Mortality militates against the desire to control our own destinies. A predictable death, as in terminal illness, seems no more palatable than the surprise demise of a heart attack. Life is fun and, even when foul, preferable to the alternative. There were relatively few suicides in the extermination camps. The neo-Darwinists see us as robots whose defining genes are simply selfish survival mechanisms. We are programmed to avoid death. No wonder we recoil from it.

But do we? Should we? Will we? If death is no longer inevitable, will it acquire some attraction? Perhaps our distaste for it is coloured, if not caused, by its supposed inevitability. Imagine if death were a choice. Would it lead to a breakdown or to a strengthening of the brotherhood of man? I suggest the former. The earth's resources are finite and would concentrate in the hands of the super-vital, super-aged, to the chagrin of their great, great, great grand-children. Who can doubt that, even today, children are often ambivalent about their aged parents' continued existence? Governments, and the dictators we seem to have forgotten about so swiftly, would soon be busy organising "forced retirement". Life would quickly become nasty, brutish and long.

Crammed together like sardines, and competing with our own progeny for limited space and material resources, we would be alive, but dead from *déjà vu*. Everything of value would have died except for us... fun, excitement, love, hope, sex, pleasure. It seems certain that our desire for life would not long outlast the knowledge that our wish for immortality would soon be eternally gratified.

Mistrust and fear of death depend on another assumption that may

**Continued on following page**



*Last March was the wedding in London of Dr Amira Naseem Sopher and Frankie Sweiry.*

*Frankie who is an accountant is the son of Isaac and Rahma Sweiry who came from Bahrain but were originally from Iraq. Dr Amira is now a partner GP in a London suburb (see also picture gallery in *The Scribe* 70, page 6).*

*The picture left shows the couple with the bridesmaid Gaby Khalastchy.*

not be true. Is life really good? Optimists, answering yes, would point to (say) beauty, love, the joy of children, or the kindness and moral goodness of man. Research into happiness is narrowly on the side of those who say that, on balance, they are contented. In our cultural climate, to admit that life is unpleasant is construed as a sign that we have failed in it. But the last century saw horrors unlike any the world has known.

But if life is, on balance, bad, and eternal life as unattractive as it is insupportable, what then of death, the great deliverance? When no longer natural and inevitable, might it at last be considered good? For believers in G-d and Heaven, how can it not be a wonderful thing to die?

In truth, death defines our life as a full stop does a sentence. Death alone, by providing an ending, makes sense of our birth and the drama of life in between. We have a limited time to plan our legacy, to play to the best of our ability the cards we have been dealt. Death gives value to our times. Those who have brushed with it, and survived, talk of its pleasantness, and yet return from the brink born again, determined not to waste now precious years. They see purpose and meaning in those things they had taken for granted and are determined to leave their mark of goodness on the microcosmic moment of forever that is human existence. A surfeit of life will sicken our appetite for it. Rationing it naturally sharpens our desire to leave our echo in eternity. Will somebody tell the scientists that death is not our enemy? It is our friend.

the result of an act of creation did not seem obvious to everyone. It was arrived at by our ancestors but was rejected elsewhere. As recently as 330 BCE when Alexander the Great visited Israel, he wrote to his mentor, the philosopher Aristotle, asking him what he thought of the Jewish idea of Creation. His reply was, "What creation? The world has always been there!" It was for this that the prophet said:

"Darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the nations but on thee G-d shines and his glory will be seen upon thee."

Modern science has confirmed the inspired knowledge of our ancestors regarding the origin of the Universe and its creation out of nothing which started with the Big Bang. Encouraged by this information, even serious Bible scholars are trying to find scientific proof in every word of the Bible which is overdoing it.

The idea of the One True G-d came about by reasoning that if there were more than one G-d, soon they would compete with one another and in the end one of them would have emerged victorious and thus became the One True G-d.

The idea of G-d the Sustainer, One who does not sleep or slumber but keeps the Universe going, the Living G-d, was arrived at in Babylon by Abraham who was an astronomer and whose ideas are the foundations of all three monotheistic Faiths. According to Josephus, the first century Jewish military commander and historian, Abraham noticed that some stars were not fixed in the sky, but continued to move from one place to another and came to the conclusion that it must be G-d

Himself who, like a croupier, keeps moving these stars around.

We know now, of course, that the Universe is self-sustaining and does not need anyone to direct its movements. In fact, any outside interference would be disastrous. There is no need, therefore, for G-d to take any part in the running of his Creation. Thus, if G-d created the Universe but is no longer there, when did He pass away? Surely, G-d who created time could not have disappeared at a moment in time. G-d could only have disappeared with the Big Bang. It was the simultaneous moment of G-d's demise and the Creation of the Universe. In other words, the Universe is G-d's wonderful memorial.

What about all the instances that G-d spoke to Moses, the experience at Mount Sinai, the parting of the Red Sea, the miracles? How did all these events come about if G-d was no longer there? The answer is that all these events were pre-recorded, pre-destined.

More and more, scientists and philosophers are coming to the conclusion that every event, past present and future, since the Big Bang and until the end of Time was programmed at the time of Creation. It is also the experience of old people that what happens has to happen because it is the destiny that it should happen.

Where do we go from here? We believe that man was created in the image of G-d and I therefore believe that man unless he will destroy himself by committing an error, is eventually destined to become G-d himself which is not impossible in a world of infinity and eternity.

I am writing all the above in the Jewish tradition of investigating and enquiring without any intention of irreverence.

## THE LESSON OF THE HOLOCAUST

The extermination during the war in cold blood and with impunity, by the beasts of Germany and its allies, of six million Jews, is a crime unequalled since the dawn of civilisation. It is an eye opener for those with intelligence.

As he witnessed the daily consignment of ten thousand men, women and children to the gas chambers, one Rabbi remarked "If G-d does not intervene in this massacre, then take it from me that, as far as we are concerned, there is no G-d!"



## THE DEMISE OF G-D

### Continuation of Thoughts & Afterthoughts

Eternal life is equivalent to a perpetual life imprisonment - a fate worse than death. Should G-d, then, be denied the luxury of dying?

In recent years much has been written and said about the death of G-d, apparently because nothing has been heard of Him or from Him for some time. The G-d referred to is obviously the G-d of the Bible, our G-d.

The idea of G-d took many millennia to develop - first G-d the Creator, then the One True G-d, then G-d the Sustainer, who keeps the Universe ticking.

The fact that the Universe was

# NEW EVIDENCE OF THE GREAT FLOOD

from *The Sunday Times* - 27.9.99

Compelling evidence that there was a Great Flood, as told in the Old Testament story of Noah's Ark, has been found far below the waters of the Black Sea by an American expedition.

Underwater surveyors, led by Robert Ballard, the renowned oceanographer who found the Titanic and other sunken ships of the 20th century, have discovered an ancient coastline at a depth of 450 ft.

"I am not sure whether it is Noah's flood or not Noah's flood, but I do buy that there was a flood," said David Mindell, one of the surveyors.

The Ballard team was working from a theory about the biblical flood of antiquity propounded by two marine geologists from Columbia University in New York, William Ryan and Walter Pittman, in their new book, Noah's Flood, reviewed in Scribe No. 71, page 3.

As Dr Ballard explained; "During the last great Ice Age glaciers advanced across the surface of the world. That lowered the sea level 400ft. Then, 12,000 years ago at the end of the Ice Age, the glaciers began to retreat".

With its lower sea level, the eastern Mediterranean was cut off from the Black Sea so that when the oceans started to rise, the Black Sea did not.

Dr Ballard continued: "Around 7,600 years ago, guess what happens? The Mediterranean breaks through a natural dam at the Bosphorus and catastrophically floods the land surface. People living there are 400ft below sea level and in trouble. They are facing a flood equal to 10,000 Niagara Falls."

This flood was on a far greater scale than the one described in Genesis, which is said to have lasted for 40 days and 40 nights, covering every living thing on Earth beneath 24ft of water other than Noah, his family and his pairs of animals carried to safety on the ark.

In the new theory, it is believed that each day for two years ten cubic miles of ocean water cut through the widening Bosphorus channel as it flowed into what was then a fresh water lake, raising the level by six inches a day.

The incoming salt water, more dense than the fresh water it displaced, plunged to the bottom of the lake bed, transforming it into a sea where the depths support no life.

This area of inert darkness is known as an abyss that is anoxic, meaning that the trapped water could not circulate and has lost its oxygen, "Such conditions exist nowhere else in the world," Dr Ballard said.

The theory supposes that in this dead zone wooden ships will be preserved intact, possibly still with their Bronze Age sails, and just waiting for Dr Ballard and his team. The explorers are convinced that there may be many ships on the bottom because the Black Sea served as an important commercial waterway.

Dr Ballard has participated in 120 deep-sea expeditions. He found two Phoenician vessels more than 3,000 years old.

**Scribe:** In response to our enquiry, the British Admiralty have confirmed that water flows from the Mediterranean through the straits of the Dardanelle and the Bosphorus into the Black Sea. This clearly indicates that the Mediterranean receives much more river water than does the Black Sea which supports the assumption that when the Dardanelle was closed in ancient times, the water level of the Mediterranean became much higher than that of the Black Sea.

## THE HAZON PETAYA REHABILITATION CENTRE by: Mrs Simcha Petaya-Ovadiya, Director of the Hazon Petaya Centre

For over 25 years, the Hazon Petaya Rehabilitation Center in Jerusalem has been providing rehabilitation through work for men and women who cannot hold jobs anywhere else, because of physical problems or emotional disturbances. Since its founding by my late father, Shaul Petaya, the Center has taught a trade and helped rehabilitate over 2,000 psychiatric patients.

At Hazon Petaya, each individual does real work in packaging, sewing and print production finishing. The work is supervised by a professional staff, with counsel provided by psychologists and social workers.

Patients receive salaries which are most often not covered by the actual work done. At Hazon Petaya, the work is never an end in itself, but a therapy leading to healing and recovery. In fact,

most of the patients at Hazon Petaya remain dependent for the rest of their lives, but a number do go on to find jobs outside, get married, begin studying and even start their own businesses.

In recent years, however, government support for Hazon Petaya has been cut and increased competition has made it more difficult to obtain work for the patients. As a result, the Hazon Petaya Center has built up a huge debt and can only accept a fraction of all potential patients.

By sending your contribution to Hazon Petaya today, you will help us to continue to provide "rehabilitation through work" - the best medicine for those who need to feel self-esteem, self-worth and pride in their accomplishments.

**Scribe:** How Rommell was halted.

On her visit to our offices, Mrs Petaya related that in 1942 Rommell and his German army were advancing rapidly along the Egyptian coast towards Palestine. The Jews there became afraid of the consequences of falling into the hand of the Nazis, and many thought of different ways of committing suicide. Shaoul Petaya went to the British Commanding Officer and asked him to let him use an aeroplane to save the situation by prayers and supplications. As the situation was desperate the officer agreed, and Shaoul Petaya took 12 white chickens and flew around the country killing the chickens one by one as sacrificial offering for the safety of Palestine and throwing them out of the window on the ground below. It appears that soon thereafter Rommell's advance was halted and the tide began to turn against him. The Jews of Palestine drew a deep sigh of relief, while the Arabs became greatly disappointed. They had been chanting everywhere, "Hasten your steps Rommell".

A similar incident was recently reported by the BBC during the long winter drought in Israel. Ten Orthodox Rabbis took an aeroplane with live chickens and performed a similar ritual. Two days later, reported the BBC, the rain began to fall and the drought came to an end.

Nevertheless, the Arabs, who were on the side of Hitler, received all the benefit of the Second World War, while the Jews who were on the side of the Allies are still struggling for a coastal strip of rocky territory.

# INTEREST FREE MONITARY SYSTEM

Dear Dr Soros

My wife and I and our son were very fortunate to attend the dinner at Park Lane Hotel, London on May 4th given by the Board of Deputies in your honour, and to listen to the most interesting answers to the various questions which were put to you. Allow me to put to you my own question, kindly requesting your opinion on this important issue.

In view of the recent final demise of the gold standard, the gradual phasing out of gold reserves by central banks, and of the gradual transition to paper money, firstly by the issuing of gold certificates, then by promissory money (I promise to pay the bearer TEN POUNDS)..... do you think that the time has come for mankind to achieve the biblical dream of Moses and work out an interest-free monetary system? This can simply be done by accepting the principle that promissory paper money needs to be issued - not in the name of the money lender nor of the central bank, but by the consumer, or in the name of the consumer.

In moving from commodity money to promissory money, economists did not take the right step. Moses identified the problem of the need for an interest-free medium of exchange, but no solution was possible at that time.

Moses left only a pious wish against usury, taken up by the Christians in the Middle Ages and also by the Moslems. Ironically Jews became the money lenders to the Gentiles with great riches and persecution. Present Islamic banking is only cosmetic.

My Foundation is able and willing to devote the necessary funds for the promotion of this idea.

Yours sincerely

**Naim Dangoor**

Dear Mr Dangoor

Thank you for your letter of May 9th. I am afraid I am not in a position to answer your question about an interest free monetary system.

With best wishes.

**George Soros**

Soros Fund Management LLC  
Open Society Institute  
New York

**Scribe:** Dr Soros is known to give an abrupt comment on matters in which he is not an expert.

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It was a great pleasure to read THE SCRIBE, issue 72. I see from this issue that interest-free lending is a matter close to Mr Naim Dangoor's heart.

I have been working on this matter for many years and I believe that interest-free linkage to the average wage or income is a practical way of lending, and is in the spirit of the Miswah: "If thou lend money to My people, even to the poor with thee, thou shalt not be to him as a creditor; neither shall ye lay upon him interest" [Exodus 22-24].

Interest-free loans linked to the published average wage would give an average yearly return of about 1.5% above the price index to the lender. Erosion of the lender's money is prevented, but there are risks.

I look forward to hearing from you.

**Israel**

**Raphael B Yehezkel**

**Scribe:**

Thank you for your information on interest-free loans. Your solution, however, is cosmetic. You just try to get around the biblical ban on usury by various means. This is like Islamic banking. When a person deposits money with an Islamic bank, instead of receiving interest, he receives a share of the bank's profit. This is like curing the symptoms instead of curing the illness. My solution is more genuine, more radical. It goes to the root of money. Money must be issued in the name of the consumer, instead of in the name of the money lender.

If promissory money is issued by or in the name of the consumer, interest suddenly disappears. This is the real money, not commodity money. Where mankind went wrong was to treat paper money as commodity money. Promissory money was not possible at the time of Moses, so the Torah mentioned the problem but could not provide a solution at that time. Now we can have the solution.

You still talk about a lender and a creditor which is directly contravening the Miswah you quote.

I believe that the greatest danger in the world is not the atom bomb, not global warming, but compound interest.

For a full explanation of Mr Yehezkael's ideas please refer to his home page:  
<http://shekel.jct.ac.il/~rafi>

Letter sent to:

The Rt Reverend Dr Richard Harries  
Bishop of Oxford

Dear Bishop

**Why are the poor, poor?**

I was interested in your "Thought for the Day", this morning, especially as that question has been on my mind for 70 years. Since the late twenties I have been thinking over the problem of poverty and its possible solutions.

Communism succeeds in making everyone poor, and this cannot be the answer. Capitalism fails to make everyone rich, and it too cannot be the answer. Helping the poor, while a virtue in itself, the need for it is a loud condemnation of our economic system.

Sooner or later mankind, after decades free of major warfare, will come to realise:

1. The need to restrict the ability to store wealth. The Bible deals with that point, limiting the ownership of landed property to 50 years.

2. Money is a form of credit, and promissory money must be issued in the name of the consumer and not by the money lender. The amount of interest paid by the community for the use of promissory money is staggering and crippling. The Bible condemned usury but unfortunately does not offer a solution. The solution is that money should be issued by the consumer based on ability to repay.

Jubilee Dot Com may yet be the greatest spinner of them all!

**Naim Dangoor**

Reply letter from the Bishop of Oxford:

Dear Mr Dangoor

Thank you for your letter. It was good to receive your thoughts on this important subject.

With all good wishes.

**The Rt Reverend Richard Harries**

**Scribe:** Bishop Harries recently informed his congregants that any Christian who cannot believe in the divinity of Jesus should not revert to Unitarian Christianity but should take up Judaism - a religion which has been successfully tested and has survived for 4,000 years.

## ONE GENERATION GOES AWAY AND A NEW GENERATION ARRIVES

On 15 June a son was born to David and Ide Dangoor of New York, a brother to his three sisters. He was named Selim Eliahou Edward, being the grandson of Selim Eliahou Dangoor who passed away two years ago and of Eliahou Edward Weitzen.



Above: picture of the new born

Below : the Torah Crown which was donated by the family to the Great Synagogue of Stockholm in memory of Selim Dangoor.



At the presentation of the Torah Crown, the Chief Rabbi emeritus, Morton Narrowe made a moving sermon in the presence of Ruth, children and grandchildren.

## MOSHE KATZAV - ISRAEL'S 8TH PRESIDENT

by Percy Gourgey MBE

The election in August 2000 of Moshe Katzav as Israel's 8th President, defeating the famous Shimon Peres in a Knesseth vote, 63-57, surprised everybody. The vote coincided with dissatisfaction over Prime Minister Barak's handling of the failed Peace talks at Camp David earlier in the month. Barak had backed Peres.

Katzav was born in Iran in 1945 and came to Israel in 1951 where his family had settled in the religious town of Kiriat Malachi. Katzav's rise to eminence may be compared to the American process of log cabin to White House!

He graduated from the Ben Shemen Agricultural School and, after military service, obtained a degree in economics and history from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. At the age of 24 he became (Likud) Mayor of Kiriat Malachi, the youngest mayor in ministerial posts in Likud governments culminating as Minister for Tourism and Trade in Netanyahu's government from 1996-1999.

I met him in Tbilisi, Georgia in September 1998 when he led a large delegation of Georgian businessmen from Israel which contracted billions of dollars business between Israel and Georgia. I was a member of the World Sephardi Federation delegation.

The President of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnaze, the penultimate Soviet Foreign Minister under President Gorbachev had decided to celebrate the forthcoming millennium in a unique way. As members of the Georgian Orthodox Christian Church, they decided to honour their 2,500 year old Jewish community, which had never suffered anti-Semitism, through four days of state celebrations. It was a wonderful experience with many notable events organised by the Government. It concluded with a State Banquet.

## GOURGEY FELDMAN WEDDING

The wedding took place recently at the London Savoy Hotel of Gabrielle Gourgey, (daughter of my brother Reggie) with Andrew Feldman. The toast was proposed by Mr James Wolferson, President of the World Bank in Washington, a personal friend of Reggie.

London

Percy Gourgey

## OBITUARIES

### Eliyahu Hillel ZL



I have written a small article in memory of my Brother, Eliyahu ZL. I had it translated to English, which you may wish to print in The Scribe. I believe Eliyahu deserves it. Moreover, I believe his story is the story of a whole generation, your generation, that is worthwhile to tell.

**Jerusalem**

**Shlomo Hillel**

On the 2nd of Shevat (January 8, 2000), Eliyahu Hillel passed away at the age of 84.

Those passing by his grave in the Yarkon Cemetery might not know that there lies a precious man, a man of great deeds, a man who loved his fellow man and who was loved in return. They couldn't have known that there lies a fascinating life story - the story of a pioneer whose life symbolises the beginnings of the redemption of the ancient Babylonian Jewry, its immigration to the Land of Israel, and becoming involved in building it.

Eliyahu ZL was one of the founders of the Ahiever Movement in Baghdad and a key activist in it at the end of the 20's and the beginning of the 30's. Together with friends, most of them youths at the Jewish school "Shamash" he established a dynamic Zionist movement which dedicated itself to teaching Hebrew, speaking Hebrew, and

promoting a strong connection with the Jewish community in the Land of Israel. During those years, while the British mandate was still in effect in Iraq, one could engage in Zionist activity more or less legally (though under the intimidating, hostile surveillance of the local Muslim population and the government institutions). When Iraq became independent in 1932, it became clear that the Zionist movement could no longer operate, due to the extreme nationalistic attitudes of the rulers of Iraq. And the movement did indeed break up, with some of the members immigrating to Israel, while others who remained in place becoming submerged in the problems of day to day existence.

Eliyahu, the son of a well-to-do businessman, decided that he wanted to immigrate to the Land of Israel and to realize the ideal he had believed in and exhorted others to realize. This was a true revolution in the Hillel family. His five older brothers had already left Iraq, but not for the land of Israel but rather for countries all around the world, where they conducted extensive business. This was the role designated for Eliyahu when he finished school - to take his place in the family business. But he stood his ground: neither business, nor commerce, instead - the Land of Israel and the studying of agriculture - of all things - at the Mikveh Israel Agricultural School, as preparation for realizing the dream of being pioneering farmer in the Land of Israel. He was 18 years old when he left his parents' warm, comfortable home to cope with a new and unfamiliar reality of dormitory life in an agriculture school in the Land of Israel.

Eliyahu's aliyah symbolised a turning point in the life of the entire family and perhaps even contributed to it. Except for those who had already struck roots in the various foreign countries around the world where they were living, the entire family immigrated to Israel, one after another, became deeply involved in the life of the country, and became an address for many of the Iraqi Jews who later came to Israel and sought out good advice and guidance in becoming successfully absorbed in the country.

Eliyahu's marriage to Renee of the Twena family and the outbreak of the Second World War which severely hurt the citrus export industry (one of the major agricultural crops at that time), put an end to Eliyahu's dream of agricultural

life.

He built his house in North Tel Aviv, a house that many remember as an open house known for its hospitality.

Another chapter in my brother Eliyahu's life began when I was recruited into the Mossad for Aliyah Bet and sent on missions to Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. It was clear that Eliyahu was the only one in the family to whom I confided the secret of my leaving on confidential missions, and his infinite love and concern always accompanied me on those missions for many years. One of the veteran members of the Aliyah Bet group said to me on the day of Eliyahu's funeral: "You thought it was only you who were recruited into the Mossad for Aliyah Bet, but no less than you - Eliyahu was also recruited. His home and his office in Wesco (opposite the old central bus station in Tel Aviv) served us at the Mossad for Aliyah Bet as a second office that was always at our disposal, day and night". And that was so, not just his office but also the home of Eliyahu and Renee became the home of the people of the Aliyah Bet group. Many emissaries, when they came to Israel, were hosted for days at their home on Ben Yehuda 121. At that time, it was not customary for emissaries who came to Israel to stay at hotels and they were glad to sleep on the rugs in Eliyahu's house and to be hosted at his generous table, abundant with the good food prepared by his wife Renee. Many immigrants who came to Israel also knew their address, found their way to it, and were given help. Testimony of that may be found by the many people who attended his funeral or who came to comfort the family during the shiva period.

Eliyahu left a wife and three loving sons, two of them living in Canada, but the youngest son, Mickey, lives in Israel and is raising his family here. The three children of Mickey and his wife Orli, Eliyahu's grandchildren, were a source of joy and delight to Eliyahu in his last years. With the good feeling that his children, grandchildren, relatives and friends loved him, he left this world. For us, his family, his wife, his children, his brother and sisters it is hard to say goodbye. The pain is deep, the loss is great.

May his memory be blessed.

## Niazi Sion Dangoor



### THE BEAUTY AND THE BEASTS by Abdulla S Dangoor

Niazi Sion Dangoor who died recently in Tel Aviv at the age of 90, was born in Baghdad in 1910 when Iraq was a province of the Ottoman Empire and was named after Niazi Pasha the leader of the young Turks who staged a revolt against the Sultan. Niazi showed his skill in languages and at an early age mastered four languages: Arabic, Hebrew, English and French and latterly German. He was a brilliant entrepreneur and with the help of his brother-in-law, Jacob Mashaal, a racing man and a member of the Racing Board, he secured a concession for a betting office in town. A year later, at the age of 21, he realised that there was a trade opening with Germany and with the encouragement of Dr Grobba, the German minister in Baghdad, travelled to far away city of Leipzig and established a branch office to one of the biggest companies in Iraq, Meyer Toeg and Joseph Moshi to trade through the newly established Havara Mark which enabled German exports to be very competitive. Within a year he became fluent in German and achieved a great success in his business enterprise.

In 1931, Germany was in a state of tranquillity and Jews flourishing in the arts, music and business. The Lorelei, the poem written by the Jewish poet, Heinrich Heine, was the most popular song at the time: "I know not why I am so sad; I cannot get out of my head a fairytale of Olden Times". But with the advent of the Nazis things changed

overnight but they retained the song without mentioning the author. Almost every foreigner had to sport a badge of his country and even members of the diplomatic corps with dark complexions were molested. But Niazi was bold to walk the streets without fear. With his angelic good looks, wave hair and blue eyes, he became like an icon in a drab city. Dressed in a Savile Row suit by Henry Poole and driving in a smart Mercedes Benz coupé, he was courted by the intelligentsia as the first man from far away Iraq in their midst. Among them was Professor Landsberger the archaeologist and the greatest Assyriologist of the century who was to compose the Assyrian-English dictionary.

It was during my school holiday in Leipzig that my brother took me with his girlfriend and a couple of German acquaintances to the races. Soon after our arrival, the military band struck, the Nazi anthem was sung by the crowds who raised their hands in the Hitler salute with shouts of Heil Hitler and Sieg Heil. It was a daring do of Niazi and I at his side, giving the old fashioned military salute. The racegoers looked somewhat surprised at our bold and defiant attitude.

A few days after this episode, Niazi was summoned to the Gestapo Chief Obersturmerbannfuhrer. Facing the man with his intimidating physical presence, he deployed the strategy that the first part of defence is attack. He upbraided him for keeping him waiting on a primitive and uncomfortable bench. The blond beast, pompous, arrogant and bombastic became docile. Eventually the wolf turned into a little twerp. The Chief asked him silly questions. Is Meyer the senior partner of your company a Jew? Yes he is. Does he worship in a synagogue? I have no idea. Do you know him well? "No. I have never met him." How is that? Because he lives in Basra and I am from Baghdad. Ach so! Where is Basra? It is the main port of Iraq. He never asked Niazi whether he was a Jew for fear that he might tell him to mind his own business. When alerted by an aide that he may be dealing with a Jew, he rebuked him by telling him: It is I who decide who is a Jew. After gruelling on petty and irrelevant subjects, Niazi could not contain his irritation, lost his patience and threatened to complain to the Wilhelm Strasse (The Foreign Office) that the Chief overstepped his mark by his intrusive interview.

The Chief has realised that he cannot draw swords with a man of intelligence, learning and charisma. He was now so

polite and promised that Niazi would not be bothered again. This promise was kept for many years to come. He took the unprecedented step by standing up, shook his hand, greeting Grosse Got and Gutten Tag, and not raising his hand in the Nazi salute.

It was at the racecourse that Inge Hansen Niazi's then girlfriend and one of the most beautiful women in Germany, was brought to the attention of Dr Ley, the Labour Minister and one of the most repulsive types of German corpulents. He asked to see the woman and after meeting her he fell madly in love with her, divorced his wife and married her. His strength through joy cruise ships swarmed up to Westminster pier just before the war and in 1940 he promised his workers trips to the beauty spots of conquered Britain. However, with Reichs defeat he was indicted as war criminal in Nuremberg and hanged himself in his cell.

In 1938, after the Munich conference, Niazi was on a business trip to London. When he phoned his office in Leipzig, he was told by his secretary that he cannot speak freely as the premises were occupied by the Gestapo and all communications were cut off with the outside world. Niazi's first reaction was not to go back and was so advised by his friends and relatives. However, the next day and on the spur of the moment, he took the plane and went straight to the Gestapo headquarters. He barged in unannounced and demanded to see the senior chief who became his friend. He stood before him, indomitable, unbent and courageous and berated him for their aggressive raid. The man was dumbfounded and after consulting his colleagues, he apologised profusely that the action was undertaken by subordinates without his knowledge.

Why were the ruthless Gestapo cosying to a man who cocked a snook at them with a brash manner? Niazi had the patronage of Dr Grobba and was a friend of the Emir Zaid the Iraqi envoy. Also they did not want to upset the notorious King Ghazi who was anti-British and broadcasting pro-German propaganda from his palace.

At this juncture Niazi came to the conclusion that it was time to go. He realised that war was imminent as he watched from his office in Nicolai Strasse the queues of the contingent of workers, and was told that these can be transformed within hours into a fighting force. He thought how naive and

**Continued on following page**

ignorant the Western leaders were. The French Prime Minister boasted that Hitler treated him as an equal and Chamberlain proclaiming that he can trust the Führer and that he is a man of his word and he can do business with him.

He said goodbye to his tearful German staff who regarded him as a foreign protector and his being in Germany was reassuring of continued peace. In fact some of them wrote to him after the war seeking his help. Although most of them were Nazi sympathisers, they felt very vulnerable and looked at him as a father figure and foreign protector.

One final noble act was to obtain a visa and work permit in France for his Polish Jewish employee by the name of Fischleiber, mindful of the ancient Rabbinic teaching that he who saves a single life, saves the world.

## OBITUARY by Stella Shamoon

### NIAZI SHAMOON



### Edmond Safra

### SUICIDE OUT OF FEAR

I knew an elderly gentleman, let us call him Jim, who had a morbid fear of hanging himself if left alone in the house, and insisted on having someone stay with him at all times. Being an intelligent person, he reasoned with himself as to the cause of his anxiety. He came to the conclusion that he felt he would be vulnerable, if left alone, to anyone forcing himself into the house or opening the door by some means. As a result he decided to put the chain on the door and his problem came to an end.

In the case of Edmond Safra, there is no doubt that he was in a terrified state, hiding in the bathroom. His fear was if he opens the door he might fall into the hands of his imagined enemy with the result that he might be tortured and be forced to pay out millions. He came to the conclusion that his best escape route would be to die in one piece and leave his money intact.

In the event, there was no enemy waiting at the door and the honest Edmond Safra was only the victim of his own imagination.

His successful life story was adequately covered in the last issue of September 1999.

It is a case when money, which is supposed to be a good servant, became a bad master.

imaginative businessman, it was not the desire for success that drove daddy. It was an inborn boundless energy and a hunger for challenge. He met each challenge and often conquered.

Niazi was born in Baghdad in 1914 to a family of seven children. He was four when he lost his father.

His grieving mother turned to her father, a man of high moral rectitude and sense of duty whom Niazi greatly admired and respected, and who from that day was to become provider, protector and head of the young bereaved family during the rest of his days.

Niazi's great grandfather Shamoon was a brother of the famous David Sassoon the First. But when the Sassoons offered to assume responsibility of the young widow and her children, his maternal grandfather was too proud and said he did not want any outside help.

My father had a remarkable memory and was a wonderful storyteller.

He was a proud man, tall and dignified but utterly unpretentious, possessed of infectious friendliness and a powerful urge to communicate with others. He approached everyone with respect and an open mind.

Whether to charm, to persuade or to argue his corner, my father was an eloquent advocate who delighted in words, had a keen sense of humour and quick wit. He was as awesome in argument as he was persuasive in praise.

With his partner, the late Ghali Shamash, my father built up a chain of London-based hotels and serviced apartments, The Embassy Group, which was sold in 1976.

He was an old man but to the end retained a young person's hunger for life and a keen sense of fun.

My father was unusually open-minded and tolerant towards people whose cultures and principles were different to his own. He was born in the sometimes sympathetic and tolerant and sometimes persecuting regimes of Islam. We were all deeply touched by the fact that so many of his friends came to pay their respects to my father and each told us "He was my best friend".

Niazi (Abraham) Hayim Shamoon, beloved husband of Teffeh (née Iny), father of Olivia, Stella and Hilda, and grandfather of Guy Greenberg, Dahlia and Benjamin Dana and Samuel Setton (Smouha) passed away on 2 September at the age of 86 years.

Rabbi Levy and Rabbi Gubbay led the prayers at the burial.

The immediate family was joined by relatives from Paris and from Geneva, along with life-long friends from our community based in London.

Rabbi Levy said Niazi was a patriarch and dynamic man who although not strictly speaking religious, had a deep sense of tradition and family values. He gave fulsome praise to Teffeh for her unwavering devotion and love.

Niazi used to tell how he met his wife Teffeh. "I met Teffeh at a wedding party. The minute I arrived, two beautiful eyes fixed on me, they stunned me, I couldn't believe them, I looked at her and she smiled". It was love at first sight for both of them. They married in 1942. In 1948 the family moved to London.

This is what Niazi's daughter Stella writes about her father:

My father was of a generation of great, tough and courageous men who lived a turbulent but rich life that straddled East and West, Old and New. His death marks the passing of an era. Family and friends were indeed his most precious values.

Although a talented and

**Absence makes the heart grow fonder**  
We feel more affection for our relatives and friends when we are parted from them.

## NATHAN SAATCHI



Nathan David Saatchi passed away on May 31 after a short illness. Born in 1908 to a well-known Baghdadi family, he established himself as a textile merchant, importing mainly from Manchester. In 1945 he saw that there was no future for the Jews in Iraq, and moved to England before the Iraqi government instituted stringent anti-semitic laws. He settled in London and purchased wool and textile factories. In 1947 he sent for his family. The Saatchis integrated quickly into English society.

Despite the corporate success of Saatchi and his sons, the family patriarch found immigrant life to be lonely and longed for his Sephardic roots. Several years after settling in London, Nathan became involved in the city's Spanish and Portuguese Jewish community. For years he was considered to be among the elders of the community. He was often called upon to read the Haftara. Two years ago his sons established a synagogue in honour of their parents. "While the family has Sephardic roots, the synagogue follows the Ashkenazi

tradition. We are something like an Upper East side synagogue for singles" its Rabbi Pini Dunner said. He added, "Nathan Saatchi was most personable, bright, sharp, cheerful, until the last week of his life."

He is survived by his wife Daisy and four sons.

### Abridged from *Forward of New York*

#### From David Elias, BEM, MWS, FSWO

The following is a tribute to the Late Aaron Aaron. Some of the information was collected by Mr Nissim Judah who has done a great deal of research on Mr Aaron.

**AARON AARON** was a great leader, doing a great deal of work for the Jewish Community all over the world. If it were not for his determination and perseverance the Sephardi community in Sydney would not have existed as it is today.

He arrived in Sydney in 1950 and wasted no time in organising the Sephardi community because of his vast experience in community matters in Calcutta, India. He was the chief architect in the formation of the Hebrew Association and New South Wales Association of Sephardim. As a bush lawyer he drafted the first Constitution of the association where it was laid down that the Association would affiliate with the New South Wales Board of Deputies, the New South Wales Zionist Organisation and the World Sephardi Federation.

With his drive and foresight he rallied men and women to the cause of building the first Sephardi Centre and Prayer Hall in Sydney, Australia. Aaron Aaron was a great communal worker

because of his continued activities within the Jewish Community in Australia. He was elected the first Chairman of the association, a position he held for a number of years. In 1960 he was asked to help the association once again and was President until 1964. Aaron Aaron served as an executive member of the Zionist Organisation of Sydney. He was also Treasurer of the Federation of Orthodox Synagogue and a member of the Kashrut Commission of New South Wales and was elected Vice President in 1975.

He represented the association of the Zionist Federation of Australia for a number of years and was a delegate of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies. He has been a trustee of the Sephardi Community Centre and Prayer Hall and the Sephardi War Memorial. Aaron Aaron worked towards the formation of the Sephardi Federation in Australia and was the first Chairman and also a trustee of the Sepher Torah Trust Fund. During his term of office as President, he had the foresight to purchase the property on which now stands the synagogue and the next door property on which stands the Sephardi War Memorial.

He came, he saw and he conquered. He knocked on many doors and finally the office of the late Prime Minister of Australia, the Rt Hon Harold Holt.

It can be said of him that his foresight and vision opened the way for the entry to Australia of Sephardim from all over the world. Gone but not forgotten. He was born 15 January 1914 and died 30 July 2000. His wife, who was a great help to him in his communal work, died two years ago. There were three children, a daughter who pre-deceased him and two surviving sons who live in Australia.



November 1974 at the Gardenia Iraqi Club in London

Harab Obadia Yosef; Nathan Saatchi; Haham Dr Solomon Gaon; Dayan Dr Pinchas Toledano

**From Mr Shlomo Hillel  
Former Speaker of the Knesset**

Thank you for encouraging me to write about my brother Frank z"l. We were very close to each other. Since my childhood he was very kind to me but, certainly during the period that I served as a member of our Knesset Mission to the UN in New York we became really close to each other. I learned to appreciate his special personality.

Dear Naim: I know you also appreciated him and loved him and this was reciprocal.

By writing this small article that I am enclosing, I am paying a debt to his memory, a debt of appreciation, of gratitude and of love.

**Frank (Ephraim) Hillel z"l**



We can say that Ephraim Hillel was a man of the 20th century. He was born at the start of the century, in 1906, in Baghdad, and died in Boston, United States at the beginning of the 21st century (January 2000).

He knew how to adjust to all the dramatic changes that occurred during his lifetime with his own strength, by making demands of himself and with an iron inner discipline. He refused to go easy on himself, and he was just as demanding of other people, particularly those who were close to him, his wife Violet, and the four sons who were born to them in New York. Three of these grew up to be successful doctors, and the fourth became an economist.

Ephraim was the son of a family

of well-to-do traders in Baghdad. As was the custom there, after finishing his studies at the high school, he followed in the footsteps of his older brothers, travelling around for the purpose of trade. In this way he reached India, China and Japan, where he settled for a number of years.

Like many young Iraqi born Jews, he believed that he could only marry one of the girls from the community in Baghdad. In the mid 1930's, when he decided that the time had come to set up his own family, he returned to Baghdad and married Violet, a member of the Della family, an attractive and educated woman who was prepared to follow wherever he led.

Meanwhile, his parents and other members of his family had moved to the Land of Israel, and he too was inclined to settle there. In the Zionist archives there is a record of his correspondence with the Jewish Agency concerning the possibilities of making Aliyah and settling in the country. He reached the country with his young wife at the height of the bloody events of 1936-1939.

It was impossible to think of doing business in the Land of Israel in those days, so he turned his steps towards New York. This large and bustling city was good for business, but not good as a place to live in his opinion. It was a place to make a living, but not for living in.

He bought a house far from the busy town, facing a large, open and green field, with a little piece of land to grow vegetables and flowers, something he remembered from his parents' home in Baghdad in which they cared with love and fostered every plant or flower that grew there, and that he had dreamt about when he thought of the Land of Israel. Every morning, in the sweltering summer or the freezing, snowy winter, he rose early in order to reach the local railway station in good time, and from there travelled to Central Station in New York and to his place of work. He believed the effort was worthwhile, because at weekends he could work in his garden.

In the second half of 1949, after the establishment of the State of Israel and the end of the battles of the War of Independence, he visited in Israel, with a renewed hope of settling there. But the conditions in Israel at the end of the forties, a tiny and newly born country with problems of shortages and economic restrictions, were incomprehensible and unacceptable to someone from the United States. The distance between the dream

and the reality was too great.

He returned to New York and buried the dream of immigrating to Israel, but his link to Israel and what was happening there remained always in his thoughts.

Eventually, in the 1960's, when I often used to meet him in New York, when I was there in the capacity of my work in the Israeli Foreign Service or in my many visits afterwards, I was surprised each time anew by his detailed knowledge of what was happening in Israel, and by his strong opinions on each and every issue.

Ephraim was not at all religious, and did not give his children any religious education, but he was a Jew to his fingertips, and his ties to the Jewish people and the State of Israel were strong and solid.

He suffered a great deal because of his eyes, apparently as a result of defective treatment he received during his youth in Baghdad in the early days of the 20th century, and there were periods when he suffered from complete blindness. But with his strong self discipline, he would get up early each morning, sit upright at his table and listen to all the news broadcasts on the radio, particularly anything concerning events in Israel, and for many hours would listen to recordings of books on topics of Judaism and Jewish history.

Whenever I visited him he would shower me with questions, not only about what was happening in Israel, but also about chapters of the history of the Jewish people, and would show signs of anger and disappointment if my answers did not seem sufficient, or if I showed my ignorance of some parts of our long history.

Ephraim was a fighter. Nothing came easily to him, but only after effort, perseverance and stubbornness. Even in his last struggle with illness he did not give up. The last years of his life were difficult years of continual struggle, which caused him great physical and mental suffering. But as usual he refused to give in or surrender, and fought his illness with all his strength, with his last ounce of strength.

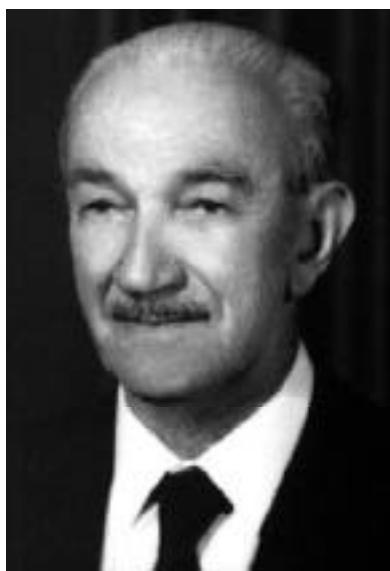
By now he could not walk or see, and Parkinson's Disease had badly affected him, but I remember him from my visits, even in this condition, sitting from early morning in his wheelchair next to the table, listening to the radio or a tape recorder with additional chapters from the history of the Jewish people, that he so loved to hear.

Finally he surrendered to the angel of death, knowing that he was surrounded by a family that loved and admired him, in spite of his strictness, and perhaps because of his strictness, which they knew how to appreciate. His wife, his four sons and his grandchildren knew that underneath this strictness was a husband, father and grandfather with a loving and sensitive heart, who was ready to do anything for his family and his people.

May his memory be for a blessing.

**Naim Dangoor writes:** I was closely associated with Frank for many years. In 1936, on my return from London I was with him frequently in Tel Aviv where he once rushed to my help when I was in difficulties while swimming in the Mediterranean. During the war, we did an extensive trade between Turkey and the United States and in 1948 during our stay in New York on our long honeymoon, Renée and I were very grateful for the help and attention that Violet and Frank gave us.

## NAJI ELIAS



### Obituary by Meer Basri

Reuben Naji Elias was born in 1910. His father Sasson Elias was a landowner in Bagubah, a township east of Baghdad on the road to the Iranian border.

He studied in Baghdad and went into business with his late brother Yehuda. With an Arab partner they built the first cinema house in Bagubah.

He continued his commercial

enterprise for many years in Baghdad. He became interested in the Jewish communal affairs and was elected a member, and then Vice-Chairman of the Jewish Council. When Meer Basri left Baghdad in October 1974, he became President of the Jewish community and continues to hold this office until he finally left Iraq in 1997. He went to live in Amsterdam with his family, but he visited London often.

He died in Amsterdam on 27th August 2000.

## Tribute to David M Schayek MC, MA (Cantab) - died 1 October 1999

by: Percy Gourgey MBE

Brought by his parents as a young child from Baghdad where he was born on 29 December 1919, David Schayek went to Harrow Public School and later studied law at St Catherine's College in Cambridge University from 1937-40. After the war he became a successful solicitor. He had celebrated his barmitzvah in the house of the renowned Mrs Flora Sassoon, in Bruton Street, Mayfair, London.

He had a distinguished war career, winning the Military Cross while serving as a junior officer in the Royal Inniskillen Fusiliers. He singlehandedly captured a German machine gun emplacement in Italy. The award citation read: "Lieutenant Schayek led his platoon with distinction onto the first objective - a low ridge known as Hill 40 - which he was the first to reach. Single-handed he attacked one of the enemy machine-gun posts and with his tommy-gun killed the crew. Although wounded twice himself, he continued to command and lead his platoon until the objective had been finally cleared. Lieutenant Schayek had previously shown himself as a courageous and inspiring leader, both in the North African and Sicilian campaigns."

He married in 1949 and with his wife, Lillian, celebrated their golden wedding in June 1999. He was a popular and well-liked among the Iraqi Jewish community in London and was knowledgeable about its history and customs. He was devoted to his family and is survived by his wife, daughters Valerie and Deborah and grandchildren. After his retirement he remained active and worked voluntarily for the Third World charity, "War on Want".

## VICTORIA BASHI



I am enclosing a picture of my sister Victoria who passed away in New York recently at age 93.

She was pre-deceased by her husband, Sassoon Aboody Bashi, who was a senior financial officer at the Rafidain Bank in Baghdad until forced out during the purge of Jewish employees by the Iraqi government.

After moving to the States, Victoria continued her academic studies and received a scholarship from the US government. She also took up artistic painting as an avocation.

She is survived by her three children, Betty (Angele) Shear of the UK, and Abbood and Menashi of the US and her grandchildren.

### Montreal

### Naim S Mahlab

## Tribute to Maurice Nathan who died in London on 28 October 1999

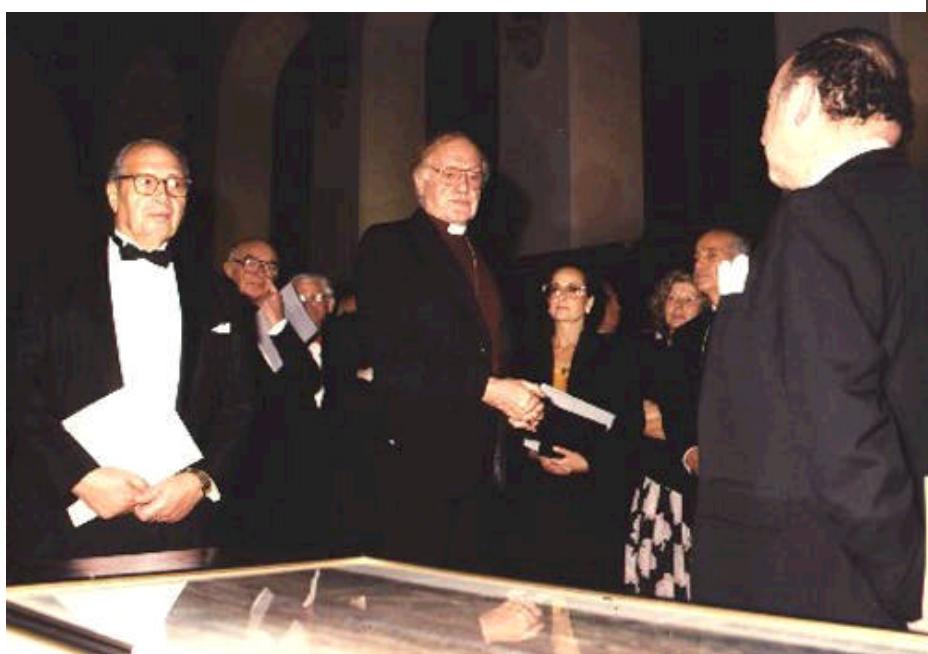
by: Percy Gourgey MBE

Maurice Nathan was born in Basra in 1920 but as a child attended the Cathedral Boys High School in Bombay. In 1946 he worked in London before going to Israel in 1949 where he married Rebecca who was born in Baghdad. He served in the Israel Army. Later he and his wife and children eventually settled in Stanmore, London. He was much respected by his colleagues in his business life, and ex-students from Bombay who had settled in England, Israel, Australia and the United States. A well-known Talmudic dictum summarised his character: "Say little, do much and receive all with a cheerful countenance".

He will be sorely missed by his devoted family and a wide circle of friends.



Above : The late Lord Runcie chatting with Naim Dangoor at Lambeth Palace  
Below : The late Dr Robert Runcie on a guided tour of Lambeth Palace.



## Lord Robert Runcie

Lord Runcie, former Archbishop of Canterbury, died of cancer at the age of 78. He was likeable and pragmatic and led the Church of England through a difficult time.

When I had dinner (strictly kosher) at Lambeth Palace some eleven years ago I was received at the door by Dr Robert Runcie, (later Lord Runcie) and when I told him that "I am greatly

honoured to meet you" his reply was "I too am greatly honoured to meet you". Then we spent some time chatting and I told him that I was writing an article on free will and wanted his opinion on the subject. His reply was "As a Christian," he said, "I believe in free will; as a philosopher, I don't. It is a dilemma."

At the dinner was the late Rabbi Hugo Gryn as well as the Chief Rabbi and the atmosphere was very friendly and jovial.

## SALMAN SHINA

From ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ISLAM  
New Edition  
Sent in by Prof. Shmuel Moreh

**SALMAN SHINA(1898-1978)**, was Iraqi Jewish journalist, lawyer and a member of the Parliament. Born in the Jewish quarter of Baghdad, he received a conventional religious Jewish education in a Heder (Stadh) and then continued his primary and secondary studies at the secular Jewish school of the Alliance Française Israëlite in Baghdad, and excelled in languages. Later, he joined the Ottoman Secondary School in Baghdad and was recruited to the Ottoman Army as a reserve officer during the First World War, as an adjutant and interpreter to the German General von Becker at the Turkish Headquarters.

After the defeat of the Ottoman army in Iraq he was taken prisoner, but refused to join the British forces on the grounds that the Ottomans had always helped the Jews, especially after their expulsion from Spain in 1492. He became a prisoner of war in India, but was re-patriated to Iraq in February 1919.

In 1920 he joined the Law College in Baghdad . On 10 April 1924 his weekly magazine *al-Misbah* was first issued, subtitled in Hebrew letters *Ha-Menorah* ("The Candelabrum"), with its Jewish emblem. This was the first Jewish literary and cultural weekly magazine published in literary Arabic in Arab script in Iraq. Shina edited his magazine, writing its main articles and translated many news items and articles from European and American magazines concerning Jewish and Zionist activities and achievements, in the Holy Land and abroad. The young poet and writer, Anwar Shaul joined him in editing the literary part of the weekly, and many other young Jewish poets and writers became contributors. Their works were among the first romantic poems and short stories published in Iraq, being influenced both by European literature and by the Arabic Mahdjar school in the USA. Shina and Anwar Shaul also encouraged theatrical activities among the Jewish community in Iraq, and among the plays performed was an Arabic translation of Corneille's *Le Cid* (1925). He also established, with other Zionist activists, The Hebrew Literary Association as a club and library, where Jewish journals in Hebrew, English and French were received.

In 1925 Shina started practising as a lawyer, serving the Jewish

community and defending its interests after the rise of the Nazi and Palestinian national activities in Iraq, where there were many Palestinians headed by the Mufti Amin al-Husayni who were later, in October 1939, joined by their leader. Their activities culminated in the *coup d'état* of Rashid Ali al-Gailani, defeated in May 1941 by the British Army, followed by the Pogrom against the Jews of Baghdad on 1-2 June 1941.

In 1947 Shina was elected a member of the Iraqi Parliament and served until 1951, the most critical years in the history of the Jews of Iraq, which ended with their mass immigration to Israel. Shina himself resigned from the Parliament and emigrated to Israel, where he worked as a lawyer, serving his community and protesting against what he termed "discrimination against the Jews of Iraq, whose properties were frozen in Iraq and who were without community leaders in the new Israeli society. In 1956 he unsuccessfully stood as a candidate for the Knesset. He continued as a lawyer and activist until his death at Ramat Gan in 1978.

## The Grave of Ezra Horesh

As you are publishing the "Horesh" family tree I thought your readers might be interested in how we found the grave of my paternal grandfather, Ezra Horesh, who was born in Baghdad in 1850.

A devout and orthodox Jew he emigrated from London about 1930 for Palestine as it was his wish to be buried there. He was buried on the Mount of Olives 29th Adar 1938, aged 90.

We were worried that the grave had been desecrated by the Jordanians during their occupation. So about 1992 we started making enquiries and eventually made a search. The problem was enormous because originally we did not know the exact date of death. Furthermore, the burial registers do not show the location of the graves, there are no row numbers and graves are not dug in chronological order.

We were told it was an impossible task as there were some 10,000 graves in just the most likely section of the Mount of Olives.

We persevered with our enquiries and in October 1997 I was accompanied by my son, Michael, Shlomo Bendahan (with pistol as the area

was dangerous) and a Mr Zevulun Erez who had a considerable knowledge of the cemetery, and we proceeded to the Mount of Olives. Mr Erez said "We will start here" and within ten minutes he had found the grave, which was in perfect order. Unfortunately we could not gather a minyan but a Hashcaba was said.

The grave was in an area which had not been desecrated, but from about three metres to the left the whole area had been destroyed. Had my grandfather been buried about two years later then his grave would have been destroyed.

The following is the text engraved on the tombstone:

  <b>הוקן היישש הקשר</b> <b>ודף צדקה וחסד הנ"פ בשם טוב מהעולם</b> <b>עוזרא (בן) יהושע (בן) עזרא</b> <b>ב"ח (בן חכם) אליעזר חורש</b> <b>נכ"ע בערבע ר'ח ניסן</b> <b>(נלכט לבית עולמו)</b> <b>תרכ"ח</b> <b>.ת.ג.צ.ב.ה.</b>	
<b>London</b>	<b>Joshua Stanley Horesh</b>

## A VISIT TO RHODES ISLAND

Going on a holiday in this Island does not sound much of a historic destination let alone, of a Jewish connection. It is the largest of the Dodecanese Islands. Its history goes back to four thousand years when, according to their mythology, a fortune teller told the King of Crete that he will be murdered by his son. The son, who loved his father very much, was horrified, fled with his family and friends northwards, and settled in Rhodes. He surrounded his area by magic silver bulls that bellowed whenever the island was in danger of attack.

His father, growing old and hearing that his son was living in Rhodes came to look for him. It was dark when the bulls started bellowing and the prince mistook his dad for a pirate and lopped off his head. So sadly, the prophecy came true.

The Colossus of Rhodes was a splendid bronze statue of Helios, their Sun God. It stood 100 feet high at the entrance of the harbour, one foot on each side. Its building took twelve years circa 280 BCE. It was recognised as one of the Seven Wonders of the World, and was destroyed by an earthquake in 227 BCE. Alas, it cannot be retrieved from the bottom of the sea as thieves had stolen its pieces and sold them as scrap.

Being a small island in an important trading seaway, it was occupied by all the powers that dominated the area. Including Alexander the Great, The Byzantines, Haroun al Rashid, the Crusaders, and the Italians of Genoa who sold it to the Knights of St John in 1306 after the defeat of the Crusaders. In 1522 it became part of The Ottoman Empire. The Italians took it back in 1912 until World War Two. We saw the house built for Mussolini at the top of a mountain, where he spent several holidays. In 1943 the Germans rounded up all the Jews, about 2000, and sent them to Auschwitz. There are now 40 Jews in the city and one synagogue that we saw, being looked after by an old Jewish lady who speaks Ladino.

One of the highest mountains in the Island is called Prophet Elias. I don't know of any other prophet with that name but ours.

Rhodes is infested by poisonous snakes. In old times the farmers brought deer into the island to kill the snakes. It seems that the deer, being afraid of the snake, kicks it until it kills it! Therefore deer are sacred and no-one is allowed to kill them.

The largest tourist group who occupy the best hotels are, believe it or not, Israelis! Many signs in the shops and hotels are in Hebrew.

**London**

**Elias Dangoor**

I am a Senior Writer with the American newspaper, The Wall Street Journal. I write feature stories. I have an interest in Judaism, because I was raised Jewish. Harry Korine who is a professor at the London Business School, and is of Iraqi descent, told me about your Scribe newsletter. I am writing to ask if you might send me a few copies. I am curious about the Iraqi Jewish community for its historical roots in Jewish history.

**London**

**Gregg Pascal Zachary**

## **EZRA HADDAD - AUTHOR, HISTORIAN AND EDUCATOR**

by Avner Meiri (Fouad Saigh),  
Canada



*Dr Ezra Haddad 1900-1972*

The first time I met Ezra Haddad was in 1947. I had just graduated from the Jewish High School Al-I'idadya, and was recommended by the late principal, Meir Zakaria, to teach in one of the Jewish Community's Primary Schools.

One day I was called by Mr Haddad, the principal of Al-Watanya School, to meet with him in his office. When we got together, his first question was, how old I am? I responded, 17 years old. He said that I shall be teaching many students who are two years younger than me and that I was lucky to be tall. He suggested that I do not tell the students my age, and also to be firm, but a gentleman with the students, as it was my job to educate them and thus increasing their knowledge. At that time I was impressed with Ezra Haddad's personality, knowledge in many aspects of life and his sense of humour.

During the three months of the summer holidays, most of the teachers would come to the Al-Watanya School almost every day for a few hours, not making preparations for the next school year, but rather to listen to Ezra Haddad tell stories and anecdotes about Babylonian Jewry, his visits to Europe and Palestine.

In fact, Ezra Haddad was a great educator, a leader, an historian and a researcher. In addition to the Arabic

language, Haddad was in full command of English, Hebrew, French, German, Turkish and Farsi.

Haddad's knowledge about the history and culture of the Iraqi Jewish people during the last two centuries was vast. He was born in Baghdad in the year 1900, from a traditional family with low income. His parents sent him to study Torah and the Talmud with the greatest Rabbis in Baghdad. In 1917, he joined the Teacher's Seminar in the city. A year later he was appointed as a teacher at the Talmud Torah School. A few years later, a new school was founded in the quarter of Abbas Afandi, which was called Al-Watanya, and Ezra Haddad was appointed to be its headmaster. It is interesting to note that amongst the teachers of this school were Anwar Shaool, Murad Michael, Baruch Mizrahi and Eliahou Samra.

During the 1920's, Haddad wrote many articles and studies in the early Iraqi magazines AL-MISBAH and AL-HASSED, which were both owned and edited by Iraqi Jews. He translated to Arabic many articles and books dealing with social, political and historical subjects.

In 1945, he translated from Hebrew to Arabic, the famous book, "The Journey of Benjamin of Tudella", the great Jewish traveller from Spain. The introduction to this book was written by the well-known Iraqi historian, Abbas Al-Azzawi. The book was translated in the genre of Arab travellers' tales from the Middle Ages. The book was welcomed by Arab scholars all over the Arab world.

In 1947, Ezra Haddad published the book, "Chapters From the Bible" to be taught at the Jewish schools in Iraq. He wrote many books, amongst them, "The History of Jews in Iraq and Their Folklore". He also translated to Hebrew part of the book "Ruba-eyat Umar Al-Khayam." It is known that at Haddad's home in Baghdad, he had an extensive and famous private library consisting of Arabic, Hebrew, English, French and Turkish language books.

In 1951, Ezra Haddad immigrated to Israel. Soon, he was active in the political and social life of the country. He was elected to the executive committee of the labour union, the Histadrut, and also to the Congress of the Zionist Movement.

In addition to his public activities, Haddad devoted a lot of his time to his favourite literary pre-occupations. He published a book of short stories from the Iraqi Jewish

folklore, and Arabic-Hebrew dictionary, and he also translated to Arabic many articles from Hebrew literature. In 1971, he published his last book in Hebrew, "Milestones, The History of the Jews in Babylon-Iraq", which covered the history from the Babylonian captivity in 597 BCE to the mass exodus to the State of Israel, in 1951 CE.

Ezra Haddad passed away in 1972, leaving us with great memories as an individual, who devoted most of his life to promote education, culture, and Zionism to three generations of Babylonian Jewry.

## **THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE JEWS OF HONG KONG A Resource Guide**

The above book by Dr Caroline B Pluss is being published by the Jewish Historical Society of Hong Kong.

Early Hong Kong Jewish history centred predominantly around the same Baghddadi families who were to be found throughout the Far East and who came to Hong Kong mainly from Bombay. The Sassoons were the mainstays of Jewish life for many years, donating the first synagogue and the land upon which it still stands. They and other Jews from Baghdad, mostly in their employ, formed the core of religious life not only in Hong Kong but also in Shanghai, Burma, Singapore and other far-flung trading posts in the region.

In its over 150 years' existence, the Jewish community of Hong Kong has evolved from a small, distant outpost of the Diaspora into the hub of Jewish life in East and Southeast Asia.

The book on the history of the Jews in Hong Kong has been very thoroughly researched by Dr Caroline Pluss, starting from a very slim base of documentary evidence in the archives in Hong Kong. Unfortunately, most documentation did not survive the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong during the Second World War.

We will, of course, send you more about the book when it has been published and is available for purchase.

**Judith LGreen  
Director**

Jewish Historical Society of Hong Kong  
One Robinson Place  
70 Robinson Road  
Hong Kong, S.A.R.  
China

## **ROSH HASHANA SERVICES AT OHEL RACHEL SYNAGOGUE-SHANGHAI**

From *Points East*, a publication of the Sino-Judaic Institute, California

Jeffrey Bernstein is General Manager of *EverReach Logistics* in Shanghai, China. He informed us that two Rosh Hashana services were held this year at the Ohel Rachel Synagogue, one in the morning and one in the evening. Lubavitch rabbis officiated. Men, women and children attended. A meal followed Friday services. The Shanghai community torah was kept in the ark throughout Rosh Hashana Shabbat. It is important to point out that the Ohel Rachel Synagogue was opened only for Rosh Hashana. After that it was closed to the public. Other services and Yom Kippur prayers took place in a hotel. Mr Bernstein described the Shanghai Rosh Hashana celebration in an e-mail to his parents who live in California. They kindly agreed to share its contents with our readers.

"Happy New Year to you from the other side of the world. We wish you all a happy and healthy New Year, filled with many momentous 'firsts'."

We started with a first in Shanghai. The Ohel Rachel Synagogue (one of Shanghai's 7 original synagogues) was opened to the Jewish community for Rosh Hashana services. This is the first time since 1949 that Shanghai Jews could celebrate the High Holidays in their own house of worship.

As we walked past the ivy covered walls of the building that had not been used a Synagogue for the past 50 years, the strong symbolism of the moment struck us. Although the outside walls were darkened by layers of soot, the inside was bright and clean, displaying its old grandeur for the holy days. We are grateful that the Shanghai City's Bureau of Education, who occupied the building, had respected its original architecture and carefully preserved the original state of its interior.

It was exciting to be part of this important day. We felt we were experiencing history in the making."

### **East or West, home is best**

Wherever it is, and however far you may travel from it, THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME.

## **DISCOVERY OF OLDEST SYNAGOGUE IN THE AMERICA'S**

One of the most unusual archaeological projects ever undertaken in Brazil is under way: the excavation and reconstruction in Recife of the first synagogue built in the New World.

The synagogue, Kahal Zur Israel, or Rock of Israel, flourished in the mid-1600's when the Dutch briefly controlled this part of north-eastern Brazil and the sugar and tobacco plantations that made it rich.

Evacuation began in September 1999 but because the Inquisition had done everything possible to obliterate all signs of the Jewish presence, the dig began with some doubts.

"We were certain we were in the right place when we came across a mikvah," the ritual bath used by observant Jews.

With the support of the Brazilian government and several foundations, the small Jewish community here plans to turn the site into a museum and Cultural Center of the Jewish Presence in Brazil. Reconstruction of the building's interior is to be completed this year.

Brazil's Jewish population today, around 170,000, is barely one-tenth of 1 per cent of the country's 170 million people. "There is no doubt that Jews contributed greatly to the construction of Brazil", especially in the crucial early years of Portuguese colonial rule.

The first Portuguese expedition to land in Brazil, 500 years ago included a Polish-born Jew as its chief interpreter, as well as astronomers and mapmakers who are believed to have been of Jewish origin. Early settlers included many so-called marranos, Jews from the Iberian Peninsula who had converted to Christianity under duress but were eager to escape the clutches of the Inquisition to resume openly practising their faith.

By 1590, however, the Inquisition had installed itself in Brazil and begun persecuting these "new Christians". So when the Dutch seized the colony of Pernambuco in 1630 and announced a policy of religious tolerance, those who moved to Recife included not only a Rabbi and cantor from Amsterdam but many Jewish families from territory under Portuguese control.

"At the height of the Dutch period, Recife may have had a larger

Jewish presence than Amsterdam itself". "The most reliable calculations indicate about 1,400 Jews, nearly half its population of free white civilians".

But in 1654 the Portuguese drove out the Dutch, and fear of reprisals led to the dispersion of the Jews here. A group of 23 returning to Amsterdam were landed at a fledgling Dutch colony called Nieuw Amsterdam. They were the first Jews ever to enter North America.

Their difficulties did not end when they reached what is today New York City. Peter Stuyvesant, governor of the settlement, sent a letter to the Dutch West Indies Company recommending "most seriously that such hateful enemies and blasphemers of the name of Christ, be not allowed further to infest and trouble this new colony."

The response he received ordered that the newcomers be permitted "to live, trade and travel" freely and be given a burial ground of their own, which was established near what is today Chatham Square. It came to be known as the Brazilian Cemetery. But it was only after the English displaced the Dutch that the Jews from Recife were permitted to build a synagogue. The congregation, Shearith Israel, still exists, with its synagogue now at 70th Street and Central Park West, the Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue. There are still some people in Brazil's interior who believe they are Jewish because they have a menorah or prayer book handed down to their grandparents by their grandparents before them, or following family customs that fit squarely within the Sephardic tradition."

The ability of elements of faith to persist for so long in such isolation is truly an amazing thing.

### **From New York Times**

I have just discovered you. I have one of the largest Sephardic genealogy websites on the net which you are welcome to visit. I will be adding a link to your website under my section for Iraq.

Please consider reciprocating and let me know if you decide to do so.

### **Jeff Malka**

### **"Resources for Sephardic Genealogy" website:**

<http://www.orthohelp.com/geneal/sefardi.m.htm>  
(Jewish Agency for Israel TOP TEN;  
Britannica 2 STARS)

## Dayan Toledano with the King of Morocco - July 2000



At the request of the King, Dayan Toledano blessed him in Hebrew and in Arabic. The King spoke about Israel and he promised he would carry on the work of his father, namely that a solution should be found between Israel and the Palestinians. Afterwards, the delegation was taken to the Mausoleum where the kings of Morocco are buried. Dayan Toledano recited Hashcaba, Memorial Prayer, for the King's grandfather, Mohammed V and his father, Moulai Hassan II. Dayan Toledano wore special robes which the Dayanim of Morocco have been wearing since time immemorial.

Dayan Toledano was also taken to visit the cousin of the King who is not well, as well as to visit the Jewish leaders in Rabat.

## Correction :

The caption of the picture at the bottom of page 21 was incomplete of the last issue (No. 72).

The people appearing in the photograph are Moroccan Jewish leaders with King Mohammed V (father of the late King Hassan II) in the circa 1950's:

Left to right: Rabbi Barouch Abraham Toledano (father of Dayan Pinchas Toledano); lay leader, Rabbi Raphael Barouch Toledano; Sidi Mohammed V; Rabbi Joseph Messas, lay leader.

Note that the King was standing on a step, to make him appear as the biblical King Saul, first King of Israel, "head and shoulders above the rest".

## Busiest men find the most time

People who do a lot are the people who have most energy. However busy they are, they can usually manage to do something more.

## REUNION OF THE FRANK INY SCHOOLSTUDENTS OF THE CLASS THAT GRADUATED IN 1962

A reunion was held in London last May of the Frank Iny students of the class that eventually graduated in 1962. The group stayed overnight at Danesfield House, Marlow-on-Thames and then attended a Barbeque lunch at David Gabbay's house in Marlow.



Shown above left to right: Standing:

Ann Shamash; Lisa Hoory; David Gabbay; David Shamash; Sylvia Koreen (née Ibrahim); Desirée Dellar (Shina); Rita Tricot; Sami Tricot; Olivia Shashou (Sheena); Gilda Aslan; Edna Shamash; Laurette Kashi (Nourallah); Ibtisam Shaul (Heskel); Emma Ghazal; Layla Shalom (Rahamim); Jack Shemtob; Faiza Vasely (Jacob); Suad Yohanan (Ibrahim); Joyce Gabbay; Ketty Cohen (Shohet); Emile Cohen; Ingrid Samra (Bekhor); Marsha Yamen (Sassoon); Lydia Jiji (Dabby); Isabelle Bar-Moshe (Twaig); Michael Cowan; Jack Atraghji; Olivia Cowan (Timan); Karim Timan; Ruth Timan; David Shamash; Gilda Shamash; Estelle Shohet; Shoua Jiji; Tommy Vasely; Sami Balass; Aslan Aslan; Yamen F Yamen; Samir Ghazal; Sabah Shamash; Charles Timan; Saïd Hoory; Ferial Balass (Mussaffi); Sasson Yamen; Samir Samra; Samir Shohet; Jimmy Shamash; David Dellar.

## **REINCARNATION IS AN ALIEN BELIEF, ARGUES RABBI DR JEFFREY COHEN**

The former Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Ovadiah Yossef, was at the centre of a furore last week over his nauseating suggestion that the six million who died in the Holocaust were "reincarnated sinners".

Behind his preposterous theory lies the mystical doctrine of *gilgul*, where the soul is reincarnated or "transmigrated" to reach a new level of perfection or to atone for some gross imperfection in a previous earthly existence. This idea, however, did not originate in Jewish sources and is not found in the Talmud, though it was widespread in early Christian circles from the second century.

Scholars variously trace it to early Gnostic sectarian teaching, to Greek, Platonic or neo-Platonic thought, or Indian philosophy. It was later promoted by Anan ben David in Baghdad, the eighth century founder of Karaism (the dissident Jewish sect which accepts the Bible but not the Talmud), who may have borrowed it from the Islamic Mutazila sect, and it entered Jewish Kabbalistic literature in the late 12th century work, *Sefer Habahir*.

Though it met with trenchant opposition from our major medieval philosophers, this did not prevent its becoming a cardinal doctrine in the later kabbalistic system of Isaac Luria, leader of the 16th century Safed circle of mysticism. It was even defended by such sages as Moses Nachmanides and Menasseh ben Israel. With the rise of Chasidism in the 18th century, belief in reincarnation was, as it were, reincarnated.

Over the years the *gilgul* concept underwent various developments, such as the notion of the transmigration of a soul into the body of lower forms of nature; or the doctrine of *ibbur*, "impregnation", when a reincarnated soul *may* enter a host body in later life as an attachment to, or impregnation of, the existing soul.

Its residence, for but a brief period there, is in order to enable some restless, righteous soul to compensate for any particular mitzvah that it neglected to perform in its original incarnation, and so attain spiritual perfection.

A large body of opinion, however, did not view transmigration so positively. Rather, it was seen as a

punishment imposed upon those inferior souls that had failed to stop their previous bodies from perpetrating particularly heinous (especially sexual) sins. Out of this came the idea of a dybbuk, a malevolent spirit possessing a person, often to seek some personal retribution, a theme taken up in Yiddish literature from the 17th century onward.

There is a great danger in mysticism: that unless one has a firm grounding in normative Judaism, it can totally distort one's faith and undermine one's observance. This is what happened to the followers of Shabbetai Zvi, the 17th century false Messiah, and to those of Jacob Frank (mid 18th century), who was regarded as Shabbetai's reincarnation.

The Frankists paraded outwardly as Orthodox Jews, but were committed to a belief in Shabbatcanism which prompted them to initiate a widespread attack on the Talmud and Jewish law. Under the influence of the Zohar, the main kabbalistic work, and some distorted Jewish mystical ideas, they ignored the Torah's sexual prohibitions, adopting at first a synthesis of Jewish and Christian principles, and the celebration of avowedly religious orgies, and ended up embracing Catholicism.

The result of their attacks on the Talmud was that the Church authorities carried out a systematic burning of cartloads of Jewish religious works. In addition to the rabbinic cherem, or excommunication, imposed upon the sect. Isaac Luria's recommendation that kabbalah should not be studied by those under the age of 40 was vigorously enforced.

In our own day, alternative religions and cults have mushroomed, some using brain-washing techniques on recruits, estranging them from their families, and subjecting them to fearsome regimentation. Ruined lives, sometimes even suicides, have been the result.

Popular mysticism is generally incomprehensible to those who merely dabble in it, leading to their potential manipulation by charlatans who seek to control the minds and pockets of their followers.

As for the courses in mysticism being promoted by some in our own community, while there is no evidence of any of the above excesses, our response should be to spell out, at the very least, their philosophical pitfalls.

There is a lifetime of spiritual stimulation in our own traditional

sources, which are far more elevating and compelling than any of the alternative traditions on offer.

Like the communication of G-d to Moses, the truths of our tradition are framed, according to the Torah, "mouth to mouth, with clarity and not in riddles, so that the nature of G-d may be clearly perceived."

Our sources hold that the everyday life that G-d would have us lead can be invested with the beauty of holiness; that our rational mind is sufficient to think spiritual thoughts; and that our need to interrelate ethically with our fellow-man is far more important than a leap into the whirlpool of mystic speculation.

### **Rabbi Cohen is minister of Stanmore Synagogue**

### **From *The Jewish Chronicle*, London**

Rabbi Dr Jeffrey Cohen's article confirming that reincarnation is an alien belief is a shining light in the current darkness of superstitious and magical beliefs still propagated by some Orthodox rabbis in this country, Israel and other parts of the world.

The late Ernest Wallis Budge, who was a leading Hebrew scholar and keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian antiquities at the British Museum, made it clear in "Amulets and Superstitions" that the Kabbalah, as we know it today, is also foreign to authentic Jewish belief. He wrote: "The Kabbalah of Middle Ages represents a mass of beliefs and traditions which the Hebrews adopted from the Egyptians, Babylonians and Assyrians, Syrians, Zoroastrians, Gnostics, Greeks, Arabs and even European peoples."

The tragedy for Judaism in this country is that Rabbi Cohen is one of the few Orthodox rabbis who has the integrity and courage to speak out about the challenge superstitions impose on the future of authentic traditional Judaism.

**London                    Maurice J Summerfield**

Isaac Luria's idea that G-d had to withdraw from part of his Creation, to make room for man's independence is untenable. The presence of G-d is everywhere in the Universe. The only concession that G-d made to man was to give him a measure of free will.

## **Et Tu Switzerland?**

from: Albert Khabbaza MD

A panel of independent historians has concluded that wartime Swiss officials refused entry to thousands of Jewish refugees even after it was known that they faced almost certain death in Nazi Germany.

By the summer of 1942 at the latest, the historians said in their detailed 350-page report, the Swiss authorities were aware that Jews were being annihilated by the Third Reich.

The historians also said there was no evidence that accepting many more asylum seekers would have put neutral Switzerland in danger of "invasion by the Axis or caused insurmountable economic difficulties." They thus rejected an argument advanced in Switzerland's defence after earlier disclosures of the country's treatment of Jews trying to escape the Holocaust.

Rather, the report cited anti-Semitism and an entrenched fear of foreigners in Switzerland as the reasons the authorities turned away more than 24,000 Jews.

Swiss officials "became involved in the crimes of the Nazi regime by abandoning the refugees to their persecutors," Jean-Francois Bergier, the Swiss historian who headed the panel, said at a news conference today.

The study is part of a larger historical inquiry, commissioned by the Swiss government, that produced another report last year on Switzerland's gold transactions with Hitler's Germany. Earlier this week, a separate report by Swiss banks and American Jewish groups found that 54,000 Swiss bank accounts might be linked to Holocaust victims.

The latest report was prepared during the last two years by nine historians from Switzerland, Israel, the United States, Britain and Poland who had unprecedented access to the Swiss national archives as part of Switzerland's effort to come to terms with its wartime history. Jewish groups praised the new report, but there were complaints from the government and from some private groups that the sharply critical study failed to measure official actions against the troubled international situation at the time.

Although the report did not delve deeply into other countries' treatment of World War II refugees, the historians said at the news conference that Sweden, also neutral during World War II, had been significantly more helpful than

Switzerland. Sweden, like Switzerland, had limited Jewish immigration between 1938 and 1942, but reversed its policy after officials learned of the mass killings of Jews.

Switzerland followed suit only in July 1944, when it declared that persecution for being Jewish was a valid ground for granting asylum.

Switzerland's governing body, the Federal Council, issued a statement today saying the country's asylum policy "was marred by errors, omissions and compromises" - renewing its 1995 apology for wartime refugee policy. "Nothing can make good the consequences of decisions taken at the time, and we pay our respects before the pain of those who were denied access to our territory and were abandoned to unspeakable suffering, deportation and death," the seven ministers said.

But the ministers said the report ignored "fears generated by the threat facing Switzerland, the uncertainty of maintaining foreign trade to ensure the country's survival."

Switzerland took in 51,000 civilian refugees during the war, including some 21,000 Jews, although many of those had slipped into the country illegally and were then allowed to stay.

There were some heroes among Swiss officials, particularly among consular employees who "were very liberal in granting entry visas," but the report details specific instances of serious "human suffering" to highlight the impact of Swiss refugee policy.

The study cited as particularly egregious the Swiss push for a requirement, enacted in 1938, that German passports for Jews be stamped with a "J." It also cited the closing of the border with Germany in 1942 to refugees persecuted solely because they were Jews.

"Without Swiss pressure, the passports would not have been stamped until later, perhaps not at all," the report concluded. "This would have made it less difficult for refugees to find a country willing to accept them."

The report was particularly critical of the 1942 decision to close Swiss borders to Jews even though senior officials were "aware of the fact the refugees sent back were being threatened with deportation to Eastern Europe culminating in death."

Although there was some public protest, the Swiss authorities stepped up rejections of asylum seekers - even denying most the right to pass through the country to other destinations -

declining to "help people in mortal danger," the report said.

**Scribe:** The action of the Swiss Government in denying entry to Jewish refugees was to satisfy the greed of Swiss bankers who saw in the German persecution of Jews an opportunity to grab their assets which they had trustfully salted away in Switzerland.

## **Pope's visit to the Western Wall**

Pope John Paul II made a special visit to the Western Wall and as is customary on such visits, he slipped a piece of paper containing a wish and a prayer. It was asking G-d for forgiveness for those who caused the Jewish people suffering and pledging 'genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant'.

I think that this prayer is an important turning point in the inter-action between Christianity and Judaism and that everybody should know about it.

Thank you very much for your regular sending us our beloved Scribe which we enjoy very much.

**Ramat Gan,Israel**                   **Dr Raouf Semah**

**Scribe:** The Pope first asked the Jewish people to forgive and forget the horrors and the crime of the Holocaust. When he was told that we can't forget, and that we have no authority from the 6 million victims to forgive, he apparently decided to turn to G-d for his forgiveness.

We are not sure if our G-d recognises the Pope. Forgiveness can only be obtained from true and genuine repentance, but anti-semitism is as strong as ever among Christians and in the Church.

At a recent updating of the website for "Resources in Sephardic Genealogy" a link has been placed to your website at the following location:

[http://www.orthohelp.com/geneal/sefardi\\_m.htm#Iraq](http://www.orthohelp.com/geneal/sefardi_m.htm#Iraq)

**e-mail**

**Jeff Malka**

I have just finished reading (for the third time) "If this is a man". I found your article to be a moving summary, and would like to thank you for its information.

**e-mail (UK)**

**Rachel Spires**

# LITHUANIA HONORS A HOLOCAUST RESCUER

from *Points East* - a publication of the Sino-Judaic Institute, California

In the summer of 1940, in the Lithuanian capital city of Kovno (Kaunas), a Dutch gentile businessman did truly amazing things to assist literally thousands of stranded Jews. What was the role of Jan Zwartendijk (1896-1976) in the Kovno rescue episode? Why has Lithuania now recognized him for courage fifty-nine years after the event?

## The Kovno Episode

By late 1939, under the terms of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, Germany had completed its occupation of western Poland while the Soviet Union took over eastern Poland. By May 1940 at least 10,000 Jews had fled from those occupied zones into neutral Lithuania. On June 15, 1940 the Soviet Union occupied Lithuania and five weeks later accepted its "request" to be annexed into the U.S.S.R., a procedure that was completed by August 5.

The Polish Jews who had fled to Lithuania precisely to escape Soviet rule felt especially vulnerable and desperate during the annexation process. By July virtually all consulates in Kovno, the Lithuanian capital, were in the process of closing. Panic set in among the Jewish refugees. At the point Jan Zwartendijk, voluntarily and at great personal risk, took on a role which quickly evolved into the rescue of the Jews.

Since May 1939 Jan had represented Philips, the Dutch electronics manufacturer, in Lithuania. In May 1940 the Germans over-ran Holland and a Dutch Government-in-Exile, technically a resistance organization, was established in London. L.P.J. De Decker, the Dutch Ambassador to the Baltic states who was based in Riga, Latvia, suspected the then-Dutch consul in Kovno of pro-Nazi sympathies. In June 1940 he asked Zwartendijk to take over in Kovno as consul in Lithuania representing the Dutch Government-in-Exile. In spite of the fact that Zwartendijk had no diplomatic experience and a wife and three young children in Kovno, he readily accepted this potentially risky assignment.

Zwartendijk's work almost immediately entailed the even more dangerous task of rescuing Jews. In July 1940 Pessla Lewin, a former Dutch

citizen who was now a Polish refugee living in Lithuania with her husband Isaac and son Nathan, took the gamble of writing to De Decker, who was still the Dutch ambassador. She requested authorization to emigrate to the Dutch West Indies. She learned that no visa was required but that she would need a landing permit from the local governor. Such permits were only rarely issued. Nevertheless the ambassador tried to help by inscribing in her Polish passport, in French, the statement that "for the admission of aliens to Surinam, Curaçao, and other Dutch possessions in the Americas, an entry visa is not required." This stipulation, dated July 11 1940, came to be known as a "Curaçao visa." It gave the impression of being as good as a visa since it omitted the key phrase that a landing permit was required. On July 22, Isaac Lewin approached Zwartendijk in Kovno. According to Lewin, Zwartendijk, "after seeing what De Decker had done, copied (the Curaçao visa) into my Lithuanian safe-conduct pass." Armed with this documentation, Pessla and Isaac Lewin, plus her mother and brother who were still Dutch citizens, went to the Soviet and Japanese consuls in Kovno and were routinely issued seven-to-fifteen-day transit visas allowing them to pass through each of those countries. The Japanese consul was Sugihara Chiune, who has been featured in movies and is far better known than Zwartendijk. Without Zwartendijk's fictitious destination visas, however, neither Sugihara nor his Soviet counterpart would have been able to issue one single transit visa through their respective territories.

Unaware of the Lewins' experience, Nathan Gutwirth, a legitimate Dutch citizen then residing in Telz (Telsiai), Lithuania, asked Zwartendijk on July 24 if several of his fellow students, non-Dutch citizens, could accompany him to Curaçao. Zwartendijk volunteered to help, providing the same notation he had given the Lewin's. Gutwirth conveyed this information to Polish Zionist leader, and later Israeli Minister of Religious Affairs, Zorach Warhaftig. Warhaftig made inquiry of Zwartendijk, who let it be known that he was willing to give a "Curaçao visa" to anyone who asked.

Thus, with Zwartendijk's help, the Lewins' single-family trip rapidly became a mass exodus of beleaguered Jews. Within hours, dozens of petitioners were lined up at Zwartendijk's Philips office, which is today part of the Red

Cross hospital on Kovno's main downtown thoroughfare. Zwartendijk originally had received De Decker's concurrence to issue phoney visas only for a few of Gutwirth's friends. But Zwartendijk went on to write approximately 1,300 visas by hand between July 24 and 27 and another 1,050 with the help of a rubber stamp between July 29 and August 3, when the Soviets took over Zwartendijk's office, obligating him and his family to return to Holland. The highest known visa number is 2,345, issued to Elisasz Kupinski and his family.

In reality, not a single Jew showed up in Curaçao. This is not surprising because Zwartendijk had made it clear to the recipients of his "Curaçao visas" that this notation would not allow them entry. They understood very well that the "Curaçao visas" were a ruse to get out of the U.S.S.R. and, they hoped, as far as Japan, where they could try their luck at various consulates to get visas for other countries. About half of the roughly 2,200 refugees who reached Japan with Zwartendijk's visas succeeded in moving on to the United States, Palestine, and other final destinations. Those not so fortunate were shipped by the Japanese government to Shanghai, the only place on earth just prior to the Holocaust where a Jew, or anyone else, could legally walk ashore without any documentation whatsoever. Within a year of the Kovno exodus Lithuania was over-run by the Nazis. The remaining Jews of Lithuania were almost entirely annihilated. The thousands of Jews who escaped with the help of visas from Zwartendijk would almost certainly have been murdered had they remained in Lithuania.

On June 4, 1999, on the grounds of the Jewish State Museum in Vilna (Vilnius), the present-day capital of Lithuania, three stone monuments were dedicated in his memory by Lithuania.

I would like to trace a friend of mine from Frank Iny School, Baghdad. His name is Safaa Nadhim Dabbi, 48, and I heard that he is living in Israel. I have not seen him in over thirty years and would appreciate any suggestions you might have that could eventually lead to making contact with him.

Thanking you in anticipation.

E-mail      Sabah Ezra Sami Zilouf  
(Simon)  
Simon Zilouf<[szilouf@hotmail.com](mailto:szilouf@hotmail.com)>

## **HOLOCAUST IGNORES GREEK JEWRY**

Sir, There are numerous aspects of the Holocaust to which attention should be drawn to appreciate its disastrous consequences. One such is the extermination of Sephardi Jews mainly from Greece and other places in the Balkans.

The six million Jewish martyrs include over 60,000 Jews of Sephardi origin, mainly in the Balkans, though many were from Holland. Most of the former were transported from Greece to Auschwitz in 1943.

Out of 70,000 Jews in Greece before the Second World War only 10,000 survived. These numbers are small but still significant compared to those from elsewhere in Europe.

The courageous Greek Orthodox Archbishop, Damaskinos of Athens, wrote a public letter to the Greek Prime Minister at the time signed by many other public figures stating: "The Greek People were rightly surprised and grieved to learn that the German Occupation authorities have already started to deport the Greek Jewish community of Salonika to Poland.

"Greek Jews have proven to be valuable contributors to Greek economy and have had their full share in the common sacrifice of Greece to defend its inalienable historical rights... all the children of common mother Greece are an inseparable unity and we demand that the government protest against the deportation of Greek Jews which insults our nation's honour and unity."

The notorious ex-Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, in a book by Zvi Elpeleg was quoted as saying, "Kill the Jews wherever you find them - this pleases Allah, history and religion." He recruited Muslim Nazi troops in Bosnia to help Rommel rid the Holy Land of Jews. In November 1941 he was photographed with Hitler urging him to carry out the extermination of the Jews - before the Wansee "Final Solution" conference of January 1942. On December 15 1942 Winston Churchill said in the House of Commons special session: We will pursue the Nazi criminals to the ends of the earth." As not enough was done, other mass murderers did their evil work after the war.

**Percy Gourgey  
Sephardi member, Yad Vashem  
Committee of Board of Deputies  
Twickenham**

I have been an avid reader of *The Scribe* for the past 29 years, ever since my father Abraham Sassoon Mukamal received your first issue of this wonderful magazine. My Father as well as all of his children and his brothers and sisters were born in Baghdad and proud to be identified as Iraqi Jews. My brother Steven and I have established a website on the internet: [www.mukamal.com](http://www.mukamal.com) which now includes more than 900 family members dating back to the early 1700's. Some family lineage is most complete while other members dating prior to the turn of the past century are very skimpy in data. This is due primarily to the fact that old age has taken a toll on these patriarchs who never passed down in written form where they came from.

This website includes the spouses and their family of the patriarchs' Abraham Mukamal, a Sassoon Murad and Abdulnabi Chitayat. My brother and I are happy for what we have accomplished so far with identifying as many family members as possible, BUT there are so many more family members that are not included. Also, this website: [www.mukamal.com](http://www.mukamal.com) was envisioned as a living family tree of the original Mukamal, a Sassoon Murad and Chitayat patriarchs'. One that could be updated as new members are added and the departed are recognised. I need the help of *The Scribe* and *The Scribe* web page [www.thescrbe.uk.com](http://www.thescrbe.uk.com) to spread the word that [www.mukamal.com](http://www.mukamal.com) exists and that any corrections, changes and/or additions to a family such as a birth, death or special event or occasion. Please e-mail me at [dmukamal@home.com](mailto:dmukamal@home.com) I will be more than happy to include any needed changes to the family tree. I speak for my brother and my immediate family of uncles, aunts and cousins who are proud of where they or their parents came from. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share the introduction of the website: [www.mukamal.com](http://www.mukamal.com) with all *The Scribe* readership.

**London      David SamierMukamal,  
Son of Abraham Sassoon Mukamal**

*Scribe*: One has to be very careful when going back more than 200-250 years.

**Knowledge is power**  
The greater our knowledge, the greater our influence on others.

## **COOKERY CORNER:**

### **Danish Rum Cream**

from: Joyce Rose

5 egg yolks  
4 oz sifted icing sugar  
1/4pt rum  
1tblsp kosher gelatine  
2tblsp water  
1 pint double cream, whipped  
5 egg whites, stiffly beaten  
Raspberry sauce

Beat egg yolks with sifted icing sugar and stir in rum. Dissolve gelatine in water in a bowl over hot water. Stir into rum mixture until well combined. Fold in the cream, reserving a little for decoration, and the egg whites. Pour into a glass bowl and chill for at least three hours. Decorate with rosettes of whipped cream forced through a pastry tube and serve with raspberry sauce. Serves 6-8.

Raspberry sauce: push one small can of raspberries through a sieve. Bring to the boil with syrup from the can.

At last I have been browsing through your website and was thrilled and amazed at all that I found regarding photos and the contents of the current issue of *The Scribe*. Internet is really a wonderful thing giving the possibility of reading all the wealth of information and subjects interesting me. I wish to compliment you, Naim, and thank you for all you have invested in this website. My only wish is if it were possible to add to the photos - David and Ide of New York with family, and an old photo of good times of Salim and Ruth of Stockholm. Blessed be Salim's memory.

Yes, it is Ruth's sister writing to you - with best wishes to you, Naim and Renée, for good health and happiness in the coming year 5761. Shana Tova!

**Bat-Yam, Israel**

**E-mail from Judy Dattner**

I thank you for telling my life story in "*The Scribe*"(No. 72, P. 38). I must say it was beautifully presented and I am proud to have a presence in the Sephardi community, which I love and admire.

**London**

**Freddie Knoller**

The following is an interesting correspondence between Maurice Sasson Peress and Rabbi Howard Joseph of the Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue of Montreal which should be of interest to Sephardim everywhere.

26 September 1999

Dear Rabbi

We have been enjoying a period of peace and harmony under the leadership of our President, Mr Selim Moghrabi. Prior to embarking on a step towards modernisation, we should take a long breathe and consider the consequences. President Moghrabi, in his address Yom Kippur emphasised the fact that our Synagogue needs a man, a strong man, a hard-working man to succeed him as President. In stressing the issue, Mr Moghrabi was trying to avoid playing into the hands of the Maghen Abraham's' faction who have been advocating the separation of their services from the Spanish (in order to have the possibility of a lady President). Electing a lady President will no doubt weaken the position of the members who prefer to stay at the Spanish. If Maghen Abraham decide to part away, a minimum of fifty families, Iraqis and Moroccans will join them. The tax base of our Synagogue will be diluted, the beautiful Chapel towards Mr Joe Iny and his brother generously contributed will be vacant. Victor Mashaal is dreaming in Technicolour when he says one member leaves and 699 will stay. Fact is he will no longer be able to carry the flag unless he coughs amounts commensurate with the honour bestowed on his beloved. All we ask you to do, our dear Rabbi, is to respect our Sephardi traditions and be a stabilising factor in keeping us together.

**Maurice S Peress**

5 October 1999

Dear Maurice

Your recent letters provide me with the opportunity to offer my views as to the nature of Orthodoxy and the basis of unity in our Congregation. Other matters will be clarified if we can come to an understanding about these two fundamental issues.

An Orthodox synagogue is one in which the rule of Halakhic law and tradition is supreme and is interpreted and applied by an ordained rabbi who is trained to interpret and apply the legal tradition to contemporary issues.

This fundamental consideration

is very different from non-Orthodox congregations wherein the members often decide on their own what should or should not be done without reference to Halakhic procedure. In some cases they may give much weight to Halakhah but are also influenced by what they call History and Tradition (Conservative) or disregard Halakhah completely in favour of what is convenient or comfortable (Reform).

But again, Orthodoxy has staked its emphasis and commitment to the Jewish legal tradition as the Word of G-d that must be obeyed. Orthodox Jews submit their questions to their rabbi and submit to his decisions.

If we are going to have an Orthodox congregation then we are all going to work for this principle and realise that the rabbi has a key role to play. Neither Maurice Peress, Victor Mashaal, Selim Moghrabi, Emile Fattal, David Kauffman or David Gabbay have the expert knowledge required to render Halakhic judgements. I do not know of anyone else in the congregation who does. If anyone of these or other members wishes to serve in an administrative capacity they can so be chosen by the members. But they cannot function as replacements for the rabbi and pronounce on what is or is not halakhically valid course of behaviour.

Furthermore, our congregation is constituted of members who identify with Orthodoxy and who may wish congregation affairs to be guided by Orthodox policies but they themselves are not completely observant in an Orthodox fashion. We call these kinds of people today the 'non-observant Orthodox'.

In some Orthodox synagogues none of the above type persons would be welcome to serve in any official capacity. In others they would not even be offered to go to the Torah for an Aliyah. Their lack of complete observance would disqualify them. In these congregations the members readily submit to the decisions of the Rabbi.

There are other factors in Jewish identity. These may include an attachment to community, past and present; nostalgia for a lost community or family traditions; attachment to Israel and charitable concern for Jews everywhere. However, for Orthodoxy the primary commitment is the observance of G-d's commandments in the Torah as implemented in the Halakhah.

So, nostalgia may be important but it is not enough to go on. If one or

another group insists on its nostalgic vision to be implemented then there will be no room for other groups in our Synagogue. Halakhah does not work only on what was done in the past; it must decide for the present. Orthodox Jews ask their rabbis if heart transplants and in-vitro fertilisation techniques are permissible. The fact that one hundred or five hundred or one thousand years ago they were not done does not mean that they are forbidden. These questions are decided upon using the components of Jewish law from the Babylonian Talmud and subsequent codes and commentaries that relate to these questions. They are interpreted and applied. Sometimes a consensus of rabbis is reached and, sometimes, differing perspectives remain.

If we wish to create unity in our congregation it must be on this fundamental. If we wish to move to a stricter interpretation of Orthodoxy as noted above we can discuss this. However, it is improper to conduct these discussions without the Rabbi present. Otherwise the sources of Torah are absent and the discussion is no longer one based on Torah and for the sake of heaven.

On the question of whether or not a woman can be President of a synagogue both Hazzan Abbitan and myself agree that there is no Halakhic objection. An Iraqi rabbi, the late Rabbi Hayyim David Halevi who served as Chief Rabbi for many years, wrote that in voluntary situations people can give authority to a woman to be a judge in a religious court for civil matters, for example.

We also have the precedent of Golda Meir. Orthodox rabbis served in her cabinet and I do not recall any objection to her being chosen as a leader of a Jewish community. In 18th century Kurdistan, Asnat Barzani, a scholarly woman, succeeded her husband as head of a Yeshivah.

Finally, we have the example of Deborah, the Biblical prophet, judge and leader who ruled our nation over 3000 years ago.

So in my mind there is no religious Halakhic issue here. If there are other issues to be discussed in this matter then they should be brought forth but not under the cover of religion. Religiously I do not see any issue.

I know that some people are uncomfortable with the more elevated opportunities women have in Canada and other Western countries. But this is the **Continued on following page**

reality. If we deny women valid opportunities in our communities we will lose the respect of our women for Judaism. This would be the end of our tradition for they would not teach their children about something that denies their dignity.

I hope that all those who wish to see our congregation continue in the ways of Orthodox Judaism will rally around the proper comprehension of this term and not use it so selectively promote their own special interests. I hope to continue to be able to have the opportunities to teach and explain to our members how an active, serious and devoted Jewish life can enrich their lives. I hope we can all work together to promote the observance of Shabbat, the dietary laws, regular attendance at the Synagogue all year long and all the other beautiful obligations by which Jews have lived for thousands of years but which now appear to be distant to many of our members. We would then be approaching the ideals of an Orthodox synagogue.

#### Rabbi Howard S Joseph

##### Scribe:

1) The occupational differences between men and women has been narrowing gradually since the French Revolution two centuries ago, even more so in the past 50 years of relative international peace.

However, even if the difference is now very small, we confirm the famous remark of one famous French deputy who said, "Vive la difference!" In fact, even if woman can now perform man's functions, can man claim to be able to perform the role of the woman who alone is capable of bearing babies?

2) As for the Rabbi describing members of a congregation as being non-observant Orthodox, this is obviously a contradiction of terms. How can an Orthodox Rabbi knowingly lead a congregation that is completely or mainly non-observant.

Some people may regard such behaviour as reform through the back door.

#### Did You Know?

Of the 11 British prime ministers between 1880 and 1940, none wrote an autobiography; of the 11 since 1940, Blair is the only one who hasn't yet written one.

## MOSSAD SNATCHES SACRED JEWISH TEXTS FROM SADDAM

Published in *The Sunday Times* 7.5.00

Dozens of sacred Jewish scrolls that Saddam Hussein ordered to be destroyed have been smuggled out of Iraq in an operation masterminded by Mossad, the Israeli secret service.

At least 50 manuscripts containing the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, had lain for decades in a warehouse in Baghdad after being hidden by Iraqi Jews who left for Israel in 1950-51.

Mossad has retrieved 30 of the scrolls after bribing members of the Iraqi army. One of them, thought to have been hand-written 70 years ago, was put on display last week in a synagogue in Afula, northern Israel. Another, 200 years old, has been exhibited in New York.

Many more scrolls, some far older and more valuable, are still in Iraq. "There is a fair chance that we will recover and return them to Jewish hands so that they can be presented in synagogues in Israel and across the world", said one source.

Mossad is believed to have started the operation after its agents in Baghdad learnt of a meeting at which Saddam's generals told him that 50 manuscripts had been found in the city's Battaween district, where the Jewish community used to be concentrated. He is said to have replied: "Burn them".

The news appalled officers at Mossad's headquarters in Tel Aviv, prompting comparisons with Kristallnacht in 1938 when the Nazis burned Jewish shops, synagogues and Torah scrolls in Germany.

Mossad soon learnt that some of Saddam's officers, realising the value of the scrolls, were prepared to defy his orders in return for money. The agency's station in Istanbul, which carries out espionage, against Iraq, was ordered to investigate.

It is not known how much Mossad paid either to the Iraqi officers or to merchants based in Jordan who acted as intermediaries. It may have been as much as £30,000 each.

The rescue of the scrolls appears to have been part of a much larger operation to recover artefacts linked to Iraq's once sizeable Jewish community.

After Iraq declared its independence from British rule in 1932,

Jews held prominent positions in the country; Sasson Heskail, the first minister of finance, was Jewish.

The climate turned hostile after the creation of Israel in 1948. About 121,000 of the 137,000 Jews who lived in Iraq were flown to Israel in 1950-1951. There was a further exodus (in 1970-71 after the Ba'ath came to power and the hanging in Baghdad of 9 innocent Jews), a mere 68 are now left in Baghdad.

Israeli sources said last week that efforts to rescue the remaining Torah scrolls were continuing. "We know where they are. Some of them served the Iraqi Jewish community for hundreds of years," said a source in the Israeli Ministry of Religion.

"We will not leave them in the hands of the Iraqis. The state of Israel, with the help of all its secret and non-secret organisations, will bring the scrolls back home."

#### Naim Dangoor writes:

In 1957 my late Father managed to export from Baghdad at his own expense no less than 500 scrolls out of a total of over 3,000 that belonged to our community in Iraq. The 500 scrolls were duly received by the Sephardi Federation in London. Many of them were then despatched to various synagogues all over the world but others unfortunately found their way into the hands of dealers and collectors. Baghdad was famous for the quality of Torah scrolls and orders were received from Eretz Yisrael, having to wait sometimes for up to 3 years for completion and delivery.

I am sending you separately a copy of my film "Baklava and the Meaning of Life". In this 23 minute video, sculptor Helene Simon (my mother) shares the recipe for her famous Baklava and treats us to her wisdom and insight on happiness in life.

Helene was born in Baghdad and studied art in London, Egypt, and the United States. After raising a family, she became a sculptor, and her pieces are in a number of museums and important collections. Along the way, she also made some wonderful Baklava.

This video takes a peek into the world of a Jewish artist and mother.

Somerville MA

Jamil Simon

## MIDDLE EAST CONFEDERATION CO-OPERATION IS BETTER THAN CONFLICT

by Naim Dangoor

Appeared in "Chronicles" in July 1983

A suggestion was put forward some time ago that the Kurdish problem could perhaps be solved by promoting a federation of present-day Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. This is a wishful dream and unrealistic. Such a federation would upset the balance of power in the region and pose a serious threat to peace. It would be opposed and resisted by Israel and its Arab neighbours alike. The presence of Kurdish minorities in these four countries is not enough reason for uniting them in one entity with one end in Europe and the other end in Central Asia. But a union of a different configuration has a better chance of resolving not only the chronic Kurdish problem, but also other minority problems there, including the Palestinian.

The area covered by Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan and Arabia is a precise geo-political and historical region, being the cradle of civilisation, the fountain of monotheism, the crossroads of three continents and the home of many ancient national groups. Its fertility and strategic importance made it the prey of foreign invaders throughout history. The Arabs were destined to play a unique role in the historical development of this region. Sheltered in their desert, they were relatively immune from foreign invasions, but were always ready to pounce at the right time on neighbouring territories. Thus, after centuries of warfare between the Byzantine and Persian empires that sapped their energies, the desert Arabs, under the banner of Islam, could defeat both powers. By their ability to subsist in conditions not suitable to their rivals, the Arabs have been able to retain and consolidate their conquests and to fan out into the outlying regions of the Middle East as the general climate became warmer. This process has continued both in peacetime and in the wake of military action. Likewise, by destabilising the region, the Arabs have succeeded in creating a continuous flow of emigration from the Middle East - of Jews, Kurds, Lebanese, Christians, Assyrians, even the more advanced Arabs, who are scattered all over the globe but who would have been invaluable to the development of the region. By the same process a sizeable Israeli diaspora has been mushrooming in Europe, Canada and the U.S.A. Middle Eastern politics and events have to be

viewed and understood in this light. After the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire nothing came out of the self-determination that was promised by the Allies to the various national groups of the Middle East. It is said that the Ottoman "millet" concept, under which a large measure of autonomy was granted to various racial and religious minorities, had to give way to the modern national concept - but this has not succeeded. "Arabs, Jews, Kurds, Seljuk Turks, Persians, Assyrians, Telkaifis, Armenians - how mould such a composite collection of races into a single nation? Sunnis, Shias, Jews, Christians, Sabians, Yezidis - how to lessen the friction between such a variety of creeds?" (The Heart of the Middle East by Richard Coke).

In the end imperial and oil policies favoured treating with the dominant Arabs and everything was handed over to them. There has been an obsession in the world in modern times that democracy means the rule of the majority. Majority rule as an expression of democracy only holds true in a homogeneous society where the differences are over minor issues. In a society divided by race, language, religion or colour, the rights of all groups, large and small, must equally be ensured and protected. This principle would solve Ireland, Africa, Cyprus and the Middle East.

Of course, once in the saddle, the Arabs would not agree to share power with the other groups or allow them any form of self-rule. Hence, the Assyrian massacre of 1933 and the relentless suppression of Kurdish uprisings in their struggle for autonomy. In 1918, a few months after the Balfour declaration, Prince Feisal, later King of Iraq, declared before a large audience at the Albert Hall, "Palestine for the Jews and Arabia for the Arabs."

Subsequently Arab attitudes changed. When the U.N. voted the partition of Palestine in 1947, the Arabs agreed to accept a previous plan of Jewish immigration without a state. When Israel was established, they agreed the partition plan. Since the Six Day War, they have offered to accept the 1967 borders. These are all false promises, for the Arabs cannot in the long run accept situations which go against the grain of pan-Arabic aspiration. Their aim would

always be the elimination of Israel as a foreign body, or cancer as they call it.

After the establishment of Israel, many Palestinian Arabs fled mainly on the advice of Arab governments who wanted them out of the way and were confident to bring them back in triumph. Shortly thereafter, there was an exodus of similar numbers of Jews from Arab countries to Israel and it was widely recognised at the time by the powers and indeed by the Arab governments themselves, who allowed their Jews to leave for Israel, that there was thus a logical and desirable exchange of populations - like many others that took place after the war in Germany, India and other countries. But while Israel absorbed its refugees after many years of hardship in transit camps, the Arabs deliberately left theirs unsettled, although they had all the money to settle them, and kept them as a political weapon and a lever against Israel in their continuing effort to defeat the Jewish state.

The Palestinian refugee problem was created as the direct result of Arab refusal to recognise Jewish political rights in the Middle East. Zionism was the liberation movement of the Jewish people. To the extent that it sought to destroy the State of Israel, the PLO was not a liberation movement, but an arm of Arab imperialism.

The Arabs say that the Palestinian problem must be solved by Israel. The Israelis maintain that it is an Arab problem. In fact, it is a regional problem if only because of the interest taken in it by all the neighbouring countries. This and other problems in the Middle East cannot be solved piecemeal. The solution must be global, for there can be no peace for the Palestinian refugees while the material and political rights of the Jewish refugees are ignored. The solution must be global for there can be no peace in one corner of the Middle East while 20 million Kurds cannot attain autonomy; while the Armenians and Assyrians remember their massacres and their stolen lands; while the Shiah majority in Iraq are oppressed; while the Arabs control 5 million square miles of territory and non-Arabs are denied any territory. These are not isolated problems and must be solved together. The

**Continued on following page**

solution must be global for there can be no peace in the Middle East while a few Arab rulers squander most of the oil wealth and embark on ruinous adventures. The solution must be global, for peace, law and order in the Middle East are indivisible. The Arabs have acted irresponsibly in their attempt to Arabise the whole region. As such they have forfeited the right to lead the Middle East.

The reason why the Arab-Israeli conflict has not come to a decisive conclusion, even after four major wars, is that the two sides have not been playing the same game and it was thus impossible to have a meaningful score. The game that Israel has accepted to play is Russian Roulette or You-Can-Only-Lose-Once. The game of the Arabs is Winner-Takes-All. It is clear from this scenario that neither Israeli victories nor Arab defeats can be conclusive. Only Israel's defeat can be conclusive.

The minorities of the Middle East must realise that they have to co-operate with one another to achieve a just regime in the region; if they don't hang together they will hang separately. In 1976 I sponsored, with the help of the Minority Rights Group, a symposium on Middle East minorities at St Anthony's College, Oxford, which provided a venue for the exchange of views on the problems of the Middle East and their solutions. It might be useful now to undertake a feasibility study and to prepare a blueprint for a federal project.

As a Middle Eastern refugee myself, I watch with dismay the unfolding of events in the Middle East - the destruction, the loss of young lives, the waste of money. The central issue is not the artificial Palestinian problem but Arab refusal to face realities; the trouble is not Zionism but Arab imperialism, not the Nile to the Euphrates accusation levelled at Israel but the dream of the Atlantic to the Gulf, and beyond, of many Arab leaders. As the Arabs face an increasing Iranian threat with increasing concern, they soon must come to realise that their only possible saviour is Israel, which too would not tolerate Iranian penetration of the region. Blind nationalism is not in the best Arab traditions and, in the past, Jews co-operated closely with Arabs in war and peace, especially in the fields of commerce, agriculture and industry. During the golden age of Islam all races had equal access to wealth and power.

The peoples of the Middle East who often suffered together

under foreign domination but were never united in freedom could then organise themselves into a confederation that would seek neither to Arabise, Islamise or Sovietise the Middle East; a confederation that would ensure autonomy, freedom and prosperity to all the people of the region who will be free to live and work everywhere. A regional development board would ensure that the vast wealth of the region is utilised for the benefit of all. Such a grouping would fit well with the neighbouring pattern of Iran, Turkey and Egypt.

The tradition and personality of Abraham, revered in all parts of the Middle East, and who is referred to as the friend of G-d in the Old and New Testaments and the Koran, can be used as a basis to forge the union, with a federal capital named after him.

Sceptics might say that it will take them ages before everyone concerned accepts this arrangement. But once the solution is identified the time element becomes immaterial. There is a local saying that he who follows the right path will eventually reach his destination.

#### LESSON OF THE EXILE

All the four Rabbis missed the point. The reason why the Jews were exiled to Babylon was to demonstrate that the Middle East was one region and that the peace of the region is individual. In this case the imbalance between the land of the rivers and that of Palestine will always end up in aggression from the Babylonian side. The lesson, therefore, is that Israel must not embark on a revival without pacifying the land of the rivers, Saddam's missile attack on Ramat Gan during the Gulf War is an illustration of this point.

It is said that history repeats itself. Like a good teacher, History will keep repeating itself until the lesson is learnt. The lesson in this case is that Israel must become involved in the politics of Iraq if there is going to be lasting peace for Israel in particular and for the Middle East in general.

Two generations ago the population of Iraq was 3 million, and now it is nearly 30 million without any immigration from outside with a potential of further increase to 40 or 50 million. This and Iraq's wealth in oil and water will eventually put Israel in the shade.

This problem should be the top priority for Israel to tackle.

Some time during the third

century A.D., in one of the two great Jewish academies of Babylonia, four rabbis discussed the question as to why the Holy One, blessed be He, chose Babylonia as the place of exile for the people of Israel. Rabbi Hiyya, himself a native of Babylonia, thought it was because they would not have been able to survive the severe decrees of Rome. Another native of Babylonia, Rabbi Eleazar ben Pedath, sought the explanation topographically - namely that Babylonia was a low-lying land, resembling the nether world, and from such a land the Jews would soon be redeemed. A third sage, Rabbi Hanina bar Hamma, suggested the reason that the language of Babylonia was akin to that of the Torah. The fourth and last of the group, Rabbi Yohanan bar Nappaha, was brief and much more direct: G-d, he said, sent the children of Israel back to their mother's home.

It will be noted that the deliberations of these four worthy sages took place almost exactly eight centuries after Nebuchadnezzar, drove the population of Judah into exile in Babylonia.

#### From The Jews of Iraq by Nissim Rejwan

#### BETH HAMEDRASH KNESSET YEHEZKEL

under the leadership of Rabbi Aharon Bassous

The past fifteen years have seen the Sephardim in London make great strides. New communities have been established, focusing on Torah education, more and more families have come closer to their roots, and an awareness in the wider community of the richness of a religious lifestyle is increasing.

Our aim is now to accelerate this process by providing an all-encompassing place which will be reaching out to all segments of the Sephardi community and actively catering for their needs.

We hope to be able to establish a community, returning the pride of the Sephardim in this country to its former glory.

The Jewish community is witnessing dramatic changes.

There has been a remarkable resurgence in Jewish learning and a sense of renewal in all aspects of Judaism. There is a renewed pride in Jewish

identity in countries where acknowledging one's Jewishness was forbidden for decades. There are thousands of books published in every language. There are schools and education programmes appearing wherever there are Jews to be found.

And yet increasing numbers of people are marrying outside of the religion, and family life and values are being challenged on every level.

This contradiction is perhaps not so surprising, but it should not be witnessed with complacency. There is a need for more outreach and development in those parts of the community which have not benefited from the huge surge in optimism within the religion.

Torah learning and a Jewish way of life is the only way to guarantee continuity.

The experience of the Sephardim in this country might be described as that of the minority within a minority. If it were not difficult enough to sustain a Jewish identity here, it has been still more problematic to sustain the traditions and learning from the oriental countries.

There is a history among the Sephardim of pluralism and tolerance. Differing traditions are sustained and respected. Thankfully, there has been no experience of ideological divisiveness witnessed elsewhere in the Jewish community. And yet there is a less obvious threat to be witnessed, as Sephardim gradually forget those specific customs which make the faith their own. And with that loss, so too there comes a loss of identity.

## ASHE LINCOLN

There is a splendid and well-deserved tribute to the late great Captain Ashe Lincoln QC, RNVR, by Abdulla Dangoor in the September 1999 (No. 72) edition of *The Scribe*.

One of many episodes in which Ashe Lincoln was involved during the War was when the Royal Navy captured a German submarine, which was loaded with unexploded torpedoes. Typically, Ashe Lincoln risked his life dismantling them, and he could have been blown to pieces.

Ashe Lincoln was awarded the King's medal for bravery, and was mentioned in Dispatches many times.

Probably the best of Ashe Lincoln's books is "The Odyssey of a

Jewish Sailor", which is one of the most interesting books I have ever seen, and is highly recommended to any readers of *The Scribe* who do not already have it. The splendid photograph in *The Scribe* is also on the front cover of the book.

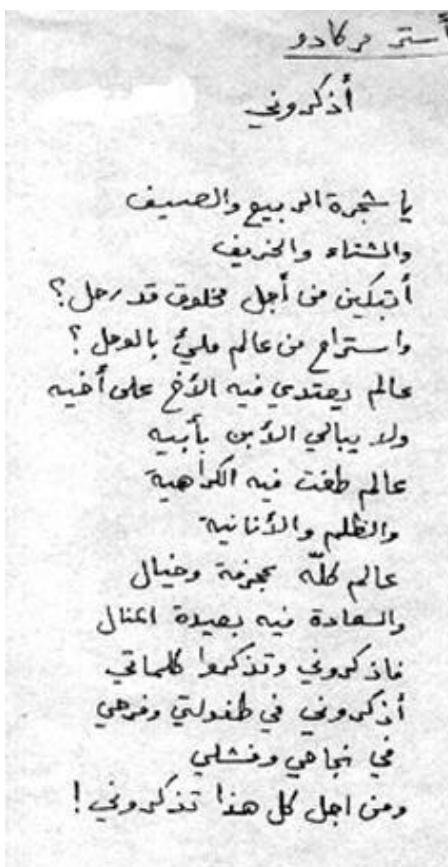
I had the privilege of knowing Ashe Lincoln for many years, and had the pleasure of seeing him regularly at Marble Arch Synagogue, and on Shabbat at the New London Synagogue ("Louis Jacobs' Shul").

London

Lou Gorden

## LETTER FROM ESTHER MERCADO (KHABBAZA) DATED 22 MARCH 1999

As I had to undergo a brain tumour operation a few months ago, I will never know what would happen to me. Therefore I wish to offer to you and to my school friends, and all the readers who happen to know me, the following poem in Arabic.



**Experience is the mother of wisdom**  
Out of experience comes wisdom. We learn by our mistakes.

## REMEMBERING FOR THE FUTURE 2000

### The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide

Last July, a conference was held in London and Oxford to discuss racial genocide outbreaks that have been taking place in various parts of the world since the end of World War II.

The following letter was received from the Executive Chairman of the conference, Dr Elizabeth Maxwell.

To The Exilarch's Foundation

One of the outstanding papers presented at the conference was by Dr Mark Levene, Dept of History, University of Warwick, Coventry. Speaking at a session of the conference, Dr Levene told academics and survivors: "It seems to me to be a paradox. For 50 years no-one was really interested in the Holocaust; now it is everywhere."

Dr Levene questioned the uniqueness of the Holocaust. He considered the invocation, "never again" as hollow and crass.

Dr Levene admitted that the focus on the Holocaust was not necessarily a bad thing, but wondered where do we go from here? How does knowledge of the Holocaust make genocide more difficult? We probably don't have an answer for that yet.

**Scribe:** The extermination of millions of Jews in the German gas chambers is unique because these Jews died as hostages for the free world. In 1939, Hitler threatened that if world Jewry would embroil Germany in another world war, then all the Jews of Europe would be exterminated. That was the price that the Jews of Europe had to pay, so that people everywhere could live in freedom and peace. Students of the Holocaust are perplexed by its significance because they miss this point. Moreover the Holocaust was aided and abetted by oil interest and by Arab influence in the axis countries which needs to be highlighted.

While "Remembering for the future" and "never again" may be useless in preventing another Jewish Holocaust as there are too few Jews in Europe for that, it may also be useless in preventing smaller outbreaks of genocides elsewhere. But the victims of the Holocaust died for the free world and must be remembered and honoured as such. That is the uniqueness and that is the importance of the Jewish Holocaust.

# "BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON:"

## THE LONGEST DIASPORA

based on an article in *Wizo Review*

The Jewish connection with Babylonia dates from the time of Abraham the Patriarch, who started his journey to the land of Canaan from Ur, just south of the city of Babylon. However, it was only after many centuries, with the exiles from Judea and Samaria in the years 721 and 733 BCE, that a Jewish presence was established in Babylonia. But it was the destruction of the First Temple and Jerusalem in 586 BCE, and the exile of the elite of the nation to Babylon, which created the background for the flowering of Babylonian Jewry.

### First Return to Zion

When Babylonia fell to the Persians in 539 BCE, forty-seven years after the destruction and exile, the victor, King Cyrus the Great, was quick to issue a royal directive giving the Jews permission to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. Of the 120,000 Jews living in Babylon, 40,000 decided to return to Judea and, eventually, to rebuild the second Temple, but 80,000 decided to remain and prospered there in agriculture and commerce, under the leadership of the Resh Galuta, the Exilarch.

The destruction of the Second Temple (in 70 CE) strengthened the status of the Jews in Babylon, and it became, in fact, the spiritual center of the entire Jewish dispersion. For over a thousand years the Jews of Babylon were represented by the Resh Galuta, the Exilarch (the administrative head of the Jews in exile), and great academies of learning were created in Nehardea, Sura and Pumbedita. Babylon became the center for the creation of great works of Jewish scholarship.

### The Talmud

The highly significant contribution of Babylonian Jewry to Jewish life was best expressed and preserved in the compilation of the Babylonian Talmud (Oral Law), the basis for Jewish law (halacha), philosophy and the Jewish way of life - an enormous undertaking began at the Academy of Sura and was completed in the year 499 CE. It has been rightly maintained that no book, with the exception of the Bible,

has played such an essential part in the history of the Jewish people as the Talmud in both its versions, but the Babylonian Talmud is considered superior to the Palestinian or Jerusalem Talmud.

### Islam Arrives

When the armies of Islam began their triumphant conquest of large portions of what was then the civilized world, Mesopotamia became one of their earliest victories. The Jews of Babylonia welcomed the Moslem conquerors with relief, since the local Persian Sassanian ruler had begun one of their frequent waves of harassment and persecution.

### Baghdad and the Period of the Geonim

Baghdad founded in 762 A.D., soon became the capital not only of the Moslem Empire but also of Babylonian Jewish life and scholarship. Shortly after its emergence as a capital and a heavily populated city, Baghdad gradually became the seat, first of the Exilarch, and then of the Geonim, who up till then had resided in the three centres of Jewish learning: Nehardea, Sura and Pumbedita. The Geonim were the spiritual leaders who headed the Babylonian academies.

The two most outstanding and influential Geonim were Sa'adiah ben Joseph Gaon (882-942) and Hai ben Sherira Gaon (939-1038).

### Turkish Revival

After centuries of decline, the fortunes of the Jews of Iraq began to improve noticeably during the first decades of the 1800's under the Turkish Ottoman Empire, which ruled the area for almost 400 years, beginning in 1534.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the Iraqi Jewish community was noted for its highly developed communal organization. In Baghdad, which had the highest concentration of Jews, there were dozens of institutions including yeshivot, schools, synagogues, charitable organizations, medical institutions and other bodies, designed to meet the needs of the community.

## ASPECTS OF BABYLONIAN JEWISH LIFE IN INDIA DURING THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

by Sara Manasseh

Religious and communal life were of foremost importance in India. The early Baghdadian settlers combined keen business acumen with the religious traditions of Baghdad; commercial interests with the study and observance of the Torah. Houses of prayer were established, and in time, beautiful synagogues were erected. David Sassoon built the Maghen Dawid synagogue in Byculla, in 1861, and the Ohel Dawid Synagogue, a famous landmark in Poona, in 1863. Later, his grandson, Sir Jacob Sassoon built the Keneseth Eliahu Synagogue in the Bombay Fort area in 1884. In the same year, in Calcutta, the Ezra family built the Maghen Dawid synagogue, a magnificent structure and the largest synagogue in the East. The Ezra family had also previously built synagogues in Calcutta, including the Beth El (c. 1861). In 1893, Hakham Shlomo Abid Twena from Baghdad went to Calcutta, and in time set up a prayer hall in his own home; he is remembered for his profound knowledge of Jewish Law and for his inspiring sermons, delivered in Arabic.

Philanthropic work by the Sassoon family included the Sassoon General Hospital in Poona, and in Bombay, the **Jacob Sassoon High School** and the Sassoon Mechanics Institute, later renamed the **David Sassoon Library and Reading Room**. In 1994, in recognition of the charitable works of David Sassoon, the road leading from the Library to the Law Courts, was renamed "**David Sassoon Marg**" (David Sassoon Way). In Calcutta, the Jewish Girls School achieved special distinction under Miss Rahma Luddy, who had trained in England, and who was appointed headmistress in 1929.

In Bombay, the Jewish Women's League was founded during the 20th century to assist needy families. Mrs Hannah Gourgey was one of the early members. The league made major headway with the coming of Mrs Georgette Ani (my grandmother). Not content with attending to letters of application for assistance at the committee's meetings, she would visit the poorest families with one or two other ladies, and talk to them in the Jewish Baghdadian Arabic dialect - the common

lingua franca. Visiting the Sir Jacob Sassoon High School it was found that the School Feeding Fund was totally inadequate to meet the rapidly rising costs in the World War 2 years. Sir Victor Sassoon was approached, and with the assistance of the E. D. Sassoon funds, a good daily hot lunch was organised for the whole school. With the coming of the refugees from Singapore, the Jewish Women's League organised the refugee centre at Dharbanga Mansions (in Malabar Hill; provided by the government of Bombay), and assisted the families to get settled. The League also played its part in equipping children who went on Youth Aliyah groups to Israel.

Wizo (Women's International Zionist Organisation) was founded in Bombay after the arrival of European Jews before and during World War 2, for raising funds for Israel. The Jewish Relief Association was set up by European immigrants to assist members of this community who had come to Bombay as refugees from Nazi persecution.

### Relations with Israel

The Bombay Zionist Association was founded in 1920 by three young Baghadians: Judah Gubbay, Joseph S Ezra and Ezekiel S Somekh, inspired by newspaper reports of events in London to celebrate the Balfour Declaration, 1917.

The Central Jewish Board of Bombay was founded in 1943, with representatives from the synagogues, initially to deal with anti-Zionist or anti-Jewish attacks in the press. It was succeeded by the Council of Indian Jewry founded 1978.

Jewish publications included the Jewish Advocate and the Jewish Tribune, and in later years, The Indo-Israel Review. The BZA arranged lectures and fundraising for the national institutions in Palestine, and then Israel, and initially, 'Aliyah (immigration) to Israel. From 1948-1958 Mr F W Pollack personally published and edited a monthly magazine, India and Israel, which was highly regarded.

### Youth organizations

In 1935, **Habonim** (retained as a religious organization in India, unlike its development elsewhere) was founded in Bombay by H'R Albert Manasseh, with the assistance of Mr Solomon Ezra. The movement grew, and continued always as

a religious organization. Centers were opened in **Calcutta** with the support of Sir David and Lady Rachel Ezra, and the leadership of Sally Meyer (now Dr Sally Lewis); in Cochin, led by Mr Koder and in Poona. A number of the members later made 'Aliyah' to Israel. Habonim initiated the first Youth Aliyah groups from Bombay to Kibbutz Lavee and other religious centers.

**Bnei Akiva** was founded by the Jewish Agency who sent shlichim (emissaries) from Israel to organize the work.

**Maccabi**, founded in Bombay by Mr Starosta, a European immigrant, with Sass Moses, as Chairman, captured the interest of the youth, and contingents were sent to Israel to take part in the Maccabiah competitions.

In Bombay, for 50 years, Albert Manasseh (1907-1991) was the Chairman and Life President of the Sassoon Trusts - which included the three synagogues - of which he was the spiritual head, schools and burial ground. He devoted much attention to youth in school, Bnei Akiva and Habonim. He accompanied the first Youth Aliyah group to Israel from India to ensure that they were settled in religious Youth Aliyah centers. In recognition of his dedication and guidance the trustees of the EEE Sassoon school recently opened (c.1993) the **Albert Manasseh Memorial Nursery School**.

from "The Jewish Babylonian", the Newsletter of Midrash BEN ISH HAI

To: H E Mr Zvi Gabay  
Israeli Ambassador Dublin

20 April 1999

### AN IRAQI IN IRELAND

Your Excellency,

Greetings and salutations. This is but an introductory letter and message of peace. I am Iraqi by birth and have been an Irish national since 1986. I left Iraq in 1976 and have not been back since. My paternal grandfather Senator **Mohammed Al-Sadr** was one of Iraq's 1920 uprising leaders, a hero of independence, an ecumenist, a political and religious figure and one of the fathers of the Iraqi state. It is because of this family background that I was brought up

to know about and respect all the constituent groups that constituted the people of Iraq. Alas, the violent Iraq of Saddam I grew up in (post 1958) had very few Iraqi Jews, but both my late parents spoke fondly of them. I yearned to hear the Iraqi Jewish dialect.

I am an avid visitor of the Internet and visited the *Babylon Jewry Heritage Centre* site. I also received their newsletter *Nahardea*. I was amazed to see so many names I recognised from what my parents had told me. I signed the guest book and subsequently received an e-mail from a Ms Helen Bekhor in Australia. She is of Iraqi Jewish origin and her husband Ken is an Iraqi Jew. She told me that your kind self is an Iraqi Jew and that is why I decided to write to you both to introduce myself and to offer you greetings. Helen and Ken Bekhor also asked me to convey their regards (they told me to remind you that you had lunch with them, many many years ago when you were stationed in Sydney).

I pray that our peoples find peace in our time and that we all can hear the Iraqi Jewish dialect spoken again in the land of Babylon, in a free, democratic and pluralist Iraq. Please honour me by visiting my website at <http://www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/Quarter/1803> and feel free to e-mail me any time.

Shalom / Salam

**Mohammed H Al-Sadr**

Dublin

6 May 1999

Dear Dr Al-Sadr

Thank you very much for your letter and the sentiment it contained. I am following with much anxiety the situation in Iraq and only hope that peace will prevail in that country for its people and the future generation in the Middle East.

I enclose a copy of The Scribe, a Journal of Babylonian Jewry published in London and trust it will be of interest to you.

Yours sincerely

**Zvi Gabay**

Dublin

### Courtesy costs nothing

There is nothing to be lost by behaving in a courteous way. Sometimes 'civility' or 'politeness' is used instead of 'courtesy'.

## JERUSALEM, THE ETERNAL CITY



In 1996 the Khalili Family Trust commissioned the ultimate painting of the City of Jerusalem to be painted with the hope that in the new Millennium it will be possible for Jews, Christians and Muslims to live together in Peace and Harmony.

The painting shown below was first exhibited in the "Summer Exhibition" in the Royal Academy of Art London from 29 May 2000 to 7 August 2000 and subsequently will travel to the Tower of David in Jerusalem. Upon the attainment of permanent Peace in the Middle East it will travel throughout all the major Muslim countries in the world and hopefully will become a shining torch of the three faiths.

I have pleasure in enclosing a copy (shown above) of the postcard which we have produced which I hope you will find interesting.

London

**Dr N D Khalili**

### THE FUTURE OF JERUSALEM

"Yasser Arafat feels he must consult with hundreds of millions of Muslims, before he can make any decisions with respect to Jerusalem; well Jerusalem is also the concern of all world Jewry", asserted Ambassador Dore Gold, Israel's former UN ambassador, who spoke at a Friends of Yesha meeting at the Hendon United Synagogue. Gold, who also met with the Board of Deputies carried a message that the involvement of the International community in the issue of Jerusalem is likely to increase in the months ahead: Up until now the world assumed that Israel's insistence on a unified Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty was carved in stone. The perception emanating from Camp David is that the Jewish position is more pliable; this will now invite pressure on Israel in the future. This must be revised - the national consensus in Israel opposes concessions in Jerusalem. For Russian Jews, for example, the liberation of Jerusalem in

1967 began a re-birth that led to the movement to free Soviet Jewry. At Camp David President Clinton proposed that Israel turn over two quarters of the Old City to Palestinian sovereignty. Prime Minister Barak did not reject this proposal but only asked Clinton to check with Arafat. Whatever Barak said at Camp David was oral, was stated to a third party (the US) and was hypothetical (dependent on achieving Palestinian agreement on all other issues). It cannot constitute a binding international commitment for future Israeli governments. A major world-wide information campaign is needed on Jewish rights in Jerusalem after Camp David. Gold now heads the Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs. His writing on Jerusalem can be viewed on the centre's website: [www.jcpa.org](http://www.jcpa.org)

### The Zionist Standard

### DOME OF THE ROCK Temple-Mount Mosque 'Temporary'

JERUSALEM, 15 Kislev - After a 3 1/2 hour discussion between a Jewish delegation and representatives of the Moslem government last night, the Moslems gave assurances that the mosque under construction on the Temple Mount is only in the way of a temporary structure.

The delegation had requested the interview after construction on the mosque had begun despite explicit promises by the authorities that, because of the Jews' unhelpfulness in the uncovering of the Foundation Stone, the holiness of the spot on which once stood the Temple would be carefully safeguarded.

The Caliph's representatives, on the other hand, argued that the Jews had been granted many privileges, and that it was "not too much to ask" that the Moslems be given the opportunity to erect a "temporary mosque" on the spot where, according to Moslem tradition, Mohammed tied up his horse - a spot

which also happens to be located on the Temple Mount.

Among the "privileges" enumerated by the Moslems are the friendship of the Caliph enjoyed by the Jews; the refusal of the Moslem authorities to be swayed by the arguments of the Christians in the matter of the transfer of the Tiberias Academy to Jerusalem; the appointment of the Jews as guardians of the Temple Mount; and the permission granted the Jews to build a synagogue next to the Foundation Stone - a synagogue which the Jews were allowed to complete without interference.

**From *Chronicles - News of the Past - Volume II, No. 17***

## "THE NEW MILLENNIUM"

The fact that our planet rotates on its axis a little less than the 24 hours, we know as a day (by 3 minutes and 56 seconds), and that it travels around the sun once every 365.25636 days, created confusion over the centuries about exact dates, and induced calendars to make compromises.

The Romans may have been accurate in building aqueducts and coliseums, but they erred when it came to the calendar. They started with ten months, then added two more months, while fiddling with the numbers of days in February which at one time had 30 days.

Just for the record, in 46 BC Julius Caesar reformed the previously erratic Roman calendar. He took the length of the year to be 365.25 days, beginning on 1 January. As a result of a tremendous mistake by Roman priests, the calendar had to be reformed again in 10 BC. Even so, by 1582 the Spring Equinox had slipped back from 21 March to 11 March. To prevent further slippage, Pope Gregory XIII reformed the calendar and as part of the reforms, ten days of 1582 were removed with 5 October becoming 15 October.

But since the Gregorian calendar, as it was called, necessitated the elimination of a number of days from the calendar then in use throughout much of the Western World, a number of countries balked. The ones that immediately went along with the plan were the Catholic countries in Europe, but the Protestant countries refused.

Slowly but surely, however,

over the years even countries not controlled by Catholics agreed to use the Gregorian calendar since the incorrectly calculated Julian calendar was now throwing the year clearly out of the track with the earth's rotation. One of the nations that delayed converting to the new calendar was England and its colonies, which put it into practice in 1752 and Russia and Finland not until 1918.

The changeover in America, as in England, led to a loss of eleven days in February 1752. This affected among others, George Washington, who as a twenty year old in 1752 saw his birthday moved from 11 February to 22 February. This seems quasi as fiction than a fact. Of course the celebration of George Washington's birthday has now been shifted to the third Monday in February - which has nothing to do with the Julian or Gregorian calendar, but with more important one for most people in America: the federal holiday calendar.

As European power spread around the world, every country eventually settled on the Gregorian calendar as the way of marking the change of year. Surely, other ways of measuring time are in force. We Jews shall have our New Year in 2000 on 30th September and the year will be 5761, and according to Islam what we call year 2000 will be 1420, while the Chinese New Year in 2000 will be 4th February and the year will be 4698.

From the 7th century to the year 1338, the English considered Christmas Day to be the first day of the year, and then it was moved to 25 March for civil purposes and to Easter for religious ones.

Gregory XIII was a Catholic Pope, and of course his calendar is supposed to have begun with the birth of Christ. But most students of the subject say the latest Christ could have been born was 4 BC. Thus, perhaps the Millennium should have celebrated in 1996. According to the "New Catholic Encyclopaedia", Dionysius, who has been termed one of the most learned men of the sixth century, made a serious error which, at that time, went unnoticed and which, since then, has gone uncorrected.

The Catholic Encyclopaedia says that Dionysius "wrongly dated (the birth of Jesus) to 754 A.U.C. some 4 years, at least, too late. Thus what Dionysius said was CE1, should have been four or more years earlier. A.U.C. is the abbreviation for the Latin anno urbis conditae, which means "the year of the establishment of the City-Rome."

Leaving aside whether Jesus was a real character in history is certainly far from clear to most academics when he was born, not to mention how he was conceived.

In any case, the Millennium has entered the door of history on 1st January 2000 but not without a controversy from certain institutions such as the Encyclopaedia Britannica, the US Naval Observatory and the Greenwich Observatory, as they claim that right date had to be 1 January 2001, though the Vatican preferred to announce it in a three-cipher-year.

A book entitled "Zero - the Biography of a Dangerous Idea" by Charles Seife (Viking) discussing the history within the larger context of alternative numbering systems developed by various cultures, such as the base - 60 system of the Babylonians who brought us the 60 minute hour and the magnificent zero invented by the Maya, came down to a statement that the absence of nought gave us our "silly" calendar system that goes from 1 BC to 1AD, guaranteeing that the new Millennium actually begins next year.

My personal view is that clinging on to the errors of history in such cases, is not worth a dispute especially after the Millennium has already been fixed and that the decision should be taken as a common sense choice.

**Milan**

**Edward Yamen**

**Scribe:** The seven day week has remained unchanged for thousands of years. Jewish leaders have successfully reinstated any attempt to tamper with that system, such as not to count one day a year in order to have a year of 52 weeks, so that every month will start on a Sunday and so on. Jews have strongly objected to any change in order to keep the Sabbath in a fixed position.

### **You cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs**

You cannot expect to get something for nothing. You must be prepared to make sacrifices in order to gain your ends.

### **Better an egg than a hen tomorrow**

This means the same as A BIRD IN THE HAND IS WORTH TWO IN THE BUSH.

## SIR SASSON ESKELL



Hakham Heskel Shlomo Dawid was a student of Hakham Abdalla Somekh. In 1873 he travelled to India to become the Rabbi and Shohet of the thriving Baghdadi Jewish Community there. In 1885 he returned to Baghdad a wealthy man. In 1906 he built Slat Hakham Heskel which was one of the prominent synagogues in Baghdad.

Sasson Eskell born in Baghdad 17 March 1860 and studied at the Alliance School. He left for Istanbul in 1877 in the company of Menahem Saleh Daniel who had been elected a deputy of Baghdad in the Ottoman Parliament during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II. After studying in Istanbul he proceeded to Vienna where he was an outstanding pupil. He returned to Istanbul where he obtained a law degree. He returned to Baghdad in 1885 where he was appointed dragoman for the consular services.

On the announcement of the new Constitution in 1908, he was elected deputy for Baghdad in the first Turkish Parliament, a position he occupied until the end of World War I when Iraq was detached from the Ottoman Empire. He returned to Baghdad in 1920 and was appointed Finance Minister in the first Iraq Government. In 1921 he attended the Cairo Conference under the chairmanship of Winston Churchill at which Emir Feisal was chosen for the throne of Iraq. He occupied the position of Minister of Finance during five consecutive governments until 1925. Thereafter he was Member of Parliament until his death in Paris in 1932 where he was buried at the Père Lachaise Cemetery.



*The picture above was taken in Baghdad c. 1927 showing left to right, seated:*

*Jack Eskell; Sir Sassoon Eskell; Henry Eskell  
Standing: David Shaoul Eskell; Frederick Daniel*



*1927 - Sir Sasson Eskell and his brother Shaoul (standing), with Albert Shaoul Eskell (left) and friend*

# PHARAOH AKHENATEN

In the last issue, no. 72 of September 1999, we wrote about pharaoh Akhenaten who attempted to introduce in Egypt monotheism which he learned from his Uncle, Joseph, son of patriarch Jacob. The following is an abbreviation of an interesting article about that pharaoh which appeared in "Aramco World" Nov/Dec 1999.

## CORRESPONDENCE IN CLAY

by: Barbara Ross

"I am going to have a house-warming", read the invitation. "Come yourself to eat and drink with me. Twenty-five women and 25 men shall be in attendance." The party favour promised was "10 wooden chariots and 10 teams of horses" - a lavish gift by ordinary standards, but this invitation was from royalty. It was sent some 3500 years ago by Kadasman-Enlil, king of Babylonia, to Akhenaten (Amenhotep IV), pharaoh of Egypt. The message was inscribed on a pillow-shaped clay tablet, small enough to be carried easily in one hand or slipped into a satchel.

Akhenaten was the first Egyptian king to worship a single deity. He forbade the worship of multiple gods, and he directed an entire society to worship one supreme being represented by the sun, which he referred to as "Aten". With his wife, Nefertiti, and their young daughters, the royal family moved from Thebes, the capital of Egypt, to a palatial city he had built along the east bank of the Nile some 300 kilometers to the north. He named his city Akhetaten ("Horizon of Aten"), and today it is known as Amarna.

Politically, Egypt was at its zenith, the most powerful kingdom the world had known, dominating the lesser empires of Babylonia, Assyria, Khatti, Mitanni and Alashiya (Cyprus), and the provinces of Syria, Palestine, Canaan and Kush. These Amarna clay letters were diplomatic correspondence between the pharaoh and the rulers of these lands, or the vassals who governed towns and cities under Egyptian control.

After a flurry of courteous salutations, most letters included a plea for money, gifts or military troops. This is a typical introduction: "Say to Nimmureya [Akhenaten], the king of Egypt, my brother, my son-in-law, whom I love and who loves me: Thus Tushratta,



Queen Nefertiti

the king of Mitanni, your father-in-law, who loves you, your brother. For me all goes well. For you may all go well. For your household, for your wives, for your sons, for your magnates, for your chariots, for your horses, for your warriors, for your country and whatever else belongs to you, may all go very, very well."

The meat of the letter would quickly follow. In this case, Tushratta announced that he was sending one of his mistresses as a gift to the pharaoh. "She has become very mature, and she has been fashioned according to my brother's [Akhenaten's] desire. And, furthermore, my brother will note that the greeting gift that I shall present is greater than any before."

Akhenaten was the richest and most powerful man in the world, and the Mitanni, in western Mesopotamia, were among Egypt's most important allies, and several princesses had been sent as brides to marry Akhenaten and his father, Amenhotep III.

The written word of the time was cuneiform, a type of writing that had spread from Mesopotamia beginning in the third millennium BC, and was used to write several languages at different times and places. The Armana Letters are mostly written in Old Babylonian, itself a dialect of Akkadian, a spoken and written language that developed in the city of Akkad, now in Iraq. At the time the letters were written, Old Babylonian had become infused with West Semitic and

Egyptian words, and it had become the common regional language that unified international relations and trade, a *lingua franca*.

Each country outside Assyria and Babylon, where Akkadian was the first language, had to maintain a staff of trusted, educated people who could interpret and write in Akkadian. For example, when the Egyptian king dictated a letter, his scribe probably wrote on papyrus. The scribe would then hand his text to a translator, who would inscribe it into clay in Akkadian. The tablet would then be dispatched by royal courier.

This was an era in which diplomacy was often urgent, for throughout the Amarna period many of Egypt's vassals were at war with each other.

In a tumultuous political sea, what remained fixed throughout Akhenaten's reign was his ardent adoration of Aten. Amarna was built with roofless courtyards, temples, and shrines to facilitate worship directly toward the sun - although shade was provided for the royal family. An Assyrian king protested to the pharaoh on behalf of his emissaries:

"Why are my messengers kept standing in the open sun? They will die in the open sun. If it does the king good to stand in the open sun, then let the king stand there and die in the open sun. Then will there be profit for the king! But really, why should [my messengers] die in the open sun?"

Although many letters contain similarly heated protests of the pharaoh's ways, he appears to have remained largely unmoved, for his power dwarfed that of other empires.

Akhenaten and his wife Nefertiti had at least six daughters, and reliefs found on shrines, temple walls, and burial sites show hints of intimacy and domestic contentment that are unique in pharaonic art. In one painting, the king and queen are seated under a sun-disc whose rays end in tiny hands, which symbolise the life-giving force of the sun. Their three eldest daughters, Meritaten, Meketaten, and Ankhesenpaaten, are often depicted in scenes that display an unusual degree of affection between them and their father.

Akhenaten died after 17 years of reign and was succeeded by Smenkhare, who had married Meritaten. Smenkhare  
**Continued on following page**

ruled for 4 years, and was himself succeeded by Tutankhamen, who may have been either Akhenaten's younger brother, or Akhenaten's son by a minor queen. The nine year old pharaoh married Akhenaten's youngest daughter, Ankhesenpaaten, and ruled until his untimely death nine years later. This left his wife a widow while she was still, presumably, only in her teens.

During Tutankhamen's reign the capital was moved back to Thebes, and the old polytheism was reinstated. It is widely believed that the young king Tutankhamen was manipulated by older, craftier advisors who saw a return to past ways as a means of restoring their own power. One of the closest advisors to the king was a nobleman named Ay, who had been a faithful follower of Akhenaten.

But after the political climate changed following Akhenaten's death, he had become sympathetic to the Theban priests who still prayed to the ancient Egyptian pantheon. In the absence of a male heir to Tutankhamen's throne, Ay became the designated candidate - but the pre-requisite of his ascent was marriage to Tutankhamen's young widow, who was at least 30 years his junior.

What survives today of Akhenaten's legacy is but a small part of what once existed, and Horemheb's destruction is part of the reason that the reign of Akhenaten sank into obscurity until its re-discovery in the early 19th century. As for the Amarna Letters, although the form of communication doubtless continued, there have been no corresponding caches of correspondence found in Thebes, and thus the record ends approximately a year after the capital was moved back there from Amarna, during the reign of Tutankhamen.

The Amarna Letters are our only intimate glimpses into lives lived in a world so distant from our own in time, yet so similar in its humanity.

### **Learn to walk before you run**

Knowledge cannot be acquired all at once; it must be gained step by step. Don't try to spell 'catastrophe' if you cannot spell 'cat'.

### **Little and often fills the purse**

Small sums of money frequently received soon mount up.

## **THE FOREIGN POLICY OF ISRAEL BETWEEN REALPOLITIC AND JEWISH FOREIGN POLICY**

**Yizhak Mualem Ph.D.  
Department of Political Studies**

*Yitzhak Mualem completed his studies by means of a scholarship from The Exilarch's Foundation under the patronage of NAIM DANGOOR*

### **ABSTRACT OF THESIS**

In this paper the purpose was to examine whether the Israeli foreign policy is affected by the fact that the State of Israel is the state of the Jewish People or whether this has no impact on the conducting of foreign relations of the State of Israel. That is, that the Israeli foreign policy is a policy which is conducted and based primarily on realistic foundations, its meaning being focused political activities for the purpose of realising the state goals in order to reinforce its independence and status as nationality-state in the international arena.

The theoretical framework which has been adopted to deal with the fact that the State of Israel is both a State and the Jewish State is constructed on combination of two theoretical approaches, the realistic and that of extra-national relations. The State of Israel, due to the structure of the Jewish people which is a case that cannot be for the analysis of foreign policy of a state. Therefore, it is not possible to explain this policy according to the realistic model alone. Hence, to be able to present an effective analysis we needed a complementary theory. The extra-national theory enables us to analyse the phenomenon of the State of Israel and the Jewish world, the structure of which, as noted, goes beyond the framework of a regular nationality-state.

The empirical framework of the research is comparative: three different illustrative cases in respect of their time and place of occurrence. The illustrative cases are: A. Israel-France relations and the future of Algerian Jews between the years 1958-1962; B. The Jewish Community and the Israeli foreign policy toward South Africa under the Apartheid regime 1960-1967; C. The campaign for USSR Jews after the Six Days War. This is while focusing on issues-field which is defined by set rules of behaviour of the

actors: the State of Israel, the Jewish organisations in the Diaspora and other states that took part in this field of activity.

The historical message on which this research is based has its source in the central foundations of the Israeli foreign policy as it was formed in the first decade. In that decade the Israeli-Jewish politics was based on the statehood principle. This approach considered it necessary to subject all the internal and external means within the State of Israel and the Diaspora for the realisation of the primary goal of the Jewish People, which is making the State of Israel a central state factor within the Jewish People. This unique political approach had, therefore, impact on the formation of the Israeli foreign policy, and it is also manifested in the illustrative cases, which were examined in the course of this research paper.

In the first illustrative case there was an attempt to examine the nature and essence of the Israeli foreign policy in two fields of activity which have influenced each other. The first is the field of Israel-France relations, and under the second we have dealt with the question of the rendering of spiritual and material assistance to a non-Zionist Jewish community in Algeria throughout the 1950's and early 1960's. The research in this case focused, as noted, on two parallel lines the first of which and the prominent and significant one being the discussion of Israel-France relations which has affected the other, more inner line, which dealt with the relations of Israel and the Jewish community in Algeria.

The involvement of the Israeli Government in South Africa and in the new states in that continent had influence on the status and welfare of the Jewish community in South Africa. In this case the policy of the Israeli Government regarding the question of preferring the interest of the Jewish community, which emanated from the context of the Middle-East conflict, over the interest of the Jewish community was examined. The Israeli Government has deepened its political and economic ties with the new states in Africa and supported motions of the UN organisation to condemn the inter-racial separation regime in South Africa and to impose sanctions on this state, while this notwithstanding the harming of the welfare status of the South African Jews. The political interest was dominant and essential whereas the overall Jewish interest was marginal in

the interest scale of the State of Israel. This is because the harming of the South African Jews was limited, as a result of the policy of the Israeli Government, to the political and economic fields alone and did not spread to the physical one.

The tension between the state interest and the Jewish interest was intensified in the campaign for the USSR Jews, especially in the period following the Six Days War when the diplomatic ties between these two countries were severed and the bilateral political chains have been removed. The Israeli Government dared and commenced acting decisively on the issue of the USSR Jews. It took advantage of the structural changes which started to form at that period, when a new international reality started to come into being which was based on the policy of amelioration - *the détente* - between the two superpowers. At that period the Israeli Government laid the issue of the USSR Jews openly on the Jewish and even the international agenda. It has initiated a battle for the granting of immigration-permits and not departure-permits and this contrary to the policy which has been determined by the large Jewish organisations in the United States, such as the Jewish-American Committee and the World Jewish Congress. These organisations demanded to provide assistance to the USSR Jews to run their cultural life independently, and to campaign for the cessation of persecution and detention of Jews, as well as for their departure to Western countries apart from Israel. These goals were defined by them as primary and essential goals.

From the facts which have been revealed in those three cases we conclude that the Israeli Government finds it difficult to conduct foreign policy which is based on the political realism alone, as a result of the international and inter-Jewish reality. It was forced to take into account the magnitude and impact of extra-state factors in the Diaspora. The Israeli Government accorded weight to the overall Jewish goals, when it has defined the shape of the national interest of the State of Israel as the state of the Jewish People. This accession means, politically speaking, that the Israeli Government was forced to conduct foreign policy that is not focused from the purely state viewpoint, which did not provide full explanation of this foreign policy. Through the complementary model, the real-political viewpoint has offered a more precise explanation of the foreign policy of Israel.

According to the findings of this paper it seems therefore that two things are present in the Israeli foreign policy, and these are: the fundamental-declarative aspect and the operative one. The foreign policy was characterised by the declarative aspect in the parallel commitment both to the state interest and to the overall Jewish interest. Moreover, in this aspect it has been relatively easy to create an overlap between the two so that the realisation of the state interest was defined as clear manifestation of the overall Jewish interest. On the other hand, in the operative aspect there were discovered contradictions and contrasts between the two types of interests. Examination of those issues is what stands at the heart of this paper.

transportation and tourism. Peres, by contrast, has held every important job in government including Minister of Defence, Finance and Foreign Affairs and was Prime Minister three times. Peres was the chief architect of Israel's military-industrial complex, including its nuclear weapons programme, and a key player behind the 1993 Oslo peace accords with the Palestinians, a role that earned him a Nobel Peace Prize.

Peres' wit and elegance have made him a favourite among foreign dignitaries, but those qualities make little impression on Israeli voters, who prefer their politicians rough-cut and earthy. Early in his career, Peres gained a reputation as a self-promoter, an image reinforced by old party rival Yitzhak Rabin, who reflecting on what he saw as sabotage by Peres during his first stint as prime Minister, memorably dubbed his competitor a "tireless subverter".

At a Labour convention three years ago, Peres famously addressed the crowd: "They say I am a loser. Am I a loser?" His fellow members thundered back, "YES!" Yet neither that nor other humiliations, including rejection for the presidency, motivated Peres to quit public life. Last week he revoked his resignation as Minister for Regional Development, tendered in anticipation of victory in the presidential vote, and vowed to continue working for peace. There was some speculation Barak might name him Foreign Minister after David Levy quit the post to protest the Prime Minister's peace policies. Peres said he would not seek the job. But perhaps he has simply learned by now that admitting he wanted it would spoil his chances of getting it.

**From Time Magazine**

## 'Palestine is a myth'

An Arab writer, Joseph Farah says that prior to the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, there was no serious movement for a Palestinian homeland.

Farah says Palestine has never 'existed - before or since - as an autonomous entity'. He adds: 'There is no language known as Palestinian. There is no distinct Palestinian culture. There has never been a land known as Palestine governed by Palestinians.'

In his scathing article, Farah continues by lambasting the Arabs for 'wanting it all'. 'No matter how many land concessions the Israelis make, it will never be enough.'

## THE ACCOMPLISHED LOSER

**Shimon Peres considers his options after losing the presidency of Israel to a political lightweight**

His opponent was a nonentity. The press had predicted victory. His political allies had counted more than enough votes for a win. All that was left was for Shimon Peres to wait out the official balloting in the Knesset for the largely ceremonial post of the nation's President, a position well-suited to the country's most senior statesman. But when the final tally came in last week, the result was written all over Peres' stricken face. Contrary to the general expectation, Israel's new head of state was not Peres but the underdog, Moshe Katsav, a decent guy by all accounts but a political lightweight.

Actually, the secret 63-57 vote should not have been such a shock. It was in keeping with Peres' long and inglorious electoral record. Though he is the most accomplished politician in Israel-and a seasoned world figure as well- Peres, 76, has not once managed to win outright an election for public office. In Israel's entire 52-year history Labor has lost at the polls only when Peres was its leader. The Likud's Katsav, Israel's eighth President, is the first from a party other than Labor.

Katsav, 55 who will take over from the ailing and disgraced Ezer Weizman, served as a cabinet minister in various governments but never rose above such second-tier posts as

## From the British Library

### THE HEBREW COLLECTION OF THE BRITISH LIBRARY by Ilana Tahan, Curator in the Hebrew Section

The history of the Hebrew collection of manuscripts and printed books is rooted in the British Museum foundation collections. The libraries of Sir Hans Sloane, Sir John Cotton, and Robert Harley, the First Earl of Oxford which had been acquired by the British Museum in the 18th century, contained important Hebrew manuscripts some of which finely illuminated. The Sloane library yielded some thirteen Hebrew manuscripts, the most notable of which being a 14th century translation of Aristotle's *Historia Animalium* by Samuel ha-Levi Abulafia and the handsomely illustrated *Leipnik Haggadah*, dated Altona 1740. The most significant contribution of Hebrew manuscripts derived from Robert Harley's collection and consisted of 130 manuscripts. Outstanding among those were the lavishly illuminated two volume copy of *Maimonides' Mishneh Torah* completed at Lisbon, 1471-72, a beautiful 13th century Biblical Italian codex in two volumes and a large Sephardic Bible from the 14th century known as the Harley Catalan Bible.

The following decades witnessed a steady expansion of the Hebrew manuscripts collection. This resulted partly from the dispersal of libraries owned by English aristocratic families as for instance that of the Duke of Sussex, King George IV's brother, but also from the judicious acquisition policies pursued by some of the Museum Keepers in charge of manuscripts, particularly Josiah Forshall and Sir Frederic Madden. Their major contribution was the purchase in 1839 of the elegant manuscript known as the *North French Miscellany* copied around 1280, and of the famed *Ashkenazi and Barcelona Haggadot*, which were added to the collection in 1843. By the mid-nineteenth century the Hebrew manuscript collection totalled about 300 manuscripts, half of which were biblical codices.

The breakthrough in the development of the Hebrew manuscript collection occurred in 1865 when the Museum acquired the library of the Italian bibliophile Joseph Almanzi comprising 332 fine manuscripts

covering all fields of Hebrew literature. One of the jewels in the Almanzi collection is undoubtedly the exquisite *Golden Haggadah* copied and illuminated in Catalonia in the 14th century.

The contents of the collection was further shaped by two important developments, namely the acquisition between 1877-1882 of nearly 300 mostly Karaite and Yemenite manuscripts and the addition in 1925 or 1300 manuscripts from the library of Moses Gaster, who, for many years acted as the Hakham of the Sephardi and Portuguese community in England. His collection was rich in Samaritan works as well as Hebrew biblical, midrashic and cabalistic manuscripts.

Today, the British Library holds one of the most representative Hebrew manuscripts collections in the world numbering some 3,000 volumes and about 10,000 fragments deriving from the Cairo Genizah.

Besides manuscripts the collection boasts valuable printed book holdings numbering some 80,000 volumes. They too came into the possession of the British Museum at various stages after its foundation. At its inception in 1759, the Museum owned a single Hebrew work among its 500,000 printed volumes. This was the first edition of the Bomberg Talmud printed in Venice 1520-1523, from the library of King George II. That same year a gift of 180 books of great significance was offered to the Museum by Solomon Da Costa Athias, a merchant broker from Amsterdam who had lived in London for many years. A turning point occurred when the book collection of Michael of Hamburg - 4,420 volumes embracing all fields of Jewish learning - were purchased by the Museum in 1848. Subsequent acquisitions have included both religious and secular works leading to further expansion of the collection. Among the printed book material the most significant category are the Hebrew incunables (i.e. books that were printed before 1500), numbering over 100 works. In the collection there is also a fine assortment of 16th century imprints, and many unique examples testifying to Hebrew printing activities over the centuries in many parts of the globe.

Most of the manuscripts and printed books have been recorded in scholarly catalogues, copies of which are

placed on open access in the Oriental Reading Room (see below). The most important are:

G Margoliouth's "Catalogue of the Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts in the British Museum", 3 vols. & Index, London, 1965 (reprint)

J Zender's "Catalogue of Hebrew books in the British Museum", London, 1867 (reprint 1964)

Van Straalen's "Catalogue of the Hebrew books in the British Museum acquired during the years 1868-1892", London, 1894

Second Supplementary Catalogue of Hebrew printed books in the British Library, 1893-1960. 2 vols. London, 1994

The Hebrew collection of manuscripts and printed books forms part of the Oriental and India Office Collection and is housed in the British Library's new building at 96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB. Hebrew material can be viewed and consulted in the Oriental Reading Room, which is located on the third floor of the building. Admission to the Reading Room is by valid reader's pass only. A display of Hebrew illuminated manuscripts is on view in the Treasures Gallery of the Library, open daily to the public. One of the most beautiful manuscripts in the collection, the *Golden Haggadah* is displayed on the Turning the Pages interactive electronic system, which is accessible free of charge in the Treasures Gallery.

Dear Mr Dangoor

It gives me immense pleasure to write to you to express my thanks for the warm welcome extended to me during my recent visit to The Exilarch's Foundation's offices.

It was indeed an honour and a privilege to be permitted to view the manuscripts of your grandfather, the Gaon Rabbi Ezra Reuben Dangoor Z.L., illustrious 20th Century Chief Rabbi of Baghdad and provinces, and prolific editor and printer of Hebrew books. Rabbi Dangoor's vast knowledge and love of Torah and the superb calligraphy exhibited in all his manuscripts particularly impressed me.

Rabbi Ezra Dangoor's recently published edition of '*Adi Zahav*' a copy

of which you have kindly donated to us, constitutes an important addition to the Library's Hebrew collection of printed books and is greatly valued.

As a token of my appreciation I am enclosing a list consisting of 53 Baghdadi imprints held in the Hebrew collection, many of which were printed at your grandfather's publishing house. I would like to take this opportunity to cordially invite you to visit the Hebrew Section and the Oriental Reading Room. I will be delighted to show you and your circle of friends not only books printed at your grandfather's printing press, but also some of our treasured manuscripts.

**Hebrew Section**      **Ilana Tahan**  
Oriental & India Office Collections  
96 Euston Road  
London NW1 2DB  
**From the British Library**

Dear Mr Dangoor

I understand that The Scribe will from now on be issued electronically on the Internet. Though I realise the importance of keeping abreast of new technology, I must express my personal regret that many of us will no longer enjoy the benefit of handling the printed version of this excellent publication. In the Library's Reading Rooms users and researchers have no access to the Internet as yet; consequently none would be able to read The Scribe in its new format. This is a great pity indeed! Besides I know of many library users who would much prefer leafing through the printed pages of a journal than scrolling through endless web pages. One of the sections of The Scribe most of its readers would no doubt miss is the visual material. The photographs accompanying the text were absolutely delightful!

Would it be at all possible to continue sending the Hebrew Section of the Library and other interested customers (such as myself for instance) hard copies of The Scribe? I hope I am not the only one voicing this request.

**Ilana Tahan**  
**Curator in the Hebrew Section**

**Scribe:** We had to go on the internet in order to move with the times and go forward rather than stay where we were. We acknowledge that this new practice may at the beginning cause

inconvenience to some, but we feel in the fullness of time this will be overcome as and when the word has spread as to where we are and how they can 'connect up' in order to receive what we think will be an even more informative and flexible way of publishing due to its versatility.

On the question of visual pictures, this should not be a problem because we are getting an excellent reproduction on the internet of both colour and black and white pictures.

As an alternative to producing hard copies, we are prepared to provide a print-out of each issue to anyone interested at a cost of £10.00 plus postage. For your information, the old method of producing The Scribe used to cost £7,000 per edition!

community was autonomous, but its legal position deteriorated under Roman rule. The Jews aspired to civic rights while the pagan Alexandrians, strongly anti-Jewish, objected; against this background, grave riots broke out in 38 CE against the Jews. In 66, under the influence of the rebellion in Judea, disturbances broke out among the Jews, but were suppressed with cruelty by the Roman governor, the convert Tiberius Julius Alexander. In 115-7, at the time of the general Jewish revolt, the Alexandrian Jews were heavily attacked and punished, their Great Synagogue being burnt down. As a result of these risings, the Jewish population diminished. Their condition deteriorated further with the establishment of Christian predominance. In 414, owing to the inflammatory preaching of the Patriarch Cyril, they were expelled from the city, but many evidently returned; as at the Arab conquest (642) their number was again considerable, but by then leadership has passed from Alexandria to Cairo.

In 1937, the Jewish population numbered over 24,000, but after the advent of Nasser only 2,760 remained; very few remained by the 1970's.

Septuagint (from Latin), mentioned above, refers to the oldest Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, based on legend according to which 72 elders of Israel translated Pentateuch into Greek in Alexandria in 3rd century BCE, for the benefit of the large Greek-speaking Jewish population of Alexandria. Designation extended to the entire Bible as translated into Greek during the following two centuries.

The United Nations must make sure that the Egyptian Government does not gloss over or diminish the outstanding role of the Jews in the history of Alexandria.

Visiting Alexandria and wanting to keep up with your e-mail? Take coffee in the Cyber Access Cafe in the Smouha Shopping Mall, in Laurent (Louran) on Abdelsalam Aref Street (Tram Street).

Smouha Mall is named after Baghdad-born Joseph Smouha who came to Egypt in the 1920's and established there the modern Smouha City which was appropriated by Nasser after the Suez war.

Abdulsalam Aref was one of the leaders of the 1958 Revolution in Iraq. He was a pro-Nasserite and once boasted to him regarding one of Nasser's enemies, "You want me to kill him? A bullet costs only 20 fils!"

## JOY AND THE JOY OF GIVING



Above : Joy Eliahu

Joy Eliahu, the 31 year old daughter of an Iraqi Jewish family who immigrated to London a year before her birth, is an Israeli citizen and a licensed lawyer specialising in European and International Law.

Since last September Joy has been living in Kosovo as the Red Cross representative. Her nights are spent in a modest room in a bomb-wrecked neighbourhood, her days bearing the weight of human misery. Joy is the first (and so far only) Israeli to serve as a representative for the International Red Cross, the neutral Swiss humanitarian aid organisation established in 1863. Joy was relaxing in front of her TV after an exhausting, productive day when she chanced across a documentary about Kosovo. She contacted the Red Cross about doing volunteer work with the Kosovar refugees who were arriving in Britain. A few months later she contacted them again about becoming their representative in Kosovo. This entailed a series of interviews and a five week training course in Geneva. "They teach you about reuniting families, caring for prisoners, staying neutral, tracking down missing persons, keeping track of the people held in prison monitoring the adherence to the various Geneva conventions" she says. The goal is to provide humanitarian aid without any finger-pointing and above all protect the minorities.

Joy is not afraid of living on her own in such a dangerous area. She is protected by an unarmed Albanian guard. Generally the workers are treated very well. However, the place is very sad; everything is in ruins. The power and

water supply often break down and generally there is nothing to do.

The neutrality of the International Red Cross requires that Joy keeps all information she receives strictly confidential which makes it very hard at times not to be able to share her experiences.

She had gotten used to, she says, taking bodies across the border in her car - her perspective has definitely changed.

She is scheduled to spend until September 2000 in Kosovo and hopes to continue working for the International Red Cross, perhaps in another country.

Joy sees her Judaism as one source of her altruism - she learnt about the Holocaust in High School where she volunteered to help survivors in Jewish nursing homes.

She believes that Judaism means being able to identify with people's suffering - "I hear stories about the Holocaust and wonder why people did nothing to prevent it. I put myself in their place and say: I won't be that way."

**Abridged from Ha'aretz Magazine**

I have recently discovered your wonderful publication. When I was a small child in the late 1940's my American mother married the son of a prominent Iraqi politician, and in the early fifties we went to live in Baghdad. I remember driving around the city with my parents looking with a mixture of wonder and vague dread at "abandoned" properties that had belonged to Iraqi Jews. Some houses stood empty for years, tied up in legal wrangling between certain of the rich and powerful who sought possession. Why I remember this so well, at an emotional level, is that a peaceful sector of the community that had been a part of the city for ages could arbitrarily be uprooted and driven out. Since then I learned that Baghdad's Jews had constituted a very large fraction of the city's population. With them the city lost much of its best and brightest, especially in terms of culture.

Now the Jewish victims of forced emigration have been joined by new waves, a continuing Iraqi diaspora. One can actually follow the threads on the internet, as Yezidis, for example, try to find one another. It is significant that many disparate ethnic groups are linked together on the internet's Iraq sites, which is how I found you. The times are changing rapidly. Who could have predicted the changes in the Soviet Union? With any luck at all, it will be only a matter of time before the peoples of the Middle East, including those in current partial diaspora, reconstitute in mutual self-interest to form a brighter, more mutually understanding and tolerant society. With any luck at all.

**Carbondale, IL**

**Jim May**

صَنَا لِلْفَرَنَى هَنَيَا وَمَا لَحْقَنَا بِأَهْلِ الْعَالَمِ

Semna lema serna henaya w'ma lehaqna b'ahlel ataya.

We fasted until we became hunchbacked but could not catch up with those who make charitable donations.

أَبْنَ الرَّاحْمَةِ يَصُومُ وَيَصَّافِي وَأَبْنُ الرَّسُّاْبِ يَرْقَبُ وَيَفْتَنُ

Ebnel hakham yesoum weysalli w'ebn el rasha'e yerqess weyghanni.  
Son of the Rabbi fasts and prays while the son of the wicked dances and sings.

## THE REUBEN BROTHERS

Extracts from the article in *Fortune* magazine dated June 19 2000

Last June *Fortune* magazine featured a long article on the Reuben brothers, David and Simon and their spectacular rise to great fortune in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, with the help of two Russians - Lev Chernoy and his brother Michael.

The Reubens brothers were born in Bombay and raised by their Iraqi-born mother and grandmother after their parents separated. As poor teenagers, like so many ambitious kids in post-colonial India, the brothers made their way to London, where they landed briefly in a Jewish shelter. Simon eventually went into the rag trade and scraped together enough money to buy his first pieces of real estate. David spent his early years trading in scrap metal, later co-managing a Soviet metals-trading venture with Merrill Lynch - and eventually laying the groundwork for TransWorld by founding his own company in 1977.

When the Soviet Union fell, its entire military-driven aluminium industry collapsed with it. David Reuben says he had built TransWorld into one of the largest aluminium traders in Russia by that time, and he seized the opportunity to expand into the void. At that time everything in Russia was up for grabs. It wasn't long before Simon was enlisted in the project as well.

Of course, Russia was even then a fairly lawless mafia infested society, with overlapping business rules, rampant corruption, lax or naïve regulators, and state-appointed factory bosses who suddenly found themselves de facto capitalists - and in dire need of cash. Then, as now, a foreigner soon learned that these stormy seas were far more navigable if he had a local partner to help. As David tells it, not long after he opened his Moscow office, in 1992, a man with a heavy cane limped through the door. In the pre-perestroika shadow economy, Lev Chernoy had become a big trader in timber and fish, among other things, "Lev said that only those with money can solve everything", recalls David. "He said, 'Fly with me'." Lev soon introduced David to his older brother, Michael, now 48, who proved a valuable asset to the fledgling enterprise. Michael who speaks no English has useful connections, and a partnership was born.

Of TransWorld's four principals,

only Michael Cherney wasn't interviewed face to face by Fortune. Instead, he responded to selected questions faxed to him in Israel. "I do not possess any exclusive information on the so-called Russian mafia", he wrote. As for questions about bribes, murder, or money laundering, they "have nothing to do with me....."

**Scribe:** The lucky break came when the bosses of the International Monetary Fund gave Russia a \$20 billion loan and made the foolish stipulation that the Rouble be made freely convertible into Dollars. Many privatised industries and businesses quickly obtained heavy borrowings from their banks and converted the Roubles into safe deposits in Switzerland. The \$20 billion were cleaned up in a matter of days driving the Rouble to an all time low, and businesses were thus able to repay their bank borrowings in a depreciated Russian currency.

## THE MARRIAGE OF THE PARENTS OF GENERAL KHALED AL-ZAHAWI

At a friend's house I recently came across a few back copies of *The Scribe*, which I read with great interest, especially your answers to readers' enquiries.

I would be very grateful if you could help me, too, by providing more detail about the persons in the following piece of oral history:

**In order to escape from an unwanted marriage, a girl from a well-known Jewish family sought refuge in the house of Muhammed Faidhi Al-Zahawi (1803?-1891?), Mufti of Baghdad. Since the Mufti did not consider it proper to have an unmarried girl living under his roof, he married her to his son Mahmood. A son from this marriage was General Khaled Al-Zahawi, director of the military academy in Baghdad in the 1930's.**

Since I do not have regular access to *The Scribe*, I would appreciate it if you could send an answer to my address. I am enclosing a self-addressed envelope and two international reply coupons for this purpose.

Brisbane, Australia

Ms Z Zahawi

**Reply:** We give you below the story as we know it.

The parents of a Jewish girl wanted to marry her to an elderly Jew, but she was friendly with a young Moslem neighbour and decided to elope with him. So she went to the Mufti Muhammed Faidhi Al-Zahawi for the marriage formalities. According to the arrangement between the Moslem and Jewish communities the girl had to stay a week at the Mufti's house who was required to persuade her to return to her parents and would only marry her if she refused at the end of the week to return to her parents.

When the Mufti was satisfied that the girl had no intention to return to her parents, he advised her that instead of marrying her poor Muslim friend, she would be better off marrying his own (the Mufti's) son. In fact this is what happened and that's how the girl married the father of Khaled Al-Zahawi.

We are informed that Khaled was born in 1889 and if that is the case the marriage of his parents would have taken place around 1888, but certainly not in 1803.

Khaled Pasha was Governor (Mutasarrif) of the Baghdad district at the time of the Farhood in 1941. He came to our house on the morning of the rioting at which over 200 Jews were killed, and informed us that although he asked permission from the British military authorities and Nouri Al-Said to disperse the rioters by firing into the air, they refused to give him permission.

### Reply from Lisbeth Zahawi

Thank you very much for your detailed answer to my letter concerning the marriage of Mufti Al-Zahawi's son. What a lucky coincidence that this story can now be verified from another source.

Since I am going to be in London in August, I am planning to contact you then in order to find out whether it would be possible for me to look at some back copies of your publication and maybe have a look at your reference library.

As to any photographs that might be of interest to you, I am afraid there is nothing earlier than the 1930's. I'll bring some group photos with me and you can have a look at them. I, on the other hand, am very hopeful that you might have a portrait of the Mufti in your picture archive!

# INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON JEWISH GENEALOGY

## 8 - 13 JULY 2001

Dear Mr Dangoor

The Programme Committee for the 21st International Conference on Jewish Genealogy, to be held in London from 8 - 13 July 2001 has much pleasure in inviting you to present a paper. The Seminar is being organised by members of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain and will be held at the Intercontinental Hotel at Hyde Park Corner.

Over 600 participants from the 80 member societies of the International Association of Jewish Genealogy Societies are expected. We are inviting other European Genealogical Societies to contribute to the programme.

The suggested subject for your paper is Babylonian Jewry but if you prefer others, this should be no problem.

We sincerely hope you will be able to accept this invitation to speak. For more information, please contact us at the addresses or numbers below.

**George Rigal:** 14 Pembridge Place, London W2 4BX  
Fax No: (0)20 7221 7302 Tel. (0)20 7229 6845  
**Arlene Beare:** arl@dircon.co.uk  
**Saul Issroff:** Saul@swico.demon.co.uk

Some of the Speakers:

**Morris Bierbrier**  
Tracing your Ancestry in Italy and the Ottoman Empire

**Dr Nardo Bonomi**  
Italian Jewish Resources for Genealogy

**Hal Bookbinder Vice President, International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies**  
Changing Borders of Europe  
The Khazars

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### **Karen Franklin**

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Illustrated Hebrew Manuscripts in the British Library

### **and with Hazel Dakers**

British Library Genealogical Resources

### **Theon Wilkinson**

Jewish Communities and Memorials, Cemeteries, and Burials in the Near and Far East, from Aden to Japan

## **SEARCH FOR DON MATVAY (MOTTLE)**

May I take this opportunity to wish you and all your loved ones a peaceful and prosperous New Year, and well over the Fast?

I am writing, firstly to thank you for your most pleasing journal in its information on Babylonian Jewry.

Secondly, may I enlist your esteemed help?

A sad Jewish lady in Israel is in search of her missing relative. Is it possible that you could give a few lines of your journal for her personal search?

MILYA PECHERSKY, Levanon 21/11, Kyriat Shmona 10200, Israel is looking for:

DON MATVAY (Mottle) d.o.b. 1921/2 "somewhere in the London area"

If anyone has information please write to Milya at above address or P.O. Box 3589 or telephone (06) 6943785.

I am most grateful to you for kindly receiving this request.

**Gwent, Wales**

**Meg Thomas**

## THE ELIAS FAMILY

I have read with interest your magazine '*The Scribe*' and am wondering if you have in your archive any information about the Elias family. I enclose the immediate family tree and a photograph of Abdullah Elias with four of the five children (youngest not yet born).

I am married to his grandson, David William. I also enclose two copies of photographs taken in Baghdad. Abdullah and his brother Meir were cotton merchants and moved to Manchester in about 1895-1900.

**London**

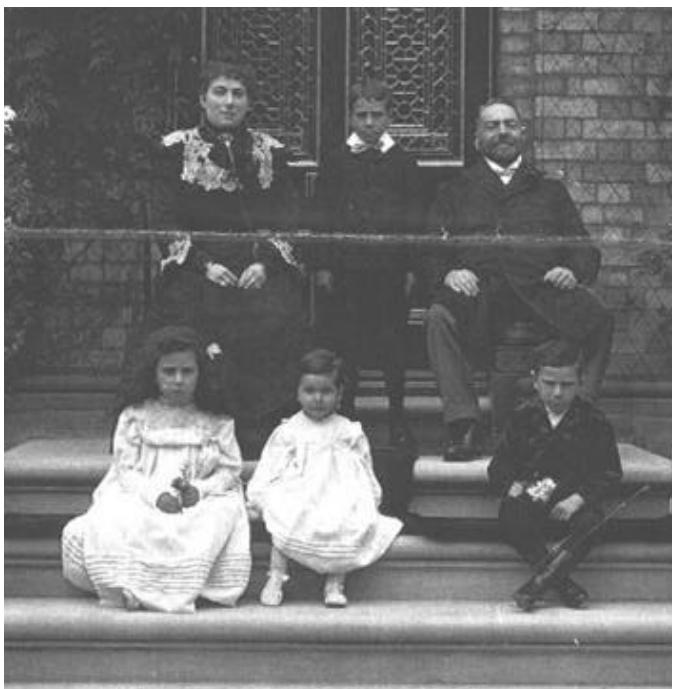
**Jennie Elias**

**Top right :** *Abdullah Elias with wife Sarah Flora (formerly Bassoos) with four of their children outside their Manchester home in 1901.*

**Middle right :** *One hundred years ago - picture taken in Baghdad with teachers and the students of the Midrash Talmud Torah Yeshiva*

**Seated -** *Abdullah Elias with his son, Eliahoo Victor and his daughter, Messooda Lucy*

**Bottom right :** *The Turkish Governor of Baghdad with his Cabinet and foreign Consuls in the Sarai c. 1895*



**Scribe:** According to our information from the book by Dr Abraham Ben Jacob, Abdullah Elias was the eldest son of Eliahou Shlomo David, (see family tree elsewhere in this issue).

Abdullah and his brother Meir were cotton merchants and used to travel to Manchester. In 1892 Abdullah returned to Baghdad to marry Sarah Flora of the Bassous family, and there, three of his children were born. He was falsely accused of insulting Islam, but the Wali Haj Hasan Rafiq Pasha who was a friend of the family dismissed the accusation. In 1899 Abdullah moved to London and appointed his nephew Menashi Saleh as his agent in Baghdad. He donated fifty pounds for the repair of the Shrine of Ezra Hasopher near Basra. Sir Sasson Eskell was a cousin.

His brother Meir was also a generous benefactor and in 1910 he built the large Meir Elias Jewish hospital which treated non-Jews also and was only the third in the city. The hospital was opened by the Wali and members of the government and the consular service. He suffered sun-stroke while supervising the building of the hospital and died the same year. After his death his large house was converted into a synagogue bearing his name, where the Emir Feisal was acclaimed on arrival to Baghdad to become King of Iraq.



## THE NIGHT OF THE HENNA

by: Albert Khabbaza, MD, New York

Few days before the wedding, it was customary in the Iraqi Jewish society to have a ceremony called the night of Henna - something roughly equivalent to shower in the USA. It was arranged by the family of the bride as a symbol of separation of the bride from them and only close family members were invited. It was customary to use Henna - a red orange solution of leaves of certain trees on the fingers of the bride - so that the colour would remain for a few days.

But the most happy part of the ceremony was the special songs and music. The "Deqqaqa" - a professional woman musician who sang and played on the drums (Neqqara). She was assisted by a small group of women who also sang in response and played a large tambourine (Daff).

Although it was considered

shameful for any woman to sing or play any instrument in the Jewish community, the night of Henna was an exception because, probably, it was originally an occasion for women only. It was even approved by the Iraqi rabbinate.

Another occasion when it was not considered shameful for a woman to sing, even in the presence of men, was at home when the mother put her child to sleep and sing the famous lullaby - "Dillilloli".

Some of the songs at the night of Henna were:

يابو العردد

2.Yabu elward.

Oh, the father of the flowers. It was addressed to the father of the bride as the bride was described as flowers.

يابو الحنة ما جوز متنا

3. Yabu el henna ma jouz menna.

Oh, the father of Henna, I will not leave you alone.

But the most famous one is **Afaki, Afaki**.

It is a very long song - part of it is shown below.

عنف على البنية

1.Ghannu ala elbaidha.  
Sing for the brightness, (of the white flower) meaning, the bride.

Afaki, Afaki ala elfan le'emeltainu

Ana t'abtu wana shquaitu  
Ala l'hadher akhedhtainu

Sheftainu walad alkaif  
Berritainu menni bilsaif

Twessalti b'abu yousef  
Ma a'aref ash t'amtainu

Enti qelti aridu  
Whewi amru ma beedu

Rabbi ye'eteq wlaidu  
Hewi elli yesaleenu

عفاكي عفاكي على الغنى لعماليته  
أنا تعنت وانا حفت  
على اخاهن أخذتني  
خفتني ولد عالكتيف  
بس بيتنينه فنتي باليف  
توسلتني يا أبو يوسف  
ما أعرف أشي طعماني  
أنت قلتني أريدك  
وهدتني أمرك عابيدك  
ربت يعتق ولديك  
حفتني اللي يلتم

Bravo bravo for the  
artful trick you used.

I toiled and suffered and  
You took him ready made.

You found him a very good boy  
Separated him from me by sword.

You begged Abu Yousef.

I do not know what you  
had fed him.

You said I want him.

And he was helpless.

G-d bless his son.

He who will console him.

Note that in this song, the mother of the groom complained that her son was taken away, or "stolen" from her and blamed (not seriously of course) both the bride and her mother.

## DO YOU PLAY BRIDGE

from: Edward Dangoor

An old, coloured woman was applying for a new position. When asked why she left her last place she said:

"Yessum dey paid good wages, but it was the most awful place I ever seen. Dey plays a game called "bridge", and last

night was a lot of folks dere. As I was preparing refreshments, I heard a man say:

"lay down and let me see what you got"

Then annuder man say:

"I got strength but no length"

Then annuder man say to a lady:

"Take your hand off my trick"

I near dropped dead when a lady say:

"You forced me.....you jumped me

twice when you didn't even have a raise" Annuder woman was talking about her honour.

Well, I just got my hat and coat and as I was leaving, I hope to die if one of dem didn't say:

"Well, I guess I'll go home now, dis is de last rubber".

## SIXTY GENERATIONS ROOTS TO BABYLON?

I recently found a branch in my family tree that appears to be Jewish. I do not know much about Jewish beliefs or customs. I have a couple of questions concerning this branch of my tree. There are about ten generations that were all born in Babylon, starting in the year 590 AD. The first generation found had the name of "Hanini David" and had the title of "Exilarch". All of the following nine generations carry the surname of "David". What is the significance of this and what is an "Exilarch"? Unfortunately I live in a small town in Wyoming, USA and there is not a Jewish Temple close, or I would turn my questions to the local Rabbi.

Thank you for your time.

Lander, WY, USA

Annessa Main

### Scribe reply:

How are you personally connected to this branch of the family tree? "Exilarch" was the title of the head of the Jewish community in Babylon. It became extinct in the year 1270 and was revived by Mr Naim Dangoor 700 years later in the year 1970, and he is the present incumbent.

### Annessa Main's reply:

First, thank you for your response. I will try to list all the generations that I have to lead to this family branch. It is quite extensive. The Jewish part of our history was lost a long time ago.

1. (Myself) Annessa Lynn Huff b. 28 Mar 1972 Scottsbluff, NE, USA
2. Julia Ann Belden b. 13 May 1950 Alliance, NE, USA
3. Vida Lee Hascall b. 20 Mar 1926 Gaston, OR, USA
4. Leslie Earl Hascall
5. Ray Smith Hascall
6. Sarah Caroline Whitman b. 9 Apr 1820 New York, NY, USA
7. Martha Patsey Lucas b. 14 Nov 1796 Harolin County, KY, USA
8. Sarah Phelps b. 1771 Buckingham County, VA, USA
9. Thomas Phelps b. 1725 Albemarle County, VA, USA
10. Thomas Phelps b. 1703 Albemarle, VA, USA

11. John I Phelps b. 1683 Goochland, VA, USA
12. William Phelps b. 1656 England
13. Elinor Howard b. 1626 England
14. Matthew Howard b. 1609 Wardour, Whitshire, England
15. John Howard b. 1 Dec 1578 Brockdish Hall, Norfolk, England
16. Robert Howard b. Jan 1537, Syon House, London, England
17. Thomas Howard b. about 1512 Ashwell Thorpe, Norfolk, England
18. Thomas Howard b. 1443 Stoke Newland, Suffolk, England
19. John Howard b. 1420 Tending, Essex, England
20. Robert Howard b. 1385 Stoke Neyland, Suffolk, England
21. John Howard b. 1365 Wiggenhall, Norfolk, England
22. Robert Howard b. about 1336 Wiggenhall, Norfolk, England
23. John Howard b. 1310 Wiggenhall, Norfolk, England
24. Joan De Cornwall b. about 1295 Thunnock, Lancashire, England
25. Richard De John Cornwall b. about 1275 Burford, Shropshire, England
26. Richard Plantagenet b. about 1252 Berkhamstead, Hertfordshire, England
27. Sancha, Countess of Provence b. about 1225 Aix-en-Provence, Bouches-du-Rhone, France
28. Raymond Berenger V, Count of Provence and Forcalquier b. 1198 Aix-en-Provence, Bouche-du-Rhone, France
29. Alfonso II, Prince of Aragon b. about 1174 Aragon, Spain
30. Sancha, Queen of Aragon b. 21 Sep 1154 Castile, Spain
31. Alfonso VII, Pierre Raimund, King of Castile, Leon and Galicia b. 1105 Castile, Spain
32. Urraca Alfonsez of Castile and Leon b. 1082 Castile, Spain
33. Alfonso VI "The Valiant" King of Castile and Leon b. 1039 Castile, Spain
34. Sancha, Princess of Leon b. about 1015
35. Alfonso V, King of Leon b. about 0989
36. Elivira Garcez of Castile b. about 0971 Castile, Spain
37. Count Garcia Fernandez of Castile b. about 0955 Castile, Spain
38. Urraca Garces of Pamplona b. about 0937 Pamplona, Spain
39. Garcia Sanchez I, King of Navarre b. about 0920, Navarre, Spain

40. Sancho Garces I, King of Navarre b. about 0890 Navarre, Spain
41. Dadilda De Pallars, b. about 0870 Pallars, Spain
42. Daughter of Raymond of Toulouse b. about 0800 Toulouse, France
43. Count Raymond I of Toulouse b. about 0822 Toulouse, France
44. Countess Senegonde of Toulouse b. about 0800 Toulouse, France
45. Bertha D'Aube David b. 0775 Autun, France
46. Theuderic Thierry Makir David b. about 0720, Babylon
47. Habibai Ben Natronai David b. about 0687 Babylon
48. Natronai Ben Nehemiah David b. about 0670 Pembeditha, Babylon
49. Nehemiah Ben Hanini David b. about 0650 Babylon
50. Hanini Bar #8216; Adoi David b. about 0627 Babylon
51. Bustani Ben Hanini David b. about 0590 Babylon
52. Exilarch Hanini David b. about 0590 Babylon

Does the &#8220; David&#8221; at the end of these names mean they are descendants of David? Do you have any more of the family line? Is Exilarch a religious post or more of an appointed leader? If it is an appointed post, by who (i.e. G-d?)? Was (Is) it passed down in an &#8220; eldest Son&#8221; manner? Why was the post eliminated?

Thank you for your time. This has been very helpful.

### Scribe reply:

The reference to David in the name definitely means a direct descent from King David through King Yehoyachim and all the previous Kings of Judah. We are sending you by post a copy of the Babylonian Haggadah where you will find on page 91 the earlier generations of Exilarchs and on page 90 all the previous kings to King David.

The Exilarch is a political post of Royal descent, but many Exilarchs were eminent Rabbis in their own rights as was Rabbi Makir, mentioned in your ancestor No. 46, who was sent by Haroun Al-Rashid, Calif of Baghdad to Charlemagne, King of the West at his request, who wanted to establish in Europe a middle class based on a Jewish

Continued on following page

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nucleus. Rabbi Makir was received by Charlemagne and was given the title "King of the Jews". The office and dignity of Exilarch was hereditary in the royal line, passed down not necessarily to eldest son, but more often to the most suitable candidate. The post came to an end in 1270 following the Mongol devastation of the Middle East.

We would be very interested in having copies of original documents to support your family tree.

#### Annessa Main's Reply :

In reference to your e-mail and August mailing - all received. Thank you for the information; it is very interesting.

The information from myself to generation no. 6 is from word of mouth and family history from my grandmother. From gen no. 7 onto gen no. 35 was found through the Mormon church information, in the ancestral files that they have. From gen no. 36 onto gen no. 50 was found in the international genealogical files found at the Mormon website ([familysearch.com](http://familysearch.com)). This information was posted by:

John Feagin Sr.  
9632 Rocksparkle Row  
Columbia  
MD  
USA 21045

I have written him a letter and have not received a response, nor do I have any other way of getting a hold of him. I came across this information looking for the ancestors of gen no. 35 and have not come across any other information. But, as I have only been doing this for a little more than a year, that may change.

I have never heard of this book. Why is it debatable? Why is it doubtful that there could be Jewish settlers in France? Toulouse borders Spain. I have found information that states that the Count Raymond of Toulouse was a very prominent and powerful man who had several descendants that married into Royal families (Biography of Eleanor of Aquitaine). I suppose I do not find this information to be improbable.

Anyway, as far as paper in my hand-proof of this line, I have yet to receive information from the person who posted it in the website. I also hope that it is not false.

Thank you for your time.

#### FAMILY TREES

After meeting you a few years ago, I started to work on a family tree.

Recently you started to print various family trees and so I decided to send you what I had developed over the last few years. It took time to meet and contact family in Israel (the main source for my information). They were kind enough and patient enough to agonize and remember under my persistent questioning (I guess I could be cited by the Human Rights organizations for my interrogations).

Anyway, attached is the result of my work. It has been suspended due to my recent marriage.

I have researched the following:  
Father's father's family - Yossef Ajemy-Chitayat and Baruch Tahan  
Father's mother's and Mother's father's family - H'baba and Aziz Peres  
Mother's mother's family - Shelomo and Habiba Houri

I have enclosed the family list in tree form and in outline form. Regrettably the program cannot accommodate first cousins getting married. This leaves us with the problem of names being repeated.

Save the above caveat, I would love to contact other families who might assist me in seeing where our mutual trees intersect.

I know that the Moreshet in Or Yehuda is putting some effort into this and have sent them the enclosed information. Just to be sure however, I am sending it to you as well.

Thank you again for your continued efforts in maintaining contact with our tradition and keeping us informed.

**S David Moche**  
1700 York Avenue, 8P,  
New York City,  
NY 10128  
USA  
Tel. No. 212-876-3893  
Fax No. 212-876-3498

**Scribe:** We have passed your family tree information to Ms Lydia Collins, our genealogy specialist, who would be glad to correspond with readers on ancestry matters c/o The Exilarch's Foundation, 4 Carlos Place, London W1K 3AW, U.K.

#### The Horesh-Baher Family Tree

In the last issue of The Scribe dated September 1999 I happened to look at the genealogical tree of the Horesh-Baher family and was surprised to note that my brother-in-law, Rouben Horesh, whose father is Raphael Horesh and brother Charles Horesh (hanged by the Tikrity regime on January 27 1969) were not mentioned in that genealogical tree. I asked my brother in law who dismissed the whole subject as superfluous. Could you clarify this to me? Thanks.

**E-mail** Maurice M Sawdayee Ph.D

From The Editor:

This is a line we don't know about. Can you send us details going as far back as possible - we may then be able to join them to the main tree.

In your *Scribe* No. 72 I read that EliaShahmoun came to open the school bearing his daughter's name: "Rachel Shahmoun".

I remember my mother used to say that only if "Ezra Joseph Hakham Saleh", my father, will take charge of the building, because he trusted my father, Elia Shahmoun will accept to have the building done.

My father accepted to take charge.

My father finished the school but he died on the 27th July 1927.

Elia Shahmoun came over for the inauguration of the school - shouldn't my father's name be mentioned? After all Elia Shahmoun trusted my father, he was his friend, and he wouldn't have anybody else to be in charge.

Please, I would like you to look into the matter and mention that without my father the school wouldn't have been built. Is it also possible to try to find a photo of my father and put it with it?

*The Scribe* this time was wonderful. Yom Kippur helped me reading all you wrote. I don't know how you have the time and the energy to find all these lovely things, to put it so nicely together.

You are a genius - G-d Bless You!

**London**

**Violette Levy**

The following article is intended not only to remember my beloved father Shaul Darwish, but also to celebrate our beautiful Iraqi heritage.

by: Tamara Ruben  
Westfield NJ

## MY KING SAUL

In Ramat Gan, Israel, I remember day-dreaming in Bible classes about King Saul, the defeated biblical King, whose tragic destiny alienated him from G-d, from his people, from living life to its fullest. I remember thinking how he had it all but had nothing as he was consumed by an invisible yet devastating disease of melancholy.

My thoughts would then drift to my own father, Saul, whom I secretly anointed as my King, as early as I can go back in time. My King also had moments of melancholy. Moments that seemed like an eternity to a growing child. When my King Saul was triumphant over life's yoke, I would rejoice, my soul would celebrate. Our lives would be transformed into exotic trips in northern Israel to virgin places, magnificent in their beauty and simplicity. I recall laughters, practical jokes, abundance of fresh food, and the exotic aromas of spicy meals. The King's Chamber would once again be bustled with people coming and going, with rich stories that only my father, the Master Story-Teller, could tell about his life in Iraq. About his life in the desert as an officer in the British Oil Company with his favourite dog and horses, his travel to Palestine in the 30's, his audacity to face some hoodlums in the market place in Baghdad, his firm stand for what he believed was just and right even at his own expense and ours, his unmatched ability to deal in commerce with people while tending to his unmarried sisters.

*And we listened with thirst to the stories and "travelled" with him until he no longer could...*

His profound passion for learning, for nature's wonders and animals became his nourishment, sustaining him in those dark moments when his soul ached. When he felt trapped. When darkness ascended upon his spirit. When even a soft touch of his child of 5 or 10 was dismissed, unheard.

On Tu B'shvat of 1984 at the dawn of spring, as nature awakens in Israel with the first signs of spring, my King Saul died, spared by the oncoming

snowstorm that day which he so dreaded in his last years. He died fighting his own battles as the mighty King of Israel, in a quiet hospital room in New York. The King's Chamber was once again silent.

Recently, at my role as a Director of Jewish education at Temple Emanu-El in Westfield, New Jersey, I wrote the article below. It was written in celebration of the beautiful and fertile Iraqi Jewish community, and above all, in celebration and memory of my beloved King Saul, my father Shaul Darwish Z"ל, the son of Benyamin and Salha of Baghdad, Iraq.

1950, Baghdad, Iraq. A baby is born to Shaul and Violet Darwish, a Jewish family who was a part of a splendid Jewish community in this ancestral part of the Middle East. A community which remained intact and proud of its heritage in spite of being exiled from Judah by the Babylonian Empire in 586 BCE. While many returned to rebuild the second Temple with the help of Ezrah & Nehemiah, the prophets, a good number of the exiled remained in Babylon/Iraq.

*1950, Westfield, New Jersey. A Jewish congregation in Westfield is charted after years of dreams and vision of its founding members. In her magnificent Historic Narrative, one of the founding members and author, Evalyn Averick, writes: "It seems that during a social afternoon...six women turned the conversation to their dreams of starting a Temple in Westfield...They spoke to other women, then to their husbands, and to the other Jews of the community, resulting in the gathering...the first official meeting."*

I often wonder about these two births and the hand of fate that has linked them together. Two worlds seemingly apart, yet in many ways connected. Both communities struggled with maintaining their Jewish identity and the continuation of Jewish life, while being a small minority. Both communities used their vulnerable state to build strong and healthy societies that will serve them and the generations that will follow.

With the inspiration of the Prophets in the Babylonian exile, a profound sense of hope guarded the Jews against despair and extinction. Zeal for learning and Jewish scholarship resulted in the establishment of the Academies for the study and interpretation of Torah in Babylon. The Jewish community there began to thrive and served as a guiding light to the rest of the world's Jewry.

*As a minority in the early '50's in Westfield and other places in America, "Jews found that the United States Constitution with its noble ideals, nevertheless, was no substitute for Torah." Here too, the Chalutzim, the pioneers of Temple Emanu-El, listened to the call of Ezrah the Prophet and his contemporaries to build a Jewish community in spite of all the obstacles. With a prophetic spirit and a keen sense of vision, they set to create various segments of the Temple. The fascinating history of the Temple is a story of Livnot Ulhibanot, to Build and be Built.*

Two weeks after my birth, my family, along with thousands of other Jews of Iraq and other countries, set out to Israel to realize yet another vision, another dream. A dream that travelled with our people since antiquity. "Veshavu Banim Ligvoulam," and the Children of Israel have returned to their Land. Jeremiah's prophecy was realized. Building the country, providing physical and emotional refuge for its wandering sons and daughters of Israel were central to the newly found State.

*During these years, in Westfield too, there was a sense of yearning to build the newly formed community and developed it. "The 'togetherness' concept perfectly fit the mood of Westfield Jews who were searching for identity, who were building a Jewish community and were concerned about relating to their neighbors." (Ibid)*

When I assumed the position of Director of Education at our Temple Emanu-El in 1989, I was thrilled to discover a community infused with deep commitment to Jewish learning, and an unconditional love for its young ones. I was excited to join a Temple whose passion to Israel, to social justice and Tikun Olam are a way of life. Standing on the shoulders of others before me in Baghdad, Israel and Westfield has been a guiding light for me in working with a superb staff and most committed parents at Temple Emanu-El Religious School. Together we have transformed it into a true Beit Midrash, a House of Learning. A place where our children and many of our parents have evolved to become informed Jews who experience in so many creative ways Judaism as a source of joy, beauty, meaning, consolation and hope.

*At 50, I bless you, Temple Emanu-El and the entire congregation. At 50, I bless myself and those I cherish.*

## BOOK REVIEWS

### To Baghdad And Back

by Mordechai Ben Porat

Reviewed by: Anna Dangoor

"To Baghdad And Back" by Mordechai Ben Porat is the remarkable true story of the mass immigration of many Iraqi Jews to Israel between 1949-52. The book portrays both moments of courage, and loyalty, as well as some of the worst traits of human nature. It is an extremely moving account of the difficulties faced by the Jewish community in Iraq, and those trying to facilitate the Aliyah of almost 130,000 Jewish men, women and children, a number which represented over 80% of the Jews in Iraq at that time.

Sent to Iraq as an emissary by The Mossad in 1949, Ben Porat writes first-hand, describing the way in which he was smuggled into Iraq assuming a false identity. Ben Porat's family had left Iraq themselves in 1944, and his Iraqi appearance, and fluent Arabic helped him spend nearly two years there with his true identity remaining undiscovered.

The book begins almost as a spy novel, with descriptions of the activities of the underground Zionist movement in Iraq, "The Halutz", and the methods of smuggling many people illegally across the borders. However this book is also much more than that. Ben Porat describes intricately the way in which influential members of the Jewish community in Iraq were asked, persuaded, and even pleaded with, to use their connections to put pressure on the Iraqi government to allow Jews to emigrate. He also depicts the balancing act in which emissaries from Israel found themselves, juggling the desires of the Jewish community, members of the Halutz movement, and the Iraqi authorities, all the while pushing the emigration process forward.

At points, the detail with which Ben Porat describes events become tedious, although his memory is astounding, and situations he relates can sometimes be confusing in their complexity. This is only a problem towards the middle of the book where the busiest period during 1952 of the 'Ezra and Nehemiah Campaign', as the emigration process became known, is described.

Overall, this is merely a minor fault, in a book which has the qualities of covering many attributes of its subject,

such as 'political manoeuvrings' and maintaining radio communication with Israel, and also has the benefit of the strong sense of emotion which only a first-hand account can give.

One aspect of the book which Ben-Porat feels especially strongly about is the issue of the bombing of Baghdad. In 1951 a number of bombs were thrown at a synagogue, and a shop owned by a Jew, amongst other Jewish targets. Eventually Yousif Bari and Saleh Shalom, both Jewish, were accused of carrying out the attacks, and they were subsequently hanged for this crime. It was claimed that The Halutz Movement were behind the bombs, in an attempt to scare more Jews into leaving Iraq for Israel. "To Baghdad And Back" contains the full report of an Israeli Inquiry Commission on The Bombing of Baghdad which was produced in 1960, and since then the Halutz, and all its activists have been 'completely vindicated' of an accusation which to Ben Porat 'is almost like a blood libel'. The book contains an incredibly distressing account of the tortures Basri and Shalom were forced to endure before they signed their confessions admitting to the bombings, and it seems highly likely that the pair were framed by Iraqi police, desperate to charge someone for the crimes.

Apart from the tragedy of these two young men, and others who were taken prisoners in Iraq, overall the Ezra and Nehemia campaign was a success. A huge number of Jews managed to leave Iraq in a short space of time, and settle in the land of Israel. Ben Porat concludes by hoping that although many Jewish treasures had to be left behind in Iraq, the rich heritage of Babylonian Jewry will not be lost, and this is something which we must all make sure of.

### Beyond Hitler's Grasp: The Heroic Rescue of Bulgaria's Jews

by Michael Bar-Zohar

Adam Media Corporation

Holbrook Adams Media Corporation

268 pp

US \$24.95

Can \$36.95

Reviewed by Linda Dangoor  
Khalastchi

On the eve of World War 2 Bulgaria aligned itself with Germany,

largely on the promise of recovering the territories of Thrace and Macedonia lost in World War 1. As the war progressed, Germany put pressure on its ally to implement its anti-semitic legislation and to send its Jews to Labour camps. In a concerted effort, the leaders and the people of Bulgaria resisted bravely to the end. Not one of the 50,000 Bulgarian Jews was deported to the death camps.

How could such a small country defy and stand up to Hitler's regime?

The answer is in Michael Bar-Zohar's book "Beyond Hitler's Grasp". It transpires that the Bulgarian people and most of their leaders were not in the least anti-semitic and not understand Germany's "problem" with the Jews. In a letter to his government in Berlin, the German Ambassador explains the difficulties his country was to face in Bulgaria,

"The Bulgarian Society doesn't understand the real meaning of the Jewish question. Besides the few rich Jews in Bulgaria, there are many poor people who make their living as workers and artisans. Partly raised together with Greeks, Armenians, Turks and gypsies, for the average Bulgarian the racial question is totally foreign to him."

We learn that most of the Jews were non-observant (very few went to synagogue), almost none kept Kashrut and most of them worked on the Sabbath. The reason for their popularity was their "normality", their non-Jewish behaviour, if you like. They were totally integrated Bulgarians. When King Boris was asked by Hitler to transfer the Jews of Bulgaria to German camps, he refused to do so on the pretext that they were needed in Bulgaria to construct roads and railway tracks. Although King Boris was an ally of Germany, anti-semitic legislation was not always observed and many times ignored. Most surprising was the pro-Jewish position of the country's leading Christian figurehead, Metropolitan Stefan, who voiced his opposition time and time again against anti-semitic actions.

The feature of this thriller-like book is that the author, Bar-Zohar, lived the drama of those times first-hand.

Scribe: Bulgaria was not without her anti-semitic in the ranks of power.

Bulgaria is the only country that had shot down in the early post-war years an El-Al aeroplane with the loss of the lives of hundreds of passengers.

## HITLER'S POPE

The fight to reveal the secrets that threaten the Vatican

Taken from *The Sunday Times* 12.9.99  
(abridged)

Ever since a young German playwright, Rolf Hochhuth, accused Eugenio Pacelli, Pius XII, the wartime Pope, a saint of the Catholic church, of not having done enough to save the Jews from the death camps, the debate over his culpability has gone to and fro. Did his reticence condemn millions of Jews to the gas chamber?

A practising Catholic and a former seminarian, I always believed Pacelli was innocent. I could not imagine that a pope of such evident holiness could be guilty of silent complicity in the Holocaust and I originally set out to write a definitive book in his defence. I knew of the sworn depositions in the Jesuit's keeping and I was eager to have sight of them. After a number of meetings with one of Rome's top prelates, the German Jesuit Father Peter Gumpel, at the headquarters of the Society of Jesus situated next door to the Vatican, he agreed to let me read the 1,000-page typed transcript: the testimonies of 40 years, his doctor, his nephew and his priest secretaries, as well as various bishops and cardinals.

I read the testimonies in an enormous dust-laden reading room filled with portraits of Jesuit missionary martyrs. Gumpel agreed to photocopy, personally, any of the pages I wanted. His courtesy was clearly dependent on his conviction that I would write a glowing portrait of Pacelli, whom he frequently described as "that beautiful, saintly man".

Eventually I flew back to Britain with 650 pages of documentation. The material was to give me a deep and unique insight into the personality and motivations of arguably the most powerful churchman in modern times.

After reading through the combined archives alongside a huge amount of historical scholarship on Vatican diplomacy in Germany during the 1920's and 1930's - in which Pacelli had been the dominant figure - I found myself in a state that I can only describe as moral shock. The material I had gathered, taking the more extensive view of Pacelli's life, amounted not to an exoneration but to a wider indictment.

Spanning Pacelli's career from the beginning of the century, my research told the story of a bid for unprecedented papal power that, by 1933, had drawn the

Catholic church into complicity with the darkest forces of the era. I found evidence, moreover, that from an early stage in his career Pacelli betrayed an undeniable antipathy towards Jews.

Having realised the sort of book that I have written, Gumpel attempted to wreck it - not on the basis of inaccuracy, but by legal threats based on the claim that he had never technically given permission for me to use the material in the first place, which was untrue.

Gumpel's anger and dismay went much deeper than mere disappointment at seeing his hero depicted in a bad light. The process of making Pacelli a saint, a project much supported by Pope John Paul II, has enormous implications for the future of the Catholic church.

Pius XII has become an icon of the ever-growing constituency of Catholic traditionalists who want to restore the reactionary policies abandoned by the Second Vatican Council after his death in 1958. A book critical of him has implications for a looming titanic clash between Catholic traditionalists and progressives in the billion-strong worldwide Catholic church.

Vatican II urged a decentralised, more democratic church, which admitted its fallibility and extended friendship to other denominations and religions. But the traditionalists believe that the future and unity of the Catholic church can be secured only by concentrating all authority in the person of the Pope. John Paul II has increasingly endorsed this view.

The canonisation of Pius XII is a key move in the attempts to restore a reactionary papal absolutism. My book shows that the failure of Catholics to resist Hitler, and the failure of the wartime Pope to speak out against the final solution, were precisely linked to the politics of that same absolutism.

Gumpel, in a piece of special pleading, has written that critics of Pacelli "should realise that they are trampling on the sensibilities of Catholics and in doing so hinder efforts to build better relations between the Catholic church and Jews".

After my own journey through the life and times of Pacelli, I am convinced that the cumulative verdict of history reveals him - on political grounds alone - to be not a saintly exemplar for future generations, but a deeply flawed church leader from whom Catholics can best profit by expressing their sincere

regret.

The documents also show him to be a deeply neurotic, narcissistic and arrogant man in his private life, the very antithesis of the saintly model he was said to be - and I intend to reveal details of these flaws.

## Freud, Dora, and Vienna 1900

by Hannah S Decker

Free Press - 299 pp

Reviewed by Linda Dangoor-Khalastchi

Everyone has heard of Freud but no-one has heard of Dora. Who was she? Freud's mistress? Daughter? Mother? No. Dora, alias Ida Bauer, was a patient of Freud for many years and about whom the Viennese psychoanalyst wrote extensively. One of Freud's unhappiest cases, her case history became a pioneering vehicle in theory and practice for subsequent analysts.

But don't let that put you off!

Although the book is about Dora, her story (and that of Freud's) is told within the broader framework of Bohemian and Viennese Jewish history.

From their first settlements in the 11th century, the Jews of Bohemia were a people apart, their lives hallmarked by unpredictability. While certain stable times allowed them to practice numerous crafts and trades and allowed them to live "normally" these were always short-lived. Changing times brought with them restrictions, special taxes, physical attacks and repeated expulsions.

Hannah S Decker with great insight describes how these anti-semitic conditions had a lasting and negative psychological effect on the Jewish psyche which was passed on from generation to generation. We learn, for example, that in the 18th century a programme of deliberate population curtailment had begun in Bohemia. In 1726 a law was passed which caused much suffering to the Jewish community. It disrupted family life by limiting the number of Jews eligible for marriage. Only the eldest son was allowed to marry and this not before the age of twenty four and only after his father's death. If children, other than the eldest son wanted to marry legally they had to leave the country as marriages not conforming to the new conditions were considered illegal.

The Law had the desired effect. In thirty years the Jewish population of

Continued on following page

Bohemia fell by a quarter.

By placing Dora and Freud and their respective families in their historical, religious and socio-economic context, the author does a wonderful job in reconstructing Jewish lives, attitudes and aspirations and showing how ineffectual conversions to Christianity was as a means to being accepted.

Dora was born at the end of the 19th century into an upper middle-class Viennese Jewish family at a time when masculine qualities and feminine ones mistrusted and ridiculed.

"In Christian society, middle-class Jewish girls and women felt especially powerless. In addition to the continual negative sentiments they had to bear as women and as Jews, they had to cope with the very real disadvantages that barred their admission to higher education and careers."

Misogyny (woman hating) and anti-sensitive went hand in hand, the denigration of both, women and Jews being part of social conventions "Even the most superior woman was immeasurably below the most debased man, just as Judaism at its highest was immeasurably beneath even degraded Christianity". Hannah S Decker explains that it was the general consensus that women were inferior and the insistent proclamations of anti-semites that the proof of the "Jews' deficiencies lay in their exhibition of traits commonly associated with women. Thus did anti-feminism and anti-semitism unite at the turn of the century. A young Jewish woman like Dora could be filled with more self-doubt, and even self-loathing than a Jewish man.

It is disheartening to learn that an important and influential man such as Freud held the same views as some of his contemporaries. "At no time in his career, was he prepared to recognise women's sensibilities".

It begs the question: how much harm was done and can be done by psychoanalysts' bigoted views and ideas?

Freud, as the author explains, was from a most traditional background, leading a conforming married life. He "cannot be blamed for his conventional views. But his lack of empathy with Dora .....further narrowed her circumscribed situation.....".

Half-way between a documentary and a novel, Decker's book makes fascinating reading. Although repetitious at times, it raises questions that are still pertinent today.

## Brief Encounters of a Legal Kind

by Aubrey Rose

Reviewed by: Anna Dangoor

Aubrey Rose's book "Brief Encounters of a Legal Kind" is a wonderful insight into the many different facets of human nature. Rose talks with a frankness and honesty that makes this book almost autobiographical, although I found his style sometimes too confident, and sure of itself.

The book is divided into chapters which consist of an introduction followed by the story of a related legal case. In the introductions Rose reveals his multitudinous knowledge of a great variety of cultures, and communities that he worked with closely, and marvels at how he was often taken deeply into their trust, having been invited to become the leader of a Torvil council in England, and mediating for a West Indian community during the fraught time of the Brixton riots.

Rose's own Jewish background also features in the book, Jewish ideas often being turned to, when he is contemplating the situations he has experienced; situations which have taken him to New York, Paris, Geneva, and allowed him to work with Jamaicans, Nigerians, Sri Lankans and many other peoples.

Of all Rose's "encounters" my two favourite are most definitely "A Night for St Patrick" and "The One Day Case". "A night for St Patrick" tells of a case in which Rose was acting in defence of a man called Danny who had been involved in a pub brawl in Kilburn. The police had arrived to break up the fight, and having seen nothing, arrested Danny. The main witness, who had had to have 48 stitches in his face, because a broken bottle had been thrust into it, allegedly by Danny, took the stand. Rose summarises what was said, and it quickly emerges much to the embarrassment of the prosecution, that the witness has no idea who in fact had injured him. Furthermore, even after sustaining his injuries he threw himself wholeheartedly back into the fight, claiming to have "given more than I got". The different perspective that this witness could take on a situation, which to the prosecution, Rose, and also myself seemed horrific, is fascinating, and as Rose notes it indeed provides a window into "another world".

My other favourite anecdote "The One Day Case" reveals Rose's

ability for perception, and quick thinking. He describes how he was approached by a South African mother whose son David had been taken into custody in "one of Johannesburg's most notorious police stations". The reason for his incarceration was simply that he had been teaching English to black students, and although his mother had mounted an international campaign for his release she had had no success; the South African government would not budge. Action was required immediately but the English courts could do nothing to help, and Rose realised that he would have no sway in the South African courts either.

Inspired by the actions of a Polish lawyer years earlier, Rose decided the only course of action was to write to the Prime Minister of the time, Margaret Thatcher. The timing was perfect, as Thatcher was due to attend a Heads of the Commonwealth meeting in which she was one of the only figures defending South Africa against sanctions. Rose sent a copy of the letter that he was sending to Margaret Thatcher to the South African embassy, and because the loss of her support would have been so detrimental to South Africa, David was released by 2.00 pm that afternoon. As Rose had expected, a week later he received a reply from Margaret Thatcher's secretary saying that regrettably she could be of no help in the matter.

"Brief Encounters of a Legal Kind" is a book about generosity and greed, cruelty and kindness, about the best, and the worst sides of human nature. Through his stories Aubrey Rose confirms that time old saying that gives its name to the penultimate chapter of the book, "there's nowt so queer as folk"!

*Naim Dangoor writes:* Mrs Thatcher's reply that she cannot help is what she is supposed to write, that she cannot interfere in the course of governmental business. However she often took action behind the scenes if the case merited her help.

In fact, she helped our community in London twice; once by instructing the Inland Revenue not to charge us Capital Gains Tax on the profits of sale of our property and secondly, by helping us with our planning application.

## No answer is also an answer

If you ask a person a question and he does not reply, his very silence is an answer in itself.

## **Britain's Withdrawal From East Of Suez**

### **The Politics Of Retrenchment**

by Jeffrey Pickering

Reviewed by: Anna Dangoor

This book was an unusual read for me. Having not studied history for a few years now, such an in depth analysis of a single historical event on which I had no previous knowledge was not my standard bedtime reading. Light it was not, but I was astounded at how enjoyable I found reading the study.

Pickering's self-professed aims in this book are to investigate the causes of Britain's decision in 1968 to withdraw from almost all her military outposts east of Suez. He explains that the issue of retrenchment in general, has been dealt with too superficially in the past, and he seeks to dig deeper, and piece together a fuller picture of the factors that precipitated Britain's withdrawal from the 'East of Suez' bases. Ultimately Pickering aims to create a framework in which other instances of retrenchment can be studied.

The work is clearly set out with a lengthy introduction outlining how this 'longitudinal' study is to be carried out. Pickering takes care to explain all the unfamiliar terms he uses, ensuring that one does not need any background on the subject to get the most out of the book.

The study focuses on three crises in the post-war years up until the decision to retrench. Within this focus, Pickering examines both Britain's increasingly fragile, economic state, and the political movements going on at these times.

The first crisis period is between the years 1945-1951, in which the new world order taking shape after the war, has left the global situation highly unpredictable. In this period the government of Clement Attlee is examined, and his political relationship with his Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, which biographer Alan Bullock claims was one of the most successful partnerships in British history, is explored.

The second crisis to be investigated is the well known Suez crisis of 1956, and here the political wizardry of Harold Macmillan, who managed against all odds to restore faith in the British government after the shame of Suez, is revealed.

Finally Wilson's government is depicted, concerning the economic crises of the 1960's, explaining the way in which he continually juggled his cabinet in order that his position of power should

never be challenged.

Throughout these periods Britain's old notions of being a world power, a symbol of which, to many, were the 'East of Suez' bases, restricted any major policy movement towards retrenchment. This was the case, even though, from Attlee's time, it was clear that in upholding these overseas roles Britain was overstretched both economically and militarily. This imperial hangover, and other factors explored in the book, ensured that it was not until 1968, when what Pickering calls 'a triacle of factors' came together, that the need for retrenchment was finally accepted.

### **"THE LAWS OF BAR MISWAH"**

Reviewed by: Anna Dangoor

"The Laws of Bar Miswah" by Rabbi Ya'aqob Menashe is divided into two sections, one Hebrew, and one English. The English section is a summarised translation of the Hebrew part, laid out in point form, and detailing laws and customs relating to all aspects of a Bar Mitzvah.

This book is of interest to both those actually planning a Barmitzvah, and those who are purely intrigued by Jewish culture, and traditions of the time old practices that make up part of the celebration of a Bar Mitzvah. The Mitzrot of Sisith, and Tefillih are described in great detail, explaining the ten laws which must be followed when making the latter as well as such customs as making sure to touch the Sisith before the Tefillih when one comes to pray in the morning.

The book also discusses the Rabbinical opinions, as to when a boy actually reaches the required age of thirteen and one day, on which he has come of age, and can celebrate his Barmitzvah in order to show G-d that we are happy to take on the burden of his commandments.

Batmitzvahs are also briefly examined in the book, and it was interesting to discover that unlike with other commandments which women are exempt from, if a woman chooses to carry out the Mitzrah of Sisith she is considered proud and conceited.

All in all, although the English portion of the book is short, it is packed with a great deal of information and guidance, as to the intricacies of a subject which is important to all of us as Jews; the time of our lives when we accept responsibility before G-d for our actions; the Barmitzvah.

## **BOOKS RECEIVED**

### **A Divinely Given Torah In Our Day and Age**

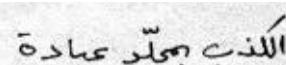
**Studies on the Weekly Torah Readings from Bar-Ilan University**  
**Designed and produced by**  
**Laser Pages Publishing Ltd,**  
**Jerusalem, Israel - 479 pp**

In these studies a number of prominent writers give their interpretations and views. They include Professor Moshe Kaveh, President of the University; Dr Aharon Arend; Professor Nathan Aviezer; Professor Elazar Touitou; Professor Jacob Klein; Professor Hannah Kosher; Dr Zohar Amar; Professor Dov Schwartz, Rabbi Yaakov Charlap; Rabbi Dr Pinchas Hyman; Dr Avraham Elqayam; Dr Penina Meizlish; Dr Meir Bar-Ilan; Dr Dvorah Ushpizai; Dr Meir Gruzman; Rabbi Yehezkel Lichtenstein; Professor Ephraim Chazan; Dr David Elgavish; Yona Bar-Maoz; Dr David Eglavish; Hillel Neuman; Dr Zvi Betzer; Professor Eric Zimmer; Dr Leb Moskovitz; Naftali Stern.

**Naim Dangoor writes:** In Parashat Lekh-Lekha, G-d's command to Abraham to "Get thee out from thy land, thy birthplace and thy father's home", is usually interpreted as in this study as demonstrating the painful decision that Abraham had to make in leaving his homeland, so that G-d had to sweeten His command by promising Abraham to make him a great nation.

But I have a deeper, more subtle and more meaningful interpretation of his historical phrase. G-d's emphasis that the land of the rivers is Abraham's land and the house of his fathers is to remind him that the Jews must always regard Mesopotamia as their rightful homeland and any forgetting of this fact would result in disaster after disaster as has happened in our history - exile to Babylon, the destruction of the second Temple and finally Saddam's missiles on Ramat Gan.

Israel cannot hope to survive in peace unless she attempts to passify Iraq and consider the whole Middle East as one country.



Al kethab bem'hallu ebada.

Lying in its proper place is equal to worship.

## **Hiding Places**

**A Father and his Sons Retrace their Family's Escape from the Holocaust**  
**by Daniel Asa Rose**  
**Simon & Schuster - 377pp**  
**U.S. \$25.00**  
**Can \$36.00**

In this innovative memoir, part travel narrative, part spiritual quest, prize-winning author Daniel Asa Rose describes the remarkable journey in which he and his young sons retraced their relatives' escape from Antwerp during the Second World War and also embraced, with ample amounts of wit and irreverence, the Jewish heritage that had pained and mystified him.

## **Alexander the Great**

**The Unique History of Quintus Curtius**  
**by Elizabeth Baynham**  
**Ann Arbor**  
**The University of Michigan Press - 219 pp**

In recent years much attention has been given to evaluating the surviving ancient histories of Alexander and their own sources.

In this book Elizabeth Baynham examines these issues concerning first century historian Quintus Curtius' account of Alexander which, until now, has received very little attention from Alexander historians.

## **The Middle East**

**2000 Years of History from the rise of Christianity to the present day**  
**by Bernard Lewis**  
**Phoenix Press - 387 pp**

In this book Bernard Lewis charts the successive transformation of the Middle East, beginning with the two great empires, the Roman and the Persian, the development of monotheism and the growth of Christianity; the astonishingly rapid rise and spread of Islam; the waves of invaders from the East and the Mongol hordes of Jengiz Khan; the rise of the Ottoman Turks, and the changing balance of power between the Muslim and Christian worlds.

## **A People Apart**

**The Jews in Europe 1789-1939**  
**by David Vital**  
**Oxford University Press - 898 pp**

David Vital explores the Jews' consistently tense relationship with the rulers whom they were subject and the peoples in whose midst they were embedded. He documents the struggle of this ancient but almost uniquely non-territorial people to establish a place for itself within an increasingly hostile political and social environment.

## **Jews and Arabs**

**Their Contacts Through the Ages**  
**by S D Goitein**  
**Schocken Books - New York - 252 pp**

In this new edition, which carries the story of Arab and Jewish cultural developments into the 1970's, Professor Goitein explores the social and intellectual contact between Jews and Arabs since their beginnings three thousand years ago.

## **Sun, Sea and Soul**

**A little bit of heaven on holiday**  
**by Lionel Blue**  
**and Jonathan Magonet**  
**Hodder & Sloughton, London - 246 pp**

This is no ordinary holiday guide. True, it tells you how to help and not hinder your quest for a happy holiday, how to plan, budget, deal with queues, lost luggage, holiday rows and romances, loneliness in five star hotels, and enjoy the culture, but the insights go much deeper..... into the bigger journey of life itself.

Laced with Jewish humour and personal anecdotes, Rabbis Blue and Magonet talk us through the holiday experience in all its unpredictable glory. They pass on their delightfully upbeat wisdom, gleaned from a complete mix of holiday destinations - the disco floors of Benidorm, the Chapels of Malta, the cultural delights of the Edinburgh fringe and much more. They share their wisdom on how to have a truly happy or at least happier holiday and how every bit of a traveller's body, mind and spirit can benefit from the experience.

Lionel Blue is a popular and much loved Rabbi whose thoughts for the day have become a national institution.

## **Coming Home to Jerusalem**

**A personal journey**  
**by Wendy Orange**  
**Simon & Schuster - 291 pp**  
**US \$25.00**  
**Can \$37.00**

An American Jewish woman uproots her family to live in Jerusalem, searching for a new home. For Wendy Orange, a writer in her early forties, what starts as a ten day conference in Jerusalem, stretches into a six year residence in one of the world's most captivating cities, where she undertakes an illuminating and evocative trip to this ancient land.

Dear Sirs,

The last issue of *The Scribe* I received was on September 1999. I was wondering what happened to the next two issues?

I have been receiving this valuable journal for several years. If you have had a change of policy regarding subscription, please let me know and I will be glad to oblige. This journal is a resource and, a very good one at that, to all of the Babylonian Jews such as myself.

I would like to continue receiving this excellent journal. Thank you.

Sincerely yours

**Shamoon Salih**

**USA**

Issue 73 on-line is a magnificent accomplishment, but now that you are only on-line, spare a thought for your hundreds of older readers who used to look forward with such eagerness to receiving their copy of '*The Scribe*'.

Is it possible to have a re-think on the subject?

**Helen Bekhor**

**Australia**

**Scribe :** We have to move with the times. However, we are willing to provide a colour print-out of issue 73 which covers 76 pages at US\$20 including air-mail postage.

Like AIDS, life is a sexually transmitted terminal disease; and, like AIDS, it has got out of hand.

**From BBC Radio 4**

Please continue to send me *The Scribe* as I am greatly in need of the material published in it.

I am glad to send you herewith two books which I published lately, the first Arabic one, "In the World of Peace", a collection of poems by the author, the second in Hebrew, "The Artificial Fertilization In View of Islam".

**Shlomo (Salim) Shashoua**  
**Ramat Gan Israel**

## **TOGETHER**

**by Shlomo (Salim) Shashoua**

We and the Arabs both drank from the spring of peace,  
Bearing banners all over the world calling for harmony,  
We are brothers in faith and grandsons of Sam.

We and the Arabs joined flourishing life, United by ideal brotherhoods and fortune,  
We are like a bird which can fly only with his two wings.

We and the Arabs focusing light of knowledge towards mankind,  
We had liberated peoples from the darkness of paganism,  
We are all standing like a huge mountain facing critical moments.

We and the Arabs determined to live together,  
We are grandsons of one forefather who was a prophet,  
Our uterine relations will last forever.

We incline to peace and go forwards, Begging him to prevail comfort and happiness to people,  
Expecting fulfilment of great hopes.

We are all eager to the immortal, "Golden Age",  
Which bears happiness and long life  
We are relatives of Peace, and adhere to him by branches and roots.

We and the Arabs will build an honourable and glorious world,  
In which ideas expressed freely rejecting bounds,  
And in which life will be continuous sweet and happiness.

This is the peace returns back to our homelands today,  
Carrying tidings for a period full of fertile life,  
Our peace shines like the sun but does not vanish.

## "THE WORLD IS COMING TO AN END"

**by Nicole Iny (when 16), New York**

"The world is coming to an end", I heard somebody say.

Because no-one is innocent any more - the children work, not play.

The morality has sunk quite low and people are falling sick.

I doubt that this is what G-d intended - it seems to be a trick.

The world is coming to an end, and no-one can tell me why,

Instead of improving themselves, there are people who cheat and lie.

They murder, usurp and commit other sins for reasons which I can't fathom.

I doubt G-d is happy any more, for look what was done to Adam.

"The world is coming to an end", I heard somebody scream.

People are selfish nowadays - they just satisfy their own dream.

What happened to sweet charity which existed long before?

Does nobody desire to help the less fortunate any more?

"The world is coming to an end", and I am quite upset.

There are sins committed every two seconds which ordinarily would not be let.

Religion is forgotten - morals can never survive.

Instead of yearning to be higher, people have put the dirt into their lives.

The world is coming to an end, and it's not what G-d intended

For he wishes us to improve ourselves - to fix whatever must be mended.

People welcome sin and laugh mockingly at old traditions. The Guide to Immorality must have been printed in many editions.

The world is coming to an end, and it is very sad,

That we Jews who promised G-d we'd keep his laws are making him quite mad. We said we'd keep the Torah in our heart and it would be our life.

So many people have died for our faith - was it worth all their strife?

Have we forgotten everything? Are our memories so unclear?

What happened to our Torah which we used to love so dear?

What happened to our wisdom? Has it disappeared?

What happened to morality? It used to be revered.

The world is coming to an end and we can't help that fact.

Do you think if we turned back the clock, we could bring morality back?

### **A thing you don't want is dear at any price**

If you don't want an article, however cheap it may be, it is dear because it is useless to you. This is a warning against temptation to buy something just because it is cheap.

### **سوية \***

نحن والعرب رشينا من ينابيع السلام

نحمل الرأيات في الدنيا وندعو للونان

نحن في الدين أشقاء وأحفاد لـ... سام.

نحن والعرب دواماً لفنا العيش التضليل

جمعتنا أخوة مثلي ودهر ومصير

نحن كالطائير إلا بجناحيه يطير.

نحن والعرب حملنا للورى نور العلوم

نحن حررنا شعوبنا من دجي الشرك البهيم

كلنا في ساعة المحن كالمطرود العظيم

نحن والعرب عقدنا العزم أن نحيا سوية

نحن أحفاد لجد واحد كاننبياً

صلة الأرحام فینا سوف تبقى ابدیاً

انتا نجح للسلام ونمضي للامام

ترتجي منه رخاء وهناء للانام

وبيه نأمل تحقيقاً لأمال جسام

كلنا شوق «لعصر ذهبي» لا يرزو

تشعد الأيام فيه وبه العمر يطول

نحن انسابٌ الى السلم فروع وأصول

نحن والعرب ستبني عالماً غرّاً مجيداً

تبزغ الآراء فيه حرّة تابي القيدوا

وبه العيش سيفحلو والهنا يبقى مديداً

ها هو السلام الى أوطاننا اليوم ينوب

يحمل البشرى بعهد كلّه عيش خصيب

سلمنا كالشمس وضاح ولكن لا يغيب

## **365 DAYS AT THE TERMINAL PALACE**

**by Shaoul H. Sassoon**

Mr Shaoul H Sassoon has recently published in English in a limited edition "In the Hell of Saddam Hussain". Three hundred and sixty five days at the "Terminal Palace". It is a translation of his Arabic book published earlier, and is a moving description of the terrible experience that he went through for a whole year in the notorious detention centre of the present regime at Qasr al-Nahaya which was the famous Royal Palace of Qasr al-Rihab.

### **CORRECTIONS BY THE AUTHOR**

Allow me first to express my appreciation of your tremendous contribution to our community in publishing 'The Scribe', a wonderful chronicle of history and a social medium through which this scattered community can interact.

In reviewing my booklet " In the Hell of Saddam Hussein", and in articles which appeared in previous issues, I noticed a few inaccuracies and omissions relating to events with which I am personally familiar. I would like to regale your readers with the following observations:

In an earlier Scribe (Issue 18), Mr Meir Basri mentioned that Hakham Sassoon was dismissed. As a matter of fact, King Faisal I requested his resignation and send Prime Minister Nouri Al Said to the Hakham's house to convey his wishes. I detail the Prime Minister's visit on pages 108 and 109 of my book "A Leader and his People".

Regarding my own arrest, I again beg to differ about the reason behind my year long ordeal at the hands of the Baathist gang. I reject the suggestion that it was a way of putting pressure on my father, the Hakham, in an attempt to buy his silence and compliance. These bloodthirsty thugs did not need indirect methods to silence anyone, nor did they care much about the Hakham's position or influence. I was arrested, accused of spying because of passing on a letter concerning spying to Israel addressed to Mr Abdul Hamid Al Damirchi from Mr Mustafa Cheta Babkukel, and endured a year of unspeakable torture and abuse until my so-called trial which miraculously freed

me.

The late Gourgi Bekhor mentioned in his book "Fascinating Life and Sensational Death" that the late Albert Nounou and Shaul H Sassoon were similarly accused, but Albert Nounou was sentenced to death and Shaul H Sassoon was released without bail. However, the specific charges against Albert relate to his friendship with the late Haim Nathaniel, who was described by the court as the most dangerous Israeli spy in the world. Shaul H Sassoon received the charges against him because of passing on a letter concerning spying to Israel addressed to Mr Abdul H Damirji.

As for Meir Basri's arrest, it had to do with a visit by an American journalist who wanted to get some historical information about Iraq. The late poet, Anwar Shaul, recounts in detail the interesting events leading to his release in his book "Kissat Hayati Fi Wadi Al Rafidain" p229-232. He relates how four lines of soul-touching poetry, which he composed, saved the situation and resulted in Mr Shaul personally putting up the bail for Mr Basri.

**London**

**S H Sassoon**

### **FREEMASONRY**

When I was in Iraq during the 1950's, I had some dealings with a solicitor who was high in Masonry. Upon my enquiry, he explained that it is an organisation that teaches morality, promotes charity and the brotherhood of man.

I was impressed and wanted to join. While he was willing to introduce me, he decided at that time to emigrate, and I lost the opportunity. But that was a blessing in disguise. When the revolution took place in 1958, the new government rounded up all freemasons and put them in jail!

The opportunity arose again in England during 1973 and I immediately took it up. I have never regretted that decision.

The great majority of those who join a lodge stay members for life. It is also common for them to introduce their relatives and friends. They enjoy the fellowship and the dramatic presentation of moral lessons that it provides. They can always resign if they want to. A lodge normally meets four times a year in the evenings. The meeting is in two

parts. The first is formal and ceremonial. It concerns the admission of new members, the installation of a new master and the general administration of the lodge. The speakers are those who want to be active. There are also many of those who just want to sit and watch. The rituals relate to certain events in history. It teaches humility, morality, honesty, and to regard the interests of the family as paramount. Members undertake not to use masonry for personal gain. Those who prove to be below the expected standard, face expulsion.

The second part is a social gathering in which the members treat themselves with good dinner and good wine. It offers a framework for companionship, teamwork, character development, and enjoyment of shared experiences. It is forbidden to discuss religion or politics.

Membership is open to men of all faiths who are law abiding, and of good character. Masonry is not a religion, but those who join must believe in G-d. To join, you need to ask a member.

It was an excitement when one day I received a letter from the Grand Secretary stating:

"I am commanded by the Most Worshipful The Grand Master, HRH the Duke of Kent KG, to inform you that in recognition of your services to Freemasonry in London he proposes to confer upon you the honour of LONDON GRAND RANK" giving me the date and the details. I have also received honours in other orders. Each order relates to different events in history. Several Iraqi Jews have this honour and some have higher.

**London**

**Elias Dangoor**

### **Letter to the Jewish Chronicle**

If Jerusalem is expendable, then what is left to keep us there, a troublesome corner of the world for the past 3,000 years?

In an overall peace deal with all the Arabs, we might be able to swap Israel for Mauritania, a more strategic and more convenient location, 40 times the size of Israel and very sparsely populated, next to a friendly Morocco. Soon the Jews would make the desert bloom, and I for one will hasten to go there. Would the Palestinians have second thoughts and ask us to stay?

**Naim Dangoor**

Dear Naim

You may remember me. I am the son of the late Reuben Heskel Dangoor. I was very pleased to receive a copy of the great journal *The Scribe*, No. 72, which was full of rare and precious pictures. And since I worked in various government department, including ten years in the Prime Minister's office, the Broadcasting and television house, the Ministry of Education in Arabic since 1946 until after my recent retirement, I wanted to present Prime Minister Barak my copy of *The Scribe* in which he appears. This I did on my visit to his home on the occasion of Succoth to greet him for the Festival and he thanked me very much with a kiss. Thereafter he also sent me a letter of thanks. I also wanted to present a copy to Major General Yair Itzhaky (see his picture P. 56, issue 72) whom I know well. And I had learnt bookkeeping at his grandfather's school.

I remember you well as an officer in the Iraq army in Baghdad when I was a conscript and I saluted you as you passed by but you did not recognise me.

The loss of your dear brother Salim came as a shock to all of us. I used to see him often at the Dangoor stores in Baghdad where I worked for many years. And I also remember well when he eulogised at the age of eleven his grandfather Hakham Ezra Dangoor at the Synagogue at the Alliance School describing him as "my young grandfather".

#### **Jerusalem      Asher Reuben Dangoor**

The grandsons of Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin are going to meet in Holland in April 2001 to carry out a general discussion on the Yalta conference and the Teheran conference that were held by the wartime leaders in Yalta and Teheran in 1945.

There will be present at the meeting 250 historians, political analysts and leading business men.

#### **Populations of Arab countries**

When former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was asked what was the total populations of Arab countries, the answer he gave was 20 people. He explained that in Arab countries only the heads can be counted; the rest are all onions.

## **MUSIC OF BAGHDAD**

I have been very pleased to receive, at last, *The Scribe*, the September'99 edition, and felt very attached and touched!

As I have been, all my career-years, active and related to Music and Broadcasting, I look forward to be connected, in a way or another to the printed articles of yours. I am still deeply involved in the wide music field, within our communities. Further of my endeavours are: I have organised a professional group who presents a panorama of oriental music, including Iraqi.

Allow me to make the following comments.

In the picture on page 53, the man sitting next to Yousaif Horaish is not Mohammed Alqubbanchi, the famous Iraqi singer, but is the celebrated Egyptian composer Mohammad El-Qasabgi.

In the article of Mr Yeheskel Kojaman; on page 53, it says:

"There was only one Arabic music ensemble in 'Qol Yisrael' (Israel Radio);.."

In fact, one ensemble, at least, has been active through some years in "Israeli Arabic Radio". Parallel to my work with the permanent orchestra through conducting, composing and taking part in public-radio-programmes, I have been named to take charge of founding and conducting another orchestra. That project took place, beginning in 1976. I made many recordings and broadcast them. Later, I brought it on stage in public performances. After that I proceeded with the orchestra in a series of public concerts.

#### **WORK AND LIFE EXPERIENCE - Synopsis**

Came to Israel from Iraq in 1951. Attended Hebrew University in Eastern Studies and Music. In 1957, joined the pioneers who established *The Voice of Israel In The Arabic Language* as a national radio station. His programmes had wide popular appeal and have been received enthusiastically by musicologists in Israel and in Egypt, where he enjoys high esteem amongst his peers. Composed, performed, recorded, and lectured on Arabic music of all styles. Authored and translated lyrics. Appeared in various panels and talk shows on National Television as authority on the history and trends of Arabic music. Mr

Aviezer is fluent in Arabic, English and Hebrew. He has been married for 34 years and has a son in New York and a daughter in Israel, both of whom are lawyers and musicians.

#### **Israel National Radio**

Chief of Arabic Music Programming:  
Editor; Anchor; 1957 - Present

Headed the Arabic Music Programmes Department. Created, presented, edited, and anchored a wide range of radio programmes, including documentary, entertainment, and live shows. Presented, in the Arabic language, own programmes featuring European classical music, Hebrew music, and Ethnic music.

Composer, Conductor, The Radio Orchestra of Arabic Music, 1959 - 1985  
Performed and recorded numerous musical works of Arabic music composers.

#### **City of Ramat-Gan Cultural Department**

Musical Director of Oriental Culture Centre, 1985 - Present

Established and conducted Naharayim, the only choir of its type in the world, specialising in the hymns and songs of the Babylonian Jewry heritage. Composed and wrote new tunes and lyrics to enrich and perpetuate the messages of that heritage. Established the Ramat-Gan Ensemble to perform both with the choir and independently. Conducted the Choir and Ensemble in live concerts for large audiences.

#### **Independent Composer and Musician**

Composed works of unique nature, such as *The Prophecy of Peace of Isaiah*; composed music to poems of famous Arabic poets, such as *Egyptian Valley Of The Kings*; composed songs about peace in the Middle East, infusing Israeli and Arabic themes, such as *Jerusalem Of The Three Religions*. Compositions have been publicly performed and gained wide acclaim. Plays, performs, records, and instructs Oud in the Arabic styles.

#### **Lecturer**

Lectured on Arabic Music in The Educational Center of the Israel Broadcasting Association, The Oriental Music Center in Jerusalem, and The Israeli Academic Center in Cairo, Egypt. Instructed the Arabic language in The Tel-Aviv Open University.

**Ramat-Gan**

**Isaac Aviezer**

## THE SINKING OF THE STRUMA IN 1942

I am corresponding with you on a subject other than that of the Little Synagogue. You may recall that during our correspondence I asked that you send me a few copies of "The Scribe".

It has occurred to me that you may be interested in the Struma project as a possible subject for your publication.

I am going to Istanbul at the end of August to participate in the Struma project. The Struma was a ship that was blown up in the Black Sea in 1942 while trying to reach Palestine. I had a relative on the ship.

Since I have already written a detailed version of my Struma story for my family, I am sending you the entire text. I hope you find it of interest.

**Fair Lawn, New Jersey**

**Joel Ives**

A few months ago, after more than three years of research, I had finally identified each of the thirty-eight people in a 1924 family photograph. At the centre of the sepia coloured photograph was my grandfather's uncle who later died aboard the ship Struma that was blown up in the Black Sea on 23 February 1942.

The search for historical and genealogical information led to a series of internet contacts with people from around the world interested in the ship Struma and eventually to a meeting in Washington.

The adventure took an international twist a few years ago when I wrote an article about the ship Struma for inclusion in the Jewish Genealogical magazine, "ROM-SIG" (Romanian Special Interest Group). The article I wrote included a list of the 768 people who died aboard the Struma, and mentioned the one survivor of the Struma tragedy, David Stolier who was mentioned in a number of historical sources.

Although ROM-SIG only has a circulation of a few hundred, the article and the list of passengers was put on the internet, which led to people from around the world contacting me.

On Sunday morning, 16 January 2000 Sheryl (my wife) and I met David Stolier the sole survivor of the Struma tragedy for the first time in Washington DC. We had been brought together in Washington by the power of the internet.

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My article in ROM-SIG had put me in contact with Greg Buxton whose grandparents were on the Struma. Greg who lives in Great Britain by coincidence is a diver and has done "deep exploration". The Struma is 70 metres under the surface of the Black Sea. Greg has explored the Britannic in the Aegean. He said he has no objective in his search for the Struma other than to "close the circle for himself and his father that was broken in 1942". I gave Greg the suspected address I had for David Stolier in Oregon and the names, addresses and e-mail addresses of a number of people I had been in contact with that were interested in the Struma. Greg and his friend Louise Trewavas, who publishes a women's diving magazine, met with us in the lobby of the Loews L'Enfant Hotel in Washington, which is near the Holocaust Museum. Jeff Hakko also joined us for breakfast. Jeff is a contact that Greg has made during a visit to Istanbul, Turkey. A few months ago, Greg had visited Istanbul in an attempt to do preliminary research with Turkish divers and to work out some of the logistics of this extended depth "technical dive" and speak to local people about the location of the Struma. Jeff is a member of the small Jewish community in Istanbul and is coincidentally a diver connected with "SAD" Turkey's premier underwater research and diving group. Jeff, Greg, Louise, Sheryl and I were all transfixed hearing David Stolier's story.

David was escaping from Bucharest, Romania with his fiancée (Lisa Lotringer) and future in-laws late in 1941. Their goal was to get to Palestine and a place where Jews could be safer. David knew about the horrors of the Nazi's in the West of Romania and that the "Iron Guard" was killing Romanian Jews in the street. David's father stayed in Romania. His mother lived in Paris and was deported and later died in Auschwitz. David boarded the ramshackle overloaded boat Struma in Constanta, which is Romania's eastern port, on 12 December 1941, five days after the bombing of Pearl Harbour. He sailed into an unknown future with 776 other people.

The ship was detained in the Bosphorus in the Istanbul Harbour for 71 days during which time it became an international political incident.

David said that the ship was horribly overcrowded. When we passed the wooden bunks in the Holocaust

Museum, he mentioned that there were similar constructions on the Struma.

Hundreds of people were stuffed aboard the Struma on a ship that couldn't hold 100 people comfortably. Everyone was assigned space and that was where you had to stay. David was 19 years old at the time. He said the ship was made of steel but wooden platforms were built on the deck to allow more people to be transported in layers. Only a small proportion of the fleeing Jews could fit above the deck at one time. The rest had to endure the stench below deck. There was only one bathroom.

The engines failed outside Istanbul and Struma was towed into the outer harbour.

When the Turks stopped the ship, the engines were barely functioning, the food was running out and the toilet that served the hoards of people stunk.

David said that the ship was boarded by some Turkish police against the will of the passengers in order for the Turks to attach a towline that could pull them out to sea. The Turks had to forcibly board the ship to clear the way to make the connection and to raise the anchor. The Turkish police took control by force and cut the anchor chains. The passengers were very ill, malnourished and weak, so it would seem that little real force was used.

The Turks apparently in a logic that still is difficult to explain, and not generally agreed upon by historians, towed the helpless ship into deeper waters of the Black Sea. David said that he knew that the engine block was cracked. He suspected that the crew had removed the engine in an attempt to repair it. According to US reports from Istanbul, the engine had been taken ashore for repair and not returned to the ship at all. The Struma was truly helpless. Here were 769 Jews, including 103 children and infants, that could not go back to Romania for fear of death, not to mention the fact that the Romanian government would not allow them to return since they had "left the country illegally".

The British would not provide visas for anyone to go to Palestine until it was too late. The Turks would not let this leaking ship pass through their territorial waters under political pressure from the British government. The Russians were killing Jews in the crossfire of War and the Romanian Iron Guard was as murderous to the Jews as the German SS.

The world Jewish community struggled to help while the world watched. Eight people, four of whom with connections to an oil company obtained visas and were allowed to leave the ship after pressure was applied by a Turkish company. Israel Dinari was one of these people. A woman Mrs Salomovitz who was in labour was taken to an Istanbul hospital.

The Struma was registered in Panama and some of the crew was Bulgarian. Bulgaria had just become at war with Panama. The crew tried to abandon the ship with the people aboard but was prevented by the Turks. Unfortunately, the rest of the desperate refugees on the Struma had nowhere to go.

After more than two months of stalemate, the Turks towed the helpless Struma out into the deeper waters of the Black Sea under pressure from the British government and as they saw it, with little choice, to rid themselves of the problem. A recent Turkish position is that the Turks felt that the sea's current would cause the powerless ship to be grounded and once that happened, the people could be saved since they would be classified as a "shipwreck". The engineless ship drifted for one night and at dawn about 5.30 am a Russian submarine fired a single torpedo and sank the Struma. The violent explosion that occurred blew a hole in the side of a boat. David said that the ship sank immediately. Anyone below the deck was trapped. The Struma just went straight down. There was debris all over the frigid waters from the shattered temporary wood structures that had been built on the deck. People were screaming and thrashing about in the cold icy waters of the Black Sea. Many quickly succumbed to the freezing water and one by one disappeared. David was thrown up in the air with the explosion and fell into the water. He held on to some wooden planks. He remembered that the waters were calm. He said he would not have survived in rough waters. Towards evening, a large piece of wreckage floated near him and he dragged himself aboard and out of the water. Birds flew over the corpses but no-one appeared to be living. Shortly afterwards, Lazar an aide of the captain was pulled aboard the wreckage but he died shortly before the next morning. Twenty-four hours after the explosion, a commercial boat passed right by David without stopping and afterwards men from the local lighthouse in a small boat pulled David out of the frigid water. They had come from the lighthouse a few miles away. David was

the only survivor of the sinking of the Struma. The men that had saved him were surprised that anyone was still alive and David has theorised that they rowed into the wreckage in order to find something of 'value', not to discover a human being alive. Fortunately for David, they took him ashore and wrapped him in blankets.

His hands and feet were frozen but he was alive. He was put in a sick room under the guard of the police who watched him night and day. He was given some food and shortly afterwards his "saviours" didn't know exactly what to do with him so they dragged his limp body, since his feet could not support him, onto a bus and left him on the front seat. Since he did not speak Turkish he had difficulty communicating. At the end of the bus run he was lifted up by both arms and brought into a hospital. He was cared for by a few nurses and doctors for two weeks, completely isolated from the outside world. Then, barely able to walk when he left the hospital, he was brought to the Central Police, arrested, and put in a small cell. For his crime of miraculously surviving this tragedy, he was put in jail. His legs were damaged since they had been frozen. The Jewish community in Istanbul sent him packages of food and clothing.

Actions of the Jewish community in Istanbul (and probably the International community) resulted eventually to his release. Two months had passed since the sinking of the Struma. It was now 23 April 1942. He slept one night in the house of one of the leaders of the Istanbul Jewish community, Simon Brod, and then he was put on a train accompanied by a Turkish police officer that took him to the border of Syria. He stopped at Aleppo and then went by car to Haifa where he was interrogated in the police station by the British. He was given ID papers and told not to contradict the official version of events that the Struma was sunk by a "mine".

It is amazing from today's perspective of overbearing media and pervasive communications that David was told by the Turks and British not to say anything about his ordeal. He was also told not to talk about his ordeal by the Jewish Community in Istanbul since they were living in a potentially precarious situation in the middle of World War II. One would think that his arrival in Israel and his survival would have been met with news media from around the world but David had a friend

in Israel and stayed with this friend in relative obscurity for several months and further regained his health.

Later David joined the Jewish Brigade of the British Army and was stationed with the Eighth Army in North Africa.

David now lives in Bend, Oregon. He speaks English very well but also speaks Japanese, French, Romanian, Yiddish and Hebrew. I asked him what language he speaks to Romanians in and he answered, "French".

David has a son and grandson in California. For years, he never told his son the story of the Struma. When his son was about 20 years old he found some old documents and started asking questions.

(Note: Some of David's story was taken from Saveanu's book)

Professor Jurgen Rohwer a German historian was mentioned since he wrote about a Russian submarine in his book as being the culprit that released the torpedo. Rohwer was the first to uncover the submarine records with the break-up of the Soviet Union. A Russian submarine commander, Lt Denezhko was given a "medal" for his "heroic" action of killing all these defenceless people. Rohwer's book gives the co-ordinates of the attack. One possible view of the "rationale" of the Russian attack is that they thought that there were Nazi spies aboard the Struma. The Panamanian government was discussed since the Struma flew a flag of that country. Dr Fisher was planning to attend the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust in Sweden at the end of the month. He said he would bring up the subject of the Struma. He also suggested that the Holocaust Museum was interested in putting together an exhibit about the Struma. The Museum would like a piece of the ship for their exhibit however time will tell whether this will be possible since it requires the approval of the Turkish government to remove any artefact from their country.

The exact location of the Struma still has not been verified. Turkish fishermen tear their nets in an area they know as "The Jew Ship." The Russian submarine had different co-ordinates of where the Struma was blasted to oblivion. Greg will carry out a "side scan sonar survey" concentrating on the two logical sites. David Stolier's story perhaps suggests still another location.

Now the Struma has a web page:  
<http://www.struma.net>.

## **KEBBA BURGHUL**

**Burghul (cracked wheat) balls filled with meat, almonds and raisins.**

To make 15-20 portions. 35-40 balls.

Ingredients for the shell:

1/2 kg burghul (coarse)  
1/2 kg burghul (fine)  
1/2 kg semolina  
1 egg  
1/2 tsp. Salt  
1/2 tsp. turmeric

Ingredients for the filling:

1/2 cup blanched almonds  
3 onions, finely chopped  
5 tsps. Oil  
400 gr minced meat  
8 stems chopped parsley  
1 tsp. black pepper  
1 tsp. chilli powder  
20 seeds ground cardamom  
100 gr raisins

For the soup:

10 cups water  
2 tblsps. Chicken soup powder  
1 tsp. turmeric  
1/2 tsp. salt

### **Directions:**

Preparing the shell:

Soak the burghul in water for one hour, then squeeze off the water. In a bowl mix together the burghul, semolina, egg, turmeric and salt.

Preparing the filling:

Blanch the almonds and cut in half. Heat the oil in a frying pan then fry the chopped onions until golden brown. Add the chopped parsley and the spices. Then add the almonds and raisins. Mix well and cook for 10-15 minutes.

Take about 1-3 oz of the burghul mixture and roll out in your wet hands to a nice ball 7-8 cm in size. Make a hole in the centre and push in two tablespoons of the filling inside the hole then seal well and shape.

In a deep saucepan, put ten cups of water, salt, pepper and soup powder and bring to the boil. Add the burghul balls into the boiling soup. The balls will rise to the surface after 2-3 minutes. You can either continue to cook the kebba over moderate heat for another 20 minutes or you can fry after taking it out of the soup and let to cool.



## **KETCHRI**

### **Rice cooked with red lentils**

Ingredients:

1 cup of red lentils  
2 cups of rice  
1 tsp. salt  
1/2 tsp. black pepper  
2 cups of water  
3 tblsps. Oil  
8 cloves of garlic chopped  
1 1/2 tsp. cumin  
1 large fried onion (thinly sliced)  
Slices of hard cheese  
1 sliced tomato

### **Directions:**

Soak the rice in water for 2 hours. Soak the red lentils for 15 minutes before

cooking. Add the pepper and salt to the water and bring to boil. Put the rice and lentils in the boiling water. Cook on medium heat until the water has evaporated. Lower the heat. Cook for a further twenty minutes.

Heat the oil in frying pan. Add the cumin, garlic and fry until golden brown. Pour the fried garlic over the rice.

In a separate saucepan fry the sliced onions and cover with the sliced cheese and then the tomato slices. Cover and cook until the cheese is melted. Serve on top of the rice.

from '*Iraqi Cooking*' by Pascall Peres-Rubin