

# The SCRIBE

## JOURNAL OF BABYLONIAN JEWRY

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Mrs Shoshana Arbeli-Almozlino, Israel Health Minister, recently addressed a Sephardi Bonds Dinner in London. She is one of many prominent Iraqis now in the Israeli leadership. From Right to Left: Mr Nathan Almozlino, Mrs Shoshana Arbeli-Almozlino, Mr Naim Dangoor, Mrs Dangoor, Dr Davide Sala.

### Israel and the Holocaust

Israel has recently granted posthumous citizenship to the martyrs of the Holocaust. There are now 6 million more dead Israelis!

When old anti-semites and neo-nazis tell the world that the Holocaust did not take place or is grossly exaggerated, we feel offended. But in the false propaganda of our enemies there is a deep challenge to the Jewish people – namely, "THE HOLOCAUST IS WHAT YOU MAKE OF IT." We can either moan about it and pile it on top of our innumerable tragedies, or transcend it by turning it into a miracle. For at the end of the day the important thing is that we have survived; our policy to disperse has paid off; we had the last laugh on Hitler and his Arab followers; the State of Israel was established.

As to the Six Million who perished, our challenge is to turn them into posthumous OLIM to Israel, which needs *live* citizens. Instead of commemorating their names on a wall, the Jewish people, in Israel and the Diaspora, should raise children to bear the names of each and every victim of the Holocaust. World Jewry should adopt a massive programme to be called RAISE A CHILD IN ISRAEL (physically, or financially). Suddenly, the Six Million will have arrived to the land of their ancestors. In the 1950's 600,000 Israelis absorbed 1 million immigrants. Today 4 million Israelis should be able

to absorb these new-comers. Let us turn our lemon into a lemonade ●

### French Visa

To combat terrorism, the French government took drastic measures that included the requirement to obtain an entry visa for all non-EEC travellers. As a result the French consulate in London has been besieged by long queues of people wanting to acquire the necessary entry visa.

This measure has hit the honest tourist and innocent traveller as well as the French tourist industry. The determined terrorist would not be deterred as there are many loopholes in this arrangement. For example, people coming from Geneva into France are not examined for visas.

On the other hand, most Jews from Arab countries now living in Europe have travel documents that require the visa, which takes about 12 weeks to arrive from Paris. This has resulted in many cases of hardship, especially of people who have holiday homes in France.

In the 1950s a group of Italian Jews were refused visas to visit Iraq. In retaliation the Italian government decided to reciprocate. They decreed that all Jews from Iraq would not be allowed to enter Italy!

In the end it is always the Jews who have to pay the price of Arab terrorism and lawlessness ●

### International Conference

Coinciding with the 20th anniversary this year of Israel's magnificent victory in the Six Day War, increased attempts are being made to convene an International Conference to consider the future of the West Bank and Gaza seized in that War as a result of Arab aggression.

This suggested Conference looks a long way ahead. Its aim is to enable Jordan to enter into direct negotiations with Israel as instructed by the Conference which would include the five prominent members of the United Nations Security Council. While Prime Minister Shamir and his Likud cabinet ministers are opposed to the Conference contending that it will only pressurise Israel to make concessions instead of engaging in direct negotiations, Foreign Minister Peres and his Labour colleagues are in favour of it to provide King Hussein an international frame-work within which to negotiate in order to overcome Arab objections to direct negotiations.

However, the positions adopted by Shamir and Peres are in reality too far apart. Both agree that on no account will there be any PLO participation as its oft-proclaimed aim is to destroy Israel backed with acts of terrorism. Both agree that there will be no Soviet participation unless the Soviets resume diplomatic relations with Israel. Before fulfilling this condition the Soviet Union would seek to influence the course and outcome of the negotiations. This is wholly unacceptable to both Peres and Shamir. It is true that the United States can veto any decisions of the Conference and Israel can refuse to implement them, but Israel's image will suffer in consequence.

In a sense both Peres and Shamir are right and there is no need to break up the National Unity government before general elections due in 1988. Peres is right in trying to find a way out for Hussein in his dilemma, and Shamir is right in seeking to ensure that such a Conference will not just pressurise Israel. The momentum towards peace could be maintained through careful preparation for the Conference by clearly defining its commitments, its agenda and its participants ●

PSG

# Compensation from Arab Governments

by Percy Gourgey

The important and perplexing question of compensation for Jewish property seized by Arab governments when masses of Jews left these countries in the early 1950s will form a major item in the agenda of the Third world conference of the World Organisation of Jews from Arab Countries (WOJAC) meeting in Washington late in October 1987. It figured largely in the two earlier conferences, the first in Paris in 1975 and the second in London in 1983 both of which I attended.

In the crucial UN Resolution 242 adopted by the Security Council after the Six Day war in 1967 (which subsequently became the basis of the 1979 Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty), the term "refugee" was later interpreted as referring not only to Palestinian Arab refugees, but also to Jewish refugees from Arab lands.

They had left their countries of origin, where they had lived many centuries before the advent of the Arabs, as a direct result of the adverse policies of the Arab governments. Together with their offspring these refugees number over two millions, most of whom have settled in Israel.

The principle of compensation was first enunciated by the late Moshe Sharett, then Foreign Minister of Israel, in a speech to the Knesset in Jerusalem on March 19, 1951 when he declared that, "by freezing the property of tens of thousands of Jewish immigrants to Israel - stateless today, but citizens of Israel the moment they arrive - the Government of Iraq has invited a reckoning between itself and the State of Israel ... Jewish property seized in Iraq will be taken into account with regard to the compensation we have undertaken to pay Arabs who abandoned property in Israel."

This principle was affirmed by Mr Abba Eban in 1958 as Israel's Ambassador at the UN when he stated that "in fixing the level of compensation owed by Israel, it will be necessary to take into account the claims of *Israeli citizens* who have the right to compensation for the property left behind in Arab lands."

In May 1979 when the then Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin visited London he stated in reply to my question following his address at a public meeting that Egyptian Jews in Israel were preparing a statement of their claims to be presented to Egypt at an appropriate occasion amounting to several hundred million dollars.

It is fascinating to note that claims

for compensation or restitution have historical precedents going back over 2000 years. The late British Chief Rabbi Hertz has observed that the Talmud records a formal claim for indemnity put forward by the Egyptians before Alexander the Great for the vessels of gold and silver which the Israelites took with them at the time of the Exodus.

The Jewish spokesman however had little difficulty in convincing Alexander that if any indemnity was to be paid, it was the Egyptians who were the debtors, because they had enslaved and exploited the Israelites for many centuries without any payment for their labours.

Dr Hertz further observed that, "through God's providence, the Israelites were enriched at the expense of their oppressors and gained, as it were, a prize for victory in compensation for their long oppression."

The formulation of WOJAC's claims could be expressed in the following demands: first, that fair compensation be paid for communal and individual property which was stolen, frozen or expropriated, as well as for injuries suffered by Jews as a result of discrimination or persecution by the Arab governments responsible.

Secondly, that the Arab governments restore all assets of spiritual, cultural or religious significance, including Torah scrolls and other collections of value. In 1979, after the conclusion of the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty, President Sadat gave express permission to Lord Segal (who had his wife's family connections with Egypt) to bring several of these items to Britain.

Moreover, there are Jewish shrines in Muslim countries such as the tombs of Ezekiel the Prophet, Ezra the Scribe (after whom this journal is called), and Yehoshua the High Priest in Iraq, to which holy places annual pilgrimages were paid by Jewish communities in these countries. This right should be restored.

Thirdly, that a rightful share in the natural wealth of the Middle Eastern countries be allotted to the Jews of these countries.

The claims, rights and aspirations of Jews from Arab lands are worthy of full consideration, especially as they have refrained from resorting to terrorism, as the Arab refugees have done to dramatise their situation.

Comment by N.E.D.

If Jewish claims are to be offset against Arab claims for property taken by the Israeli government then it is reasonable to demand that Jews from Arab countries should get some payment from Israel on account of their own claims. If this is not done now then it is most unlikely that Jews from Arab countries will ever get any compensation from Arab governments or from Israel.

This also leaves outstanding the claims of Jews from Arab countries who did not settle in Israel. WOJAC's Executive had passed a resolution vesting in the Government of Israel the right to compensation for such claims.

As regards the Torah Scrolls, unfortunately 1000 of these were sent out of Baghdad to London but were later squandered and sold privately ●

Open Forum

## Daily Blessings

An observant Jew has to recite many benedictions every day - on waking up, in prayer, on eating and drinking and washing hands. There are blessings for sighting a rainbow, for seeing a king and for a full moon. Our Babylonian sages decreed that a good Jew has to say at least 100 blessings every day, praising and thanking the Almighty for the wonderful world that He has given us.

This continuous practice of counting the Almighty's achievements shows piety and reverence to our Creator; but I also detect an element of envy. By ceaselessly telling God, "You are the Greatest," we hide a secret Jewish characteristic of trying to cut out the middleman: if God can do it, why can't we?

Indeed, God has no objection to our ascending to the highest levels, for we were created in His image and the sky is the limit. Our only restriction is our present ignorance. But even though we did not eat of the Tree of Life and thus failed to achieve instant immortality, we did eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil - positive and negative, which is the basis of computer language.

Thus it is only a matter of time before we discover and acquire the secrets of the Universe. I guess it is a very simple formula ● N.E.D.

### The Jews of Iraq between 1920 and 1970.

Selections from the paper by Simha Horesh. Part 3 will appear in the next issue.

# Our Super Mother Eve

As reported in the July '86 issue of *The Scribe* it has been scientifically established that all humans are descended from one female who lived in Africa many years ago. The January 1987 issue of *Nature* carries a report by Dr Alan C Wilson and two colleagues from Berkeley University, California, explaining how they arrived at this conclusion.

The scientists studied the cell characteristics of 147 women from five different regions and, in particular, the mitochondria, that part of DNA that females inherit from their mothers. From the degree of divergence in different females they worked out that all humans had a common female ancestor 6000 generations back.

This "Super-Eve" must have lived in East Africa some 200,000 years ago and is likely to have belonged to a small band of primitive hunters who had survived by learning to kill big fierce animals at a distance. None of the descendants of other females alive at the time survived. Only descendants of this "Super-Eve" have survived, and form the present human race.

This discovery is yet another triumph for the Bible, which traces all humans to one mother, Hawwa. Genesis 3:20 states, "And Adam called his wife's name Hawwa (Eve); because she was the mother of all living." The Bible does not refer to Hawwa's husband, as being the father of all living. Likewise, Dr Wilson's findings only trace a common mother and not necessarily a common father. This means that female descendants of "Eve" may have married, along the line, inferior strains of "homo sapiens", which explains why we have such savage humans in history as the mogul tribesmen and nazi beasts who devised the gas chambers.

The importance of Dr Wilson's discovery is not just historical. It shows that evolution does not take place gradually, but in jumps. A day may come when only descendants of one future mother will survive. We salute Hawwa, our great mother and wonder who, and in what circumstances, the next "Hawwa" is going to be. We may take note here of the greater importance placed in our religion on a Jewish mother over a Jewish father.

The story of Adam and Eve in the Bible becomes more relevant if taken without a fixed time scale. First there was the creation of Mankind in God's image, by evolution, if you like, over millions of years. Then there was "Hawwa", common mother of the whole present human race, who lived in East Africa. Then there was Adam,

who started settled agriculture and, by definition, civilisation. He lived, still in East Africa, only some 10,000 years ago.

Genesis which starts with the creation story of the world, in fact deals mainly with the history of civilisation, i.e. settled society. All these events are telescoped in the Bible in the story of Adam and Eve. Adam, father of civilisation, a prophet, a great leader and thinker is accorded the honour of being called the First Man. A subsequent personality to be accorded a similar honour is Noah. The Bible states that the generation of Adam were only allowed to eat fruit and grain. This was because people, living in fixed agricultural settlements, had no access to animals, who were still in the wild. The importance of Noah in the march of civilisation is that he tamed animals, as is evident from the story of his Ark and the zoo that went into it. Thereafter, we were allowed to eat meat (of slaughtered, but not of hunted animals). Noah was accorded the honour of being named, with his family, the sole survivors of the Flood. The mention that only Noah's family was favoured with survival is both remarkable and significant. It shows that this feature of evolution was witnessed by our ancestors and confirms the findings of Dr Wilson and his colleagues. The Flood story may well describe an episode of the thawing of the last Ice Age some 9,000 years ago.

The story of the Flood appears in early Babylonian records, which some historians claim to be the source of the Bible story. This is not true. Both the Bible and the Babel versions derive from a much earlier Semitic saga. The Bible is often criticised for historical inaccuracies; but gold is never found in pure form. Even if a great part of the Bible is inaccurate or irrelevant yet, the message it contains is mankind's greatest treasure ● N.E.D.

## Orthodox and Liberal Judaism

At the biennial conference of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues held recently in Bournemouth, Rabbi Dr John Rayner, senior rabbi of the St. John's Wood Liberal Synagogue said that the Orthodox must not be allowed to claim that their Judaism alone is authentic.

"Undoubtedly, we should respect and admire Orthodox Judaism for the commitment it evokes, the learning it nurtures and the piety it instils. But

they are a minority, a strong and important minority. In Britain and other countries, while the majority may belong to Orthodox synagogues, it is only a relatively small proportion of them who lead a Torah-true life in the full Orthodox sense ... However highly we may and should regard Orthodoxy, we must not allow it to inhibit us or to distract us from getting on with our task to evolve for ourselves and our children a form of Judaism wholly consistent with the demands of the world in which we live."

In a letter to Dr Rayner Mr Dangoor wrote: "As an Orthodox Jew I agree entirely with every word you say. Orthodox Judaism is itself the product of pharisaic reforms started by Ezra the Scribe. But here we are speaking of religious observance.

"The gulf that, in the course of time, will separate Orthodox and Progressive Jews will not be one of observance but of status - marriage, divorce and conversion; in other words, the definition of who is a Jew. Unless this gap is closed, Orthodox and Progressive Jewry will perforce develop into two separate religions and two separate races. It is the duty of both factions, by compromises on both sides, to agree on a common definition of who is a Jew. If Progressive Judaism wants to influence the totality of Israel then it must not cut itself adrift on the matter of who is a Jew."

Babylonian Jewry experienced this problem when in 760 Anan ben-David revived the Karaite sect and was put in prison until he conceded that his was a separate religion.

In his reply Rabbi Rayner writes: "Thank you for your letter which I appreciate and find encouraging. Your point about Jewish unity is well-taken and is never far from our minds.

"However, we feel we must do what seems to us right in the matter of conversion, as in all matters, and we believe that many of our policies have the approval of the great majority of Jews, even though not of the Orthodox minority."

We are pleased to learn from Mr Mordechai Ben-Porat that the Iraqi Jewish Traditional Culture Centre at Or Yehuda, near Tel Aviv, will be officially opened during Succoth, on October 13th 1987.

A man lives on a quarter of what he eats; on the other three-quarters his doctor lives ●

Old Chinese proverb

A miser lives poor so he can die rich! ●

## BOOKS

*A HISTORY OF THE JEWS* by Paul Johnson, 643 pp. Published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

In this widely acclaimed book Paul Johnson (a non-Jew) reviews in great detail and in a journalistic style the story of the Jewish people. He believes that the Jewish discovery of a sole omnipotent God actuated by ethical principles is perhaps the greatest turning-point in history.

The author touches on two aspects of Mosaic law – namely, the Jubilee and the ban on usury, without appreciating their true significance.

The author looks on the commandment, 'And the land is not to be sold in perpetuity, for all land is Mine,' in a religious sense only. In fact, the law of the Jubilee, which is based on this commandment, is a form of land taxation that is crucial to the long-term health of a nation's economy and even a nation's survival. It all started with Joseph. He was "the great minister-statesman of an alien ruler, the pattern of many Jews over the next 3000 years." As such, he was *plus royalist que le roi* – more pharaonic than Pharaoh. Jews in that category, mindful perhaps of the accusation of dual loyalties, work with great devotion to their masters in complete disregard of the welfare and interests of their own people. (We have seen them in our own community).

By his 14-year plan – 7 years of plenty and cheap grain during which he cornered all the grain reserves of Egypt, followed by 7 years of scarcity and rocketing grain prices, Joseph manipulated the Egyptian economy to such an extent (now considered illegal) that people had to sell everything to Pharaoh – first their cattle, then their land and finally even themselves in slavery. The lesson was clear to subsequent generations: once the land is gone, enslavement follows. The Jubilee was intended to make sure that every 50 years land reverts to its original owner – in essence, the State. But our Rabbis, always searching for legal ways to avoid certain commandments, and seeing that the literal application of the Jubilee does not suit modern conditions, have wrongly ruled that the Jubilee applies only when the majority of Jewish people live in Israel, without regard to the economic importance of this practice, giving lip service to the letter of the Law but disregarding its beneficial spirit. The Arabs

expropriated land by conquest. The modern way would be an annual tax on the capital value of the land.

The ban on usury is another fundamental requirement of Mosaic economic law. Johnson naively writes, "Usury, or rather lending money at interest – was a problem the Jews had created for themselves, and for the two great religions (Christianity and Islam) which sprang from Judaism. Most early religious systems in the ancient Near East, and the secular codes that sprang from them, did not forbid usury ... the usual creditors being temples and royal officials."

"But the Jews took a different view of the matter. Leviticus 25:36 laid down: 'Take thou no usury of (thy brother), or increase,' and clarified by Deuteronomy 23:24: 'Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury.'"

The importance of this law is that it was given against all prevailing practice; but no one has ever appreciated its true meaning. Many ways were attempted to get around it in Jewish communities such as by profit sharing, which is being applied in what is called "Islamic banking," practised nowadays in strict Islamic countries. In the Middle Ages, when the prohibition against usury was strictly applied by Christian and Moslem communities, the Jew conveniently became the moneylender, often in secret partnership with the local ruler.

In an ideal society no money is necessary for the exchange of goods and services. But in an ordinary society a medium of exchange has to be used. By banning usury (that is, interest on money) the Torah is in fact attacking the money created by the moneylender, which can only be had on payment of interest and pointing the way to us to discover the only real money, which does not require the payment of interest – namely, the money created by the consumer. We must understand who should have the

*Continued on p.8.*

"Turning Back the Pages" by Esmond David Ezra, 718 p.p., in 2 Volumes. Published by Brookside Press, London. £20.

There have been other books written before about the Jews of Calcutta, but Esmond Ezra's book in addition to narrating the history, has traced the history of his family and some of the prominent members of this community. Its contents also disclose much information never before published and the most comprehensive ever compiled, with fascinating details of the way of life of this closely-knit and very

colourful community. The book also contains many colour illustrations and photographs of the magnificent synagogues. Volume 2 contains a genealogy with over 2500 names including the prominent families of Calcutta. It is highly recommended ●

*HA-ARABIT HA-YEHUDIT SHEL BAGHDAD (The Judeo-Arabic Dialect of Baghdad)* by Jacob Mansour.

1. Studies in Phonology and Morphology; 2. Texts; 3. Dictionary, Part One. The University of Haifa.

From a review by Nissim Rejwan, Jerusalem Post, April 3, 1987.

Judeo-Arabic can be said to have originated in Iraq, which at the time of the great Moslem conquests in the middle of the seventh century was still by far the largest centre of Jewish life and learning. The author states in his Introduction to the three volumes so far published that three different Arabic dialects were used in Baghdad and its environs. They were Moslem, Christian and Jewish. The dialect used by the Jews, however, survives in two forms: written and spoken. The subject of Mansour's studies is the *spoken Arabic* of the Jews of Baghdad. Their written literature differs so widely from the spoken language that it requires separate treatment.

The study of Baghdadi Jewish Judeo-Arabic is essential because, along with other Jewish dialects, it is fast dying out. The purpose of these studies, Mansour writes, is to serve "as a corpus for any researcher who wishes to study the vocabulary, morphology, collocations and synthetic structures of the dialect." The texts compiled in Volume II, however, can also serve the historian, the sociologist and the cultural anthropologist, as they are rich in folklore, folk tales and material of similar interest. All the texts given in this volume – with one exception – are transcribed from recordings made in the 1970s, and comprise only a part of the total material recorded by the author.

Volume III of the work contains the first part of a comprehensive dictionary of Baghdadi Jewish Arabic. It covers the first seven letters of the alphabet.

Another merit of the work is that it includes, apart from individual words, many common expressions, idioms and popular sayings ●

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** An International Conference on Judeo-Arabic is to be held on July 13 at the School of Oriental & African Studies, Mallet Street, London WC1, and on July 14, 15 & 16 at St John's College, Cambridge. Further information can be obtained from Dr Stefan C. Reif, Director, Taylor-Schechter Geniza Research Unit, University Library, West Road, Cambridge CB3 9DR. Telephone: Cambridge (0223) 337733.

*"LE REPOS ET L'OUBLI" (Rest and Oblivion)*, by Naim Kattan Editions Hurtubise, Quebec, Canada. (Price not stated).

Reviewed by Meer S Basri

This is the latest book published in French by the well-known Canadian writer of Iraqi origin, Naim Kattan. Born in Baghdad in 1928 in the centuries old Jewish community, he studied at the Sorbonne in Paris and then emigrated to French Canada.

Novelist, essayist, critic, he wrote several books, foremost of which is *"Adieu Babylone"* (Farewell, Babylon), a novel inspired by the reminiscences of his youth in the City of Caliphs. His other books comprise *Ecrivains des Amériques*, *Le Réel et le Théâtral*, *Le Désir et le Pouvoir*; *La Discrétion* (drama), *Dans le Désert*, *La Traversée*, *Le Rivage* (short stories), *Les Fruits arrachés*, *Le Sable et l'Île* (novels), etc.

Kattan thinks of himself as a hybrid creature and states that the reason for his writing is to tell the course of his mind. In reality he is torn between two cultures, the oriental and the occidental, the inherited and the acquired.

He affirms that his origins do not constitute an obstacle nor do they close for him the door of the new world. Quite the contrary, he thinks that they place him at a distance enough to allow him to observe this new world, to examine and study it with impartiality.

Rooted up from his origin, he is bewitched by the facets of his past and his present. Transplanted in a distant land, he follows the path of Gibran Khaleel Gibran, the famous Lebanese mystical author of "The Prophet". Like Naim Kattan, Gibran and his fellow writers and poets of a former generation came from their mountain villages of the Levant to the sophisticated shores of New York. Unable to be adapted to their new home and to digest a new set of ideas, they continued to write in Arabic, their native language, and to compose nostalgic prosodies, oblivious of the mechanised industrial world around them. Gibran turned to write in English, baring his haunted soul to his American readers in the style of the Gospels and imitations of the Sermon on the Mount.

Naim Kattan has been inspired by The Bible which he considers, in a non-religious sense, as the true way of life. He read the Koran in its original flowery language. It influenced his thoughts to establish a bridge between the sacred and the profane. He feels, as he says, blended in himself Orient and Occident, Europe and America: a presence devoid of Time and Space ...

In his latest collection of essays, Naim Kattan treats of diverse matters ranging from prayer, the exodus from Egypt, the Sabbath, to heritage, nature and technology, war and peace, treason, tolerance, history and destiny, friendship, and ... Arabic literature in medieval Spain. These broad subjects are bound by one line of thought: the ramblings of a Thinker trying to reconcile his divided soul.

Mr Kattan is at present Head, Literature and Edition Service, Arts Council of Canada ☉

During my recent visit to Los Angeles, California, I had the pleasure to attend a meeting held on Tuesday, 20.1.87 by representatives of about 1,500 Iraqi Jews who live in Los Angeles, coming mostly from Israel. They have decided to form an organisation called "The Iraqi Jewish Community of Los Angeles" of the following members:

Professor Shmuel Morcy Ph.D	Honorary President
Abc Kattan Ph.D	Chairman
Victor Ozair MSc. P.E.	Secretary
Rabbi E. Levy	Religious Committee
Ivon Dems BSc.	Social Committee
Professor Lev Hakak Ph.D	Legal Consultant

The aim of this community is to create a framework which encompasses educational, cultural and social activities, etc ☉

London N2 Shaool Hakham Sassoon

The article "Time for a Revolution" April 1987 issue, is of great merit, interesting and deserves wide readership. I am wondering now if this material ever reaches the leading authorities here in Israel, and what lessons they will draw from it when they are given the chance to consider it.

I suggest, therefore, that you make arrangements for The Scribe to reach us regularly here.

Congratulations for the endeavour, the effort and the response of your readers ☉

Tel Aviv

Emil Murad  
Friend and ally.

Thank you so much for sending me a copy of The Scribe which I enjoyed reading. Thank you also for recommending my book *Ages of Man* in such warm terms to your readers.

It was an excellent idea to try to build a sense of pride in the Iraqi community by recalling the splendour of their Babylonian ancestors – even though they did in fact finally decline almost one thousand years ago. I must

also confess to finding some of Naim Dangoor's ideas bizarre; but they are certainly worth expressing, and do at least provoke thought and discussion.

If I may make a suggestion, you might consider introducing an astringent note into the paper when it becomes more established; for it reads rather complacently at present. We former Iraqis need to be told our failings: and I think that a good case could be made for claiming that ours is the most materialistic of all the Jewish communities, as well as the most ignorant and the most indifferent to Zionism and other matters that concern our fellow Jews. What worries me most is the rate of assimilation, as well as its speed, which must be higher than that of the European Jews.

London N2

Lucien Gubbay

*Scribe*: While we welcome Mr Gubbay's appreciation of our work in The Scribe we are surprised that he ignores the great achievements which we have recorded from time to time of leading Iraqi Jews in Israel, UK and elsewhere. Back seat criticism is the hallmark of ignorance and prejudice. If he finds some ideas strange he should be more specific and debate them ☉

I await the arrival of the Scribe with eagerness and it gives me so much pleasure to read its contents. Frankly, I can't do without it! ☉

London

Salim Z Obadiah

The article "God and the Holocaust" in your April issue states that God did not intervene to save His people. Do you expect God going with a stick or machine-gun around the world? But where are all the mighty empires that persecuted the Jews? They all vanished without trace. Moreover, when the German gangster appeared on the world in 1930 he openly said he would murder all the Jews. No country tried to stop him or offered to take the persecuted Jews into their vast territories. They received their punishment in the Second World War, and their empires have disappeared. God does care for His people and interferes, if not immediately.

As for us, we are not without guilt. To our enemies we are all Jews. But among ourselves we are divided into Ashkenazim, Ashkenaz Sepharad, Sephardies and more, with different prayer books. We must all have one prayer and one mentality and build up Israel and defend it ☉

Hong Kong

Karel Weiss (83)

## Reminiscences of C.A. Bekhor

Charles Anwar Bekhor was born in Baghdad in 1907. At the age of 12 he went to Switzerland and France to study and attended University in Paris. He then returned to Iraq at the age of 22 and joined his father's business as a textile importer. After his father died he joined the Imperial Ottoman Bank for 4 years and reopened his father's business as manufacturing agent for Marconi, English Electric, Bradbury Wilkinson, Brown Boveri of Switzerland and ENI of Italy. He became well established with the government and obtained the contract for building a Radio Station for Marconi, TV Station for Brown Boveri and a gas pipeline from Rumaila to Basra for ENI. After the Revolution, in 1959, he left for Switzerland and spent a year in Italy before coming to London in 1964, where he continued with his manufacturing agency until he retired. With his widespread knowledge and contacts he should have risen to an important political or diplomatic post.

# Jaafar Pasha al-Askeri

I liked Jaafar Pasha; he was good fun, good company and always told some interesting stories which I immediately jotted down in my diary. I would have liked him much more were it not for his vulgarity which I utterly detested: he made very frequent use of obscene vocabulary plus his notorious "zeeg" (raspberry) of which he was very proud. He told me that during the early days of the Kingdom of Iraq, whenever he attended a cabinet meeting which became "overheated" he would clear the atmosphere by making a long "zeeg". His cabinet colleagues would get angry and tick him off ("shame on you, Jaafar") but in the end they would all burst out in laughter and "cool it". He was frequently at loggerheads with his brother-in-law, Nuri Pasha Al Said, a more sophisticated man of the world. One day when Jaafar was complaining about something Nuri had done or said, I told him: "Why don't you have it out with Nuri Pasha? He replied: "What can I do to this 'sarsari' (vagabond)? If I go and .... his sister, he will go and .... my sister. (In fact, Jaafar and Nuri were married to each other's sister).

With all his shortcomings, Jaafar had a great charisma and readily charmed his audience (my late wife used to call him "un vagabond sympathique"). In the presence of ladies, however, he behaved like a perfect gentleman. He was very witty and his mind reacted very swiftly to any given situation. He admitted to me: "I am not really an intelligent man but I possess a great presence of mind and, to illustrate his point, he told me the story of an encounter with a Bedouin Sheikh:

"It was in the early days of the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire. I was sent by the Sherif of Mecca to raise the tribes against the Turks. One day I sat in the *diwan* of a Paramount Sheikh of a fairly sizeable tribe from whom I wanted to extract a number of armed men to join the fight. I started my preamble by extolling the merits and reputation of the great "*Sheikh al Sheyoukh*". "*Ya Sheikhna*", I told him. "Your name occurs very frequently in the songs of the desert. The Sherif of Mecca, descendant of our Prophet Mohammad, has commanded me to come to you whom he has chosen from

amongst the leading Arab patriots, to ask you to join the War, your own *Jihad*, against the Turkish oppressors, enemies of Islam. I am calling for some 20,000 '*tfugas*' (riflemen). This number is nothing for you, you can raise it instantly" etc. etc. The more I praised him the more he would sit upright and put his hands on his breast Tarzan-fashion (he was a small man seated on several cushions to make him look taller). When I finished, he said enthusiastically: 'Of course I can give you 20,000 '*tfugas*' without any difficulties' and turning to the assembled sheikhs of his sub-tribes, he ordered them: 'You Sheikh Ahmad, you will supply 2,000, 'You Sheikh Ali, you will send 3,000' and so on, continuing to allocate the quotas to the other sheikhs to make up the required 20,000 men when, without warning, a woman's hand appeared from behind the Sheikh and hit him on the head with a '*babooj*' (slipper). There fell a dead silence in the '*diwan*' whilst the audience was waiting for the Paramount Sheikh to decide on the only two alternatives open to him: a) go out of the tent, kill the woman and come back to show her blood on his hands to prove that he has duly redeemed his honour or b) run away from the tent as a coward without honour and be declared unfit to remain a Sheikh. I was quick to remember that this particular sheikh had a very weak character and did not take a decision without his wife's approval. But, in his excited response to my cleverly chosen words of praise, the Sheikh forgot all about his wife and, likewise, the latter forgot herself in her anger and unconsciously administered the blow before she realised what she was doing. It was then that my presence of mind stood me in good stead: I banged the ground with my fist and gave a good laugh: *Ya Jama'a* (Friends), I am laughing because I am thinking how lucky the Sheikh is that his wife has only a slipper to hit him with whilst our women-folk in Baghdad use heavy *qabqab* (wooden clog) which are really very painful and can do a lot of damage to our head ..." The whole audience joined me in laughter, probably saying to themselves that if the honourable envoy of the great Sherif of Mecca accepts, as a matter of course, to be

beaten up by his women, who are we to judge and condemn our women?

In any case, I saved the Sheikh's face, his wife's life and got my 20,000 '*tfugas*' without any further discussion.

Jaafar Pasha was also very versatile and a good actor who could change his attitude instantly without transition or interlude. When he came to Teheran on a Baghdad Chamber of Commerce mission to talk to the Shah and the then Prime Minister Teymourdash to ask them to lift the ban on the export of capital under the newly enforced Exchange Control regulations, he sent me a telegram asking me to meet him on his arrival and drive him to my house where he wished to stay for the duration of his short visit. I brought him to my house in Koutché Iran which I shared with two French colleagues of mine who were very thrilled to meet such a great hero of the Arab Revolt (they had read about him in "The Seven Pillars of Wisdom" by Lawrence of Arabia). Jaafar made himself quite at home and started ordering me about. "Change your cook" he said after the first meal, "how can you eat this tasteless European food? Get me a good Iraqi cook who can prepare really delicious Baghdadi dishes and if he can't I'll teach him myself". I engaged an Iraqi cook and the Pasha was very happy.

One day the Pasha told me: "I want you to drive Kamil al-Gaylani and myself to the Prime Minister's office this afternoon." I told him: "I am very sorry, Pasha, I am playing polo this afternoon, I can't take you." Whereupon he stood up and, gesticulating with both hands, said: "Wy-wy, your father used to play *bolo*, your grandfather used to play *bolo*?" I got very angry: "Pasha, who do you think you are to make fun of my father? Let me tell you that when you used to be roaming about with just an *aba* my father and grandfather would be sitting comfortably in the *sardab* of our big house in Baghdad with many servants to attend to their needs ..." Kamil al-Gaylani who was sitting next to me was horrified and kept pulling my sleeves: "Shush, you can't talk to the Pasha like this!" But the Pasha himself switched on his other split personality and became very apologetic: "*wee abdalak, abdalul themak,*

*aruhlak kappara, fedwa le'ayunak*" he broke into an old Jewish-Arabic dialect.

A few years later, when I returned to Baghdad to take up my father's old firm, I entertained very friendly relations with Jaafar Pasha who had by then been appointed Minister of Defence in the last Yassin Pasha al Hashemi's cabinet and he awarded me several army contracts including the purchase of small arms and military equipment from Nazi Germany against payment of 'Haavara' Marks (a monetary system which allowed German Jews to export various goods, mainly arms and military ordnance items such as binoculars, blankets, etc. The German Government kept the total amount of foreign currency and paid the Jewish exporters about 40% of the total proceeds in Deutsche Marks).

I used to visit Jaafar Pasha in his office quite frequently and his *farrash* who knew me well, would let me in straight away after knocking at the door.

In 1936 I believe I was one of the last persons to see Jaafar Pasha alive about a couple of hours before he was killed by Bakir Sidqi's men during the first-ever *coup d'état* in the 15-year old kingdom of Iraq. On that day, I went to the Ministry with Suleyman Fattah to discuss a contract which I had in partnership with his brother Nuri Fattah. As we were going up the stairs in the old Saray, we saw Jaafar coming downstairs fuming with rage. When Suleyman asked him where he was going, the Pasha replied: "*Rah arouh aneech ukhta elhadha ibn el gahba Bakir*" (I am going to teach Bakir a lesson). He sent me an ultimatum to surrender to him! I'll show him how Jaafar Al Askeri surrenders!" Suleyman noticed that Jaafar was not armed and offered his own revolver to the Pasha. But the latter would have none of it: "I am going to give him a good kick in the arse ..." and ordered his driver to take him to Shahraban. That was the last we saw of Jaafar Pasha. When he arrived in Shahraban he was met by a dozen Army and Air Force officers including Mohammad-Ali Jawad, a good friend of mine. Several Iraqi historians have since written the full story of Jaafar's death and named the officer. He had a heated argument with Bakir Sidqi and one of the officers shot him at close range.

Many years later (in 1977/78) I was told by two reliable sources that the officer who shot Jaafar was no other than Hassan Tohala ... Very strange indeed! considering the fact that Hassan was and remained a very close friend of Jaafar's nephew, Sabah al Said! ●

## Spot an Ancestor

A FURTHER SELECTION from the Register of military taxpayers of the Baghdad Community of 1892. In that year the tax was graded according to the means of the person – from nearly 3,000 piastres at the top of the scale down to only 10 piastres at the bottom of the scale.

Eliahu Dawid Sarah Zbaida  
Yosef Dawid Sarah Zbaida  
Abraham Dawid Sarah Zbaida  
Abraham Yosef Sarah Zbaida  
Yacoub Yosef Sarah Zbaida  
Yosef Abraham Sarah Zbaiba  
Meir Sasson Zbaida  
Matuq Sasson Zbaida  
Shlomo Sasson Zbaida  
Mrad Shlomo Hawwa  
Reuben Shlomo Hawwa  
Heskel Saleh Hawwa  
Ezra Saleh Hawwa  
Abraham Saleh Hawwa  
Yosef Yacoub Hawwa  
Nessim Saleh Haglu  
Heskel Saleh Haglu  
Shaul Saleh Haglu  
Yishaq Heskel Hoory  
Shaul Yosef Hoory  
Heskel Yosef Hoory  
Ezra Yosef Hoory  
Ezra Shlomo Hoory  
Heskel Hayim Ezra Hoory  
Heskel Ezra Hakim  
Hai Mrad Hakim  
Eliahu Ezra Hakim  
Yosef Heskel Abraham Hebbousha  
Dawid Heskel Abdulla Hebbousha  
Yacoub Heskel Abdulla Hebbousha  
Aharon Heskel Abdulla Hebbousha  
Shmuel Heskel Hebbousha  
Yacoub Abraham Hebbousha  
Abdulla Heskel Hebbousha  
Menashe Eliahu Abraham Hebbousha  
Yahya Moshi Hebbousha and Sons  
Yosef Yishaq Hosli  
Nessim Yosef Henguil  
Hoogui Aharon Tweg  
Saleh Aharon Tweg  
Heskel Abraham Tweg  
Ezra Abraham Tweg  
Eliahu Abraham Tweg  
Meir Abraham Tweg  
Saleh Abraham Tweg  
Menahem Abdul Nabi Tweg  
Nessim Abdul Nabi Tweg  
Yehuda Abdul Nabi Tweg  
Yosef Moshi Dawid Tweg  
Shaul Yishaq Dawid Tweg  
Saleh Dawid Tweg  
Selman Dawid Tweg  
Heskel Dawid Tweg  
Shaul Shimon Tweg  
Selman Sasson Tweg  
Mordechai Selman Tweg  
Menashe Selman Tweg  
Aboudi Selman Tweg  
Shaul Selman Tweg  
Sasson Selman Tweg  
Shaul Meir Selman Tweg  
Aboudi Yishaq Hayim Tweg  
Dawid Abraham Shalom Tweg  
Moshi Asher Tweg  
Dawid Moshi Tweg  
Heskel Eliahu Tweg  
Yosef Eliahu Tweg  
Abed Aharon Abed Trad  
Abd Elazar Moshi Abdul Trad  
Hayyu Abdulla Tehhan  
Barukh Yacoub Tehhan  
Heskel Eliahu Tewwaf  
Hayim Shuaa Heddad  
Saleh Shuaa Heddad  
Meir Mualllem Heskel Qendarchi

Heskel Hayim Yishaq Yahya  
Reuben Yehuda Abdul Yas  
Heskel Yehuda Abdul Yas  
Meir Yacub Abul Yas  
Shaul Yehuda Yishaq Abu Yas  
Yosef H. Yacub  
H. Yishaq Farha  
Aharon Eliahu Yusefan  
Saleh Aharon Yusefan  
Aharon Saleh Yusefan  
Aboudi Saleh Yusefan  
Shaul Abraham Yusefan  
Reuben Eliahu Yusefan  
Heskel Yehuda Hakham Yishaq  
Yishaq Yehuda Hakham Yishaq  
Moshe Yehuda Hakham Yishaq  
Abraham Hayim Shlomo Hakham Yishaq  
Yacub Hayim Shlomo Hakham Yishaq  
Heskel Shimon Hakham Yishaq  
Mordechai Sasson Hakham Yishaq  
Efrayem Hakham Yishaq Mjalled  
Moshiyah Yona  
Nessim Yona Moshiyah  
Sasson Abdulla Moshiyah  
Heskel Yona Moshiyah  
Shaul Saleh Yona  
Heskel Abraham Moshiyah  
Aharon Abdulla Newama Yona  
Mordechai Yona Moshiyah  
Yishaq Saleh Abed Yom Tob  
Aboudi Saleh Abed Yom Tob  
Eliahu Saleh Abed Yom Tob  
Fathi Yom Tob Sayegh  
Shaul Ezra Shaul Yadu  
Aharon Yishaq Yehuda  
Shlomo Yishaq Yehuda  
Yosef Ezra Shaul Yehuda  
Moshe Shaul Yehuda  
Reuben Shuwa Ezra Yehuda  
Abraham Eliahu Yehuda  
Yacub Yosef Yehuda and Sons  
Yehuda Rfael Yehuda  
Shaul Reuben Yehuda  
Dawid Yosef Saleh Yehuda  
Selman Yehuda Rfael Yehuda  
Yehuda Yosef Saleh Yehuda  
Abraham Aslan Yehuda  
Yehuda Eliahu Yehuda  
Yosef Sasson Yehuda  
Shaul Sasson Yehuda  
Eliahu Saleh Yedgar  
Mordechai Yedgar  
Efrayem Abdulla Yosef  
Abdulla Yisrael  
Abdulla Shlomo Yisrael  
Faraj Hayim H. Heskel  
Khedhourli Sasson Kehaila  
Hoogui Sasson Kehaila  
Heskel Shalom Abed Kheyat  
Dawid Ezra Khazma  
Yacub Yosef Hayim Khazma  
Shaul Yosef Hayim Khazma  
Ezra Abraham Khalastchi  
Dawid Abraham Khalastchi  
Nessim Abraham Khalastchi  
Hoogui Menahem Kaheb  
Menashe Eliahu Khestawi  
Yosef Saleh Khleifa  
Yacub Saleh Khezama ●

## Carmelite Convent to be removed from Auschwitz

The Carmelite convent on the grounds of the Auschwitz death camp, to which we drew attention in previous issues, will be removed within 2 years. This was agreed at a meeting in Geneva between senior Jewish and Catholic leaders.

The Jewish delegation consisted of Maitre Theo Klein, president of the European Jewish Congress; Chief Rabbi René Sirat of France; Dr. E.L. Elrich of Bnai Brith International; Mr Sam Hoffenberg, delegate of Bnai Brith at UNESCO; Maitre Markus Pardes, president of the Coordinating Committee of Jewish Organisations in Belgium; Dr Gerhart M. Riegner, co-chairman of WJC Governing Board, delegate of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations; Professor Georges Schneck, president of the Federation of Jewish Organisations of Belgium; Professor Ady Steg, president of the Alliance Israelite Universelle; Mrs Tullia Zevi, president, Union of Italian Jewish Communities.

The Catholic delegation consisted of four cardinals; members of the French Episcopal Commission for Jewish Relations; members of the Polish Episcopal Commission for a Dialogue with Jews.

The implementation of this agreement would remove a chief source of Jewish-Catholic friction. The presence of a church and a convent on the grounds of Auschwitz could well be used to misrepresent and distort the Holocaust. They were put there, perhaps, with sinister intentions. Future pilgrims to these Christian establishments might well be told, "This is the spot where the 'murderers of God' received their just punishment." ●

N.E.D.

## Hiroshima and the Holocaust

At a recent visit to Japan Elie Wiesel, a survivor of the Auschwitz and Buchenwald death camps, chronicler of mankind's greatest horror and Nobel Peace Prizewinner, referred to Hiroshima, where the first atom bomb was dropped, killing 150,000 civilians, and to the Holocaust, where 6 million innocent Jews perished. He cautioned against cheap comparisons and pointed out that whereas Auschwitz was meant to liquidate the last Jew, the Hiroshima bomb wasn't meant to kill the last Japanese.

Why does Elie Wiesel have to tell the Japanese people that our holocaust is bigger and more important than their holocaust? Obviously, to gain sympathy, so that they may refrain from indulging in anti-semitism. For Japan complies ardently with the Arab boycott of Israel and a spate of best selling anti-Semitic books have been published in Hiroshima recently, even though there are only 1000 Jews in the whole country. Masami Uno's books on Jews have sold a million copies.

Immediately after the war the Japanese were toying with the idea of adopting Judaism in exchange for their aggressive shintoism that failed them. They rejected the fallacy of Christianity and the inadequacy of Islam. They wanted to re-assert themselves against their Western conquerers. They felt frustrated and rejected and saw a spiritual brotherhood with the Jews as the victims of war. It suited their mood to identify with the Jewish people in whom they perceived the same sense of purpose, group loyalty and industry that the Japanese admire in themselves. Moreover, Judaism was the source of all that was good in Christianity and Islam and, because it had relatively few adherents, it would give the Japanese some prominence in this faith. The circumstances were similar to when in 800 CE the Khazar King

Bulan was in search of a religion. The Christians and the Moslems, who were the front runners, both advised him that Judaism was better than the rival faith. So he and his subjects adopted Judaism! But with post-war Japan we were not there to take their call and a golden opportunity was missed.

No wonder then that the Japanese interest in the Jewish people should turn sour, giving some Japanese writers the opportunity to present warmed-up versions of Nazi theories of Jewish world conspiracy.

We apparently prefer to keep to the role of martyrs and we prefer our martyrdom the hard and long way.



Committee of the Los Angeles Friends of the Iraqi Jews Traditional Culture Centre of *Or Yehuda*. R to L: Prof. Lev Hakak; Prof. Shmuel Moreh; Mr. Victor Uzair.

### A HISTORY OF THE JEWS

Continued from p.4

power to create money. It is not the moneylender, the temple or the local ruler; it is not the central bank in the modern state. **THE ONLY PERSON WHO CAN CREATE MONEY IS THE CONSUMER.** I go into a shop to buy a washing machine; I sign a promissory note for it. That promissory note – "I promise to pay" is the fountain of money and should be in circulation. Thus the money in circulation is directly related to consumer demand. There is no possibility of inflationary trends.

The permission to lend money at interest to a foreigner does not include resident aliens. It is meant in an economic sense – someone outside the economic community ● N.E.D.



1917 – The New Baghdad Racecourse – awaiting opening time.