

Israel has no right to appropriate the assets and claims of Jews of Arab countries and must be prevented by injunction or by appealing to the United Nations from using these assets to compensate the Palestinians.

The SCRIBE

JOURNAL OF BABYLONIAN JEWRY

PUBLISHED BY THE EXILARCH'S FOUNDATION

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No. 59

SEPTEMBER 1993

Est. 1971

A HAPPY NEW YEAR 5754 TO ALL OUR READERS AND FRIENDS

Emperor of the World

by Naim Dangoor

President Clinton's road to the White House has been paved with the remains of broken empires

The Chinese Empire came to an end in 1911, and WWI brought the demise of the empires of Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottomans, and Tsarist Russia.

The casualties of WWII were the empires of Japan, Britain, France, Italy, Holland, Belgium, Spain and Portugal.

At the Suez crisis of 1956, President Eisenhower dealt a death blow to the pretensions of Britain, France and Israel to dictate the course of history.

Last, but not least, was the sudden collapse of the Soviet Empire two years ago that left the United States the sole super power in the world.

Controlling, at one time, 60 per cent of many of the world's resources, America's weight was bound to be felt in international affairs. Hovering between isolationism and involvement, the United States was called upon twice to put an end to Germany's bid for world domination. Each time America emerged stronger in world politics and has come out the clear winner of WWII.

Its planned star war programme gave Soviet rivalry its *coup de grace*.

As was demonstrated in the successful multi-national Desert Storm operation to free Kuwait, America will increasingly direct world affairs through the United Nations Organisation, conveniently located as it is, in New York, appropriately managed by an Arabian secretary-general married to a Jew.



Official photograph

Courtesy U.S. Embassy

President Bill Clinton

he needs wisdom. Youthful Clinton has the potential to acquire more wisdom. When God asked King Solomon in a dream what he wanted most, the answer was: Wisdom. God replied, since you asked only for wisdom and not for other things, I will give you Wisdom as well as Power, Wealth and Honour ●

President Clinton has to deal with many problems:

- The North-South divide in the world.
- The population explosion in the Third World and the danger that the South will march on the North.
- The bad distribution of wealth and income everywhere.
- The threats of terrorism and Moslem fundamentalism.
- Germany and Japan, who made hay while the American sun was shining in the post-war world, must be cut to economic size. They should not be offered permanent seats in the Security Council for the time being, especially as their good behaviour may only be skin-deep.
- Racism must be condemned and fought.
- Democracy must be applied discriminately. In countries divided by race, colour, religion or language, one-man, one-vote cannot apply; 51% of the vote must not take 100% of the power; the interests of all sections have to be equally safeguarded.

The imperial crown of the world is Clinton's for the taking. But to wear it

Middle East Confederation

A historic necessity

by Naim Dangoor

It appears that neither side in the current Middle East peace negotiations expect the talks to succeed, but each side is posturing to put the blame on the other side for the failure.

The Arabs went to Madrid in the hope that Bush would deliver Israel to them. Shamir went to Madrid under pressure from Baker and Bush in order to qualify for the \$10 billion loan guarantees.

Now, with the Clinton administration only willing to act as an "honest broker", the Arabs are no longer interested. With the first billion dollars already sitting in the Bank of Israel doing nothing, Rabin no longer feels under pressure.

If the region was united under one umbrella it would have welcomed Jewish immigration and the Zionists would not have insisted on a separate state.

The talks do not deserve to succeed for the peace they can bring is precarious and dangerous.

What peace will it be with Israel strategically weakened and forever vulnerable to Syrian guns and missiles poised on the Golan Heights and aimed at Israeli population centres?

What peace will it be with Arafat commuting between Gaza and Nablus through a corridor across Israel and knocking on the gates of Jerusalem to claim it as his capital?

What peace will it be with Moslem fundamentalists all around Israel and sworn to destroy it?

As I have said for the last twenty years: PEACE IS NOT ENOUGH. The solution must be global for there can be no peace in the region while Jews from Arab lands are denied their rights in their countries of origin; while 20 million Kurds cannot achieve self-rule; while the fragmented region remains vulnerable to threats from all sides and to the whims of its ruthless dictators; while the huge arms expenditure is destabilising the region; while the vast oil wealth goes entirely into Arab pockets.

In this connection, it is encouraging to note that the Kurds are already claiming a third of Iraq's oil revenue; a suitable proportion of the whole region's oil income should be allocated to the Jews.

The solution which I offer is a confederation of independent democratic states with a new capital in the centre of the Fertile Crescent, on the banks of the Euphrates, bearing the name of our Patriarch Abraham, the acknowledged father of the Middle East for Jews and Arabs alike.

President Clinton would do well to channel the Middle East talks to this direction and make it his crowning glory ●

had fled Rashid-Ali who also stayed in the Iraqi Consulate. Fortunately, no pogrom took place.

The last 30-40 years of the Iraqis in Iran were without a doubt the very best years of this community. The issue of the studies for the young had become much easier. There were more possibilities to provide our children as good a private education as could be had anywhere in the world. There was the Iraqi Jewish school, the American Community school, the Lycée Français, also other French, German, British and Iranian schools all providing top education.

For two generations most of the Iraqi students were educated either in the American Community school or the Iraqi school of Teheran. For higher education and University studies they were generally sent abroad. The majority went to the USA. The Iranian government of the time accepted these students as normal Iranian students and gave them the same benefits as those of returning Moslem Iranian students. The only obligation of the returning graduate student was that he should have a recognized University degree and had to do his military service by serving only six months, and this, as an Officer in the Iranian army. Some of our boys of course obliged. Unfortunately a few of the boys who happened to be serving at the end of 1978 were stuck as a result of the revolution but fortunately were dismissed and exempt by the Ayatollah who at that time believed Iran did not even need an army! It was luckily before the Iran-Iraq war!

Before the recent Iranian Revolution the Iraqi community in Iran numbered some 6,000 people. I repeat, these were indeed the best years of our lives! The biggest pleasure however that gave us all a sense of satisfaction and security was the excellent relationship which existed between Iraq and Israel, at very high levels and could simply not have been better. Iran was of course a very lucrative market for Israel and the understanding between the two countries was at all levels and on many sensitive regional matters. Yom Ha-atzmaout used to be celebrated annually at the Embassy of Israel in the heart of the Capital and every year several main Central Teheran streets would be closed to the public to facilitate the coming and going of the guests which included ministers, MP's, Ambassadors, High ranking Military Officers, VIP's and last but not least the representative of the SHAH. It was simply too good to be true! Maybe I should be saying it was too good to last.

I would like to mention that the Israel Embassy in Iran was of course closed down in 1978. The name of the building changed to Embassy of Palestine (PLO) and Ave "Kakh" meaning Palace where the Embassy was located is now called "Palestine Avenue".

With the coming of the Iranian revolution the "Haflla" certainly came to an abrupt and unhappy ending.

Some families liquidated and moved out in time but many did not succeed, each for his own reason and circumstance. Many had to eventually leave behind their assets, most of which had been confiscated by the revolutionary government of the Ayatol-

lah. Unfortunately and sadly there were some casualties. They will of course always be remembered by their families and friends. They shall always be missed amongst this community.

The Iranian/Iraqi community was very close and inter-locked. It was friendly, more like a large family than simply friends in a community. Although the usual material structure existed socially, generally they were one large family and shared in each other's happiness and sorrow. There were several social clubs, where various circles of friends met and socialized. To mention a few, The French club, the

Imperial country club, the American club and were always welcomed both by the foreign residents in Iran and the local Iranians themselves.

The photo enclosed shows the community of Hamadan in 1925. Regretfully, we do not have other such photographs at hand. We would appreciate receiving any photos which show the different communities, if available.

Victoria Rabbie (Rabipour) (maiden name Dellal) born in Kermanshah, married in Teheran and presently living in London along with her family●

Notes from Abraham Ben-Jacob's Hebrew book: *Babylonian Jews in the Diaspora*

The anti-Jewish policy of Baghdad's Turkish governor Daud Pasha (1817-1831) obliged many Jews to leave Iraq for other countries, including Persia.

The Jews of Persia used to direct their religious enquiries to the Baghdad Rabbinate.

After 1850 many Persian Jews came to Iraq to escape persecution in their country.

With the opening of Persia to European trade many Iraqi Jews went there to trade.

At the end of WWII there were 300 Iraqi Jews in Hamadan – prominent among them: Gurji and Saleh Masri, Selman Shiri, Dahud Shlomo Dahud, Salim Iny, Salim Shohet, Khedhoury Yosef Shahmoon, Yosef Abraham Hayim. Yishaq Dennous, Menashe Muallem, Dahud Moshi, Aharon Jeddaa. They all helped the needy and supported the Jewish school there.

Around 1930 when Teheran became an important trading centre, Iraqi Jews there began to grow from 600 to around 3000 in 1948. Among the wealthy families were Lawi, Mashal, Shaul Nathan, Gurji Obadiah, Hessel Kookoo, Abraham Nawi, Gurji Shashi, Rahamim Namurdi, Belbul, Battat.

Iraqi Jews in Persia constituted a community by themselves. They married among themselves and kept to their Baghdadian tradition in all religious and legal matters. Meir Abdulla built a school.

In 1949 Iraq's Regent Abdul Ilah, accompanied by Fadhel Jamali, visited Teheran, and secretly arranged with the Iranian authorities to expel the Iraqi Jews who in November of that year were given 15 days to leave Iran and return to Iraq. The Israeli Government requested Washington to intervene and the order was rescinded.

Selim Dangoor, who lived in Teheran at the time, writes from Stockholm that on the Regent's visit to Teheran the Iraqi Jewish community there presented him with two valuable carpets. Thus when the expulsion order came they wrote to the Regent appealing to him to intercede on their behalf.

Shlomo Hillel writes from Jerusalem: "In June 1949, 33 Jewish refugees who were fleeing Iraq were caught at the Persian frontier. The Regent who was on a visit to Teheran at the time asked the Iranian authorities to return the refugees to Iraq where they would have been severely punished and tortured. In fact, the Iranian minister of foreign affairs issued an expulsion order, but we managed in the end to keep the refugees in Iran"●



Empress Farah Diba admires the flower arrangement of Louise Chitayat●



Teheran, May 1947
– Engagement picture of Renée and Naim Dangoor taken at his brother Salim's villa outside the capital●

The Farhud retold

The Golden Carpet

which includes The Silver Crescent
by Somerset de Chair

Reviewed by Naim Dangoor

We recently came across this book which was published in 1944 by Faber and Faber, London. In it the author, an Army Intelligence Officer and an MP, relates British Army operations in Iraq during the second world war.

The interesting part of the book is his reference to the *farhud* of 1/2 June 1941 in which hundreds of Jews were massacred and thousands of homes and businesses were looted, and which marked the beginning of the end of the 2500-year-old Jewish presence in the Land of the Rivers.

During the Month of Rashid Ali's revolt of May 1941 and the ensuing fighting between the Iraqi and British armies which the author calls the Thirty Day War, the British ambassador, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, and his staff were trapped inside the Baghdad Embassy.

On 29 May, Rashid Ali and his government fled the country, and his forces surrendered unconditionally to the British who, however, stayed outside the capital for a few days. Somerset de Chair, the author of the book, was staying at the embassy during the anti-Jewish riots in Baghdad.

Over a game of bridge Sir Kinahan told him that 2,000 people, mostly Jews, were believed to have been killed in the one night looting. Although the actual figure turned out to be much less, the estimate of "2,000 people, mostly Jews, killed" has an important significance. The riots did not surprise the embassy and were probably abetted by its secret agents.

The figure reported to the ambassador of 2,000 killed appears to have been an acceptable punishment to inflict on our innocent community by withholding, for whatever reason, law and order from the Capital.

De Chair's interpreter, who had assumed the name of "Reading" and was thought to be a Palestinian Arab, but was in fact an Iraqi Jew, asked him earlier, "Why do our troops not go into Baghdad? There will be many people killed if our troops do not enter".

De Chair writes, "This was my own view and the ways of the Foreign office were beyond my comprehension. From the hour of the Cease Fire their word had prevailed. Having fought our way, step by step, to the threshold of Baghdad, we must now cool our heels outside. It would, apparently, be lowering to the dignity of our ally, the Regent, if he were seen to be supported on arrival by British bayonets". (p.118).

This is not the whole story. There was no need for British troops to enter Baghdad. The local administration and police were quite capable and willing to enforce law and order but they were not allowed to act, even to fire shots in the air to disperse the rioters.

On the morning after the *farhud*, the Governor of Baghdad, Khaled Pasha Al-Zahawi, whose mother was Jewish, came to our house in Alwiya and complained bitterly to my father that the Committee of Public Safety, consisting of the capital's Governor, Mayor and Head of Police, which was formed after the flight of Rashid Ali, had been in touch with the Embassy, the Regent and Nuri Said for permission to disperse the rioters and maintain law and order, but they were refused permission.

The riots were staged on purpose, and the rioters were given free rein so that the anti-British extremists would let off steam and forget the defeat of their uprising.

This was a pattern that was to be repeated following the capture by British forces of many towns of the Middle East in the first years of WWII.

Hitler's holocaust was yet to come.

Captain Shaul Shemtob-Reading, MBE, who was on the military intelligence at the Headquarters of the British Army advancing from Jordan towards Iraq to crush the regime of Rashid Ali, has now been able to break his silence and write:

Early in May I was entrusted by the Army Command to deliver an urgent message to the Royal Family in Baghdad; hostilities had since commenced and continued up to the end of the month. At the Iraq/Transjordan frontier I borrowed one of Nairn Overland cars with its driver and proceeded at midnight to Baghdad.

I entered Baghdad area by passing through Kadhimain and arrived at the Royal Palace Qasr Al Rehab.

The Lord Chamberlain ushered me into the presence of the Queen Mother and the young King Faisal. The Regent, Abdul Ilah, was not present. He had escaped from the Palace disguised as a woman and gone into hiding.

The Queen Mother was in a distressed state over the safety of her son and I gave her the message that the British Army, as well as a group of the Hashemite army of Emir Abdallah under Glubb Pasha, were advancing to restore order.

During the army's advance, we were continuously bombed and strafed by Mussolini's fighter bombers and German planes specially painted with Iraqi insignia, also with sporadic shelling. I was in the advance party and at one point we met an Iraqi officer with a white flag of surrender acting on the orders of his commanding officer, who came out of hiding shouting "*sahib dakhilak*" (I am at your mercy) because he was afraid he and his contingent would be killed on sight.

This senior commander was later used to good purpose by giving false information deliberately spread by our unit to the effect that there are many tanks in our column advancing on Baghdad.

On arriving near Habbaniya, at which point the whole Iraqi army had retreated and disappeared and Rashid Ali and his ministers escaped to Iran, the Regent, Abdul Ilah, accompanied by Dawood Pasha El Haidari arrived at the British Headquarters to see the GOC. The Chief of the military intelligence, Regimental

Commanders and myself were present when the Regent thanked the British Government for saving the situation AND requested that the British Army enter Baghdad to stop the riots and the massacres taking place.

The GOC replied that he was well aware of the serious situation, but acting on strict orders from London, was unable to enter Baghdad●

Jews and Arabs

Their Contact Through the Ages
by Professor S D Goitein

Published by Schocken Books, New York, 263pp, \$14

Professor Goitein fully explores the social and intellectual contact between Jews and Arabs since their beginnings 3000 years ago.

This well-written book first published in 1955, touches on many subjects of historical and contemporary importance: the myth of the so-called Semitic races; the Jewish tradition in Islam; the legal position of Jews under Arabic Islam; the rise of Jewish philosophy under Islamic influence; Jewish and Islamic mysticism and poetry, law and ritual●

The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times

by Norman A Stillman

Published in 1991 by
The Jewish Publication Society,
Philadelphia, 604pp

The author continues the saga he so eloquently began in his first volume, *The Jews of Arab Lands*, up to the dramatic events of the twentieth century. It focuses on the forces, events and personalities that over the past 150 years have shaped the Jewish communities of the Arab world, changing the relations between Jews and Arabs more radically than anything since the rise of Islam nearly 1,400 years ago●

Genesis and the Big Bang

by Gerald L Schroeder, Ph.D

Published by Bantam Books, Fifth Avenue,
New York 10103, 186pp, including Index

Reviewed by Deborah Shaya

It is a most fantastic account of the Creation of the Universe, proving that the findings of modern science in fact complement and reiterate the teachings of our ancient and Holy Bible. The end result for the reader, whether sceptic or believer, Jew or Christian, has a totally fresh understanding of our Universe and one's personal genesis as well.

The author has given many lectures on this topic in London and around the world●

The Periodical Publication of Congregation Bene Naharayim Volume 1 referred to *The Scribe* and said that it is published in London by the Iraqi Jewish Community.

In fact, *The Scribe* is published by The Exilarch's Foundation, which was established by Naim Dangoor in 1970 and endowed by him. He is also the main writer and Editor of the Journal, which is sent free and post-free to all readers●

Minyan

- 10 Jewish Lives in
20 Centuries of History
by Chaim Raphael

Review by Simon Dangoor (aged 10)

The book is about 10 Jewish men and women who played important roles in the lives of the Jewish people. Chaim Raphael explains each one very well giving the dates they were born and when they died. On the side of every page there are a few words in connection with the text. The ten people are set out in this order: King David, Rabbi Hillel Maimonides, Dona Cracia Nasi, Menasseh ben Israel, Glueckel of Homeh, the Vilna Gaon, Sir Moses Montefiore, Emma Lazarus and finally Chaim Weizmann. Chaim Raphael writes about their famous deeds and about books or literature they wrote. The first group, Sephardim, concentrated on books and explanations, and the second group, mainly Ashkenazim, helped to bring Israel together.

The book is very interesting and I recommend it for reading. The pictures have an interesting design. Even though it is more than 20 centuries ago. It is a good book.

1001 Baghdad Proverbs

by Moshe Hakham

This is a collection of Iraqi-Jewish popular sayings printed in Arabic with a transliteration in Hebrew characters (for those who can't read Arabic, but still speak it) together with a Hebrew translation and full explanation of each proverb. It consists of over 300 pages and was recently published in Tel Aviv.

The book is obtainable from the author Moshe Hakham, 34 Herzl Street, Hadera 38421, Israel, who is considering preparing an English version (a version and not a translation of the book).

No Moslem World

During the 10-year Lebanese civil war the Christian countries of Europe did not lift a finger to help the Maronite Christians. The Pope did not utter a word in support of that Catholic community. One diplomat explained at the time that in politics there is no such thing as a Christian world.

Similarly, in the present situation in Bosnia when the Moslems have been subjected to all forms of aggression, the Moslem countries looked the other way and did not offer any help to their co-religionists, which has been strongly criticised by the UN Secretary-General. One may conclude that again, there is no such thing as a Moslem world.

However, the Moslem fundamentalists want to change all that by aggression and terror against their neighbours, and by working to subdue the third world, and eventually the rest of the world.

Fortunately, this is not the case among world Jewry - especially after the Holocaust. At the first sign of trouble, Jewish organisations extend a helping hand to Jews in difficulty and, if necessary, lift them out of their predicament to safety. This, perhaps, is because we have become so few, and extinction is now our main threat.

On our mailing list

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Baghdad Proverbs

from Salim Kabbaza

الشبعان ما يدري بذكر الجوعان

El shebann ma yedri bdard eljouan.

One whose stomach is full does not feel the pangs of the hungry.

(The idea is that a strong rich person does not appreciate the troubles of the weak and needy).

المحب سامح

Lemhebb emsamih

If you love a person, you forgive his mistakes.

(One may readily forgive a loved one, but not somebody else!).

الدبك الصبحون البصحة يصيح

Eldeek elfaseeh min elbaidha yeseeh.

An eloquent rooster crows as soon as it is hatched.

(This saying means that a clever, wise and/or good boy/girl will demonstrate these qualities at a very early age).

سهة غني ولا صفة فقير

Seet ghani wala seet faq(u)eer.

It is better to have a reputation of being rich than of being poor.

(Since a poor person can only expect to be looked down upon without any other advantage, he would be better off to let people think he is rich. At least he will enjoy more respect!).

ضميفين تغلب قوي

Dhaifain teghleh qawi.

Two weak persons can overcome a strong one.

(The joint efforts of two persons may overcome considerable difficulties and solve difficult problems. Similarly, a great task involving too much work for one person may be achieved through such cooperation).

قرش الياض نبيع بيوم الاسود

Qirsh elabyadh yenfaa beyom elaswad.

A white piastre is useful on a black day.

(This is the equivalent of the saying that one should save for a rainy day).

الف عصفور ما يملئ جدر

Alf asfour ma yemli jeder.

A thousand sparrows do not fill a pot. (This is said when one gets too little compared with one's needs. It reminds me of another saying):

الثوب كينغ والفتحة زغبي

Elshaq kbeegh wil ghe'ea zghayghi.

The hole (tear) is big and the patch is too small.

Thank you heartily for your continued dispatch of *The Scribe* to me. It keeps me in touch with my roots.

Mount Waverley, Edward J Khamara
Australia

Mrs Violet Khedouri, Los Angeles
Miss Debra Ezekiel, Miami
Ezra Shina, National City, Calif.
Judge Leonard Gerber, London

LETTERS

From Haham Dr Solomon Gaon
Yeshiva University, New York

The Scribe is a really important paper and it is always a pleasure to receive it. It is the only paper that gives us history of the Iraqi community as well as its present situation●

From the Ambassador to Nepal:

I am shortly due to complete my term of duty and am returning to Jerusalem. The culmination of my term was the recent State Visit of the Prime Minister of Nepal to Israel. I hope you will continue to send me *The Scribe* to my address in Jerusalem●
Kathmandu, Nepal Shlomo Dayan

From the Ambassador to the United States:

In reply to your letter on the peace talks and the claims of Jews of Arab countries, I can assure you that all issues pertaining to the Arab-Israel conflict and to Arab-Jewish relations will be given its proper place in our negotiating agenda.

Washington, D.C. Itamar Rabinovich
Scribe: It appears that Israel intends to use Jewish claims only to offset Palestinian claims●

Jewish refugee claims

I have read with great interest the article published in the latest issue of *The Scribe* entitled: "The Claims of the Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries".

Allow me to note that the question of claims by Jewish descendants of Arab countries has not and will not be discussed in the course of negotiations with representatives of Arab countries; no condition to this effect was ever imposed, since our government cannot be bothered with such trifles. Matters would be different if there were more Knesset members representing Jews from Arab countries.

The Israeli government could have done the necessary minimum at the time of the great aliya of 1951; it could have provided Iraqi Jews with a minimal housing fit for humans on account of the properties and funds left behind by fleeing local Arabs and confiscated by our government.

How can we possibly forget those days, when we came to Israel penniless, looking for shelter here, yet we had to spend our first night here under the open sky, without even a tent . . .

Given this state of affairs, why should Rabin's government bother about the rights of Iraqi Jews, who are exposed here to ethnic discrimination: witness the recent statements of Rabbi Schach and Mrs Shulamit Aloni●
Ramat Gan Esther Mercado

I have been receiving *The Scribe* for several years and look forward to each copy. In your June issue I saw a letter from my cousin, Eze Bashi, whom I lost contact with for 25 years, and immediately wrote to him. What a wonderful service you are doing in getting families in touch with one another.

Please put my daughter Mrs A Samuels on your mailing list●
Noranda, Western Australia E Moses

In thanking you for the June issue of *The Scribe*, as excellent as always, may I single out particularly the letter from Jack H Zeloof, New Jersey, in which he points out correctly that the broad use of the term "Sephardi" can be a misnomer insofar as it obscures the Babylonian origin of many Jews given this name. I had this very point in mind when I published my history of so-called Sephardi Jews in 1985 under the title **The Road from Babylon: The Story of Sephardi and Oriental Jews**. I organised the story to show that "everything" started in Babylon and that, in particular, the glories of the "golden ages" of Spanish and Portuguese Jews had originated as an offshoot of this great Jewish civilisation. The book was well received under this title, but I was told that when a reprint was planned in 1991 to coincide with the Sephardi Centenary, it would be clearer if I gave it the title **The Sephardi Story**, which I did. The body of the book is identical with the 1985 version. It was published in Britain by Vallentine Mitchell (in hardcover and paperback) and in the USA by the B'nai B'rith Book Service, 1640 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036●

London NW3 Chaim Raphael, CBE



When did you last see your father?

by W F Yeames - Walker Art Gallery

It is perhaps not a mere coincidence that the founders of the three monotheistic Abrahamic religions did not know their fathers - Moses, because he was brought up in Pharaoh's palace and may not have had much or any contact with his father Amram; Jesus, because his mother bore him before her marriage to Joseph was consummated; and Mohammed, because his father died before he was born.

This may have given these outstanding leaders an independent outlook and a broader perspective●

Eureka! (I found it)

For years I was wondering why the Jews have so many enemies and why so many people hate them. Some attribute this hatred to an inherited "smart gene" while others blame the Jews themselves for their high financial standard. I found the "real reason" when I recently read a passage in the Bible, which also explains the insistence of the Likud Party not to give up any part of our land, the so-called occupied territories:

"Those who hate me without reason are more than the hairs of my head; they outnumber my hairs, those who accuse me falsely.

How can I give back what I have not stolen?" (Psalms 69:4)●
Great Neck, NY Albert Khabbaza MD

Mistaken Identity

The writer of the poem *Another If...* which appeared in our last issue was erroneously described as having just returned from his honeymoon in Hawaii, when in fact it was written by a much senior person.

Freddy Sopher (the younger) received letters and telephone calls from his relatives and friends congratulating him on his efforts and was reprimanded by his new bride for not disclosing his poetic side to her. She did not quite believe him when he denied he wrote poetry.

New Fred Sopher (the elder) has written as follows:

"Thank you for publishing *Use...* and *Another If...* I noticed however that you inserted below my name 'Just back from his honeymoon in Hawaii'. My wife and I celebrated our 51st wedding anniversary a couple of months ago and she is wondering with whom I had gone to Hawaii for a 'honeymoon'!! In addition, friends and relatives are asking why they were not invited to the 'wedding'!! Please set the record right".

London NW4 Fred Sopher
(Commander I.N. Retired)

Scribe: If... we can take such incidents in good humour, then life would go smoother. We wonder why the Muses have taken so long in visiting our 'Kipling'●

Loya Family in Baghdad

I find your journal an interesting and informative publication where Jews from Iraqi origin get to share heritage and memories. Good luck and keep up the good work.

Among the well known business people in Iraq were Murad and Saleh M Loya (Al-wayya). They were the owners of American Watch Company. Their large store was located on Al-rashid Street, near what was known as "Bait Lynch". The two brothers established their business in the early 1930's. They were the suppliers to the Royal Palace and the government. As a matter of fact, they supplied the first radio to King Ghazi. They also supplied the very famous clock to Baghdad Radio Station. The striking of the clock was an indication of news time and was later recorded and used for several decades! They were the sole importers of the popular American "Waltham" watches and the German "Mauth" clocks. Their business was also with Japan and Switzerland. They had a branch at "Habaniyah", where the British troops were based. The manager of the branch was Meir Dallal, who currently lives in Ramat-Gan.

The business suffered a major setback because their main imports were from countries that were deeply involved in war. As a result of that and the deterioration of the Jewish situation in Iraq in general, after the existence of the State of Israel, they closed their business.

The two brothers were private and always kept a low profile, but they were very well respected due to the high quality of service they had provided to their customers. Murad died in Israel in 1978, while Saleh died in Baghdad in 1969●
Toronto, Canada R Loya, CGA



March 1909 – Aboudie Clan, Baghdad.

Photograph Parisienne Baghdad Courtesy Mrs Renée Elkabir

Left to right:

Back row: Sasson Shina; Haron Somekh; Khedhoury Abraham Somekh; Abraham Somekh; Moshe Somekh; Yosef Belbul; Ezra Belbul; Yacub Belbul; Heskell Elkabir. Second row:;; Regina Belbul; Farha Belbul; Salim Aboudi (child); Sion Aboudi; Heskell Murad; Yusef Murad; Shaul Murad; Abraham Elkabir; Saleh Elkabir; Elkabir family servant.

Sitting: Murad family nanny; Salha Belbul; Lulu Shina; Serah Somekh; Farha Aboudi; Chahla Murad; Farha Murad; Muzli Elkabir; Hanina Elkabir; Aziza Elkabir. Front:;; Naima Abraham Somekh; Yusef Elkabir; Selman Elkabir.●

In his recent interview with *TIME* magazine, Iran's President Rafsanjani said, "The world should adopt a position that would allow Palestinians to return to their homeland and create a system in which people can live freely together".

Since when have the Iranians become the protectors and defenders of the Arabs? My advice to Rafsanjani is that he guide and teach the Shi'ite and Sunni Moslems to live together in southern Iraq.

As for his generosity to create a Jewish state within US borders, it is far better for all parties not to threaten the existence of Israel which stands on less than one-quarter of the original Palestine.

The declared objective of Rafsanjani's followers is to annihilate Israel. If Rafsanjani seeks peaceful co-existence with the West, he should first show goodwill towards his neighbours and the region in general, including Israel.●

London George Haye
(A version of the above letter appeared in *TIME* magazine).

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

- Mrs S Sapriel, Harrow
- Mrs Nour Davis, Queensland, Australia
- Mr & Mrs K Bekhor, Melbourne
- Mr & Mrs Fred Kooby, New York
(in memory of their parents Rosa & Sion Kooby and Marcelle & Abraham Nawy)
- Mr & Mrs Ezra Meir, Cary, N.C., USA
- Mr Rudolph Masry, New York
- Mr Meyer Jonah, Los Angeles
- Mr M Ephraim, Watford
- Mr Charles Sassoon, White Plains, N.Y.●

- رجاء وثناء -

يا اخي داويد لطفاً
عزت خلعنا عزت فضد
بلغ الاستاذ عني
يا اخي الكلي نعم
انت قد صفتنا صفاً
نشرة الكليل هذه
جمعت بن اولي الافضال
ص لدهيب لعيان
وبرا للطبع ركن
هل وجود الصبروما
اناس بشور الليم
انا لانكم ما
انحوا عن دفا
ثم جودوا بلبا

انت لي خيل حيم
زانه ود مقبر
قول سفاو كريم
دم بخير سيدم
زانه خلود قوم
هازت السبقه العظيم
والجلود الليريم
سفاو للكتيم
تدموهي الذود الليم
بلطام يا نعم
في عذاب سديم
عشتة ولد ليطم
فا ذكروا الورد القديم
يبري الخيل السيم

A reader in Vienna praises *The Scribe* and those involved in producing it●

I have recently come across a copy of *The Scribe* at my aunt's house and was fascinated by the stories you publish. As my parents are no longer alive and my circle of Iraqi relations has grown smaller in recent years, I find it heartwarming and touching to read about times and places long gone.●

Montreal Charles Chitayat

In 1945 Prime Minister Churchill, according to his official biographer Dr Martin Gilbert, tried to promote the idea of a Middle East "Federation of Independent States" in which an independent Jewish State would form an integral part. Having sponsored two symposiums on M.E. confederation at Oxford University in recent years, I tried to interest Dr Gilbert in organising another symposium to revive Churchill's idea. His reply: "It may well be that Churchill's idea of a federation of independent states will be a way forward for the current Middle East peace conference. Certainly a symposium would be worthwhile. Whilst I hope you will forgive me if I decline your exceptionally kind offer to put together a symposium myself, I would gladly participate in such a venue. I am busy trying to complete a six-volume set of Churchill's war papers, which is proving an up-hill (though fascinating) task. But it leaves no time for conferences. (It does have a constant Middle East dimension!)"●

N.E.D.

While on an excursion with other pensioners of Barclays Bank, I was reading your journal in the bus when one of my colleagues glanced over my shoulder and impatiently asked me to lend it to him to read for a few minutes. This I did with great pleasure, knowing the satisfaction that I and many of your readers have had as subscribers. Please kindly add my colleague to your mailing list.●

Kiryat Ono, Israel Heskell Soffair

Judaism and free will

Judaism shot itself in the foot by saying that God gave us free will, to choose between good and evil, which makes us responsible and punishable for our actions and, at the same time, saying that God knows our thoughts.

These are contradictory statements. If God knows what we are going to do, then we have no choice; our actions are predetermined and we cannot be held responsible for them.

The rabbis try to explain, by saying: All is in the power of Heaven, except the fear of Heaven. But that doesn't seem to solve the problem.

By contrast, Islam has no such difficulty. It simply says Allah is aware of all that we do, and leaves our thoughts and decisions to ourselves. God gave us free will and is not interested in our thoughts.

The gift and responsibility of free will is emphasised in the powerful and timeless exhortation of Deut 30:19: I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse, **therefore choose life.**

The choice is ours●

Regarding calendar reform; when I was Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Baghdad, we received from the League of Nations a proposal to reform the calendar by having 13 months of 4 weeks plus an extra day or two at the end of the year.

The government rejected this plan and our Ministry wrote to say that this was contrary to the Islamic religion●

London **Meer S Basri**

Received:

Shirim – a collection of 45 exquisite Hebrew poems by Dr Lilian Dabby-Joury; Ramat Gan●

Thank you for your contribution to *Goshen*, our bulletin of Egyptian Jewry.

Our foremost aim is to reach the standard of *The Scribe*, which is interesting, well written and presented, and which we enjoy reading and keep all issues in our records. *Kol Ha Kavod*●

Israel Federation of **Avner Assael**
Egyptian Jews **President**
Haifa



Akram and Saida Chitayat, President and First Lady of Congregation Bene Naharayim, New York, were honoured at the annual fund-raising dinner of Midrash Ben Ish Hai.

The photograph shows Hakham Ya'aqob Menasseh presenting them with an award for their community work●

Minyan – a congregational quorum

by **Aaron Aaron**, Founder President of New South Wales Association of Sephardim, Sydney and its Sephardi synagogues. Author of *The Sephardim of Australia and New Zealand*

In our community, the first question one asks – when he comes to the Synagogue to pray, either in the morning or evening, is “have we a *minyan*?”

Usually, the congregation is waiting for the tenth man to complete the quorum for divine services.

As the worshippers anxiously await for the tenth man – they keep asking why not nine men to complete a congregational quorum – *minyan*?

To answer this question I went through a number of books and I give below what our sages and rabbis had to say on this matter.

In order to understand the significance of the tenth man, one has to know what constitutes a congregation – the answer is a minimum of ten adult Jews. (An adult Jew is any male who has passed his thirteenth birthday) to be present to hold a religious service or to proclaim the holiness of God and his Kinship. In the absence of a *minyan*, no public worship may take place.

Sources of Ruling

The origin of this ruling is traced to various biblical sources.

For instance, our forefather – Abraham's plea to God to save Sodom if at least ten righteous men were found there (Gen. 18:32).

In Ruth one notices Boaz seeking out ten elders of Bethlehem (Ruth 4:2) and Psalms (68:27).

It is interesting to note that in the question of spies, the word *Edah* (congregation) is also applied to the ten spies who in the days of Moses rendered a negative report on the land of Canaan. Hence it was established that the “congregation of G-d” consists of at least ten men – The talmud explains that if ten men pray together the Divine Presence is with them (Ber 6a).

In Psalms (82:1), number ten was derived from the verse which reads: G-d standeth in the congregation of G-d.

The Jewish philosopher Philo Judaeus of Alexandria (25 BCE to 45 CE) said that ten was decided upon because it is the most perfect number. (The basis of the decimal system. N.E.D.)

The Zohar speaks of the TEN SEFIROT.

It is interesting to note that in the Geonic Period, the definition of the *minyan* was not as rigid – In MASSEKHET SOFERIM (10:8) – a late Geonic work reads “A *minyan* is required for the recitation of certain prayers – but”, it is added “our sages in Palestine recite these prayers in the presence of seven . . . and some say even in the presence of six”. The practice of the Palestinians did not prevail, however, the rule of Babylon Jewry was adopted everywhere – a full quorum of ten men has been required for public prayers.

Throughout the centuries, congregations in small towns or villages often found themselves shy of one person to complete a *minyan*. Many innovations were introduced in an attempt to solve this problem. For instance – some of our sages discussed whether one may include in the congregational *minyan* – a “boy” under thirteen years of age, when only one person is lacking for a quorum.

In Tosafot – it is said there is a custom that considers a minor holding a *Humash*

(Bible) as comparable to the tenth adult male Jew. To this custom Rabbenu Tam (France 1100-1171), grandson of Rashi, scoffs at such a procedure and calls it a “foolish custom” (Minhag Shetul).

Agree to Disagree.

To add to his opinion, R Tam goes on to say – that he would count as the tenth man a boy without resorting to such devices. Consequently Rashi in one of his responsa (Teshuvot Rashi No. 277), condemns those communities who consider a *minyan* and read from the Torah – when there are actually only nine men and a boy present. (The boy is given a Sepher Torah to hold).

Rema (Isserles – Moshe Ben Israel 1530-1572) – the Great Polish Rabbi of the Ashkenazi Community, the author of the *Mappan* (an addition to the Shulhan Arukh of Caro) whose ruling and custom were accepted as binding on the Ashkenazi Jewry goes on to say:

“That some congregations have the custom – when a *minyan* is lacking – of utilising nine adult male Jews plus a minor holding a *Humash* (Bible) (Orech Chayyim 55:4). In Mishna Berurah (55:24) many sages disagree with this custom.

It is very interesting to note that the Sephardim accept the more stringent ruling, due to the fact that the Cabbalistic tradition was a central feature of all the great latter-day Sephardic authorities – the Halachot of Ben Ish Hai (Hacham Yosef Hayyim) – speaks of the Laws of Kaddish – in the following vein:

If there were ten men present when the Z'miroth and Shirath Ha-yam of Shharith of Ashre of Minhah were being recited, but some left before kaddish – one may not recite kaddish if ten men are not present – even though it is an obligatory part of the prayer (Shulhan Aruch of Raz. 2L Chapter 58 No. 4).

Amidah repetition

The ruling of the law of Amidah during the repetition of the Amidah is as follows:

If there are less than nine people answering “Amen” to the berachoth of the Shaliah Sibbur, his berachoth are considered as if they are *Levattalah* (void).

The “Olath Tamid” cites Rebbenu Yonah that, if there are not ten people paying attention to what the Shaliah Sibbur is saying, his berachoth are also *Levattalah*.

In the repetition of the Amidah – if it is noticed that there is no more than a bare *minyan* and one realises that some of those present would not pay attention to the prayers so to answer Amen of the Berachoth – in such circumstances the Shaliah Sibbur should pray the first three Berachoth aloud while the rest of the congregation pray with him quietly, word by word. (Halachot – Ben Ish Hai)●

I am interested to receive your journal concerning the heritage, culture and history of the Baghdadian Jewry.

I was born in Baghdad in 1920, educated and qualified as M.D. I have held a post as chief of an Eye Department in various hospitals in Israel teaching ophthalmology to young doctors. I am now retired and work on a consultative basis●

Haifa **Dr Hayim Ben-Moshe**

With the establishing of printing presses by Baghdad Jews in 1855, prayer books began to be produced locally. In addition, short biblical stories in Judeo-Arabic with Hebrew characters were published, such as Joseph and his brothers, Hanna and her seven sons, etc.

Below is reproduced "The Story of the Fishes" kindly supplied by Rabbi Abraham Gubbay, in which the various kinds of fish in the rivers of Iraq, such as the *Bunni*, *Bizz*, *Shabbout* and *Gtan* proclaim their merits and qualities and vie with each other.

האדי קצת א סמך

יקוד סמך אל בני אל כאן שפת
 אחסן מני לא תאפילני לאן אנא
 דאימן דהון ינו מני וכל נגס סמך מא
 יקדר ועייב עליי ויפשלני . וינערו
 סמך אך בו וקלו לל בני אנתא מא
 אחד יכר ניר א בפראן ואל עיסו
 וקאכן אנא באל קרח ובל עו ונאשא
 מא וצירני א צינאר וכתרע ויפו זאל
 אנסאן וסתנמעון מני כפה ופקאו
 וערוקאל רו אחפילך יא צלטאן עלא
 סמך אל נשאן אנא אנפע לל סעודה
 מל בלה ודחתאן . יקוד סמך א שבוט
 א כאן צלת באר שמוט עלך מן סמך
 אל שבוט יקוד סמך א צעיה אנא
 אבלי לריר כל ציה יקוד סמך אל
 בו אספת יא חוין כאן אנא אקלי
 ויא רהון מני ינו ולאנארם וסתנפעון
 מני כפה ופקאו וערוק אל רו . יקוד
 סמך א שרוק א כאן צלית כל טאווה
 תסיר מחרוק אחפילך יא צלטאן עלא
 סמך א נשאן יקוד סמך א נשאן אנא
 אנתקדם קדאם א ויא וצלטאן
 ואתקדם בסעודת סידה ודחתון
 ואתקדם קדאם אל קצי ולבטראן
 וכליני א ערסו ולבטראן ואתקדם
 קדאם א שדחאן בטרמה וכליוואן
 ואתקדם קדאם א מונאי ולפנאן
 ואתקדם קבל מא יצה אדוואן אלוואן
 מן טרשי ולרמאן :

I have known you and your family for a very long time, including your late grandfather Rabbi Ezra Dangoor of blessed memory who gave my *shehita semikha* when I was about 14 years old.
 You have surpassed all except perhaps your late grandfather. *Koll hakabod* your name is known all over the world. Keep it up!
 White Plains, NY Charles Sassoon

Rose Petal

Mrs Renée Elkabir relates that in 1923 her mother took her to enrol her in Mrs Stout's newly opened American school. The Headmistress came back with a glass of water full to the brim and placed it on the table to signify that the school was full and there was no place for young Renée.
 Thereupon the mother took a petal from a rose she was carrying and put it on top of the water without spilling it. The Headmistress was so pleased with this gesture that she decided to accept Renée in the school, and from then on she became known as the rose petal.
 Renée got married three years later. Hers was the first wedding in Baghdad with bridesmaids (see picture)●



Right to left: Abraham and Renée Elkabir; her sister Marguerite; Flora Somekh; Blanche Murad. In front: Marcelle Sion Shelomo; Khatoun H Ezra●

Genealogy

I have been delighted by the wonderful response from your readers who have written to me about their family histories following my recent publication of the 1917 Manchester petition. I have received letters from all over the world, including Canada, the USA, France, Israel, Australia, as well as the UK. It has shown that there is a great interest in genealogy and a wealth of knowledge existing amongst the older generation. I would encourage your readers to think of making a permanent record of their family histories and pedigrees before the information is lost. It seems to me that *The Scribe* could form an excellent focal point for the collection and publication of such material●
 London W1 Lydia Collins

Greetings. Each time I am in Montreal visiting my parents I always ask my father for the latest issue of *The Scribe*. So last time he simply said "Why don't you get your own copy?" Please send me my very own copy.
 The last book I published is called *The Stones That Speak*, in photographs and words, which evokes 200 years of Jewish life in French Canada●
 Paris Edward Hillel

Please accept my appreciation for the wonderful job you are doing. I enjoy *The Scribe* very much and read it from the first to the very last word●
 Los Angeles Meyer Jonah

Many thanks for your nice service and the wonderful information about our past. It's just like an encyclopaedia.
 I started having *The Scribe* from No. 52. Can I please have issues No's 1-51?
 Manila, Philippines David Shamoon

A dear friend just gave me a copy of *The Scribe*. What a thoroughly enjoyable issue. It gave me great memories of our days in Baghdad. Please put my name on your mailing list●
 New York Rudolph A Masry

Overheard:
 Viscount Tonypany, former Speaker of the House of Commons, saying at the House of Lords: Everything in this House is red, except the members. Everything in the House of Commons is green – including the members!●

Overheard in the synagogue:
 The Sephardim pray and the Iraqis pay●

**Poetry for the countryside;
 prose for the town●**

Where is the Middle East?

by Naim Dangoor

When my wife and I were in Paris on a continuation of our honeymoon in April 1948, I put an advertisement in the classified column of the American *Herald Tribune* for a French cook to take back to the Middle East. One reply said, "Dear Sir, I know where the Middle West is, but can you please tell me which part of America is the Middle East?"

The term "Middle East" was first coined around 1900 and came increasingly into use after the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the first world war, to indicate the strategically important territories with fabulous petroleum deposits, newly conquered by Britain and France and which were previously included in the general term of Near East.

Collier's Encyclopaedia defines Middle East as "comprising that expanse of territory in which Asia, Africa and Europe converge". This would include Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Arabia and Egypt. Some definitions include Sudan, Libya, Tunis, Algeria and even Morocco, which makes the term synonymous with the "Arab World".

Iran (and even beyond) is often included and sometimes also Turkey and Greece (but not Cyprus): Greece, because it was within the Near East which Middle East has now largely replaced. Turkey and Greece, together with the lands around the Eastern end of the Mediterranean were formerly called the Levant. The American State Department still employs officially the term Near East rather than Middle East.

One dictionary divides the East, always in relation to Europe, into Near East, Far East for China and Japan, leaving Middle East to cover India and Pakistan, which seems logical!

Many Middle Eastern people are beginning to object having to adhere to terms devised by their former colonisers and imperial masters.

Incidentally, prevailing conditions in the Middle East after the establishment of the State of Israel, prevented us from returning home. Thus, our honeymoon lasted 25 months travelling to many countries – New Year at Monte Carlo, Olympic Games at St Moritz and London. I was informed by the *Guinness Book of Records* that this is very close to the longest honeymoon on their records.

We returned to Baghdad in 1950, from New York where we were planning to settle, in order to start, with my Moslem partner, the Coca-Cola bottling operations for the whole of Iraq, while the Iraqi-Jewish community was preparing for its historic mass aliya to Israel.

My attachment to you comes from my origin and I am transmitting to my four children the pride of having Babylonian Jewry in our roots.

The picture of the Babylonian Rabbis (Scribe 58) brought out some feverish excitement, as (Chief Rabbi) Hakham David Papu is great-grandfather to my children, and this was the first time he is more than a name: a face, a presence. Thank you *Scribe*.

Geneva Mme Jeannette Aykut-Rejwan



Reception on the occasion of the new Israeli Embassy at New Delhi on 18 May 1993. From left to right: Dr S S Mahapatra, Patron of All-India Indo-Israel Friendship League; Justice H R Khanna, President of the League; Mr Shimon Peres, Israel Foreign Minister; Mr Vasantrao Shinde, Secretary & Treasurer; Mrs Sarojini Mahishi, Chairman New Delhi Branch; H.E. Mr Ephraim Duek, First Israeli Ambassador to India at New Delhi; Ms Sophy Kelly.

INDO ISRAEL FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE

From:
Ms Sophy Kelly
Hon Secretary



Hill Grange Residential Complex
13A Pedder Road
Bombay 400 026, India

I cannot congratulate you enough for the superb publication of *The Scribe* – it is a unique publication, from any Jewish perspective – religious, historical, Baghdadi, Sephardic, Babylonian, or Biblical.

It is spiritually elevating which is simultaneously refreshing. Its excellence surpasses description, and all the issues, since its inception, have already made deep inroads and invaluable historic records into Jewish history and the Jewish Bible, and the story of what is known as Zionism today can be traced to the roots of the Babylonian Jewish civilisation where the spiritual romance with the God of the Hebrews took birth.

Indeed, the Almighty has showered his blessings on you abundantly, to have the privilege to publish such a wonderful paper.

You are part and parcel of the miraculous resurrection of the State of Israel, the Renaissance of Judaism and above all the Hebrew Babylonian civilisation which embraces all the aforesaid.

An important feature of the Dinner at the Jewish Club on the occasion of the Habonim Bombay Reunion was that two representatives from the BBC World Service kindly and graciously covered the function and recorded Mrs Ezra Aboody's conversation. The same was broadcast on 7 March 1993 and repeated on 8 March 1993, along with the recordings of the special interview they granted to me personally at Hill Grange.

With the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Israel, the Indo Israel Friendship League, which was founded in the wake of the Six Day War, came to life.

There is a great enthusiasm and joy in all sections of Indian Society about the final establishment of diplomatic relations. We intend to establish a branch of our League in each and every state in India. However, the League is in acute need of funds.

When the Iraqi Jews were in Bombay, they always came to the rescue in such situations, but there is not even a minyan in the synagogue nowadays. Nevertheless, small in number as we are, we have enough influence and have already mustered a great deal of political and moral support from the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha (both Houses of Parliament).

Would you kindly permit us to reproduce a few of your valuable articles, either in the local press or news handouts?

Our library requires replenishing so books about Jews and Jewish history, about Israel and her achievements, about the birth and survival of Judaism, will be most welcome and appreciated.

I noticed from the Mailing List you have published that no names from India are included.

Scribe: The list that appeared in the last issue is only one of 30 such lists that are being serialised in our journal.

In answer to my request, you sent me issue No. 58 which I read thoroughly. My son was born in New York. He is 31 years old and has much interest in his parents' heritage. He wants to know everything about our life in Baghdad and the language we spoke and are still speaking at home. Can you please send me all the back issues?

Forest Hills, NY

William Moullem

I am Dr Shlomo Basri's sister. I have been very moved to see in the March issue of *The Scribe* the picture of the Baghdad Medical College with my brother and all his friends whom I knew personally. I will be grateful if you can include me among those to whom you send *The Scribe* and even more thankful if I can get it from January 1993.

Nave-Avivim, Israel

Hanna Rahamim

Finally we have our very own copy of *The Scribe*!! For years we have been reading other people's copies.

To give you a little background. Fred grew up in Baghdad, Lebanon and France, and I had my early years in Teheran and England. We met, got married and have lived in New York for 35 years. Every winter for the last 10 years we have been going to Ft. Lauderdale. What a unique and amazing experience. In 1983 there were about 110 people at a New Year's Eve party there. Last year I believe over 400 attended and many were turned away because of space. There is no age barrier. We look forward to being there because we have an opportunity to renew old friendships which have a glow that never fades away. Each year we say let's go somewhere else for a change, but the Ft. Lauderdale magnet draws us back●

Great Neck, NY

Dora Kooby

Jews-for-Jesus

Jews-for-Jesus should be told that if *Yeshu* came back today he would not recognise Christianity as his own teaching.

The same view is held by the mass-circulation Christian magazine, *The Plain Truth*, published by the Worldwide Church of God, of Pasadena, California, with a circulation of 1.7 million worldwide (114,000 in the UK).

In a recent issue, in a long article, the writer points out, "If you were to study Jesus's teachings closely, you would probably conclude he would be alarmed, even angered, by the many beliefs and practices attached to his name today".

"In the rush to gain converts, the quantity of believers became the goal... In their zeal to attract the masses, Christian teachers gradually modified the message".

"Satan seduced much of mankind into adopting the approach of worshipping Jesus". "Christianity becomes an empty bottle that successive cultures fill with all kinds of things".

"A rabbi once asked his students how to tell when the night had ended and the day was dawning. One student volunteered: 'Could it be when there is enough light to tell the difference between your brother and your sister?'

'No', replied the rabbi. 'If you don't know that any human being is your brother or your sister, no matter what time it is, it is still night'".

"Christianity requires that we demonstrate our love to all human beings".

The truth of the Gospels

Another article in the same issue of *The Plain Truth* reports that a group of scholars has been creating a stir, especially in the United States, by questioning the truth of the Gospels.

Last year, after six years of debating and voting, the group, called the Jesus Seminar, rejected about 80 per cent of the words attributed to Jesus, calling them "later creations".

About a Jewish Trial – All four Gospels describe a Jewish trial and condemnation of Jesus before his crucifixion. 97 per cent of the Jesus Seminar do not think any such trial occurred. "The Jewish role in these events is a figment of Christian imagination".



Fort Lauderdale has become a wintering resort for Iraqi Jews of the USA, Canada and UK. The above picture was taken at the New Year's Eve ball.

Left to right: standing – Barry Cohen, Salim Mahlab, Flora Hillel.

sitting – Yvonne Hillel Cohen, Reñee Dangoor, Jamila Shooker●

About founding a Church – Jesus reportedly said: "I will build a Church". The Seminar disagrees that he could make such a statement. "Jesus had no intention of starting a new religion. He had no idea that a new religion would transpire or that he would become a cult figure in it. He would have been appalled by it".

Divinity – "In the judgment of the Seminar (and of most mainstream scholarship since the last century) Jesus didn't think of himself as divine".

The Seminar believes most of Jesus's statements and teachings as reported in the Gospel are inaccurate.

Sabbath or Sunday?

Yet a third article, as well as the leading article in the same issue, deals with the weekly day of rest. It refers to the European Community's attempt to fix Sunday as an official day of rest across Europe.

The editor states that the subject is much older than European civilisation and has its roots at the very beginning of the history of man. God designated the last day of the week as the Sabbath for men and women to have an intimate spiritual relationship with their Creator.

"The command to observe the Sabbath was later codified into the Ten Commandments at the time of Moses. Christians believe they should obey and keep the Ten Commandments. Yet, asks the writer, how many realise that the Sabbath Commandment specifically says to keep the *seventh* day holy? There is no dispute that Jesus kept the seventh-day Sabbath. Neither the Apostles nor the Church fathers changed that day to Sunday.

"In fact, Sunday was not formally decreed on the entire Roman world, as well as on Christianity, until 321 C.E., by Emperor Constantine. It is no secret, continues the writer, that Constantine's enthusiasm for Sunday as the official day of worship coincided with his goal of political and religious unity, not to mention his own special respect for the Roman god, Apollo, whom he had long worshipped on Sunday, the first day of the week. The real Sabbath was discarded as "Jewish" and long since forgotten by most Churches..."

Naim Dangoor adds: The above sentiment is in line with my article in the last issue of *The Scribe* – **Sunday Opening – Saturday Closing**. Some may argue that the days of the week may have changed over the years. In fact, the weekly sequence has not changed at all since the time of Adam, 9,000 years ago. Mankind must not tamper with the continuity of the week by inserting a nameless day or two every year in order to have a symmetrical calendar. Such attempts have always foundered for Sabbath considerations.

When Jews-for-Jesus recently put out full-page advertisements saying, "You don't have to be Jewish to celebrate Christmas", I wrote to them, "If you are searching for the real teachings of Jesus, do write to me. If, on the other hand, you are just Christian missionaries in disguise, don't bother to write".

They never wrote!●

The Jewish Museum

I would like to thank you on behalf of all of us at the Jewish Museum for including the article on the opening in the June issue of *The Scribe*.

The evening was a great success attended by 400 people from all the different Sephardic communities.

It was a privilege for me, together with Francine Simon, Jamila Shooker and Constance Aboodi, to serve on the committee that made it such an historic event. This is only the start of many Sephardic Heritage Society events and programmes●

New York

Yvonne Hillel Cohen

I have nothing but good things to say about the Sephardic Heritage Society reception at the Jewish Museum on 17 June. Having grown up in Iran, I especially liked the Judaica from the Middle East such as the wall from the temple of Isfahan and the diamond engagement pins worn by Sephardic ladies. My greatest compliments to all who worked on this impressive collection of art and history●

New York

Ida Saleh-Kirsch

Homecoming

by Naim Dangoor

In what language was the Torah given at Sinai?

The Torah was given in the language spoken by the Israelites in Egypt, which was obviously Hebrew.

Hebrew can be defined as the Israelitish dialect of Canaanitish, which by the testimony of Tel-El-Amarna were both spoken in Palestine as early as 2000 B.C.E. The language of the Bible was in fact the language of Canaan (Isaiah 19:18). The Assyrians called Hebrew the language of the West country. This shows that the Israelites coming to Canaan did not conquer a foreign country but, enlightened by the Revelation at Sinai, returned to their country of origin – as we are doing in this day and age. **If the Palestinians are truly the descendants of the Canaanites, as they claim, then they would be speaking Hebrew and not Arabic!**

Our mistake, then as now, was to allow Arabs to infiltrate our country, to be fruitful and multiply (faster than us). When Nebucadnezzar took Jerusalem they told him, "Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation thereof".

We realised our mistake only when we were led into captivity. "By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion." Why did we weep? By a Freudian slip the answer is given in the words that follow in the Psalm. "*Al Arabim betokhah*". Because of the Arabs that were entrenched within it.

Will history repeat itself? Like a good teacher, History keeps repeating itself until the lesson is learned!

Our claim to Canaan merely highlights our wider indisputable claim that the so-called Arabian peninsula and Fertile Crescent have been our general habitat since time immemorial. We firmly belong to that region and are entitled to our full share of its land and its natural wealth.

The return of the Jews to the Middle East is the best thing that has happened to the region in modern times, if only the Arabs knew●

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A couple of years ago you kindly printed a letter from me inviting your readers who had any Judaica or Hebraica they were willing to dispose of to kindly donate them to Jews' College Library, 44a Albert Road, London NW4 2SJ (telephone 081 203 6427, ext. 76).

The college was established in 1855 and probably has the largest collection of books, manuscripts, periodicals and pamphlets of Jewish interest anywhere in Europe. Its Reading Room is open to the public on weekdays and Sunday mornings during termtime.

We pride ourselves on having Judaica and Hebraica, including prayer books, in many languages and are anxious to add to our collection, so that we can meet the many demands made on us from the UK and abroad●

Ezra Kahn, Librarian



Left to right: Abraham, Missouda (Mirza's wife), Gourji, Rufka (Mirza's mother), Naim, Mirza, Menashi, (tall one at the back is Aziz). Aflatoon not in picture, as he was away studying●

Doctor Mirza Yaccub

I was particularly interested in your reference in your March 1993 issue to my grandfather, Dr Mirza Yacoob, as one of the early doctors in Baghdad.

I always understood that my grandfather practiced alone, having obtained his qualifications in Persia – and as to my father, Aflatoon, he did not train in France, but in Beirut and in Edinburgh.

I would be very interested to hear from any of your readers who knew me in the past, especially at the American School for Girls in Beirut.

I enclose a photograph of my grandfather and his family. He had six sons in all, no daughters. A fact that led one pregnant lady to believe that my grandmother had a "secret medicine" for generating boys. The story goes that this lady obstinately demanded this medicine. To appease her, my grandmother gave her a bottle of beetroot juice, prescribing a dosage. The lady was pacified and went home contented.

Any news of Abraham, who stayed in Baghdad, would be welcome●
**PO Box 606, Nour Aflatoon Davis
Stanthorpe, Queensland 4380, Australia**

I read with interest the article on Jewish medicine in Iraq in the March issue of *The Scribe*. The part written about my father Dr Mirza Yacoob is appreciated.

It is not correct that my father did not have a diploma. He had a diploma from Teheran and was practicing his profession when he got settled in Baghdad. Having become very popular and successful, he was the subject of envy by other doctors especially the Turks, who intrigued to have him barred from practice on the pretext that his diploma was not recognised. Faced with this situation he brought Dr Nourallah from Persia as a partner to sign the prescriptions.

This partnership with Nourallah continued until Baghdad was occupied by the British during World War I, when a health department was set up under Dr Major Hegg. My father's diploma was accepted and he was given licence to practice. He was appointed Chief Medical Officer in charge of the Baghdad Prisons Hospital. Nourallah then opened his own clinic and my father continued on his own.

It may be of interest to mention that my father was the honorary doctor to the Persian Consulate during the Turkish regime and after. At a reception held at the Persian Consulate in honour of Shah Ahmed Qajar when he visited Baghdad, the Shah presented my father with a medal and a sword in appreciation of his services. My father was also the honorary doctor to Meir Elias Hospital. He was the family doctor to most of the well known families of Baghdad, both Jewish and Moslem. He retired in 1939 and died in 1951 at the age of 85.

Hamilton, Ontario Naim Mirza Yacoob

Scribe: In 1923 Riza Khan became prime minister of Iran and he sent off the young Shah Ahmed Qajar, who was only 25 years old, on a long trip to Baghdad and to visit the Shi'a holy shrines and then to Europe, from which he was not allowed to return to this country. In 1925 Riza Khan proclaimed himself Shah and Ahmed Qajar died in Paris in 1930 at the age of 32.

Naim Dangoor believes he may have been present at the Persian Consulate reception in 1923 in the company of his grandfather Haham Ezra Dangoor who was then Chief Rabbi●

I was born in Baghdad and emigrated to the United States in 1952. I saw a recent copy of *The Scribe* and read it from cover to cover. It made a marked impression on me. Please put me on your mailing list●
Whiteville, N.C., USA Ronald S Mukamal