

As soon as Iraq can be brought within the Rabin-Arafat coalition, the Middle East will have internal peace and external security.

The SCRIBE

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WISHING ALL OUR READERS A HAPPY HANUCAH AND A PROSPEROUS 1994

Now that we have recognised Arafat, – Should we not recognise Mohammed?

Single-handed, Mohammed created a new monotheistic religion on the lines of the Revelations to Abraham and Moses, with its own Bible (Koran), having today one billion followers all over the world. He started a new empire and a new civilisation.

by Naim Dangoor

The one person responsible for making the Israel-PLO peace accord possible was Rav Obadia Yosef, former Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel. He was one of five Israelis constantly kept informed of the secret negotiations in Norway. Circumstances have often cast Rav Obadia in the role of kingmaker, and he made full use of his authority.

Labour had obtained a majority of only one seat in the present Knesset, and that majority depended on the five Arab votes. Bringing his religious Shas party with its six seats into the coalition, Rav Obadia made Labour's majority more credible.

Rav Obadia's reason for supporting Rabin's land for peace platform is that human lives are more important than land. He may have given Israel the right solution for the wrong reason, for when was individual human lives more important than the land of one's country. People are supposed to lay down their lives gladly for the fatherland.

However, the road of peace can be a sour lemon or a sweet lemonade. An Israeli-Palestinian alliance can become the dominant force in a re-organised Middle East. Moreover, we must realise that the new Israel is part of a changed Middle East. Thanks to Mohammed, the whole region now acknowledges the God of Israel. Jews should have no difficulty in acknowledging the Moslem formula: "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed

is Allah's missionary", without converting to Islam. Islam is contained within Judaism.

Mohammed's fault was that he tried to convert the Jews. Islam does not conflict with Judaism but confirms it. The enmity started when the Jews rightly refused to convert. Just as Christian-Jewish enmity started not because of the baseless accusation of "deicide", but because Jews refused to convert to a paganised Christianity.

Having recognised Arafat, should we not now recognise Mohammed as the religious leader who brought in a billion believers in the One True God?

Mohammed killed Jews, but certainly not more than Arafat and the PLO. Mohammed denounced and reviled Jews, but not more than our own Prophets did. The Koran vilifies Jews in certain places, as also do our own scriptures.

Only Rav Obadia Yosef has the authority to make such a step possible.

Just as Arafat agreed to repeal part of the covenant seeking to eliminate Israel, Moslems must give up their claim that Islam has supplanted Judaism. In fact Islam confirms Judaism.

What about the Temple Mount? There is no practical way of taking it away from the Moslems. The Bible expresses the hope that the Temple shall become the house of prayer for all nations. This is indeed the only solution to that problem●

(Arabic grammar is deficient in that it cannot distinguish between "A messenger of God" and "The messenger of God adding the definite article – "Mohammed al-rassul Allah" becomes blasphemous).

(Rav Obadia's son tells us that his father's name is derived from Hakham Abdullah (Obadia) Somekh and Hakham Yosef Hayeem, illustrious rabbis of Baghdad)●



19 years ago – MAN OF THE HOUR Rav Obadia Yosef at the Iraqi Club in London.

Left to right: Dayan Dr Pinchas Toledano; Meer Basri; David Petel; Elias Sofaer; Haham Dr Solomon Gaon; Rav Obadia Yosef; Albert Dangoor (behind); Naim Dangoor; Percy Gourgey (behind); Nathan Saatchi; assistant to Rav Obadia; Jack David; Sonny Gubbay●

My life and times

by Salim E. Dangoor

I became involved in community life at an early age. In 1930, while only 11, I read a nostalgic eulogy for my late grandfather, Hakham Ezra Dangoor, at a mass memorial service held at the Albert Sassoon Alliance School Synagogue in Baghdad, organised by the late Sasson Murad who was also the author of my oration, that brought tears to many eyes. p. 6.

In 1935 I was at the Shamash School with one year to finish. We had amongst the other teachers from Palestine a Dr Kallye, the director of the school, and Mr Schneider our Hebrew teacher. We also had one Moslem teacher, Mr Sabri Al-Dhuwaibi, in charge of sport activities.

One day when I came to the school my classmates surrounded me and told me the story of how in the dark of night, the two Palestinian teachers were arrested and thrown across the border. Everyone blamed Mr Sabri in this action and when the classes were convened after the whistle, our class was still in turmoil discussing the events of the night before. After an argument with Mr Sabri the other teachers came and took me to their room, seeing how excited I was, and we all thought that the matter was closed. However, in the evening two policemen came to our house looking for me but I managed to escape to my uncle's house.

Father went the second day to see one or two of his friends at the Ministry of Interior. He was told that it was very difficult to rescind the order as it was issued by the Minister himself, no less than Rashid Ali (of ill fame). Apparently Mr Sabri told him that in front of all the boys in school, I insulted him and insulted Islam. All the same, I was expelled from the Shamash School. My parents were worried about my safety to stay in Baghdad so they decided to send me to London where my two elder brothers were staying.

When all three brothers returned after one year, the world situation was unstable, with Hitler in power, and the threat of war in the horizon. My father wanted me to stay with him and help him in his publishing house and offered me a high salary. At that time all the school books and many books from the Ministry of Defence were published by Father, but I refused and decided to leave for Beirut. My parents followed me there to see to it that I did not travel any further to Europe. I had a lovely time in Beirut and apart from my studies I managed to do some business by buying the huge quantities of paper that the Germans were exporting at very cheap prices to get the foreign exchange they needed for their armaments.

In 1939 war was declared after the Nazi's attack on Poland but life was normal in Beirut until June 1940 when France shamefully surrendered. A classmate and a friend, the son of the Prime Minister Abdul Mihsen Al Saadoon came to me in the early morning and said that we must leave Beirut immediately, as maybe the Germans will come to arrest all allied citizens. We left hurriedly by car to Palestine and from there to Baghdad.

Again Father wanted me to stay and help him but I refused. I applied and was accepted in a University in the United States to study medicine. In the meantime Rashid Ali made his coup d'etat, with the Jewish pogroms that followed, and that made my decision to leave irrevocable. Since there was no air travel during the war, all departures to the United States were by boat through India. When I arrived in Bombay, I met my uncle and aunt, Mr & Mrs Kelly Hillel, and decided to stay a few weeks until the University's term began. That was a mistake that cost me my medical studies.

In December 1941 Japan attacked Pearl Harbour and the US entered the war, and the route by sea to New York was not available any more. I was stranded in India not knowing what to do until I met Mr Conrad de Courcey one day at the Taj Mahal Hotel bar. We spoke by chance and when he heard that I was without any plans, he asked me if I wanted to work for his company as Manager of the Bombay branch. Mr de Courcey was the Managing Director of Faiha Trading and Fowler Insurance of Baghdad. When I told him that I did not know anything about business, he said that he only needed someone he could trust. Since all supplies to the Middle East will come from India there was going to be a tremendous business entailing millions of Rupees. He said he knew my father and the family and thus he was not afraid to send me huge sums of money. As to experience, he said that I will get specific instructions what to buy and from whom to buy, so I didn't need experience.

I was offered 2000 Rupees a month plus commission (a very high salary then) and naturally I accepted and I had to arrange for an office, secretaries, accountant and helpers. The first remittance I received was 20 lakhs of Rupees (2 million) and when the Manager of Lloyds Bank called me, he said that I was too young to get such an amount. He said that he thinks that there was a mistake of one zero and he is waiting for a confirmation. But the confirmation came to buy cotton, piece goods and tea. I contacted the Sassoon mills and got prices below the limits I got, which impressed and pleased my superiors. At one time I had $\frac{3}{4}$ of a Dhow (sailing boat) filled with goods bought and insured by me, while nobody was able to get any shipping space. I succeeded in engaging reliable captains and paid them even more than what they asked. Other merchants had bad experience with these captains of Dhows. They would accept a cheap rate and then disappear to another port in the Gulf with all the goods they carried. All in all, I made a very good business for myself and for the company and in 1944 I left Bombay for Baghdad.

In Iraq at the time a young man was exempt from military service while studying in a University, and this is how I was allowed to leave at the time, to India and the US. But when I returned they looked at my passport and took me straight to the Ministry of Defence, had me examined

medically and enrolled me at the officer's college in the term that was going to start a few months later. They were convinced that I left at the time on false pretences saying that I was going to study medicine, to avoid military service.

I was to stay in Baghdad about four months to wait for the "Dowra" to start at the Officer's College at Karradeh. On the intervention of Taha Pasha El Hashemi, the Commander in Chief of the Army, a friend of my father's, I was exceptionally allowed to go to Iran for a short visit.

I got a transit visa to Iran and left by train through Basra. There were no air flights then to Iran. From Basra I took a taxi to the frontier at Khorramshahr. The driver asked me to give him three dinars to bribe the frontier officer. "Bribe for what?" I asked. He said that this is the cost for entering Iran illegally. But when I told him that I had a visa, he went to speak to the fellow in charge and came back to say that would not help. I was angry and went myself to speak in English and the officer was very nice. He said of course I can proceed but he has to look at my luggage. He found an expensive camera and a radio. He took them out and he asked me if I had an import licence to bring in these two items to Iran. He said that he will keep it with him until my return. The driver told me in Arabic that if I want to see my camera and radio again, it would be cheaper to pay the bribe, which I did, and naturally did not require an import licence any more. I was soon to find out that this was the pattern in Iran, to pay bribes with or without reason!

I arrived in Teheran without knowing anybody there and unable to speak the language. I stayed at the Park Hotel, the best in town, and decided to have a nice time.

The Manager of the Park Hotel was a nice fellow who spoke good English and French. A few days after my arrival, he came to me asking for 500 tomans (£50) as a bribe. He would not say for what, but promised to return it doubled if I am not very satisfied. I gave him the bribe and he told me that since Czechoslovakia has been liberated by the Russians, leading Czechs are coming from London to Prague. And that day a beautiful girl, the private secretary of President Benes arrived at the hotel and had to stay a few days waiting for her flight. He was going to make her sit next to my table for dinner. It was really worth the bribe! In no time I started a conversation, had the rest of the dinner together and we became great friends. As it turned out the girl was extremely intelligent and beautiful. She was Jewish, called Dasha Steinova, and she returned to Iran twice on short leave. Everybody including Dasha herself thought that we would be married. There was no specific reason why we didn't, and we carried on corresponding for years afterwards, until after the "Dubchek Spring" in 1956.

The days passed quickly and after three months I told the hotel manager that I would be leaving. Have you got an exit visa, he asked? I said I am a tourist, why should I need an exit visa. Well, he said, this is Iran and you have to pay a bribe of 500 tomans to get it. A bribe in and a bribe out! He said why don't you go your-

self to get it, you have nothing to do. I took the address and went. The fellow asked me if I paid my taxes. What taxes, I have not done any business here. Well, he said, then go to the tax office and explain that, and bring their authorisation for you to leave. I went to the tax office, they looked at every page of my passport and asked me what I was doing in Teheran. I said that I came as a tourist and lived at the Park Hotel and now have to return to Baghdad to do my military service. And what were you doing in Bombay, they asked. I explained that I was the Manager of a company there. He said you can go to the hotel and we will send you the paper there. The second day the paper came and as I did not speak any Persian I took it proudly to the Manager to translate. He said that they simply say you have to pay one million rials before you can leave. I was furious. I went to the Iraqi legation and spoke with the Minister, Hashem Khalil (there was no embassy then). He laughed and said this is Iran! Come with me to the Finance Minister. The Minister called his second and ordered him to attend to this shocking case. I was taken to a third and fourth person and was told that since an estimate was made as to how much I have to pay, there is no authority that can change that except a special "commission" that meets once a month. After going from one commission to another and over a year later it was decided that I had to pay a tax of 10,000 rials.

But in the meantime I studied Persian and spoke fluently. I opened an office, engaged a staff and dealt extensively in the import of paper, my father's and grandfather's line of business. This made me come in contact with many friends – those that were pro Shah and the nationalists like Dr Nossadegh that were in the opposite camp. Life was really interesting and exciting: political murders of Prime Ministers, of journalists, attempts against the life of the Shah, cabinet changes every now and then and the iron hand of the Shah ruling the country.

I made good business in Iran and the first year I sent my tax declaration showing a modest profit of 600,000 rials. Sometime afterwards the tax officer came to see me in my office and told me that if I declared such a large figure, I would be assessed for ten times the amount. He suggested to reduce the figure to 60,000 rials and share with him any saving achieved. I could not but agree and this was the pattern in all the following years.

One of the big deals I did was with the Russians. They had a big trade delegation in Teheran and more than half the imports to Iran came from Russia. One day I met one of the delegates at a diplomatic cocktail reception and he wanted to see me the day after. It was very unpopular to meet a Russian, sometimes even dangerous, but I took the risk, as he said that he had a good business proposal. It turned out they needed dollars while the merchants could only buy in rials. After prolonged negotiations we agreed that I buy all the imports in dollars and they would sell it for my account in rials without mentioning my name. It was a secret arrangement and they were always correct and helpful. I would sit with them and "fix" the selling

price of their sugar, steel, paper and half a dozen other items. It was not difficult for me to buy the many millions of dollars on the open market to cover my purchases. Nobody ever knew of this arrangement and the brokers would wonder how I had obtained so many rials. Before signing a deal they would invite me for a fantastic dinner always asking me if I needed any help. When I told them once that I was called by the secret police and interrogated about what business I might have with the Russians, they told me not to worry and they would take care of it. And really that was the end of my trouble with the police.

Apart from my dealing in paper, that opened many doors to many friends, Bridge helped me to play with the highest people in the country. These contacts would prove most helpful to solve any problems I had or help I needed.

For example, one day I asked a young Englishman whom I met every night at the Bridge table of the Club what he was doing in Teheran. He confessed that he was on a "mission impossible". The bank note printers Thomas de la Rue sent him to submit an offer for printing the banknotes of the land, but they would not even accept an offer from him. When I told him that I could help, he could not believe it. I went the next day to meet the President of the National Bank (Bank Mellii), a good friend and a Bridge player. He said that de la Rue were simply blacklisted, and by order of the Shah's father, they would never be admitted to do any business in Iran. Apparently once, when they printed the notes, they deformed the nose of the Shah on the notes and that made him furious. He was certain that they did it with malice. It took me some time to persuade him to take the risk of lifting the ban. After all Iran could only profit from competition. In the end de la Rue gave a quotation 30% cheaper than Bradbury and got the contract.

Most Iranians knew us as the Jews, but often called us "Arabs". So much so that when once the Persians were expelled from Iraq for not having valid visas, the authorities in Teheran decided to reciprocate by expelling the Jews, as they were known to everybody as Arabs. We tried in vain to explain how the Iraqis would be pleased that we were to be expelled. Bribes were discussed, we wrote to the authorities in Iraq and then to our relief one day I saw Tahsin Kadri at the Embassy. He became the Ambassador overnight. Tahsin told me that the Regent was coming for a visit and it would be appropriate to give him a valuable present while meeting him. We found two carpets – one a big Nayin, and another a small silk, costing 600,000 rials each, a sum which we had collected from a dozen or two members of the community. The Ambassador suggested that the Regent should choose. That was a mistake because when we went to see the Regent and showed him the carpets, he said that he wanted to keep both. It was a problem to pay for both but we succeeded and naturally the story of deportation did not materialise. The people of Iran in general showed great respect to the Shah and his family. Some loved him blindly next to God. However, even his most faithful supporter would confess to me that Iran will become a great country

like France or England only while the Shah was there. When they spoke of Iran they were thinking of the Shah alone.

The events of the last twelve years proved how right they were. When I attended a Royal marriage it was difficult to imagine that we were really living in Iran and not in the country of one thousand and one nights. But all that could not hide the extreme poverty of the majority that think only of food for the day for their families.

And now something on my private life. There was no doubt that I was one of the most eligible young men! I was surrounded by girls left and right and had really a nice time.

Then I met one day a Viennese girl, with a magic beauty that stole my heart. It was love at first sight and we eventually got married. At that time it was unthinkable for an Iraqi Jew to marry a non-Iraqi. But after my son was born, and having met my wife, I was "forgiven" by the family.

One day in Teheran I was having lunch in a small restaurant when the waiter came to tell me that I was wanted on the phone. I was very surprised for who could have known that I was at this particular restaurant. But when I went to the room where the phone was supposed to be, I was confronted with my cousin Shlomo Hillel. He said that he wanted to tell me that I should not greet him if I meet him somewhere, as he was on a secret mission and his name is Maurice Peress of French nationality. That evening he came home to us for dinner and told us the story of the Iraqi Jews being smuggled in their thousands through Khorramshahr. The second day he took me to the "camp" where they were placed before being flown to Israel. They all seemed happy and in great spirits. Mr Hillel was behind all the arrangements for the clandestine immigration and later on for the legal mass immigration. But in Iran everything went smoothly as all the authorities concerned closed their eyes to what is happening – thanks to bribes, left and right.

In Iran I was the biggest importer of paper and board and was supplying the government with all their requirements. But then came the Korean war and paper was in great demand all over the world. I had excellent relations with Swedish suppliers and it was enough to phone my friends to send me many hundreds of tons. But after the war they were becoming difficult and decreased my quota considerably. They said they were aware that paper would be in demand as long as the war lasted. But what will happen afterwards? The Mills have to plan for a long time ahead and the only solution they could see was that I come to Sweden and sign a contract for the next two or three years. That was to prove a lucky solution for me, as the war lasted many years and I got an uninterrupted supply which I sold in Iran and Iraq with good profit. My wife came to join me and we have been living in Sweden ever since. I was the only Iraqi in Sweden but now more than 30,000 Assyrians immigrated to Sweden from Iraq and the Lebanon. And lately many thousands of Kurds☺

Middle East peace - refugees and compensation

by Naim Dangoor

The speed of the Middle East peace process is almost unbelievable. Old enemies are fast becoming friends and even allies.

Several factors made this possible. First, the collapse of the Arab-backing Soviet Union; second, the change of the Washington administration from the pro-Arab Bush-Baker team to the balanced Clinton-Christopher team; third, the change in Israel from hard-line Likud to a flexible Labour government; fourth, above all, the realisation by moderate Arabs that their real enemies are dictators like Saddam and Assad and Moslem fundamentalists. Israel, by comparison, is viewed as a stabilising element in the region.

Having secured the return of the 1967 refugees to the West Bank and Gaza, the Arabs now want the return of the 1948 refugees. These fled, at the instigation of the Arab governments, from Israel proper and should be returning to Jaffa, Haifa and other areas in the heart of Israel.

When told that the same number of Jews came to Israel from Arab countries, in exchange, the Arab negotiators argue that the Jews are welcome to return to their countries of origin, wye! wye! A million Arabs to enter Israel and a million Jews to leave Israel! All that remains is for Yitzhak Rabin to hand over the keys of Government House to Yasser Arafat!

Compensation

Compensation for refugees, both Arab and Jewish, will soon appear on the agenda. Although international aid to the Palestinian autonomy is being expressed in tens of billions, the emboldened Palestinians will waste no time in putting forward inflated claims on the government of Israel.

We fear that, in an effort to reach a quick settlement on the issue of compensation, Israel will simply throw in the Jewish claims to offset the Palestinian claims. This would be unfair.

WOJAC (World Organisation of Jews from Arab Countries) who is holding a convention on 16 December 1993, has been acting all along as a tool of the Israeli government. It argues that Jewish refugees have been unsuccessful for the last 40 years in obtaining compensation from Arab countries. They thus consider our claims as lost property, about to be found by WJAC and should rightly belong to the State of Israel.

We hereby serve notice on WJAC and the Israeli government that they have no authority to trade away our substantial rights in our countries of origin.

We have offered WJAC 50 per cent of our claims if they will transfer the other 50 per cent to the rightful claimants.

WOJAC deny any involvement in matters of compensation. This seems to contradict their view expressed in an earlier letter. "It is our deepest conviction that the State of Israel ... has full moral right to be the trustee of the property left by the Jews in their countries of origin."

Refugee debates in the Knesset

In 1987 there was an interesting debate in the Knesset on Jewish refugees from

Arab countries. We give below some excerpts:

Foreign Minister S. Peres: The problem of Jewish property has been and will be raised by us in discussions with Arab states. M.K. Ben-Elissar has already mentioned the agreement between us and Egypt, to set up a claims committee in which each side will present its claims against the other. At the same time, the state is collecting and registering information about Jewish property and its fate, in the hope that it will be possible to raise the matter in the future, when we enter into peace negotiations with other Arab states.

I feel a little uncomfortable with the phrase "Jewish refugees from Arab countries", for despite, or perhaps because of the discrimination in Arab states, there was an *aliya* movement, based on Messianic yearning. This accounts for most of the immigrants, in my opinion. The Jews of Yemen, the Jews of Iraq.

I reject categorically the suggestion that there was a plan, or any thought of an exchange of population on our part.

Only a twisted and distorted mind can suggest transfer.

Every nation has its rights, every individual has his rights. We in Israel are proud of the positive *aliya* of Jews from Arab countries to Israel. Because of Messianic yearning, because of natural Zionism, because of their loyalty to the physical and spiritual life of the Jewish people and participation in its ingathering, they are in our eyes not refugees but "*olim*". We will stand on their rights resolutely, as two members of the Knesset have stated. There will be no trade off. We are not in the business of transfers. Except for some ...

David Magen (Likud): Under international law the Jews who fled the Arab countries, deprived of all their possessions and destitute, are refugees.

The government of Israel has already taken a decision to establish a unit in the Ministry of Justice to register the lands and assets belonging, as all agree, to Jews, or Israeli Jews, which they had been forced to abandon abroad.

Efraim Shalom (Ma'arach): I also wish to praise the Foreign Ministry, which supports this organisation consistently, both financially and by political backing. The State of Israel has, in the past, stated on many occasions, that within the framework of a comprehensive peace, it will be ready to pay appropriate compensation to the Arabs who left Israel, abandoning their property, if, at the same time, compensation will be received for the property of the Jews who left, or were driven out from the Arab states.

Israel has a responsibility for the fate of every Jew, wherever he may live.

Matityahu Peled (Progressive List for Peace): this fused two problems into one, the problem of the fate of the Jews from Arab countries and the Palestinian problem. There is no doubt that these two problems are interdependent. I would go so far as to say that they are in-reality one and the same problem. I say this because the establishment of the State of Israel caused a widespread phenomenon of forced emigration throughout the Middle

East.

Amnon Linn (Ma'arach): The fundamental argument which every one of our members should mention, when he is discussing or arguing about this question with our opponents, is that the Jews from Arab countries at no time declared war against even a single Arab state. They tried to be loyal to every country in which they lived. There were Arab countries which treated them in a civilised way, as a protected people. At certain times this is what happened. There are Arab countries which treat their Jews as hostages. But the Jews from Arab countries never made war on an Arab state, whereas in the case of the Palestinian Arabs, they, by their own actions, created their tragedy. They did this not only in one war, the War of Independence, but also before it, in three uprisings against the Jews, the small Jewish "*Yishuv*", and then during the whole period of Israel's existence, when they dragged the Arab nations into wars against us which always left them the victims.

In their heart of hearts they wished to come to their homeland, but, due to the force of circumstances, they had to abandon all their property in the Arab lands. Thus, from a legal standpoint, they are considered refugees, just as much as the Palestinian Arab refugees.

Scribe: It would be dangerous and harmful if Mr Peres, who is again Foreign Minister of Israel, holds to his views as stated above. Jews left Iraq as refugees escaping from discrimination and persecution. Those who went to Israel can be regarded as having arrived as *Olim* ●

Unmarried Mothers

Marriage was invented for the benefit of the woman in the days when there were no adequate means to prevent pregnancies and when women had no satisfactory ways of earning a living.

By identifying a man willing to assume financial responsibility for his wife and her offspring, an orderly social pattern was established.

Society must not undermine this arrangement by helping the unmarried mother who often gets pregnant to obtain priority housing or other benefits. Moreover, the increasing number of fatherless children is de-stabilising our society.

Today, no woman need become pregnant against her wish. Likewise, job opportunities are equally open to both sexes. Henceforth responsibility for the upkeep of her children must be laid at the door of the mother unless she can find, if she wishes, a man to assume or share her burden ●

I have had some favourable reviews for my books over the years, but none have given me such pleasure as the review of my recent book *Minyan* by Simon Dangoor, aged 10, in your September issue. It is a remarkable clear coverage of the book, indicating that Simon Dangoor aged 10 has very confident literary gifts even at this early age. I thank and congratulate him ●

London

Chaim Raphael

LETTERS

From Mr Somerset de Chair, now 82, author of *The Golden Carpet*, which was reviewed in *Scribe* 59.

I have returned from America and have studied the review of *The Golden Carpet* which you sent me.

You certainly make some extraordinary statements which I cannot agree, such as "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." No evidence whatever is given for this, and I can only say that the ambassador and officials in the Embassy when I was there were horrified by the riots that were going on, which as I said in the book, occurred because the British Army outside Baghdad was not allowed by the Foreign Office in London to enter the town for fear of undermining the prestige of the Regent and the young King whom we had restored. There was no reason, as far as I could see, that the police could not have performed their usual duties in maintaining public order without waiting for permission from any Committee of Public Safety. Until the British column was allowed to enter, the people inside the Embassy scarcely dared put their noses outside the grounds of it. I think Brigadier Kingston and I with our drivers were about the only British soldiers, let alone civilians, seen in the streets during this unsettled interim period. As you will see from the book, we found the demonstration very hostile.

I am afraid the whole tenor of your article is so anti-British that it is difficult for me to make a reasoned reply to it all. What you say about my interpreter, Captain Shaul Shemtob-Reading is, of course, extremely interesting to me, and seems basically accurate beyond the fact that it was at the irrigation centre at Kahn Nuqta that we found the enemy's telephone still working, and I used the opportunity to spread the false information through Reading as my interpreter that we were Iraqis surrounded by the British, who had tanks.

Scribe: It is clear that the British forces outside Baghdad were under orders from the Foreign Office not to intervene to stop the *farhud*.

This is what Dame Freya Stark, who was employed by the British Embassy, wrote to her mother after witnessing the *farhud* in June 1941: "You can imagine too what a time it is for a propagandist with the country seething with disguised Nazis and swastikas appearing everywhere (even at the back of my car). The people who are doing us even more harm than the Nazis are the Jews, who are jittering."●

I was born in Baghdad in 1927 and am the son of Selim Terzi, who died in London in 1975. I understand that some reference was made to my father in a previous issue.

I would appreciate making contact with any subscribers in the New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania areas●

William Selim Terzi

1677 Northgate Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15241, USA.

I received *The Scribe* No.59 and upon reading page 4 the two articles "The Golden Carpet" and Captain S. Shaul Shemtob-Reading, came to my mind an encounter Georgette and I had in London in 1970. That year there was an AIA Convention in Boston which adjourned to London. We were invited by the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) to a cocktail reception at their headquarters. There we met one of the hosts and happened to mention that we came originally from Iraq. The guest told us that he was sent with a contingent to Habbaniyah during the Rashid Ali period to quash his move. Georgette told him how come you (meaning the British army) did not show your face and could have avoided the killings and lootings. His answer was that the contingent arrived without their arms and were waiting for the arms to arrive and besides they were not certain that the Germans were not still there. Henceforth, the delay

Montreal

Yusuf Meer

Scribe: This sounds like a diplomatic excuse. No army would approach without arms a hostile city●

I have been receiving *The Scribe* for over a year now and have enjoyed both the information in it and the frequent possibilities of contact with other Jews with whom I lived in Calcutta prior to 1947.

In your September issue you have put forward a scenario for the creation of peace in the Middle East through a Confederation of Jewish, Arab, Christian and Moslem entities or sovereign states bearing the name of the common patriarch Abraham. With respect I find this concept, although it aims for justice and equality for everyone, to be quite utopian and dismissive of a great deal of unpleasant reality. The dispute between the Jews and Arabs has never been based on equity in the distribution of land and resources; rather it is founded on the theory that only Moslems may rule in the Middle East leaving the other nationalities/ethnic groups to reside as "dhimmi", (see also the position of the Christians in Lebanon).

But a confederation between Israel, Jordan and "Palestine", particularly with regard to defence and security, as well as a Common Market between the three, would give security both to Jordan and Israel, as well as to the demilitarised Palestinian entity wedged in-between them. In this way the historic Palestine of 1918 would have been re-unified in a sense, and thus have become "Eretz Israel Shelema"●

Castlecrag, Australia Maurice Rassaby

The position of marriage amongst young or older Iraqi or Oriental Jewish girls has become very difficult nowadays. I can say the difficulty comes more from the girl's side rather than the man's. Today's girl does not agree to marry a person whose income is beyond hers whatever little may be. She would not compromise if the man's family and social standing do not match hers, even though he is of good character. She doesn't care of the passing years, her growing in age to the extent of risking to forfeit her chances of pregnancy. This situation is entirely contrary to what has been in old times●

Ramat Gan, Israel

Abraham Yadid

As a Hebrew high school librarian, I would be very pleased if you would add our name to your mailing list for *The Scribe*. Several copies of *The Scribe* was given to us by Mrs Jeanette Yudin, a parent of one of our students and a person who came to Montreal from Iraq.

The paper was given a great deal of attention by our students and we believe a great deal of positive thinking can come from our having it on hand for our students●

Montreal Herzliah High School Library



Further to your last issue of *Scribe* 59, all the Iraqi Jews in Montreal were delighted to read the article of Victoria Rabbie and also to see the picture which was printed from the Iraqi Jews in Hamadan.

This family picture was taken in Hamadan in 1935 in my parent's house where I was born. The occasion of this gathering is Rosh Hashana.

This is one of my collection of old pictures●

Montreal

Victor H Brahimi

Right to Left, Front row: Abraham Menashy – Heskell Abraham Haim – Saleh Zeghayer – Daood Ezra – Isaac Shalom

2nd Row: Heshmat Ezra – Naim Heskell – The Child in Hand is Daood Baroukh – Salim Ezra

3rd Row: Albert Isaac Shalom – Edward Menashy

4th Row: Yacoub Daood – Massouda Isaac Shalom – Farha Ezra Abraham Haim – Farha Abraham Menashy

5th Row: Marcelle Heskell – Naim Menashy – Foad Menashy – Victor Heskell (Brahimi)

6th Row: Rima Heskell – Abraham Haim – Violet Heskell

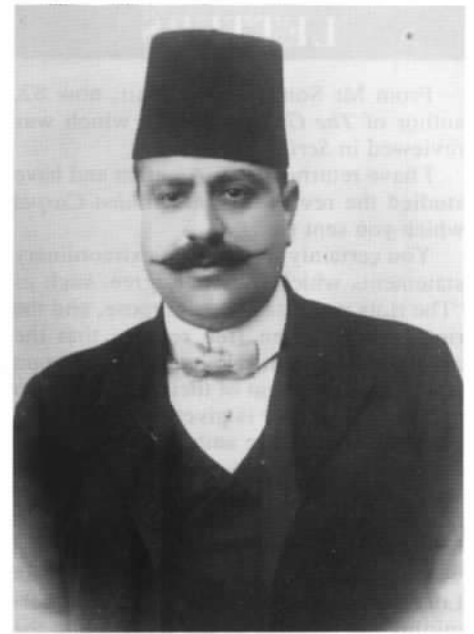
Back Row: Youssef Heskell – Doris Menashy – Edward Ezra●



SYNAGOGUE SIR A. SASSON - BAGHDAD

كنيس البير ساسون - بغداد

The vaulted Synagogue at the Alliance School, above, was clad with marble and polished teakwood. It was organised by the late Sasson Murad, a Community leader, whose family originally came from Amsterdam. (See article on p. 2)●



Middle East Confederation

Mr Naim Dangoor's suggestion of a confederation of states in the Middle East (*Scribe* 59) in which Israel would constitute an integral member, as a solution to the region's chronic problems, has authentic historical background to support it.

This logical idea of federation which Mr Dangoor revives and frequently presents in the *Scribe* was initiated and enthusiastically pursued by no less a noble and prominent Arab personality than the late King Faisal, a unique visionary the Arab world has seldom produced in modern times, and it is extremely doubtful if it would do so again now or in the remote future.

Faisal's plan had the support of the allies who in World War I were on the verge of victory over the Central Powers. Lawrence of Arabia supported and promoted it even if only from the point of view of British interest. He argued that it would establish British power and authority in the M.E. and form a bulwark of defence for the security of the Suez Canal. Had this plan been adopted it would have changed the political, economic, industrial and agricultural face of the M.E. to a region of peace, prosperity and stability in all of which it woefully lacks and desperately needs.

Apropos of Mr Dangoor's article, I give hereunder a gist of Faisal's courageous and daring plan for federation at a time when the very mention of Zionism evokes, and still does, anathema in the psyche of the Arabs, and the creation of a Jewish state an evil to be eradicated at any cost in life and material.

In May 1918, Faisal held court at the port of Aqaba. He made camp with Dr Weizmann, then the head of the Zionist organisation. In this conference the Arabs and British government were well represented and, of course, the legendary Lawrence of Arabia. In his what amounts to be a manifesto, Faisal agreed that Palestine was to be the Jewish sphere of influence for the development of the M.E. A federation of Arab states was discussed.

He was anxious to bring the future of the Jewish state within the federation. He also advanced the idea of the Zionists providing political, technical and financial advisers to the Arabs. He approved the settlement of four to five million Jews in Palestine. What a sublime vision.

However, that was not to be. A series of political and administrative blunders, especially in Palestine, during the mandate by antisemitic elements in the Foreign Office, the so-called "Arabists", and even by the more rabid antisemite Foreign Minister Bevin, not to speak of Arab antagonism to it, nipped Faisal's grand plan in the bud, to the detriment of everyone concerned. Mr Dangoor has correctly stated a *cogent dictum* which is that history repeats itself in order to teach a lesson. Because of lessons not learned in the M.E., it is not to be wondered that for millennia this region has experienced chaos, tyranny, assassinations and, above all, constant instability, its people drenched in rivers of blood flowing to this day. There is no cure to this state of affairs unless the Arabs will undergo a genuine and radical change of attitude sobered by realities, and abandon that chimerical dream of Arab unity, and accept the principle of federation as suggested by Mr Dangoor and proclaimed by King Faisal 75 years ago●
New Jersey, USA **Jack H Zeloof**

Although I am neither a Babylonian nor a Sephardi, I enjoy reading *The Scribe* which so proudly records the historic route taken by a section of our people.

However, while our sojournings must be remembered with justified pride in our various achievements, we must never forget that our "origins" are not in Eastern, Central or Southern Europe, nor on the banks of the Tigris, or even along the southern shores of the Mediterranean.

Our origins and our roots are in Judea, and although the mishaps of history may have scattered us for many centuries, the future of each of us, individually and collectively, as a nation, lies in our ancient

homeland, Eretz Israel, the land God gave to the Israelite nation, and for the retention of which every one of us must exert every fibre for future generations when our wanderings will have ended●

Cockfosters, Herts **Mervyn Kersh**

The following is an article by Abba Eban which appeared in *The Times* on the subject of Middle East Confederation, which is always advocated by Mr Dangoor on similar lines:

London **Richard Moshi**

Abba Eban on M.E. Confederation

(abridged)

At a meeting of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in September 1967, I suggested that Israel and its immediate neighbours should explore the European Community idea as a precedent for their own relationships.

It is true that the individual nation-state is not a viable economic or security unit. But it is still the only real focus of national pride and social allegiance. The nation-state as an institution is not in decline. It is proliferating. Nations are not willing to renounce their flags or to forget their histories. **The world is fragmenting and integrating at one and the same time.**

The ultimate guarantee of a peace agreement lies in the creation of common regional interests in such entanglement of mutual advantage and accessibility as to put future wars beyond rational contingency.

The trouble with "confederation", however, is that it implies a lack of sovereignty among the constituent parts. Switzerland and Canada are confederations, but the Swiss units are only "cantons" and the Canadian units are only "provinces". The 12 members of the EC are the only states to have created a structure in which individual sovereignty and regional integration are in correct balance.

Scribe: All right, let us call it "M.E. Federation of Independent States"●

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Benot Mitzvah

Last June, Rabbi Dr Abraham Levy, Sephardi Communal Rabbi, officiated at the Batmitzvah service in London of five girls, who happened to be all of Iraqi origin.

Left to right: Bianca Rashti, Natalie Somekh; Anna Dangoor; Davina Sofer; Michelle Hakim who celebrated their Batmitzvah this year at Lauderdale Road Synagogue, London.

In his address at the ceremony, Rabbi Levy drew on the girls' Baghdadi origin to highlight the important aspects of community that are represented by their surnames – learning, religion, commerce and medicine. Natalie's ancestor Hakham Abdullah Somekh was a great scholar who had done so much to promote the Baghdadi community. Hakham Ezra Dangoor, Anna's great great grandfather had studied with him and had established a publishing house which helped to disseminate Jewish learning. The community had also needed Sofers, scribes to write the *sifre torah* and other holy writings required for its religious life. As well as spiritual well-being, the community had many merchants to promote its material well-being. These travelled much for their business and settled in various places, one of which was the town of Rasht, from which we have the name Rashti. Finally the community also needed doctors to look after its physical well-being from which we get the name Hakim●

Was Mohammed a prophet?

According to the Jewish definition, a prophet is someone whom God spoke to. Quite honestly, Mohammed never claimed that he communicated with Allah.

In the Koran he firmly denies that he knew of any heavenly secrets, or that he could foretell the future. He repeatedly stresses that he was "inspired" in his mission. He is more correctly – Allah's "missionary" than "messenger".

But as the founder of a great universal religion, the title of prophet cannot be denied to him●

Disarm the Arabs?

According to a recent Arabic radio broadcast, part of the Middle East peace accord approved by President Clinton is that Israel should disarm her neighbouring Arab countries, while retaining and expanding her own conventional and nuclear capabilities.

If this is true, strange as it may seem, it sounds logical and is in line with our own regional perspective as stated on the front page of issue No.45 of November 1990. An Israeli/Palestinian/Jordanian union can police the region and defend it against all comers, and save hundreds of billions wasted on arms expenditure.

Such a role would entitle the union to a half share in the oil income of the region●

Tribute to the late Eze Nathan

by Percy Gourgey

Eze Nathan, who died recently at the age of 87, was a leader of the Singapore Jewish community and also its historian. Born in Singapore of parents of Baghdadi-an origin, he describes in particular the harrowing experience of the detention of Jews in Japan's notorious Changyi internment camp in Singapore in his book *The History of Jews in Singapore 1830-1945*, with a foreword by David Marshall, who was Singapore's first Chief Minister in 1956, whose parents were also born in Baghdad.

Mr Nathan was Honorary President of the Ashkenazi synagogue in Newport where he settled on emigrating to Britain. He was also a member of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. He recently told me that the Zionist youth movement was founded in Singapore in 1946 by Olga Simon (Sayers) who had gone to Bombay after the outbreak of the war with Japan in 1941●

My family and I are enjoying very much *The Scribe*, specially your interesting articles on Israel, the Middle East and others. They are so well described that few writers and reporters have the knowledge and facts to present them as you do●
Forest Hills, N.Y. S Belboul

Gandhi and his Jewish Friends

by Margaret Chatterjee

Published by Macmillan Limited.

This is an extremely interesting book by a lady who is a professor at an Oxford College and who lived in India for many years. It describes in particular Gandhi's early years in South Africa practising as a barrister and his friendship with a Jewish lawyer, H.S.L. Polak, whom I met in London many years ago. Gandhi's other great Jewish friend was Herman Kallenbach who financed Gandhi's ventures in South Africa, particularly his kibbutz-style farm in Phoenix.

In 1938 Mahatma Gandhi advised Indian Jewish leaders in Bombay, which included some of Baghdadian origin, "to avoid participation in the Indian freedom struggle lest they be crushed between the mighty conflicting forces of Congress nationalism, British imperialism and Muslim separatism".

However, individual Jews took part in the struggle and were jailed, as the author points out.

Gandhi described Hitler's slaughter of six million Jews as "the wanton fury of a dehumanised man". But his attitude towards Zionism was affected in part by his desire to appease India's 100 million Muslims"●

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

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Mr Herman Stivelman, Coconut Creek, Florida
Mr & Mrs Henry Galler, Monroe, N.Y.
(Mrs) Dr Najla Burton, London

Christian antisemitism

I find your quotations from the *Plain Truth* magazine in your September issue very interesting. Please allow me to add the following comments.

The virus of antisemitism was spawned by the Christian Church whose clergy, more often than not, continue to nurture it. The real authors of the Gospels reflected the political reality of the time by heaping lies on the Jews, who had become *persona non grata* in the Roman world after the revolutions of 70 and 135 CE. The Church sanctified these lies in the text of the Gospels, thus directly paving the way for the Holocaust.

Only one Pope, John XXIII, was honest enough to admit this Christian guilt in the following prayer which he wrote shortly before his death:

"We realise now that many, many centuries of blindness have dimmed our eyes, so that we no longer see the beauty of Thy Chosen People and no longer recognise in their faces the features of our first-born brother. We realise that our brows are branded with the mark of Cain. Centuries long has Abel lain in blood and tears, because we had forgotten Thy love. Forgive us the curse which we unjustly laid on the name of the Jews. Forgive us that, with our curse, we crucified Thee a second time."

Today's political reality has seen this virus spread to Islam. The carriers are often local Christians who use the present political turmoil to inject this virus into the Moslem masses. During the Gulf War, Saddam Hussein accused the Americans of being "Judas". Where does a Moslem

high school drop-out get to know about the so-called betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot except through his Christian sidekick Tariq Hannah Aziz? Antisemitism will continue to infect the whole of Christendom, unless the Church Fathers find the moral courage to cleanse the Gospels of their anti-Jewish lies.

Saddam Hussein may not realise that he is in control of the original Tel-Aviv! In Ezekiel (1:3) the word of the Lord came to him in the "land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar" which may be the Euphrates. Ezekiel (3:15) "came to them of the captivity at Tel-Abib that dwelt by the river of Chebar ..." We may have a valid claim here!●

Montreal

Naim S. Mahlab

Baghdad without a Map

and other misadventures in Arabia

An American Best-seller by Tony Horwitz sent in by Freddie & Olivia Shahrabani, Westport, Conn., USA.

The author goes beyond solemn newspaper headlines and romantic myths of Arabia to offer startling close-ups of a volatile region few Westerners understand. His quest takes him to thirteen Moslem countries and Israel, from the wilds of Yemen to the shores of Lebanon, from Sudan to Saddam Hussein's Iraq, a land so secretive that even street maps and weather reports are banned for security reasons. It reveals a fascinating world in which the ancient and the modern collide●

Enclosed I am mailing a picture that I consider very well preserved despite the more than 80 years since it was taken.

In the picture appear the Mashal family members who were part of the community of "Baghdadi Jewish Merchants" that Mrs Lydia Collins wrote about recently in your publication.



Standing on the left, Sasson Mashal, and on the right Jacob Hai, who was on a short visit with his brothers. Seated are Menashe Mashal with Kate his wife with their children. On the left is Charlie with his little sister in his lap, and Eddy next to his father

On the floor seated are the daughters, the eldest is Ruby, and the little boy is Joseph. Since we never met, except for Charlie and Eddy, I do not know who is who of the girls to name them●

Montreal

J S Nathaniel

Three Jews and the GATT Talks

In the current GATT talks one Jew Sir Leon Brittan, the EEC Trade Commissioner, has been negotiating with another Jew, Mickey Cantor, who represents the United States.

If the talks fail, the brunt would be borne by a third Jew, Baghdad-born Abdulla Simon, who is the largest importer into the U.S. of quality French white wine. America has threatened that if no agreement is reached by December, the duty on French white wine would be doubled.



Francine and Abdulla Simon ●

Jewish history on stamps

It all began when Israel was born, I discovered ancient history depicted on beautifully designed postal stamps issued by the Israeli Post Office's profiles of famous Jews details of their achievements. Stamps which commemorated our religious heritage, Jewish Arts and Artists, events of our sufferings, the exodus, inquisition and especially the recent holocaust, which moved me personally being a survivor of Auschwitz concentration camp.

In 1981 I formed the Judaica Philatelic Society which promotes the collecting of Israeli stamps, JNF stamps, and worldwide Judaica stamps. There are at least 6-7000 postal stamps from many countries in the world which have some connection with Jews or Jewish achievements, such as SHALOM ALECHEM, the famous Jewish author, LAZAR ZAMENHOF, inventor of Esperanto, ALBERT EINSTEIN, KARL MARX, GUSTAV NAHLER, CHAGALL, ANDRE CITROEN, RENEE CASSIN, HEINRICH HEINE and MODIGLIANI. I even discovered Jewish Royalty such as ALICE, Princess of Monaco née Alice Heine, and ELSA, Princess of Lichtenstein, a Viennese Jewess born Elsa von Guttmann.

We produce an illustrated magazine called *The Judaica Collector* which appears three times a year. Membership is £10 per annum. Join us in this enjoyable and interesting way to learn about our roots and take pride in the honour the world has bestowed upon us for our achievements.

Freddie Knoller 6 Badgers Croft, London N20 8AH Tel: 081-445 5922 (evenings) 081-458 6559 (daytime) ●

The Reluctant Leaders

by Naim Dangoor

After every calamity and misfortune, after every pogrom and persecution, we, the Chosen People, turn to heaven and complain, Please God, "Why don't You choose some other people for a change?"

We were chosen to propagate Monotheism and spread the knowledge and worship of the One True God but we did not find ourselves equal to the task. We brought our sufferings on our head for failing our mission.

Strangely, this reluctance to serve goes back all the way to Moses himself. For, when God entrusted him with the task of organising the Exodus from Egypt, he turned to the Almighty and said, "Please, O Lord, make someone else your agent". (Ex.4:13).

The Koran says when God gave the Torah to the Jews, he told them to propagate it and not just keep it to themselves. Moses should have continued the momentum of Sinai and conquered the Middle East and beyond for Jehovah but he was too weak and too old (over 80) and he did confess his limitations to God.

In Arabia Mohammed took over where we left off and by the sword he put an end to idolatry. Well done, Mohammed! Truly, you are Allah's messenger.

But the job remains unfinished and Judaism awaits the coming of someone who will inaugurate an age of Peace, Justice and Happiness.

The great historian Arnold Toynbee, who is wrongly maligned for his "fossil" reference to the Jews, has this to write on the subject: "The greatest of the prophets up to date, though not necessarily the last of them, would be not Mohammed, but a Jewish Seer, who inspired his fellow Jews at last to dedicate themselves to their universal mission wholeheartedly. The world has been waiting for this prophet for 2,500 years". Is it possible that the Messiah Designate is even at this moment arguing with God pleading to be excused from carrying out his assignment. Come out of your hiding, Messiah; the world has need of thee.

Was it odd of God to choose the Jews?

It is said that bad (weak) money will always drive the good (strong) money out of circulation. Can this analogy provide a clue to why God chose the Jews, a weak nation rather than a strong nation (God declared at the time that He chose Israel because they were the weakest of nations). In the end the weak always prevails over the strong, and the conquered over the conqueror. This is not a paradox: it simply means that those who espouse the wrong ideas have to depend on their might to survive ●

I was born in Baghdad and came to the United States in 1955. It was with surprise and delight to find the photograph of the "Aboudie clan" in your September 1993 *Scribe* publication. It had the photographs of my grandfather Sasson Sheena and my grandmother Lulu Sheena. Sitting in front of Lulu Sheena is her son, my father, Salim Sheena. This will help to fill in one of the missing blanks ●

Forest Hills, N.Y.

Janet Schapira
(nee Sheena)

I thank you for explaining further the Had Gadia story, which, like other striking Jewish tales, teaches the profound through the simple. Now I know why God did not destroy the angel of death ... but, of course, at that point we begin to ask questions.

The existence of sin was a mystery even to Job, your illustrious ancestor. He, too, wanted "to know". Answered the Almighty: "Where were you, Job, when I laid the timbers of the universe, when I bade the morning awake, set bounds to the seas, and called forth Orion and Pliades?" "I do not know," he replied, "I am but a simple man." "Well, Job, if you do not understand these things how can you hope to understand what I am planning for you in the world to come?" "He did speak to us," was Job's comment, "even out of a whirlwind, which proves He knows all about us." That argument I found in Jewish literature and I think it says everything.

Nachum was a friend I found in Yirushalayim, who told me about his friend, a child who sat behind wooden dividers in the death camps of Poland, listening to the rabbis who debated from morn till dusk why God allowed them to be in such a dreadful place. (They all perished). What conclusions they arrived at regarding their predicament I do not know, but they must have found some consolation in the words of Job, who was plagued, AS THEY WERE, by the manifestation of iniquity in God's universe ●

Swansea, W. Glam Gruffydd Thomas



Molly and Meyer Jonah from Calcutta, now living in Los Angeles, celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary on 5 September 1993. A Cocktail reception was given in London by Mrs Flower Elias for the couple to share with their many friends and family, and a further Dinner/Dance will be held in Los Angeles on December 26 ●

H.S.



My maternal grandfather was Abraham Haim Mualllem Nisseem. He was a member of parliament for many years. He married Rahail Aslan.

In the above photograph, the lady on the right is Khatoon Aslan and her sister Messouda. Khatoon was the mother of Rahail Aslan. I suspect that the photograph was taken in the early 1930's. The picture is a genre of an earlier age and traditions.

London SW1 Julian Sofaer

Baghdad proverbs

from Salim Khabbaza, New York

من المجنون خذ عقل

Min el mejnoun khedh aqil.

From the fool acquire wisdom.

(Sometimes a foolish person may offer you a good advice to which you should give serious consideration. It may be the right one!) Another saying on the subject:

المجنون يعبع الشط ببيتى

والعاقل بعدو يتفكح

El mejnoun yebegh el shatt nobtain wel aaqil badu qayfakkegh.

A fool crosses the river twice, whilst a wise person is still thinking (hesitating). (This is perhaps better explained by the English proverb: "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread").

In some Baghdad proverbs animals are used to drive home the point. Donkeys are frequently mentioned:

العاقل من غمزة والجماع من كتره

El aaqil min ghamza wel hmagh min gamza.

A wise person understands from a wink of an eye, whilst a donkey requires a kick in the ass.

(By merely alluding or referring to a certain subject, you can make a wise person understand how he is supposed to conduct himself, whilst a person as ignorant and stupid as a donkey may require more than frank talking – may be words that hurt). A donkey is also mentioned in:

تال طلع هل هماغ من هل وحلة

Tal talli hal hmagh min hal wahla.

Come pull out this donkey out of the mire. (This is said when there is a problem which is difficult to solve, especially when stupid, non-cooperative or hostile people are involved). (A donkey is difficult to pull out once stuck in the mire).

الجماع اللى اتلى متو هلى فكبر الشيطان

El hmagh illi anzel minnu khalli yeghkabu el sheetan.

Let the donkey from which I dismount be ridden by the devil. (If you give up a certain matter, do not care who takes over; it is not your concern).

Other animals are also mentioned in Baghdad proverbs, such as dogs, lions and birds:

كلب الديق اهن من بيع اليم

Kalb el dayyegh ahsan min sab'a el nanyem.

A roving dog is better than a sleeping lion. (A weak or poor person who is on his feet the whole day may earn something (money, a job, etc.), whilst a lazy person, though strong or powerful, earns nothing if he stays at home or sleeps the whole day.

ذبة الكلب حلو بالصبية جمدن
يعم ما عدلت.

Dhenbet el kalb khelluha bel qasba ghebeen yom ma adlet.

They put a dog's tail inside a cane for forty days, but it did not straighten up.

(This is said about a person who does not mend his ways, whatever you do to him). It reminds me of:

طبع البدن يا هيرو غير الكفن

Tab'a el badan ma yeghayyeru gher el kafan.

(A person's habit can only be changed by the shroud, i.e. by death).

In reference to the article "Judaism and free will", September 1993 issue of *The Scribe*:

You have rightly pointed to the paradox that if Man truly has free will, then how can God know what will happen? And if God knows what is going to happen, then how can man possess free will?

In his book, *Path of the Kabbalah*, Dr David Sheinkin also touches on this issue which I would like to share with you. He writes: "Logically, a free will and divine foreknowledge cannot coexist. This question is the ultimate paradox in all philosophy. No answer has ever been advanced that is logically satisfactory."

Great Neck, N.Y. Anwar H. Koukou

Scribe: It is obvious that God doesn't run the Universe on Gestapo lines. Once He has given us free will, He is not interested in our thoughts, but only in our actions.

My father Salim Khabbaza is a regular subscriber and I usually borrow it from him to read. I especially enjoyed your article about Jewish Iraqi people in Iran. I also recognise the names of a lot of the writers in your publication and it is so nice to be able to hear everyone express their views. It is almost as though everyone in England, Israel and America is on a long distance conference call!

I was born in Israel and grew up in Iran, speaking fluent Iraqi Arabic and always feeling very "different" from other Jewish kids in my school (Ettefagh) in Teheran who were Persian. I have been living in England and America for the last 15 years and am so glad that we have a publication like yours to keep us in touch with our roots. As a hypnotherapist and a writer, I often deal with age regression and I can't tell you how beneficial and therapeutic it is for people to "remember" their past experiences whether good or bad, (we never truly forget, we only store things in our subconscious mind where they effect our everyday actions without us even being aware of them), as it is only in remembering that we heal.

Flushing, New York Gila Khabbaza



Was it coincidence or fate that after so many years since *The Scribe's* publication and numerous articles on the Iraqi Jews of Iran, that the name of our late grandfather should appear on the first anniversary of his passing away.

Gourdji Shaoul Shashoua (not Shashi) was a cousin of the late Khedouri C. Shasha and his lifetime agent in Iran. He outlived by 18 months his wife, Naima, daughter of Shlomo Khazma, second cousin to Naim Dangoor.

Our late grandparents were both not only well-known, prominent figures of the Iraqi community in Teheran, but also well loved and honoured by all who knew them. Shattered by the untimely and tragic loss of their son, Dr. Shaoul in 1983, Abu Shaoul and Em Shaoul never faltered in their *mitzvot* and continued to be counted upon and trusted in both calls of happiness and distress.

All our friends and relatives from Teheran will undoubtedly recall the powerful and lovely voice of our grandfather reverberating within the walls of Moshe Heskell Haim synagogue, chanting the Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur prayers, with the radiant and ever-smiling face of our grandmother proudly sitting in the front row of the synagogue's balcony.

Tel Aviv Edna & Lorna Meer



1914 – Alliance School, Baghdad. Final scholastic year – *cours supérieur*. (Photo Araz – Baghdad). Sent in by Alice Aboody, New York. Left to right, Front row: Simon Fattal, Saleh Bashi, Israel Darzi, Mr Hassoun, Mr Isaac Bassan, Mr Joseph Cohen, 2 children of Mr Bassan, Gourgi Bassous. Second row: (Moshi Youssef Eliahou), Gourgi Sultana, David Nissan, Joseph Aboudi, Gourgi Zilkha, Rouben Nawi, Salman Shamash, Ezra Aghababa, Ezra Khebbaza, Gourgi Masri.

Third row: Moise Mansour, Elie Ajmi, Elie Khemara, Gourgi Hanania, Judah Moise, Salim Smouha, Joseph Moullem, David Toeg, Ezra Ini.

Back row: Joseph Kenna, Jacob Gareh, Menachem Shamash, Joseph Shalom, Judah Rejwan, Abraham Nawi, Joseph Rahamim, Elie Gabbay, Abraham Hay, Elie Shashoua.

Note: the big moustaches in the run-up to the First World War ●

COOKERY CORNER

Turkish Rice Ich Pilaf

Ingredients:

500 gr. rice 125 gr. butter
1 tablespoonful olive oil 1 small onion
2 tablespoonfuls currants
3 tablespoonfuls pignolia nuts
100 gr. lamb liver or chicken liver (cut into very small pieces)
1 teaspoonful spice (cinnamon, black pepper, allspice)
1 large tomato
800 gr. consomme (hot)
Salt

Method:

Place clean rice in a pan, cover with hot water, add 1 tablespoon salt, and set aside until the water is cool. Wash well and strain the rice.

Melt butter in the casserole, add the pignolia nuts and stir once then add very finely chopped onions. Add the liver and cook together for 2-3 minutes. Then add the currants, spices, salt, consomme and the finely diced tomato, stir altogether and remove the casserole from the fire.

Melt butter in another casserole. Add the rice and brown for 4 minutes stirring all the time. Pour in the hot consomme and its contents. Bring to a boil and stir well. Cover the casserole and cook for 17 minutes. Set aside for 20 minutes and serve.

1933 – I first arrived in England to study engineering at London University.

1963 – We were obliged to stay indefinitely in England because of anti-Jewish legislation in Iraq.

1993 – My wife and I became naturalised as British citizens. N.E.D.

The Legendary Cuisine of Persia

by Margaret Shaida

Published by Lieuse Publications Ltd, Henley-on-Thames, 325 pp. £19 Reviewed by Naim Dangoor.

This is the first book to explore the long history of the Persian cuisine, which is one of the three main cuisines of the world.

Our bodies are made up of the things we eat (obviously), but the function of good food goes beyond mere nourishment. Haute cuisine is a fine art that is meant to delight the palate, please the eye ("the eye also eats") and impress our friends.

Persian cooking can be identified by its sumptuous rice dishes, its intriguing and delicate flavours, its combination of fruits and nuts with meats, and its unique emphasis on herbs, limes and saffron.

The history of Persian dishes is well researched by the author, and the book included many anecdotes and quotations.

The book lists the following rice-dishes:

Rice with herbs, with broad beans, with black-eyed beans, with cabbage, with green beans, with lentils, with noodles, with almonds, with carrots, with sour cherries, with dried apricots, with dill, with tomatoes, baked rice with spinach, baked rice with chicken and jewelled rice.

Rice was brought from China to the Middle East by Mongol invaders ●

I was born in Cairo, Egypt. I left in 1953 for school in England and came to America in 1961.

I would be most obliged if you will kindly put me on your mailing list ● Beverly Hills, Calif. Roger Chalom

In search of a publisher

I wish to inform your readers that some rare books are in my possession. Every now and then I read about readers looking for certain titles that are out of print. Here is a list of some books your readers may be interested in:

Dispersion & Liberation by Abraham Twena. English/Hebrew (5 volumes).

Exodus from Iraq by Izhaq Bar Moshe. Arabic.

Babylon in the Underground by Emil Murad. Hebrew.

My Friends, the Kurds by Emil Murad. Hebrew.

Deep into the Soul by Emil Murad. English.

I have now written a new book in English *From Baghdad to Jerusalem: A story of the Freedom Fighters, the Jews and the Kurds*. It is mostly autobiographical and interesting as a human document and I would be grateful for any suggestions of a publisher.

Emil Murad,

P O Box 1779,
Tel Aviv 61016, Israel.

With reference to Mrs E Mercado's letter in issue No.59, we have to remember that Israel was only 2 years old at the time. It had no experience with *Aliyah*, poor economy and everything in ration. I can say, also, penniless. Of course it was very hard, but I cannot blame Israel, because it was not in a position to do better or more and I don't think discrimination played a role here, may be later in different fields ● Manila, Philippines. D Shamoon