

My Life and Times, Part II

by Salim Dangoor.

My children asked me whether they have to go to the *Scribe* to read some of the stories of their father! So, here goes:

While in Iran I made a good name for myself and when I came to Sweden was received with open arms by the Iranian Embassy and became the best friend of all successive Ambassadors. My only trouble was that I had to defend Iraq whenever there were differences between the two countries. There was no Iraqi Embassy in Sweden then.

When the Shah came to Sweden for an official visit he asked me why I never returned to Iran. When I told him that my children can get better education here, he decided to send me a small boy that was born in the same hospital as the Crown Prince, almost the same minute.

– Give him a Swedish education so that he can be a playmate to the Crown Prince.

The boy came to Sweden and stayed with us at home-for fifteen years. Unfortunately when he was old enough to return at the age of eighteen, it was already the last days of the Shah and his regime. He left for the U.S. where he still lives.

Side story: Iraq was represented by Camille (Kamel) Ghazala, a Christian Iraqi, who got the honorary Consulate General as a sort of compensation for his trouble once in Baghdad. He was Director of Agriculture and was returning one day from an inspection. That same day, in 1928, Sir Alfred Mond was to visit Baghdad and a demonstration was arranged to stop him from entering the city. The British Embassy tried to avoid an incident and diverted his car in the last minute. But the mole was still waiting for this Zionist, when a big car, chauffeur driven arrived. They surrounded it and pulled out "Sir Alfred" and started to beat and kick him before he could tell them that he was Camille Ghazala. Afterwards, he was so disgusted that he left Iraq and became the Consul General.

In 1966 Hardan Al-Tikriti was appointed First Ambassador to Sweden.

Side story: Hardan Al Tikriti joined the Iraqi Army in 1946 at the age of 21. In 1963 he was a full general and chief of the Iraqi Air Force! By the end of that year he became the Minister of Defence!! He was very ambitious and apparently he wanted to advance further. So the other generals plotted to stop him. They suggested that he lead a delegation of five generals to negotiate with President Nasser in Cairo. Few days after his arrival, when the negotiation was completed, he got a phone call from the President in Baghdad that he cannot return unless he wants to go to prison. The five generals plotted against him and the alternative was that he accept an appointment as Ambassador to Sweden. He told me afterwards that he was furious and left for Geneva. From there he tried to contact his friends in the Army, but to no avail. A couple of weeks afterwards, when his funds were exhausted, he accepted the Ambassadorship.

In Stockholm we became good friends. I helped him to open the Embassy in one of my buildings and we used to meet a few



Salim Dangoor with Dr Moshe Yegar, former Israel Ambassador to Sweden, now Ambassador to Prague

times a week. He kept telling me that he will not stay long as Ambassador and that he must return to Baghdad and take over the power again! When that happens, "I am going to take Iraq back ten years, to the time of the monarchy, which we thought was so bad and is now ten times worse!" I listened to his statements with a pinch of salt, little did I know that he would succeed one day.

In Stockholm he met many Iraqi pilots. Later it became known that he plotted with two of them to bring down the President's plane! Everything went according to plan, but in the last minute just when the President was going to fly somewhere, one of these two pilots fell on the feet of the President and exposed the plot. Immediately the second pilot was shot and an urgent telegram was sent to the Embassy stating that the Ambassador had been condemned to death and that he should leave the Chancellery and Residence immediately.

By chance I was sitting with the Ambassador that day when the Counsellor, Ibrahim Wali, pushed the door wide open and threw the telegram in front of the Ambassador. This same Counsellor used to show the greatest respect and refused even to sit down in the presence of his boss, but now everything changed.

"Ibrahim, I know, tomorrow morning I will leave."

– "You are to leave now immediately and within an hour, from the Residence.

– "But it is four o'clock in the afternoon, where can I go with a wife and four small kids?"

– "It is none of my business, and if you do not leave I will call the police."

When I tried to mediate, Ibrahim said that I should not intervene as this is a serious political matter, and he left the room.

I told the Ambassador that he can move to my summer house temporarily. But he said that he has no chance of repaying me for this noble gesture. I told him that we are friends after all, and this is the least I could do. He accepted humbly and stayed about two weeks and then left for London. (By the way, this Ibrahim Wali was recalled to Baghdad and became private secretary to President Aref!).

I did not hear from Hardan for many months. Apparently he wrote to the President, apologised for his plot and promised to be a faithful citizen to serve the President! He was believed and allowed to return to Baghdad where, you guessed, he made another coup d'etat.

One day I got a phone call from Bagh-

dad from the Ministry of Defence. To my surprise it was Hardan. "Salim, I am now the Vice President of Iraq, do you remember what I used to tell you? I shall never forget your brotherly act to offer your house to someone condemned to death."

Sometime afterwards it occurred to me that may be through Hardan I could help to improve the relations between Iran and Iraq. After long negotiations Hardan agreed to visit Iran if he gets an invitation from the Shah! Through my friends in Iran the matter was brought to the attention of the Shah and he liked the idea. But rather than send an invitation that could be refused, he sent his Foreign Minister to extend the invitation. Hardan left for Iran and was royally received. He was taken everywhere and shown the might of the Iranian Army and Air Force of the Shah. Then after a week he met the Shah. To the surprise of all, in a gesture of strength and greatness, the Shah accepted to solve all outstanding problems to the benefit of Iraq: the question of the Kurds, of shattal Arab, of the frontier, of the waters, of the holy places of Kerbala and Najaf. Few months afterwards, at a meeting of the heads of Islamic states in Algiers, the President of Iraq walked towards the Shah and kissed him on both cheeks, much to the surprise of all present, including foreign reporters. Nobody could imagine how this rapprochement started. The story of Hardan finished with murder. Once in Kuwait, while coming out of his plane, he was gunned and killed. Nobody ever found the killer.

Once when Iraq announced that they would hang a second batch of Jews, I was approached by Israel to intervene with "your friend the Vice President". I arranged to write a nice letter and sent it to Baghdad with no less a messenger than the Mexican Ambassador in Stockholm, Mr Carlos Guterrez, a mutual friend. There was a cry all over the world against this hanging, and I do not know how much my appeal helped, but the fact remains that the condemned Jews were never hanged.

Side story: When I came to Sweden there was another Iraqi Jew living in Gothenburg, Dr Jack Wadham. He was a famous dentist in Baghdad appointed to the Palace as the chief royal dentist. He was married to a beautiful Swedish girl, but after sometime, for evident reasons, he decided to take her back to Sweden to save his marriage. In Sweden he could only get a job as an assistant dentist in a hospital, with a promise that after five years when he gets his Swedish nationality, he could have his own practice. After three years he got fed up and accepted a position as lecturer in an American university. But he did not like it there and decided to return to his wife and daughter. To his shock he was told that now he has to stay a new period of five years to get Swedish nationality, as the first three years were cancelled after his departure.

He was very depressed and one of his friends phoned me to say that Jack is going to commit suicide, probably that same evening. I spoke to him on the phone for over one hour but he was adamant. I tried to contact the police, but they answered that they could do nothing until he really committed suicide! Which he did that same evening ●

BOOKS

The New English Bible The Apocrypha

The Books of the Apocrypha are Jewish writings that cover the period of the Second Temple. They were not considered important enough to be included in the canon of the Jewish Scriptures.

Some Christian churches, however, regard the Apocrypha as part of the Bible, appearing between the "Old Testament" and the "New Testament".

From 1 ESDRAS (Ezra) King Josiah's Passover

Josiah kept the Passover at Jerusalem in honour of his Lord and sacrificed the Passover victims on the fourteenth day of Nisan. The priests, duly robed in their vestments, he stationed in the temple of the Lord according to the order of daily service. He commanded the Levites, who served the temple in Israel, to purify themselves for the Lord, in order to place the holy Ark of the Lord in the house which was built by King Solomon. 'Make yourselves ready now, to do service to the Lord your God and to minister to his people Israel in the manner prescribed by King David and provided for so magnificently by his son Solomon. Observe the Passover according to the ordinances of the Lord which was given to Moses.'

To those who were present Josiah made a gift of thirty thousand lambs and kids and three thousand calves. These he gave from the royal estates in fulfilment of his promise to the people and to the priests and Levites.

This was the procedure. The priests and the Levites, bearing the unleavened bread, stood in all their splendour before the people, in the order of their clans and families, to make offerings to the Lord as is laid down in the book of Moses. This took place in the morning. They roasted the Passover victims over the fire in the prescribed way and boiled the sacrifices in the vessels and cauldrons, and a pleasant smell went up; then they carried portions round to the whole assembly. After this they made preparations both for themselves and for their brothers the priests, the sons of Aaron. The priests went on offering the fat until nightfall, while the Levites made the preparations both for themselves and for their brothers the priests. The sons of Asaph, the temple singers, with Asaph, Zacharias, and Eddinous of the royal court, and the door-keepers at each gateway remained at their station according to the ordinances of David.

Such a Passover had not been kept in Israel since the time of the prophet Samuel. It was in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign that this Passover was celebrated.

All that Josiah did he did rightly and in whole-hearted devotion to his Lord. But pity did not save Josiah.

After all these doings of Josiah's it happened that Pharaoh king of Egypt was advancing to attack Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah took the field against him. The king of Egypt sent him this message: 'What is your business with me, king of Judah? It is not against you that the Lord God has sent me to fight; my campaign is on the Euphrates. The Lord is with me, the Lord, I say, is with me, driving me on. Withdraw, and do not oppose the Lord.' Josiah did not turn his chariot but went for-

ward to the attack. He disregarded what the Lord had said through the prophet Jeremiah and joined the battle with Pharaoh in the plain of Megiddo. Pharaoh's captains swept down upon King Josiah. The king said to his servants, 'Take me out of the battle, for I am badly hurt.' At once his servants took him out of the line and lifted him into his second chariot. He was brought back to Jerusalem, and there he died and was buried in his ancestral tomb.

Why, O Why?

FROM 2 ESDRAS The mystery of human destiny

In the thirtieth year after the fall of Jerusalem, I, Ezra, was in Babylon. As I lay on my bed I was troubled; my mind was filled with perplexity, as I considered the desolation of Zion and the prosperity of those who lived in Babylon. My spirit was deeply disturbed. I said to myself: 'Perhaps those in Babylon lead better lives, and that is why they have conquered Zion.' But when I arrived here, I saw more wickedness than I could reckon, and these thirty years I have seen many evil-doers with my own eyes. My heart sank, because I saw how you, Lord, tolerate sinners and spare the godless; how you have destroyed your own people, but protected your enemies. You have given no hint whatever to anyone how to understand your ways. Is Babylon more virtuous than Zion? Has any nation except Israel ever known You? What tribes have put their trust in your covenants as the tribes of Jacob have? But they have seen no reward, no fruit for their pains. I have travelled up and down among the nations, and have seen how they prosper, heedless though they are of your commandments. So weigh our sins in the balance against the sins of the rest of the world; and it will be clear which way the scale tips.

The angel who was sent to me, whose name was Uriel, replied: 'How can your small capacity comprehend the ways of the Most High?' When I heard that, I fell prostrate and exclaimed: 'Better never to have come into existence than be born into a world of wickedness and suffering which we cannot explain!'

He answered, 'If you survive, you will see; if you live long enough, you will marvel.'

The Scribe replies to Ezra The Scribe:

The sin for which first the Kingdom of Israel and later the Kingdom of Judah were punished and driven into exile were mainly political and strategic. As such they were not in the domain of Heaven but were entirely the responsibility of men.

Quite simply, you cannot jump into deep water and expect God to save you from drowning, no matter how righteous you may be.

Palestine is at the crossroads of three continents and very often found itself on the route of conflicting powers of the region.

Jeremiah was a kind of Rasputin who put his nose in all affairs of state, and in the name of God gave advice on political and military matters. He was greatly to blame for the disasters which befell Judah and the Jewish people during his ministry.

Moreover, the Jews were surrounded by hostile populations. Jewish leaders took no steps either to neutralise them or to pacify them. They helped foreign armies that came to attack Israel.

The Torah was not silent on these mat-

ters and ordained the Israelites to keep the alien neighbours at arms length.

FROM ECCLESIASTICUS 44 Heroes of Israel's past

Let us now praise famous men, the heroes of our nation's history, through whom the Lord established his renown, and revealed his majesty in each succeeding age.

Some held sway over kingdoms and made themselves a name by their exploits.

Others were sage counsellors, who spoke out with prophetic power.

Some led the people by their counsels and by their knowledge of the nation's law; out of their fund of wisdom they gave instruction.

Some were composers of music or writers of poetry.

Others were endowed with wealth and strength, living peacefully in their homes.

All these won fame in their own generation and were the pride of their times.

Some there are who have left a name behind them to be commemorated in story.

Our forefathers were men of loyalty, whose good deeds have never been forgotten.

Their prosperity is handed on to our descendants, and their inheritance to future generations.

Thanks to them their children are within the covenants -

the whole race of their descendants.

Their line will endure for all time, and their fame will never be blotted out.

**THEIR BODIES ARE BURIED IN PEACE,
BUT THEIR NAMES LIVE FOR EVER
MORE.**

FROM THE BOOK OF BARUCH

Message to a Conquered People

This is the book of Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe, written in Babylon, in the fifth year after the Chaldeans had captured and burnt Jerusalem.

Baruch read the book aloud to Jeconiah, King of Judah, and to all the people who had assembled to hear it: the nobles, the princes of the royal blood, the elders, and the whole community, high and low - in short, all who lived in Babylon. Then they prayed to the Lord with tears and fasting; and each of them collected as much money as he could, and they sent it to Jerusalem.

They said: We are sending you money to buy whole-offerings, sin-offerings and incense; provide a grain-offering, and offer them all upon the altar of the Lord our God; and pray for Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon, and for his son Balshazzar, that their life on earth may last as long as the heavens. So the Lord will give us strength, and light to walk by, and we shall live under the protection of Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon, and of Belshazzar his son; we shall give them long service and gain their favour. Pray also for us to the Lord our God, because we have sinned against him, and to this day the Lord's anger and wrath have not been averted from us.

So the Lord made good the warning he had given to us, to our magistrates in Israel, our kings and our rulers, and the men of Israel and Judah.

And now, Lord God of Israel, who didst bring thy people out of Egypt with a mighty

hand, with signs and portents, with great power and arm uplifted, winning for thyself a renown that lives on to this day: Be angry with us no longer, for we are left a mere handful among the heathen where thou hast scattered us. Listen, O Lord, to our prayer and our entreaty, deliver us for thy own sake, and grant us favour with those who have taken us into exile, so that the whole earth may know that thou art the Lord our God, who hast named Israel and his posterity as thy own.

Thou hast vented upon us that wrath and anger of which thou didst warn us through thy servants the prophets who said: 'These are the words of the Lord: Bow thy shoulders and serve the King of Babylon and you shall remain in the land that I gave to your fathers; but if you do not listen to the Lord and serve the King of Babylon, then I will banish from Jerusalem and the cities of Judah all sounds of joy and merriment, the voice of bride and bridegroom; the whole land shall lie waste and uninhabited.' But we did not obey thy command to serve the King of Babylon.

O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, the soul in anguish and the fainting spirit cry out to thee. Listen, Lord, and have mercy, for we have sinned against thee. Thou art enthroned for ever; we are for ever passing away. Now, Almighty Lord, God of Israel, hear the prayer of Israel's dead and of the sons of those who sinned against thee. They did not heed the voice of their God, and so we are in the grip of adversity. Do not recall the misdeeds of our fathers, but remember now thy power and thy name, for thou art the Lord our God, and we will praise thee, O Lord. It is for this that thou hast put the fear of thee in our hearts, to make us call upon thy name. And we will praise thee in our exile, for we have put away from us all the wrongdoing of our fathers who sinned against thee. Today we are in exile; thou hast scattered us and made us a byword and a curse, to be punished for all the sins of our fathers, who rebelled against the Lord our God.

Listen, Israel, to the commandments of life; hear, and learn wisdom. Why is it, Israel, that you are in your enemies' country, that you have grown old in an alien land? It is because you have forsaken the fountain of wisdom. If you had walked in the way of God, you would have lived in peace for ever.

FROM 2 MACCABEES

Letters to the Jews in Egypt
Written in the year 188 (124BCE)

To their Jewish kinsmen in Egypt, the Jews who are in Jerusalem and those in the country of Judea send brotherly greeting.

May God give you peace and prosperity and remember his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, his faithful servants. May he give to you all a will to worship him, to fulfil his purposes eagerly with heart and soul. May he give you a mind open to his law and precepts. May he make peace and answer your prayers, and be reconciled to you and not forsake you in an evil hour. Here and now we are praying for you.

We are about to celebrate the purification of the temple on the twenty-fifth of Kislew, and think it right to inform you, so that you also for your part may celebrate a Feast of Tabernacles, in honour of the fire which appeared when Nehemiah offered sacrifices, after he had built the temple and the altar. When our fathers were carried off to Persia, the pious priests of those days secretly took fire from the altar and concealed it in a dry well. It proved a safe hiding-place and remained undiscovered. After many



1932 - Finishing Class at the Alliance School, Baghdad.

Left to right, sitting: Joseph David; Reuben Bekhor; Salim Sopher; Mr Bogod the English teacher; Naji Pasha; Heskell Salim; David Aboudi.

Standing: Isaac Dabby; Shimeon Hayim; Niazi Hayim (Niazi Shamoon); Joseph Saleh; Karim Dennous; Naim Shamash; Joseph Dabool ●

Niazi once wrote an essay in Arabic, praising the Prophet Mohammed, which pleased his Moslem teacher no end. A few days later the school was visited by the Ministry of Education, the Governor of Baghdad and the Chief of Police, asking for Niazi.

The Director of the school, Mr Sasson, was alarmed and asked Niazi if he had done anything wrong. But when the dignitaries entered the classroom, they kissed Niazi on both cheeks and complimented him on his essay, saying that a Moslem boy couldn't have written better!

In a separate incident in a different school, the Christian history teacher asked his class to name the greatest personality in history, offering a valuable prize for the right answer. Various answers were given, but a Jewish boy said it was Jesus. After giving him the prize, the teacher asked him to explain why he had made his choice. The boy replied that in fact Moses was the man, but business is business!

years had passed, in God's good time, Nehemiah was sent back by the king of Persia. He then dispatched the descendants of the priests who had hidden it to get the fire, and they informed our people that they found, not fire, but a thick liquid. Nehemiah ordered them to draw some out and bring it to him. When the material of the sacrifice had been presented, he ordered the priests to sprinkle the liquid over the wood and the things laid upon it, and this was done. Some time passed; then the sun, which earlier had been hidden by clouds, shone out and the altar burst into a great blaze, so that everyone marvelled. As the sacrifice was burning, the priests offered prayer, they and all those present.

The secret was petroleum

The King of Persia was told that, in the place where the priests who were deported had hidden the fire, a liquid had appeared, and that Nehemiah and his companions had used it to burn up the materials of the sacrifice. When he had verified the fact, the King enclosed the site and made it sacred. The custodians he appointed received a share of the very substantial revenue that the King derived from it. Nehemiah and his companions called the liquid 'nephtar', which means 'purification'; but most people call it 'naphtha'. It was the prophet Jeremiah who had ordered the exiles to hide the fire.

The prophet Jeremiah had given orders that the Tent of Meeting and the ark should go with him. Then he went away to the mountain from the top of which Moses saw God's promised land. When he reached the mountain, Jeremiah found a cave-dwelling; he carried the tent, the ark, and the incense-altar into it, then blocked up the entrance. Some of his companions came to mark out the way, but were unable to find it.

It was also related that Solomon, having the gift of wisdom, offered the dedication sacrifice at the completion of the temple; and that, just as Moses prayed to the Lord and fire came down from heaven and burnt up the sacrificial offerings, so Solomon prayed and the fire came down and con-

sumed the whole-offerings. Solomon celebrated the feast for eight days.

These same facts are set out in the official records and in the memoirs of Nehemiah. Just as Nehemiah collected the chronicles of the kings, the writings of prophets, the works of David, and royal letters about sacred offerings, to found his library, so Judas also has collected all the books that had been scattered as a result of our recent conflict. These are in our possession, and if you need any of them, send messages for them.

As, then, we are about to celebrate the purification of the temple, we are writing to impress upon you the duty of celebrating this festival. God has saved his whole people and granted to all of us the holy land, the kingship, the priesthood, and the consecration, as he promised by the law; and in him we have confidence that he will soon be merciful to us and gather us from every part of the world to the holy temple. For he has delivered us from great evils and purified the temple.

In all the diplomatic correspondence mentioned in the Apocrypha, I note that the Jews always wrote, for example, "To the people of Rome, to the people of Judea."

As one Arabic radio commentator has recently put it, "Whenever we shall learn to say, 'you and I', instead of 'I and you', then we can say we became civilised." In the Jewish tradition the order of precedence has always been They, You, We.

A new English translation of the Bible recently appeared in America that has removed all anti-Jewish remarks from the New Testament, does not refer to God as He, and does not give precedence to the right hand over the left hand.

Jews for Jesus should be true to their name by writing for themselves their own gospel as distinct from the Gentile gospels. They could then restore a missing link between Jews and Christians ●

Visions of a Middle East Federation

by Naim Dangoor

The return of the Jews is the greatest thing that has happened to the Middle East in a thousand years — if only the Arabs knew!

Ever since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 in the face of fierce armed opposition, Israeli and Jewish leaders yearned for peace in the region. But peace was elusive. Again and again the neighbouring Arab countries sought to destroy Israel and were not deterred by their failure to do so; they believed time was on their side.

But all that time, I was one of those who believed peace was not enough. After the mass emigration of one million Jews from Arab countries in the early 1950's and noting the important role they played in all these countries long before the Arabs appeared on the scene, I was convinced that Jews must continue to have a role in the affairs of the whole region, and challenged the gradual Arabisation of the region, and the Arabs' exclusive attempt to create an empire extending from the Gulf to the Atlantic.

Thus I prepared leaflets for distribution in anti-Israel rallies, stating that Arab imperialism and not Zionism is the root of the trouble in the Middle East.

When the Arabs inserted full-page advertisements in the London *Times*, one day in English, then in Arabic, Hebrew, French, German, Greek, etc. which stated: WANTED: A Balfour to establish a national home for the Arabs in Palestine.

I refuted by inserting the following reply: Balfour? First wait 2000 years if you can, and while you are waiting, abstain from terrorism but pray every day for Jerusalem. If I forget thee O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her art.

Suffer persecution and humiliation but do not lose faith in the Almighty. Remember O Lord the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem when they said, Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation thereof.

And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's House shall be established above the hills and nations shall flock unto it. Come, let us build Jerusalem together, and let the Kingdom of God be established.

At the first conference of the World Organisation of Jews from Arab Countries, held in Paris in November 1975, I managed to pass a resolution that the Jews of Arab countries have a right to a share in the wealth of the region. But the mainly Ashkenazi Israeli establishment consistently refused to play the card of Jews of Arab lands. At a meeting of WOJAC leaders arranged by M.K. Mordechai Ben Porat with Prime Minister Rabin twenty years ago, I suggested that Israel should make use of the rights in the region of Jews from

Arab countries. Mr Rabin's angry reply was, "Are you saying that Ashkenazim have no rights in the region?"

Following the Six Day War, Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban spoke at a meeting of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg regarding Israel's future relations with her neighbours. He said:

"I suggested that Israel and her 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."

The current peace negotiations are being conducted on exploring co-operation in tourism, trade and water rights.

I believe that such an arrangement, limited both in scope and territory, cannot be in the long-term interests of Israel. I believe that the long term objective must be a full-fledged federation having one army, one strategy and one economic programme covering the whole Arabian Peninsula.

900 years after the Exile the Rabbis who compiled the Talmud, living in the comfort and security of the Babylonian Diaspora, wondered why the Almighty, blessed be He, deported the Jews to Babylon of all places.

One opinion was that it was because they would not have been able to survive in due course the severe decrees of Rome. Another opinion was that Babylonia was a low-lying land, resembling the nether world, and from such a land the Jews

would soon be redeemed. A third suggested the reason was that the language of Babylonia was akin to that of the Torah. The fourth said God sent the children of Israel back to their country of origin, where Abraham came from.

However, they all missed the point. The deportation to Babylon was a clear demonstration that the affairs of the region are inter-linked. There can be no lasting peace unless it shares a common destiny. In modern times, there was relative peace and security in the Middle East under an overall Ottoman hegemony. This is a further confirmation that the long-term future of the region is in a close federation of all its states.

During the Gulf War, Israel was plastered with Iraqi scud missiles. Her inability to retaliate, for various reasons, is greatly significant and deeply ominous. Saddam fancied himself as a new Nebuchadnezzar and dreams, under favourable conditions, to subdue Israel and deport the Jews to the new Babylon which he has rebuilt at great expense. Will history, God forbid, repeat itself? Like a good teacher (and the present writer), History keeps repeating itself until the lesson is learned. The lesson, in this case, is that the Middle East is one unit and must be kept under control and maintained as such.

The Arabs have been trying to force Israel to abandon her nuclear capability in order to be equal with her. They want to rot Israel not so much of the Massada option as of the Samson option: "On me and on my enemies O Lord!"

But in a federated Middle East, Israel's nuclear arsenal can serve as a powerful protection for the whole region and a deterrent to potentially aggressive neighbours.

A federated Middle East is dictated by the lessons of history and the facts of geography. This would be necessary to face any future ambitions from Iran, Turkey, Africa and countries beyond the seas.

During the recent peace negotiations the perennial King Hussein said, "At last there is peace for the children of Abraham." In fact, Abraham can be used as a builder of a Middle East federation with a federal capital called after him somewhere on the banks of the Euphrates.

The return of the Jews is the best thing that has happened to the Middle East in one thousand years — if only the Arabs knew.

JEWISH CHRONICLE

DECEMBER 9, 1983 — TEVET 3, 5744

Letters to the Editor

25 FURNIVAL STREET, LONDON, EC6A 1JT

Why I wept by the waters of the Thames

Sir, — Tears came to my eyes at the resuscitated conference of Jews from Arab countries, held in London last week, for its petty and naive objectives and for its trite arguments, ignored by foe and friend alike.

For reasons of its own, the Israeli establishment has persistently refused to make use of the *nishka* argument that thirty years ago there was in fact an exchange of refugees — the 800,000 Palestinian Arabs who left Israel and the 900,000 Jews from Arab countries who came to Israel. While Israel absorbed its refugees, the Arab governments deliberately kept theirs in camps as a lever against Israel.

The conference was scheduled to start on November 29, the date in 1947 of the UN partition resolution. But Jewish rights in the Middle East do not stem from the UN resolution, nor from the feast of the Mائدة, the Balfour Declaration or even biblical promises. God did not promise us a national home in China or South America but in the region which was

our habitat since time immemorial. Abraham emigrated to Canaan to escape persecution and to develop a separate culture and identity. This was in no way a surrender of Hebrew rights in the region as a whole.

Jewish alyas in the fifties from Arab countries was on parallel lines. The conference stressed Jewish claims for property left in Arab countries but I maintain that the Jewish people, who have kept a continuous presence in the Middle East, are entitled to a just share of the region and its resources. This can be achieved either through a confederal arrangement or by getting a direct share of the oil wealth. When Turkey ceded its rights in Mosul to Iran in 1925 it received in return a share of Iraq's oil income for 25 years.

The conference invited (quaefriends) the Arabs to make peace with Israel. But the Arab governments' investment effect that there is no room for both of us in the Middle East — it is either us or them. And since they don't want us as their neighbours and they can't

throw us into the sea we have to take the only remaining course. Zionism as we know it, based on co-operation with the Arabs, has come to a dead end. Israel must spearhead a Middle East liberation movement to put an end to the mess that the region has been put in by the Arabs.

The conference voiced concern for religious objects left behind in Arab countries. My late father in his oblique and after great hardship, expense and difficulties sent out of Baghdad nearly 400 historic scrolls to the London community. A few were given to various synagogues but the rest have disappeared without trace, which is very disturbing, considering that collectors now pay up to £10,000 each for these rare scrolls.

The only novelty of the conference was Minister Ben Porat's plan to resettle Arab refugees in the West Bank but this has really nothing to do with Jews from Arab countries.

NAIM E. DANGOOR
25 Albert Hall Mansions, SW7.

From the Foreign Ministry, Jerusalem to all Israeli Embassies instructing them to make use of the following letter.

להלן מכתב למערכת שפורסם בג'רוזלם פוסט.

הרעיונות המובעים בו מתאימים לשמש בסיס לוריאציות שונות של מכתבים למערכת הן בנושא יהדות עיראק והן בנושא העסקות המזרח תיכוניות.

THE JERUSALEM POST

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1975 • VOL. XLV, No. 13561

M.E. solution must be global

To the Editor of The Jerusalem Post Sir. — In his address at the recent banquet for Sheikh Khalifa of Qatar, French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing expressed the belief that the Middle East must have a global agreement. Allow me to applaud this verdict of vision, these words of wisdom, which point to the right path for peace in the Middle East.

I am an Iraqi Jew who managed to escape from that country in 1964 just before the official wave of terror descended on our community and culminated in the public hanging in Baghdad's main square of nine innocent Jews. My 90-year old parents left in 1973 after their property was sequestered. Our family had lived in Iraq for over 2300 years. We belong to more than one million displaced Jews from Arab countries who did not take to the gun but, dispersed all over the world, are trying to pick up the threads quietly and with dignity.

The solution must be global, for there can be no peace for the Palestinian refugees while the rights, material and political, of the Jewish refugees are ignored.

The solution must be global for there can be no peace in one corner of the Middle East while the Lebanese Christians are faced with a life-and-death struggle; while 8

million Kurds cannot attain autonomy; while the Armenians and Assyrians remember their massacres and their stolen lands; while the Shia majority in Iraq are oppressed; while the Arabs control 6 million square miles of territory and non-Arabs are denied any territory. These are not isolated problems and must be solved together.

The solution must be global for there can be no peace in the Middle East while a few Arab leaders pocket most of the oil wealth and Jews have to keep tightening their belts; while the Arabs clamour for a return to Palestine (although the bridges are open) but have barred Jews from entering some Arab countries on pain of death.

The solution must be global for peace, law and order in the Middle East are indivisible. To the PLO who say they want to establish a free, multi-racial, democratic, secular and progressive Palestine, we say we want to establish a free, multi-racial, democratic, secular and progressive Middle East. To those who say that Zionism is responsible for all the trouble in Palestine, we say that Arab imperialism is responsible for all the trouble in the Middle East.

N.E. DANGOOR
London, November 5.

FEDERALISM AND THE MIDDLE EAST

A SEMINAR, 'BRANCHILD', as it was called by the Jewish Chronicle, of Mr. Naim E. Dangoor, and sponsored by the Centre for Contemporary

and representatives of the Foreign Office, and the Egyptian and Israeli Embassies in London.

Prof. Jonathan Frankel

The Arabs have forfeited their right to lead the Middle East

PAX ISRAELITA

In recent weeks, Middle East politics have been shifting like the quicksand of the desert. Saddam now fancies himself as an Arab and Moslem messiah — a

Moreover, it is generally agreed that once the fighting is over, all foreign forces will leave the area. Israel can then take over policing the region in cooperation with her moderate neighbours.

TOWARDS A MIDDLE EAST FEDERATION

by EXILARCH

The repeated attempts of Arab leaders to unite various countries of the Middle East in a pan-Arab Federation shows clearly their imperialist intentions and their ultimate aim of having an empire extending beyond the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf. This movement has been sponsored by pan-Arabism, some of whose aims is domination of the region.

with squandering the language, Law and order.

ABRAHAM, THE FATHER OF THE MIDDLE EAST

by N. E. DANGOOR

In many ways Abraham is the common denominator of the Middle East or at least of that part of the region known as the Fertile Crescent. He was a Syrian (Aramaean) born in Iraq who had to migrate to Canaan for the sake of religious freedom. His compliance with the divine command which bade him to leave his country, his kindred and his father's house, demonstrates both his obedience to God and his attachment to his native land which he did not leave out of choice; both Isaac and Jacob had to choose their wives from the old country.

Abraham spoke Aramaic (Syriac) which at the end of the eighth century B.C.E. became the lingua franca of the Middle East and, later, one of the official languages of the Persian Empire. From that time and for 1,200 years Aramaic was the spoken language of Jews in Palestine.

The tradition and personality of Abraham can be used as a basis to forge a democratic federation of the Fertile Crescent comprising Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Sinai and Kuwait — all different countries in which still live a score of different nationalities. Of these only the Arabs would oppose and frustrate such a union, in order that they may achieve complete Arab domination.

The ideal capital for such a federation would be at Abu-Kamal, half-way on the Euphrates and near Mari of old in which Abraham once lived. What better name can such a capital have than that of Abraham? (cf. Washington)



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.
Law-
by reamies,
and accept the principle of federation as suggested by Mr Dangoor and proclaimed by King Faisal 75 years ago.
Jack H Zelonf

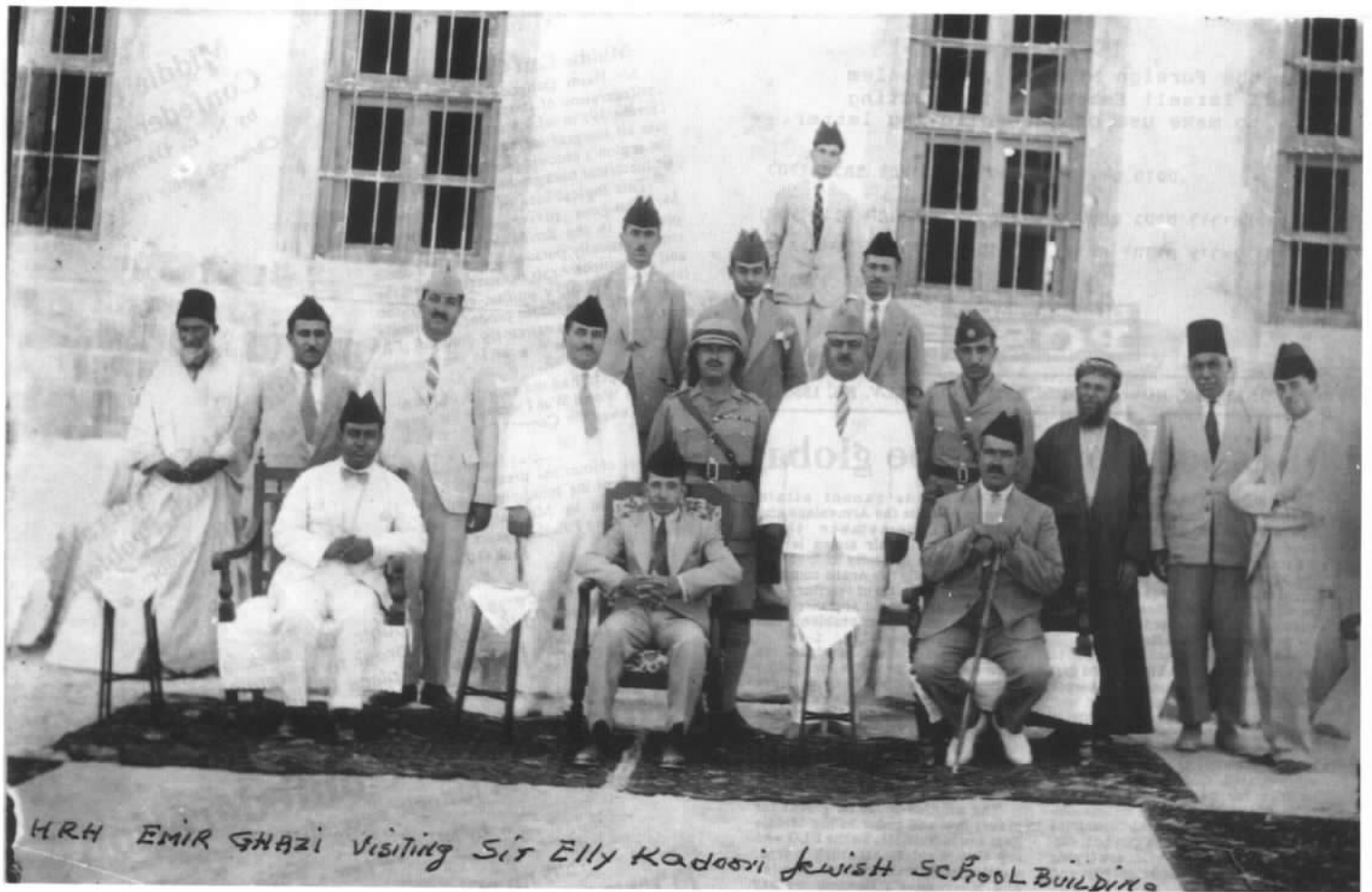
Middle East Confederation
by N. E. Dangoor
Chronicle July 1983

Middle East Confederation and the Kurdish Problem
by N. E. Dangoor

Peace is not enough. We seek a partnership in the Middle East in order to restore to the region its historic and rightful place in the forefront of human society.

Middle East Confederation
A historic necessity
by Naim Dangoor

75-76
"חלק הולם מעושרן של ארצות המזרחית יקצה לפליטים היהודים"



Left to right (sitting): Emir Zaid, Emir Ghazi (later the King of Iraq), Mutasarif.
 2nd row (standing): Hakham Yehya Hamo, Yonan ... (editor of Mosul newspaper), Iraqi Official, Abraham Nahom (M.P. in the Iraqi Parliament), Security Officer, Iraqi Official, Security Officer, Hakham Slemoon Barazani (Mosul Chief Rabbi), Isaac Ephraim (M.P. in the Iraqi Parliament), Dr Rauf Semah.
 3rd row (standing): Sasson Semah (M.P. in Iraqi Parliament), Iraqi Official, Selim Semah (see letter below left).

Your esteemed paper is very interesting and informative to all Jewish people, whether they are Sephardic Jews or not. It combines historical, educational and cultural facts about the Jewish Iraqi community.

Allow me to draw your attention to the fact that, in all the articles that I read, there was no mention of a very important part of the Iraqi Jewish community, the Jews of north Iraq! Mosul, Kurdistan, Zaccho were thriving Jewish communities at the turn of this century. There were important historical places like the tomb of the prophet Nahom Ha'Alkoshi (Nabi Nahom) in Alkosh, and the tomb of Prophet Yona Ben Amitai in Mosul (Nineveh).

I am sending a photo of the opening ceremony of the Sir Elly Kadoori School in Mosul, on July 29th, 1930. Prince (later King) Ghazi was one of the guests. Hopefully, this letter and photo will encourage people to write about this subject●

Ramat-Gan

Dr. Rauf Semah

Distortion of history

For many decades the Arab leaders and intellectuals have always claimed that they were fighting Zionism, not Judaism. History told us that, in the Arab view, no sharp line could be drawn between a Zionist and a Jew. Any Jew could easily be "accused" as a Zionist.

But recently some Arab writers and poets have taken a dangerous path of attacking Judaism instead of Zionism●

New York

Albert Khabbaza MD

I have recently been told of your illustrious journal, which interests me, having been born in that country 80 years ago, when I left at the tender age of 17 for Manchester, South Africa, Rhodesia, and now my family and I are at home in our homeland. I have a vivid memory of my schooldays there and the many people I know.

It is difficult to express in words my innermost joy and pleasure that your *Scribe* has given to me, in reading the past and present history of our people. It brought many happy memories of our Jewish community in Baghdad.

For many years I have been reading about the Sephardic communities in England, Spain, Portugal and elsewhere, and often wondered why the Iraqi Jews, who contributed so much in every sphere of life, their history should remain in total darkness.

It was by sheer luck that I was given your address and wrote to you. You graciously replied by sending me the September issue, for which I am deeply grateful●

Tel Aviv

Joseph Salem

Meeting recently in Paris with Edward Dangoor, an old friend of mine, I became acquainted with *The Scribe* journal and received a copy of the May 1994 issue.

Even though I do not belong to the Babylonian Jewry (I am a Sefarad Jew born in Bulgaria), I found your magazine very interesting, especially in view of my engagement with genealogical family trees●

Ramat Hasharon

Shlomo Finzi

I was thrilled and delighted to read Mr Sassoon Peress's letter in your issue of Sept '94 regarding a "shirt" incident. I very well remember the Atelier in the Laura Kadoorie school but unfortunately cannot recall the shirt episode. Will Sassoon ever forgive me for all the indignation he was exposed to on account of me?

For me this story has a very peculiar twist because in later years my business in life was connected mainly with the making of shirts! Was it the destiny of Sassoon Peress to forecast, at such an early age, the course mine was to take?

I would be most grateful if you could forward this letter to him, or have it printed in your columns, as a belated apology from my part and also as a sign of lasting friendship.

Although after 65 years all offences are covered by passage of time. I wish that destiny may again make us meet some day on which time I will offer him sincere proof of my repentance and gratitude.

Perhaps a shirt would be appropriate●

Brussels

Henri Sasson

To Alice Shashou.

We have the pleasure of receiving an autographed copy of your great book *Alice's International Cuisine*. We are enjoying very much the use of the Baghdadi recipes and want to compliment you on this magnificent effort and a superb collection compiled in such a valuable, well-written and handsome publication●

New Jersey

Rachel & Edward Nawy

Haham Solomon Gaon



Haham Dr Solomon Gaon died in New York on December 21 aged 82. He was born in Travnik, Bosnia, on December 15, 1912.

He became Haham of the Spanish & Portuguese Congregation in Britain in 1949 at the age of 37. In 1968 he was also elected president of the American Society of Sephardi Studies and ten years later he became chief rabbi of the congregations affiliated with the World Sephardi Federation.

The Haham title was first offered in Britain in 1664, but the rabbi in question left London because of the Plague. It is not an automatic title and has to be conferred by the general congregation. In the congregation's 350-year history, six men have held the title and the gaps between them add up to a longer period than their combined tenure of office. When Solomon Gaon was awarded the title in 1949, it was 51 years after the death of the previous Haham, Moses Gaster.

He had graduated as a rabbi from Jews' College, affiliated to London University, in 1948, and had gained a doctorate at London University. Like every holder of the office of Haham, Solomon Gaon was born outside Britain. He came to London in 1931 to be groomed for a post in Britain following his training at the Jewish theological seminary in Sarajevo. He therefore escaped the Nazi occupation of Europe.

When Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia visited Britain in 1953, he was astonished to be addressed in Serbian at a reception by a rabbinical guest - Gaon.

Solomon Gaon's personal piety, tolerance, courtesy, scholarship and devotion were welcomed. As the Jewish community re-established itself in the post-war period, Gaon's congregation enjoyed the prestige his scholarship and personal popularity gave them. He enjoyed parity of esteem with the Ashkenazi chief rabbi, without quarrelling with either Israel Brodie or his successor, Immanuel Jakobovits.

But the congregational elders worried that his increasing travels took him away from their local concerns and that other, newer congregations benefited from his services at their expense. He visited Rhodesia - later Zimbabwe - and Australia, where new Sephardi communities were being formed. Their members came from Aden, India, Greece, Turkey, the Balkans, Egypt, Iraq, Bokhara and Persia. Many of these post-colonial communities also settled in England.

He was particularly involved in Spain and the United States. He started visiting New York in 1962, where he formed an association with North America's oldest Sephardi synagogue, Shearith Israel,

founded in 1654. Invited as visiting professor to Yeshiva University, New York's Jewish university, he started an active programme of Sephardi courses, which he supervised from a distance. In 1976 he was appointed to Yeshiva University's chair in Sephardic Studies.

His interest in Spain lay in the "golden age" of Spanish Jewry under Moorish rule, when poets, philosophers and doctors flourished before the Edict of Expulsion of 1492. The edict was not formally repealed until 1968. Gaon made several visits from 1959 on, to help to collate the evidence of Spanish Jewry's contribution to the culture of the time.

He met General Franco and King Juan Carlos, was honoured by both, amazed Spanish ministers with his knowledge of medieval Castilian - the basis of Ladino, a Judaeo-Spanish language spoken around the Mediterranean - and was present at three significant occasions: the opening in 1968 of the first synagogue in Madrid since the Expulsion, the opening of the Sephardi museum in the magnificent El Tránsito synagogue of Toledo in 1971 (the synagogue was built in 1365 by Samuel Levy, treasurer to Don Pedro I of Aragon), and the historic ceremony in 1992, 500 years after the Expulsion, when, in the presence of King Juan Carlos, Queen Sophia and the Israeli President, Chaim Herzog, he declared an act of reconciliation between Spain and the Jewish people. This last was a highlight of his career.

But his overseas commitments had their cost. Gaon delegated synagogue responsibilities to younger assistant ministers. There were frequent rumours that he was leaving the country for good.

After a busy year in 1975, in which he attended the 300th anniversary of the Portuguese synagogue in Amsterdam, as well as visiting Spain and Australia, his congregational board came up with a proposal to establish a Sephardi council headed by the Haham and to cut the ties between that office and the congregation.

After the Bevis Marks celebrated its 275th anniversary in 1976, the board of management came out against Gaon, saying that he had decided to retire on his forthcom-

ing 65th birthday. The congregation was bitterly divided, with his supporters claiming that he had been forced into retirement, when no official age limit was laid down. At an acrimonious special meeting, a resolution calling on the "Senhor Haham" to remain in office received an equal number of votes as an opposing resolution. The second resolution calling on him, in effect, to stand down was carried only by the chairman's casting vote.

Gaon, who had stayed in New York during the frenzied debate, decided that the atmosphere was not conducive to a return to a situation where he had already complained that his authority was being undermined. He was a man of consensus and he preferred to concentrate on his long-term interests, the education of future religious leaders and the preservation of Sephardi tradition and identity.

At international Sephardi conferences, he pressed for greater recognition of the Sephardi element of Israeli society, which needed help to overcome its social handicaps. He was honoured in Israel for his scholarship and for his sensitivity to social issues.

He is survived by his wife Regina née Hassan of Gibraltar, whom he married 50 years ago, a son and daughter●

Scribe: Haham Solomon Gaon leaves a void that is not easy to fill. However, the Spanish and Portuguese congregations in England, Canada and USA have been greatly enhanced by large arrivals from Iraq, Persia, Syria, Egypt and North Africa. It is time the name of this community should be changed to the more general "Sephardim".

To avoid leadership rivalry in London, we should have a Sephardi Chief Rabbi and a Sephardi Chief Dayan. The title of Haham can be granted later by the congregation to one or both of them●

Mrs Regina Gaon writes:

I am overwhelmed by the hundreds of tributes received daily from different congregations and friends all over the world:

Mrs Gaon received tributes from Kahal Joseph Congregation, California; the Sephardi Federation of Australian Jewry; Sephardic Federation of Spain; Gibraltar Jewish Community; Yeshiva University in New York; Misgav Ladach Jerusalem; and Iraqi Jews of Montreal●

Nathan Saatchi writes:

The passing of Haham Solomon Gaon, is a great loss for all Sephardim. When the influx of Jews from various Islamic countries came to the U.K., the Haham recognised immediately the challenge and set about meeting some of the newcomers. Some of them joined Sephardi Synagogues in London and Manchester, while others created their own places of worship, but always under the jurisdiction of the Haham●

Scribe: Between 1961 and 1971 some 500 Sifrei Torah were shipped from Baghdad c/o the Haham who passed them on to the World Sephardi Federation for distribution to such worldwide congregations as needed them. However, some of these Sepharim were unfortunately sold to private collectors●

Khatoun Eliahou Dangoor

by Meer S. Basri

The passing away of my well-beloved and greatly regretted aunt, Khatoun, has truly brought to an end a felicitous era. She was a fine lady of the old school portraying all the attributes of grace, dignity, affection and compassion.

"A woman of valour who can find? For her price is far above rubies."

Khatoun was born in Baghdad 99 years ago in the twilight years of the 19th century in the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II. Baghdad at that time, was a remote province of the Ottoman Empire. She married in 1913 the late Eliahou Dangoor, son of Hakham Ezra Reuben Dangoor, later to become the Chief Rabbi of Baghdad; she took charge, throughout, of all the social functions required by her father-in-law's high communal office.

Khatoun lived through the rule of 20 Turkish Governors of Baghdad, the conquest of Iraq by the British in the First World War, through the Monarchy of Faisal, Ghazi and young Faisal, through the tense month of Rashid Ali and the Farhud that followed in June 1941 when hundreds of Jews were killed, through the tense period following the birth of the State of Israel, through the momentous and historic mass immigration of the entire Jewish community in 1950-51, through countless revolutions and counter-revolutions and the reign of terror following the defeat of the Arab armies by Israel in the Six Day War, which was followed by the hanging of the eleven innocent Jews that shocked the entire world.

Throughout all these upheavals, Khatoun and Eliahou Dangoor decided to continue living in the Land of the Rivers which had a continuous Jewish presence for over 25 centuries, in the earnest hope that conditions would improve. However, when Uncle Eliahou attained the age of 90, they decided they could wait no longer, they left for England in 1973 to join their children and grandchildren. In London Khatoun continued to live for 21 years under the reign of Queen Elizabeth II.

Throughout her stay in London, Khatoun held a Sabbath at home which united her numerous offspring as well as friends and acquaintances. There is a Baghdad saying that a slip of the foot can heal, but a slip of the tongue can never heal; Khatoun never uttered a bad word nor harboured a bad thought about anybody and was loved and respected for her sagacity and common sense. Her advice was always sought after till her last days and she was able to communicate with the old and the young.

Khatoun was eulogised by communal Chief Rabbi Dr Abraham Levy, Dayan Dr Pinhas Toledano, Rabbi Abraham Gubbay, Rabbi Abraham David●

Although she was blessed with a remarkably long life, Nana, as she was known to everybody, was sorely missed by her family.

May her memory be a blessing for everyone.

The ones we love are never gone, they live within our hearts●

אשת-חיל מי ימצא ורחק מפנינים מברה:



Khatoun Dangoor●

One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever●



Khatoun among some of her grandchildren●



1913 – wedding picture of Khatoun and Eliahou Dangoor●

My mother, Helen A Meer, widow of the noted architect Joseph E Meer (known by the name Yousef Meyer in Baghdad), joins me in expressing our appreciation to *The Scribe* for its publication of interesting, well-researched and informative articles that keeps us in touch with our Babylonian heritage. During the later years of his life, my dear father, may G-d bless his memory, along with my mother, chose Fort Lauderdale to be their winter and spring residence. They looked forward to receiving their copy of *The Scribe* and enjoyed reminiscing with their many friends the Babylonian memories triggered by its articles and photographs. Wherever Iraqi Jews congregate, whether it be in "Baghdad-by-the-Sea" (Fort Lauderdale), the New York/New Jersey (Baghdad on the Hudson) metropolitan area and other locales the world over, your journal has legions of fans●

Fair Lawn, N.J.

Joseph L Meer

Your 40-page September 1994 issue was a superb edition and beyond expectation. How much effort, patience and planning took you and the publishers to turn out such a wonderful and historic issue.

It was nice of you to publish on page 19 a picture of the Alliance School at Baghdad of the year 1925 in which my late sister Rachel appears in the second row under No.19.

As the donor of the picture remembers only the first name of my late sister and her relation to our late uncle Khedhour Zilkha, I may mention that her maiden name is Rachel Meir Yadid(ya) and her name in marriage is Rachel Kehela●

Ramat Gan

Abraham Yadid

The Old Aramaic Inscription from Tell Dan

Dr. Victor Sasson, New York

The recently discovered inscription from Tell Dan has attracted much public attention, especially as it has been publicised in the press. While the Hebrew Bible is our primary source of information on the Biblical period, any extra-biblical text from that long period is always exciting, particularly to the Biblical or Semitic scholar. What is most striking about this inscription – written in a dialect of Old Aramaic – is the mention, for the first time outside the Hebrew Bible, of the dynasty of David.

The Northern Kingdom, Israel, is already mentioned on the Moabite Stone—also known as the Mesha inscription, after the name of the king of Moab. Moabite is a language very close to Biblical Hebrew.

The number of inscriptions in Old Aramaic is small, but it is gradually increasing. In 1979 an important bilingual inscription, written in both Assyrian cuneiform script and Aramaic script was discovered at Tell Fakhriyah in northeast Syria (to the north of present-day Iraq). The Tell Fakhriyah inscription has been dated to the mid-9th century B.C.E, although the Aramaic script exhibits some eccentric or archaic features. The Tell Dan as well as the Moabite inscriptions are also dated to that century.

The Tell Dan inscription presents several problems to the Hebraist/Semitist. The fragmentary text refers to a war in which an Aramean king simultaneously fought a king of Israel and a king of Judah, inflicting thousands of casualties. One major problem is that the surviving text makes no mention by name of any of the kings involved in that war. Thus the specific historical context is not quite clear, and that will certainly generate much scholarly discussion. On palaeographical and archaeological grounds, the inscription has been dated, tentatively, to the mid 9th century B.C.E. The 9th century was a time of constant conflict between Aram-Damascus and Israel-Judah, as is clear from the biblical First and Second Books of Kings. It is not possible, therefore, to tell which specific war the inscription refers to. Nevertheless, careful research will enable us to refine our overall understanding of the text.

Several years ago this writer wrote and published a study of the Aramaic version of the Tell Fakhriyah inscription. He has recently completed a detailed research article on the Tell Dan inscription aimed at clarifying historical, textual, linguistic, and literary aspects of this important document●

Heskel Dabby

Dr Heskel Dabby was born in Baghdad in 1911 during the rule of Nadhem Pasha. He graduated from the Royal Medical College in 1939. He served as an officer in the Iraqi Army, and was often posted to remote districts. In 1949 he married Victoria Shaul Korin.

At the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war in 1948, Dr Dabby was forced to join a

medical group for a research mission in the Iraqi-Jordanian desert. He managed subsequently to report the findings of this group to scientists in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.



In 1951 he emigrated with his family to Israel and was accepted to work for the Health Services in the suburban town of Petah Tiqva. At the time when Israel was coping with refugees from the Holocaust and immigrants from Arab countries, Dr Dabby continued his work with the health service until his retirement in 1976. He was involved in the community life in Israel and, following the unexpected death of his son in 1954, began his attempts to advance the education of teenagers by building and maintaining a library and contributing financially to educational projects.

He found a particular interest in the field of medical surveys which were done in cooperation with the Beilinson hospital and the main significance of which was in constructing the basis of information patterns in the Army.

In addition to his work, Dr Dabby found time to develop his interest in the game of Bridge and belonged to the leading team in Israel in the 1950s which included, among others, Dr Kestner, Yehuda Arazi, Dr Lukach and Dr Boger. This team belongs to the generation which developed the competitive Bridge in Israel turning it from a game of the aristocracy to a national sport played by all classes and ages.

Dr Dabby passed away in July 1994 in Tel Aviv and his wife Victoria in October. They are survived by one daughter Dr Lilian Jury and three grandchildren.

Scribe: Dr Rudolph Kestner was a leader of the Hungarian Jewish Community. In 1944 he conducted an abortive negotiation with the Nazis to save Hungarian Jews from the death camps if the Allies agreed to supply Germany with military trucks. In the event, 200,000 Hungarian Jews were exterminated. Dr Kestner emigrated to Israel and was killed by an assassin in 1957. His name was subsequently cleared by the court, on the basis that a person would do anything to save his life and the life of his family.

Yehuda Arazi was Haganah leader who organised "illegal" immigration to Palestine. He was active after the war, especially in Italy, for the immigration of the survivors of the Holocaust●

Muzli Stanley Shashoua

My mother Muzli Shashoua who passed away on 27 July last, was an avid reader of *The Scribe*. One time her copy was late. She called me from New York and I called your office, and another copy was obligingly sent.

Your contribution to the Iraqi Jewish community worldwide is immeasurable. You have earned the love, respect and admiration of all your contemporaries.

You have brought a sense of belonging to a dispersed community that must give you satisfaction and pride. I speak for many others when I wish you to continue this unique endeavour.

Rabbi Dr Richard S Chaplin delivered the following eulogy at the funeral which is really a tribute to all Iraqi Jewish women of her generation

London

William Shashoua

(Abridged)

Muzli resembled in many ways the meritorious women of valour, described poignantly in our Book of Proverbs.

The world of Iraq served as our religion's cradle from the time of Abraham and some of the most climatic moments in Jewish life were played out within its borders.

Likewise Muzli linked the past and present. She was a vibrant, intelligent, beautiful woman, born in Baghdad 93 years ago, in a family of eight children, to Eliahu and Simha Bashi.

Muzli married Stanley and they had three children: William, Elie and Clarice, who is survived by Edward Chitayat, and through their unions nine grandchildren were brought forth and seven great-grandchildren who all returned her love in kind.

Muzli was of impeccable reputation, generous, elegant, thoughtful and dignified.

It is not easy to transfer one's life from Iraq to Iran, to Europe, to America. But Muzli not only transferred her residence, she transferred and translated her inimitable sense of grace into different languages and different cultures. Is it not remarkable that one person, Muzli Shashoua, whose family name means "joy and delight" could have influenced so many different generations of people so genuinely.

May her remembrance be a blessing for us all●

Mary Nathaniel

The passing of Mary Nathaniel has left us very sad. She was a friendly lady, always smiling and pleasant. She made many friends who loved her dearly.

Our deepest sympathy goes to her husband Heskell. Both did charity work in the U.K. and in Israel●

R.D.



Muzli Shashoua●

Albert Gourgey

Albert Gourgey, who died in New York in November 1994, was born in Baghdad 80 years ago, studied and worked in France just before, and during, the Second World War. He had a thrilling escape from the occupying Nazi forces, and, together with two other Baghdadian Jews went to Casablanca from where he boarded a ship to New York. Another of his Baghdadian Jewish friends was captured by the Nazis, sent to a prison camp and was shot trying to escape.

Albert went to a French-speaking school in Baghdad and, as his daughter, Annette, now a professor at Columbia University in New York wrote: "Dad's greatest loves in life were studying French and teaching his children. All through our school years he tutored us, putting a special emphasis on French, Hebrew language and traditions, and mathematics." Annette has a brother, Charles, also working in the academic sphere. Their mother, Louise, was born in Baghdad. She and their two children survive him.

His two brothers, Naim and Farraj, settled in Tel-Aviv in the early 1950s, having left Baghdad with the great aliya of Iraqi Jews to Israel at the time. I was always impressed by his fine personality in the many conversations we had in New York years ago●

P.S.G.



Ardhahalchi - Middle East Scribes writing a letter for a client.

Until recently, literacy among the people of the Middle East was less than 10%. An elderly woman received a letter from her son but could not read it. She met a *mullah* and requested him to read the letter for her, but he said "Sorry, madam, I am unable to read." She replied: "Such a big turban and yet you are unable to read." The *mullah* told her "My dear madam, it has nothing to do with the turban." He removed the turban and, putting it on her head, told her "Now, see if you can read!"●

Death creates a breach in nature. The ceremonies are meant to heal that breach●

My Beloved Jerusalem

by Emil Murad

Behold, follow, for beauty is in the eye
of the beholder,
This is what I shall never give up; no, I
won't surrender!

Fridays, at sundown I hear the siren
sound
Ushering in Sabbath, our holy Day of
Rest,
This is what makes Jerusalem unique,
A holy city at its best!

And when the next day church bells
chime
From the quaint village nearby,
And the voice of the muezzin echoes
In each prayer I hear a song, a rhyme,
And I crave to spread my wings and fly
To the thousand pictures in their
splendid frames
of a HOLY CITY with a variety of
names...

Calm at dusk, when shades of violet,
orange, or yellow mix and merge
to create a magical glow, clear and
bold,
Spotlighting the city in Heavenly gold!

Night falls in parks, by the span,
that low bridge over the lake,
where dusky shades of blue and green
paint an evening idyll of the lake
and the low bridge, that cast-iron span!

The skyline, etched on to it are
minarets, spires,
domes and all that in majestic beauty
transpires.
Beyond, footsteps away, modern
excavations unfold
the drama of civilisation past, a city of
gold!

Tourists and residents weave their way
through alleys,
Every curve provides a new master-
piece,
Every tunnel like works of art,
Each successive space lures you on,
Parks, trees, limbs and lights entwine,
in an affair of nature and artifice!

A mosaic of wonders, a stream of
emotions.
Walk through the ancient quarters,
touch the stones,
And a sense of identity is felt,
Mixed with joy and anticipation,
And the city awakens to the blossom of
rosemary, sage, thyme and the unique
ages old Jerusalem pine,
All you need is a deep breath and you
get drunk without wine!

Resplendent in its juxtaposition of
contrasting pictures
and common spiritual ideals,
the City, the Tower of David, the
Wailing Wall,
Come to life with the ancient past, the
living present, and all
Will lure me back to my Jerusalem;
and when I die
My bed, the soil of the city below me;
and above, the sky!●

Haskell Isaacs

Dr Haskell Isaacs, BSc, MA, PhD, MRCGP, who died of cancer on 1 November 1994, came from Iraq to the UK in 1945, obtaining a post at St Mary's Hospital, Paddington. Upon marrying in 1947 he opted to become a general practitioner within the new National Health Service and moved to the Manchester area where he soon had a flourishing practice. A man of lovable disposition, he won the hearts and respect of patients and the affection of a wide circle of new friends.



Dr Haskell at his 80th birthday celebration.
(Photo: by courtesy of Dr Stefan Reif.)

During his 35 years in Manchester, Haskell devoted such spare time as he had to the pursuit of scholarship in Manchester University's Department of Near Eastern Studies. As a doctor with a rare command of classical Arabic, a sound knowledge of Hebrew and a keen interest in the history of medicine, he received and accepted, at the age of 69, an invitation to join Cambridge University Library's famous Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit. There he worked on, and in 1994 published an analytical descriptive catalogue of the medieval Judaeo-Arabic medical material in the Genizah Collection. His study of one rarity from the latter – a 13th century Arabic medical certificate – appeared in *Medical History* 35 (1991). In 1981 he contributed, jointly with the present writer, a medical volume to the Cambridge Arabic Technical and Scientific Tests series. Notable among his other writings are "Britain's Contribution to Medicine and the Teaching of Medicine in Iraq" in the *Bulletin of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies* 3 (1976), and "Arabic Medical Literature in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature* (Vol.3, 1990).

He was the loving and much-loved husband of Ruth and father of Ann and David, who, along with grandchildren Simon, Sarah and Michael, survive him.

J D Latham

Percy Gourgey adds: I met Haskell and his wife Ruth some years ago when I gave a talk to the Cambridge University Jewish Students' Society. He invited me to his home after guiding me around the Genizah Research Unit. He combined, to a remarkable degree, the qualities of charm, intellect and profound scholarship. His uncle, Advocate Selim Isaac, served as Secretary and legal adviser to the Jewish Community in Baghdad in the 1920s.

Dr Haskell's major Genizah work on medicine

Understanding of the history of medicine has just been enriched by the publication of the first comprehensive description of Genizah items relating to that field. *Medical and Para-Medical Manuscripts in the Cambridge Genizah Collections* is the result of ten years' intensive research by Dr Haskell Isaacs, lately assisted by Dr Colin Baker, with funding from the Wellcome Trust. It is the latest volume (No. 11) in the Genizah Series published by Cambridge University Press for Cambridge University Library (ISBN 0 521 47050 1).

Among the fragments described are Arabic and Hebrew translations of Galen and Hippocrates and of commentaries on them; the medical writings of Avicenna, Rhazes, al-Majusi and Maimonides, some in the original Arabic, with others in Hebrew translation; treatises on the eye, fevers, sexual medicine and poisons; pharmacopoeias; and previously unknown works.

There are also details of correspondence between patients and physicians, medical certificates, and other fragments describing medical activities in medieval Islamic and Jewish society. Such information is of major importance for tracing the development of Renaissance science.

Since the publication of *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem, 1985), many additional magical texts have come to the attention of the authors, Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked. These have now been assembled in their new book, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem, 1993), which contains an impressive collection of 17 Palestinian metal amulets, 14 Babylonian incantations on earthenware bowls, and 21 magical texts from the Cairo Genizah

Among the 52 new texts, all of which have been meticulously transcribed, translated, annotated and photographed, the Palestinian amulets incised on gold, silver or bronze plates are considered of special importance and are reproduced in facsimile drawings.

In their introduction, Naveh and Shaked deal with the history and development of Jewish magic tradition in Palestine and Babylonia and discuss its relationship with Hekhalot literature, liturgy and medicine. They refute the belief among nineteenth century scholars that magical practice was less prominent in Palestine than in Babylonia, and stress that the Palestinian Jews resorted to incantations no less frequently than their Babylonian brethren.

Although Palestine and Mesopotamia had two separate and distinctive magic traditions, when formulae from the two geographical areas converge it may invariably be established that the origin of the theme is Palestinian rather than Babylonian.

This study constitutes an important contribution to our understanding of Palestinian and Babylonian magic and its use of the Aramaic language. It also provides deep insights into rich religious life and everyday practices of ordinary folk in the Talmudic period●

The secrets of vision

I was delighted to see a reference in your September issue to Mr Brotman of Shamash School. He was my father. I'm sorry he couldn't answer your conundrum about eyesight.

If you have any reminiscences of him I would be so grateful to hear from you. I have a sister who was in Baghdad at that time and she would also be interested. My father died in 1970 and my mother in 1986.

Wembley Park

Honor Stamler
(née Brotman)

Naim Dangoor's reply:

I am glad to hear from the daughter of my former schoolmaster. Your late father was very kind and popular with everyone. He returned from Baghdad in 1932 and when I came in September 1933 to enter London University, I stayed with the Bogods at Westcliff-on-Sea and met Mr Brotman at Synagogue there on Yom Kippur. We met again in 1951, when he was Secretary of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

In February 1970 my wife and I were invited to have tea with your parents, when your father kindly gave me all his Baghdad photographs after dating and signing them (two are shown alongside). I gave the originals to the Diaspora Museum in Tel Aviv.

Scribe: We are sorry to note the recent death of Honor's husband the late Samuel Stamler QC at the age of 68. For nearly 40 years, first as a junior and then as a silk, Samuel Stamler was one of the leading commercial practitioners in London. His capacities as a lawyer and as an advocate were unsurpassed by any of his contemporaries. In the difficult field of contested takeovers in which he specialised, he was reputed to earn a fee of up to £2500 an hour.

In 1966 he was one of the four founder members of what is now the largest commercial chambers in London. He was its head for nearly 20 years until his death. At the time of his death, he was head of the Bank of England's advisory team on claims arising from the collapse of BCCI.

His brother David Stamler was former headmaster of Carmel College.

In his private life he was particularly fortunate. In 1953 he married Honor Brotman. Their marriage, a very happy one, was a marriage of intellectual equals. She was first a tutor in economics at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, and later a senior economic adviser to the Treasury. The only cloud in the last year of Sam's life was her serious illness. We are sorry to learn of Honor's death last January.

Honor and Sam Stamler are survived by two sons and a daughter ●

The brains behind our view of the world

The creation of the visual world, form and colour, movement and depth is among the most astounding feats of the brain. Over the past 20 years there has been a quiet revolution in our understanding of the



1924 – Visit of Prime Minister Jaafar-Al-Askari to Rahel Shahmoon School Baghdad.

Left to right: Headmaster Shimon Moualim Nissim; Ezra Menahem Daniel; School's Inspector A. Brotman; Jaafar Pasha; Abraham Nahom; Tahsin Quadri; Shaoul Sulaiman ●



1928 – Senior class at Rahel Shahmoon School, later transferred to the new Shamash School.

Sitting (L to R) teachers: Ezra Twena; Younis; Reuben Zelouf; Moise Mayer; Mr Brotman; Meir Zakr Ezra Haya; Mahmoud Abd-El-Wahab.

2nd row: Anwar Soffer (student); Jamil Orphaly; Tawfiq Basri; Rashid Rushdi; Moshe Soffer; Salma Khdeir; Abraham Hakham Joseph; – ; Kadouri Levy.

3rd row (students): Adv. Jacob Abd-El-Aziz; Reuben Eliahou Batta; Eliahou Binou; Joseph Davi; Yehiskel; Dr Isaac Sourani ●

processes which make it possible.

Semir Zeki, Professor of Neurobiology at London University, has played a leading part in the revolution. Last year he became its chronicler, with a highly accessible account of the recent discoveries. *A Vision of the Brain* (Blackwell).

Zeki believes that his scientific successors will be the philosophers of the next millennium, grappling with the problems of "knowledge, experience, consciousness and the mind – all a consequence of the activities of the brain." ●

The process of vision explained

by Albert Khabbaza, M.D.

In reply to the question raised by Naim Dangoor in *The Scribe* of September 1994: Why do we see the picture where the object is and not inside our head?

A similar question is: When you hear a bell ringing in front of you, why do you hear the bell ringing at the site of the bell and not in your brain? The mechanism is the same in the visual and in the auditory senses, as well as all other senses. The

question you asked should not be addressed to a teacher of Physics whose knowledge in neurophysiology is limited.

The fact is that the brain does not receive an introverted picture from the retina and does not make it the right way up. It does not receive any picture at all and it is not a screen.

The picture of an object is real and is received on the retina upside down according to the law of physics, but here the comparison of the eye to the camera ends, and the laws of physiology and neurology start. Each point of the picture in the retina stimulates a specific nerve ending in the retina causing an electrical impulse travelling along this tiny nerve to a main nerve called the optic nerve, which, in turn, carried all these electrical impulses, or signals, to a specific area in the brain cortex (at the back of the head). This area contains a specific nerve cell highly specialising in interpreting these signals after tracing their source. How do they do that is a different question which must be dark and bewildering for the present?●

More Comments

by Steven Daniel Marsten of Illinois

I am the first son of Ilana Marsten, daughter of Jonah and Lulu Bahary, formerly of Baghdad, and cousin of Kamel Bahary of New York. I have a B.S. in Biology from the Illinois Institute of Technology, studied Genetic Engineering, and worked for five years in the area of Molecular Oncology. Your article in the current issue entitled "gene Efficiency" was stimulating and I want to pass to you a few professional insights.

You are absolutely correct in your figures regarding genetic replication efficiency. Each bodily somatic, i.e., non-germ cell has a mechanism which corrects for any replication malfunction. As you know, the genetic material DNA is made up of a double helix of two DNA polymers or strands. The elements of the strands, four genetic bases, code for proteins which result in our phenotypes like hair and eye colour. Mutation may occur resulting in an incorrect or deleted base or bases. If not repaired, it would result in a modification of the proteins coded by the bases. These proteins 99.999% of the time are completely non-functional. Luckily, we have molecular genetic mechanisms which correct them.

Your assumption that changes may result in an organism being naturally selected do not apply much to the human species because we have such a slow reproductive cycle; mutations would have to have been created in the basal germ cells for changes to be passed to offspring. It is thusly true that we are carrying copies of the same genes as our ancestors 2,000 years ago.

Natural selection refers to healthy organisms outliving the unhealthy. We recognize this in present civilized society by treating and researching disease, but this concept only goes back maybe 20,000 years into the history of modern man. Natural selection requires millions of years.

It is interesting that you related the DNA genetic code to binary code; I left my studies in DNA work a year and a half ago and am now studying computer pro-

gramming. What an interesting coincidence. You must have had a revelation from an angel with the idea for your article●



Sam and Honor Stamler with her parents
Adolph and Fanny Brotman●

On the wonder of vision

The Astonishing Hypothesis

The Scientific Search for the Soul

by Francis Crick

Published by Simon & Schuster. £16.99.

Reviewed by David Dangoor

Why do we see an object where it stands and not perceive it as an image inside our head? These have been problems which have troubled my father for the past 70 years. As mentioned in the last issue of *The Scribe* he could not get a satisfactory explanation from his Physics teacher at school. Stereo and 3-D only add an extra dimension, but do not provide a clue. There must be an explanation, but it can't be simple. In fact it is very complicated.

According to Nobel Laureate Professor Crick in his recent book "The Astonishing Hypothesis", we have only begun to scratch the surface of understanding vision. What we know at present is only a small tip of a very large iceberg. The picture we "see" with our eye is just an image that we create in our minds, which in most people matches the physical world we are seeing. In fact it is not so for all people. A man having consulted the famous neurologist Dr Oliver Sacks, and on leaving mistook his wife for a hat, even attempting to pick up her head!

This interpretation of the outside world going on in our mind is immensely complex. Movement is dealt with by one part of the brain, colour by a completely different part, shape by yet another part. There are perhaps as many as 30 separate components, including also the position of what we see, interpretation, differentiation, and so on. Each activity is accompanied by neuron firing in a separate location. It is an illustration of the miracle of the visual process that our brain is able to coordinate all these disparate parts and unite them always into a perfectly and synchronous unity.

Yet all this is very puzzling. It is very hard to avoid thinking that somewhere in the brain there is a giant cinema screen which your conscious self watches. However, all efforts have failed to find any such thing. At no stage, after the inverted image in the retina, is there a "picture" in the way there is inside a camera.

Professor Crick's astonishing hypothesis is that just as with vision, so with all our mental processes (such as hearing), everything is the result of electrical and chemical activity in our brain, and that ultimately we have neither soul nor any other self. The "self" is merely a collection of neurons obeying fixed laws. Most people would probably want Professor Crick

and his kind to go much further along this road before being prepared to extrapolate that we are ultimately as soulless as he suggests●

Circumcision Woes

I have been listening to a recording of Chaim Bermant's book *The Walled Garden*, in which he states concerning circumcision that the uncircumcised male achieves more sexual excitement and gives his partner more sexual pleasure than the circumcised male. I thought it was the other way round. Please clarify for the benefit of your readers.

London Name and address supplied

Mr Bermant writes: I wrote that "circumcision weakens the power of sexual excitement". The words, however, are not mine. I was quoting Maimonides.

I suspect he was wrong and so, obviously you.

Scribe: The latest medical opinion continues to accept the hygienic advantages of circumcision, but now points out that the foreskin has important and sensitive nerve ends that are lost in the process.

During the Hellenistic period when sports were carried out in the nude, many Jews in Judea used to sew on a bit of foreskin to conform to the rest. Nowadays some people are attaching weights to the skin in an attempt to prolong it.

Some people regard ritual circumcision as unnecessary mutilation of the body that leaves a lifelong scar on the mind of the male.

If wanted for hygienic reasons it could be done as a surgical operation under anaesthetic.

A serious complication after circumcision

Male circumcision is widely practised in our Jewish community and it is thought to be a safe procedure. But common problems are bleeding, removal of too much skin, removal of too much or too little mucosa, untidy tags, fistula of the urethra, stricture of the opening of the urethra (meatal stenosis) or even accidental amputation.

Recently a serious complication has been published in the medical journal. At Guy's Hospital in England, three babies were admitted with abdominal distension following circumcision. They suffered from urinary retention and subsequently from acute renal failure, as a result of urinary obstruction due to overzealous bandaging or penile oedema.

Unless the parents are given appropriate information about such complication due to tight bandaging, the consequences could be fatal. Special attention should be directed to passing of urine and how often after circumcision.

New York Albert Khabbaza, MD

We passed Dr Khabbaza's letter on to Dr Sifman, the Medical Officer of the Initiation Society, an organisation which represents mohelim. His comment was that circumcision was a surgical procedure which carries less risk than similar surgical procedures. However, he stated that all mohelim are rigorously trained and that there have been in the United Kingdom very few of the types of cases referred to by Dr. Khabbaza●

The Hittites

Abridged from

Aramco World

Turkey's soil is rich in ruins: Ottoman, Roman, Seljuk, Byzantine, Greek. But far older than any of those cultures – and forgotten almost entirely for 3000 years – are the remains of the first Indo-European power in the Mediterranean area: the Hittites.

Their arrival in Anatolia – the Asian part of Turkey, known also as Asia Minor – some 4000 years ago changed the political map of the Middle East, at that time dominated by the civilizations born in the valleys of the Nile, the Tigris and the Euphrates. Although the Hittites ruled in Anatolia and beyond for almost 1000 years thereafter, they then vanished from human memory, to be rediscovered only at the beginning of the 20th century. Only the Bible carried some short references to the Hittites, presenting them as one of the tribes of Palestine in the first millennium BCE. It was a “son of Heth” – a Hittite – who sold the Prophet Abraham the land to bury his beloved wife Sarah.

Who were the Hittites? Their discovery is still one of the most fascinating stories of the early archaeological and philological explorations of the Middle East. The ruins of their once monumental palaces and temples, their rock-reliefs in the middle of the wilderness of the Anatolian steppes, and their stone inscriptions in the least expected places were known by local people but overlooked, or ignored, by Europeans.

It took scholars almost a whole century to achieve a degree of certainty in reading the hieroglyphic Hittite-Luvian script, as it was called.

The royal archives of Tell el-Amarna, a city occupied between 1375 and 1360 BCE, comprised the official letters of two Egyptian pharaohs, Amenhotep III and Akhenaton, and included some 400 cuneiform tablets, mostly in the Akkadian language – the lingua franca of the Middle East in the second millennium BCE. Among them, however, there were also some tablets written in the Hittite language. Since both the Bible and Egyptian written sources referred occasionally to the Hittites as a power comparable to Egypt itself, scholars concluded that something like a Hittite empire must have existed in Anatolia sometime in the second millennium BCE.

The texts uncovered in Anatolia opened up a new chapter in the history of ancient civilizations, written by the Hittites and other Indo-European peoples – Luvians and Palaians – who arrived in Asia Minor at the end of the third millennium BCE or a little later. The land they came from and the route they took in their search for a new homeland are still among the unsolved mysteries of the past. Might they have come from the vast steppes of Russia, as Turkic tribes did some 30 centuries later? Or were they from the once dense forests of Europe? The search for those answers is still on.



Wherever they came from, it seems that the Indo-Europeans' infiltration into Asia Minor was rather peaceful, in spite of some violent local conflicts described in the archives of Bogazkoy. The Hittites settled down mostly in central Anatolia.

Anatolia was not empty when the Hittites arrived. The Anatolian cultures of the time were relatively rich but small communities whose royal tombs have been discovered in such places as Alaca Huyuk and Horoztepe. Gold, silver and bronze objects from these tombs are considered to be of equal or higher quality than the treasures found in ancient Egypt or Mesopotamia. These people spoke Hattic – a language of different structure than Indo-European or other languages known from the area. Because we have few texts or other clues, this language, and the identity of its speakers, are still a matter of speculation, but we do know that the Hattic people, and the land of Hatti, became part of a new political entity known as the Hittite Old Kingdom in about 1650 BCE.

The kingdom founder, Hattusilis I, rebuilt the city of Hattusas – destroyed and cursed by the pre-Hittite ruler of the area – and proclaimed in his capital. Here, in Hattusas, now known as Bogazkoy, the cuneiform texts of the ancient Hittite kings spoke again some 35 centuries later.

Hattusilis I set up the rules and directions for the future development of his kingdom. The Hittites would rule in a flexible way, accepting the customs, traditions and deities of any land which became part of their growing empire. Hence, the Hittite kingdom is often called the “kingdom of thousands of gods.” All the deities, those of the conquerors and those of the conquered, were to be worshipped in their own languages and according to their own customs. They were left as rulers of their lands – although their earthly representatives had to recognise Hittite suzerainty.

The originally small Hittite kingdom of Central Anatolia soon grew beyond Asia Minor. The Hittites looked with interest to Syro-Palestine and even to the famous civilisations of Mesopotamia. In 1595 BCE the grandson and successor of Hattusilis I, Mursilis I, took northern Syria and the city of Aleppo. In the same campaign he conquered Babylon, putting an end to the first Babylonian dynasty of Hammurabi. But though his military success was very impressive, its effects did not last. Mursilis was murdered on his re-

turn to Hattusas, and shortly thereafter the kingdom of the Hittites was once again limited to central Anatolia.

The Hittites organised themselves again to conquer the world. The New Hittite Empire is usually dated to the period between 1180 BCE. Suppiluliumas I of the 14th century BCE made Anatolia and Northern Syria his dominion. He did not repeat Mursilis's mistake of moving into an area which he could not directly control. Instead, through the most immediate conquests and a whole system of alliances, he founded a kingdom whose strength and wealth surpassed that of any other nation of the period. Even an Egyptian queen, alone after the death of her husband, asked Suppiluliumas to send one of his sons for her to marry.

Another ruler of the Hittite Empire, Muwatallis, had a less than friendly brush with Pharaoh Ramses II. Both the Hittites and the Egyptians were so interested in the political and economic importance of the Syro-Palestine area between them that conflict was inevitable. Their two armies met in one of the most famous battles of history, at Kadesh on the Orontes River in about 1286 BCE.

The results of the battle, which confirmed the status quo in the Middle East – the division of influence in Syro-Palestine between Egypt and Anatolia – were sealed some 16 years later by an international treaty signed by Hattusilis III and Ramses II. The treaty also represents one of the last attempts to keep the growing power of the Assyrians of what is now northern Iraq out of the area controlled by the Hittites and the Egyptians.

However, it was not Assyria which caused the fall of the Hittite Empire. The blow was delivered by the so-called “Sea People”, a group of possibly Indo-European tribes of disputed origin who attacked much of the Middle East by land and sea around 1200 BCE. Eventually these people were stopped by Pharaoh Ramses III just at the borders of his own kingdom, but the damage was done. The Hittite kingdom was destroyed, along with many famous cities of the Anatolian and Syro-Palestinian coast. However, Hittite cultural traditions were kept alive for the next few hundred years in the so-called Neo-Hittite states of southern Turkey and northern Syria. And the ruins of many of their constructions can be admired all over Anatolia.

Among them is the capital of the Hittite kingdom, Hattusas, located 200 kilometres east of Ankara. It's hard to imagine that such a fabulous city with so much protection was destroyed and rebuilt more than once. It's even harder to imagine that its constructors were forgotten for 30 centuries.

There are many places in modern Turkey where one can still see and touch the fabulous past of the first recorded Indo-Europeans – the Hittites. Although forgotten for many centuries, they are finally getting the recognition due them for their contribution to the history of humankind. Their power was once at least equal to that of pharaonic Egypt; now their fame may also grow as great, as we search for our past in the beauty of the Turkish land ●

A Tribute to David and Rachel Sasson, Headmasters of the Alliance Schools, Baghdad, 1923-1936

by Henri Sasson, Brussels

My father, David Sasson, was born in Teheran in 1888 and came from a large but poor family of 10.

As a boy, he went to the local Alliance School and upon completion of his studies in 1904, was sent by the Alliance to complete his education and train as a teacher in the Ecole Normale Israelite Orientale in Paris.

It was the usual policy of the Alliance in those early days to select promising students from various schools, place them in the Ecole Normale in Paris and send them back as teachers to serve in all their school network throughout North Africa, Greece, Turkey and the Middle East.

In 1909, my father got his first posting as a teacher at the Alliance in Cairo. There he met and married my mother, Rachel Niego, who was also a teacher at the Alliance school for girls.

My mother was born in Istanbul in 1890 and followed the same educational course as my father, first at the Alliance school in Istanbul, then at the Ecole Normale des Filles in Paris.

If such courses nowadays appear rather run of the mill, one should imagine the amount of courage and determination shown by both parents and children in the 1900s to allow a young boy, let alone a young girl, in their early teens, to travel alone in Paris for four years and subsequently to travel, also alone, to work in unknown and distant countries.

My parents married in Cairo in 1912 and in 1914 they were posted, this time as headmasters, to the newly opened Alliance school in Mosul. Travelling from Cairo to Mosul at the outbreak of World War I was also an epic adventure. Mosul was then under Turkish rule and one can still read reports my father sent at the time to the Alliance in Paris about the incredible hardships of life under Ottoman domination.

In 1915, my sister Jeanette was born in Mosul. She can be seen as a young girl of 10 in the front row of the picture taken in Baghdad at the Laura Kadoorie school for girls in 1925 (which appeared on the centre pages of *Scribe* No. 62).

In 1920, my parents were posted to Tanta in Egypt where my brother Albert was born. In 1922 they were sent to open an Alliance school in Jaffa, Palestine. This posting was somewhat a challenge because in the years following the Balfour Declaration, some of the leaders of the Jewish community in France (many of whom were on the board of the Alliance) had mixed feelings about the practical application of Zionism in the fear that it might create in their view, and in the views of their non-Jewish friends, conflicting problems of dual allegiance.

At that time, Tel Aviv was just being founded on the dunes north of Jaffa and some demonstrations took place in Allenby Street when it became known that the Alliance was

about to open a school in Jaffa. However, all went well and the school eventually became a big success.

In appreciation of their achievements in Jaffa, my parents were posted to Baghdad in 1923, my father as headmaster of the Alliance boys' school and my mother as headmistress of the Laura Kadoorie school for girls. The Baghdad posting was at that time one of the most important in the career of the Alliance. With its two schools totalling about 2,500 pupils (Jews and a few Moslems), its synagogue and also the Nuriel Wakouf Trust estates given to its custody, the Alliance soon became not only a landmark of the Jewish community, but also a centre of social progress and western culture which the nascent Iraqi state liked to acknowledge. King Feisal visited the schools in 1925, the year of my birth, together with his son Ghazi and the Prime Minister.

So many memories are linked with the events of those days. I remember vividly how we once got lost in the desert in 1932 when my father had to go for an inspection of the Wakouf estates near Hilleh. On the way back, we stopped in Babylon to see the Arch of Ctesiphon and also to visit the ruins which were then just beginning to be excavated by a French archaeological team. Soon after leaving Babylon, a sandstorm started and so rudimentary were the roads that the driver lost his way as night was falling. We had with us in the car Dr. Rubitchek, an ophthalmologist friend of the family, who tried to find the right direction by the stars. And I can still hear the plaintive voice of the driver who kept asking in Arabic: "Doctor Bey, which way should I go?"

After all that happened in the region and indeed throughout the Middle East since those days, it is difficult to realise today how much the newly founded state of Iraq owed to its population of about 180,000 Jews and also to such institutions as the Alliance. It would take days of research to compile the services rendered by the Jews of Iraq to their country of birth in the fields of economy, culture and social welfare. But perhaps the liveliest and shortest way to sum it all up is the following story told to us by my father who heard it from a first-hand source.

In the early twenties, a delegation of British officials came over to Baghdad from London to negotiate oil concessions with the government of Iraq. Eventually an agreement was reached whereby the newly-created Iraq Petroleum company would get exclusive exploration and exploitation rights in return for which the IPC would pay to the Iraqi government annuities of 5 million pounds sterling a year for the duration of the life of the company. On the day the agreement was to be signed, the Iraqi finance minister before appending his signature, said that he wanted the word "gold" to be inserted between the figure 5 million and pounds sterling. The British delegation was puzzled and did not understand the meaning of this request. They said that the only pound sterling then in existence was the gold-backed pound, that there was no other pound to create possible confusion

and therefore failed to see the reason for this last-minute change. Nevertheless, the Iraqi finance minister insisted and in the end got his way. The sentence was modified to read: "5 million gold pounds sterling". One can easily imagine the tremendous consequences this last-minute word had on the treasury of Iraq in later years when the pound was switched off the gold standard.

But this story would not have its full impact without adding that the name of the Iraqi finance minister of the time was Sasson Heskell Effendi, that he was Jewish and a graduate of the Alliance.

In 1936, David and Rachel Sasson were posted to Haifa after having spent 13 fruitful years in Baghdad. They were replaced by Mr and Mrs A. Laredo. We left Baghdad in July 1936 for pre-Israel Palestine which was then in the midst of violent mandatory conflicts between the Arabs, the British and the Jews. In the same year my brother Albert went to London to study in Imperial College where he graduated as an oil engineer in 1942. He spent his whole career working for Shell in such far-away places as Trinidad, Indonesia, Venezuela and Nigeria. He is now retired and living in Surrey.

My parents served at the newly-opened Alliance school in Haifa which was then situated in Herzl Street in Hadar Hacarmel. In 1951 they retired after 40 years of vocational dedication to the basic principle of the Alliance as formulated by its founders in 1868, namely to come to the help of the Jewish communities which were then living in the Orient under poor conditions. The first practical step was to give them an education. Once provided with a proper education, all the other improvements were bound to follow. This concept proved to be absolutely right in all the countries where the Alliance established schools, from North Africa, throughout the Mediterranean countries up to Persia. Nowhere could better justification be found than in Baghdad, Mosul and Basrah.

In recognition of services rendered to French culture, the French government awarded them in 1949 the orders of Officiere d'Académie, Officier de l'Instruction Publique and the Médaille d'Honneur.

Having been in Haifa since 1936 we had the privilege to assist and participate in the creation of the state of Israel in May 1948. Those were unforgettable days. I remember a speech made by Ben Gurion at a gathering in Haifa where he said we had not got much but we did have an invincible weapon. When we asked what it was, he replied: *Aleph Bet* which are the Hebrew initials for *Ein Brera* (There is no other option).

My parents left Haifa in 1958 to come and live with me and my wife in Brussels. My father died in Brussels in August 1962. My mother lived until the age of 95 and she died in Brussels in April 1985.

They went away with the feelings they had had throughout their lives that they were leaving behind not only members of their family but also scores of other children throughout the world for whom they cared and loved no less than their own ●



1935 - Farewell party given in Baghdad for Mr. Sasson, centre front row.

A Barmitzvah homily

The following is a homily prepared by Haham Ezra Dangoor of Baghdad on the occasion of the Barmitzvah of his eldest son Reuben Sion which occurred on the day preceding Shavuoth – 6 Sivan 5644 = Thursday 29 May 1884.

Extracts from a translation from the Hebrew original kindly made by Professor Raphael Loewe. (Such sermons, although prepared in Hebrew, would have been delivered partly in Arabic):

Why, following a midrashic adage, should a father declare when his son reaches the age of 13, "Blessed be He who has discharged me from responsibility for penalties incurred by this my son"? A minor's actions are of no account, he not being obligated to observe the commandments. How, then could the father incur any vicarious penalty for his son? An answer is suggested by Prov. 17,6 "children's children are the crown of the aged and the glory of children are their fathers." The sages hold that whereas a son can confer title to some advantage on his father, the converse does not hold; if the son is a righteous man this is an advantage to his father, whereas the only thing that a son derives is the glory, in general terms, of his forbears. If the children are righteous they indeed constitute a crown for their elders.

Why is it that God so disposed that the son can confer benefit on his father, but not vice versa? From man's very birth the evil inclination enters him – "sin crouches at the door" (Gen. 4,7): the inclination to good comes only when, at the age of 13, he becomes obligated by the commandments. But why should he not be thus obligated, and thus open to the influence of the good inclination, from birth? It is for the same reason that Israel did not receive the Torah immediately on their redemption from Egypt. Those who have long dwelt in darkness are dazzled by sudden exposure to intense light; their becoming accustomed thereto must be gradual. Hence our formulation of the daily morning prayer "Who gives light to the world and its inhabitants *in mercy*," i.e. were the sun to rise in its full strength in a single instant nothing could sustain the sudden change. God's mercy consists in ordaining that the dawn is a gradual process. Our ancestors, who had long been sunk in the impurities of Egypt, could hardly be purified and prepared to receive the holy Torah in one fell swoop. Consequently God waited for seven weeks, during which time they should get rid of their impurities and prepare their hearts to serve their Creator in holy purity.

The same principle applies here. Birth is a matter of crass matter only – the newborn has many disadvantages and lacks all the real good things – knowledge and ethical sense, etc.: he is not yet ready for the Torah and commandments. But right from the outset his father is responsible for initiating him into the commandments and setting him on the right course for life so that he may become equipped by a developing intellect; and then, on his reaching the age of 13, the good inclination enters him and he thereby becomes suitable for the Torah and its commandments, being henceforth obligated by them. But we may still wonder why not till his 13th year. By the time a child is six he has sufficient knowledge to receive education. But God waits a further seven years, while the child sloughs off his physical impurities, and when he is properly equipped and com-

plete then, and then only does the good inclination enter him and he becomes obligated by the Torah and its commandments.

So much, then, for our question why the son can confer benefit on the father but not vice versa. Since the father has the responsibility of initiating and training his son before he reaches his 13th birthday, as the boy grows up and at that date becomes obligated by the commandments, being duly prepared for this responsibility, he thereupon gains the extra support of the good inclination in striving for moral-perfection. At this stage it is a case of "measure for measure": God repays the father for all his effort, conferring upon him the benefit of satisfaction at his son's developing character, seeing that it was thanks to the father's endeavour that the son has progressed. It is thus reasonable that the father should be the co-beneficiary of his son's reward. But, *per contra*, how could any merit of the father's own confer title to advantage therein on his son?

However, the corollary of the assertion quoted at the beginning of this discourse has rather more serious implications. Suppose that a father has fulfilled his task in training his son and setting him on the right path of life, but when the lad reaches the age of 13 he deviates therefrom and commits some transgression. Clearly, no associative penalty can fall on the father, who has done all that he could to educate his son in Torah. On the other hand, should the father have failed to give him such an education up to the age of 13, then should the lad on attaining that age not follow the way of the Torah and commit sundry transgressions, the father will himself bear some measure of his son's sinfulness, having contributed to the latter's wrongdoings through his early failure to provide a training in Torah and the commandments. Hence the full context from which our starting question was taken: "Rabbi Eleazar said, a man has to concern himself with his son (i.e. teach him the Torah and commandments) until he is 13, and thereafter has to say 'Blessed be He who has discharged me from responsibility for penalties incurred by this my son.'" That declaration refers exclusively to penalties for transgression incurred by the son after attaining the age of 13, provided always that the father has previous to that fully discharged his parental obligations.

This prompts me to suggest an interpretation of the beginning of Psalm 119: "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with their whole heart. Indeed, they do no iniquity; they walk in his ways. It is Thou who has commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently." If a boy, prior to his 13th birthday, has received a proper education in Torah and the right way of life, and on his reaching the age of religious responsibility is accorded the additional support of the good inclination to resist the evil one, one need have no

concern lest his heart be turned to the way of evil; on the contrary, he will progressively increase his range of ethical qualities, since prior to his acquisition of the good inclination on entering on his religious responsibilities he will, thanks to his training, not have deviated from the way of the Torah, how much more will this prove to be the case thereafter. That is the meaning of "blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord." It is minors who may be styled "undefiled in the way", their way being innocent inasmuch as they do not yet qualify for reward or punishment but nonetheless walk in the law of the Lord; and this proves to be to their subsequent advantage when they become liable for their religious responsibilities. It is then that they may be called "blessed are they that keep his testimonies," since they seek God wholeheartedly, steadfast in the love of Him. The psalmist repeats the point, "indeed, they do no iniquity" – that is, whilst as yet minors and still not liable to reward or punishment should they not implement the Torah, nevertheless "they walked in his ways." And later on, at the time when "Thou hast commanded thy precepts," i.e. on their reaching the age of 13, it is certain that they will keep them diligently. And the text continues (Ps. 119,5) "would that my ways may be directed to keep thy statutes" – i.e. it is my prayer that worldly concerns may not distract me from finding it in my heart to keep thy statutes.

"The stone which the builders rejected is become the headstone of the corner" (Ps. 118,22). Israel is called, metaphorically, a stone (of Gen. 49,24). A Jewish boy, before he becomes barmitzvah, is rejected by the builders, i.e. he cannot be counted for *minyán* in connection with any sacred ceremony; but on reaching the age of 13 he becomes the headstone of the corner, i.e. the equal for such purposes of any other Jew; hence the text continues "this is the Lord's doing, in that God has injected into him the good inclination and henceforth he is obligated to fulfil the commandments." But "it is marvellous in our eyes" – marvellous, i.e. something concealed from our physical observation. The access of the good inclination adds no visible advantage, but we know, in virtue of our belief in what our mystic lore tells us, that "this is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it" – the rejoicing over fulfilment of a mitzvah. And so we pray for my son that God will ever deliver him from the evil inclination and cause him to prosper in the Torah and its precepts.

May God grant us the privilege of having planted in our hearts his law and his love; may His fear be ever before us, to keep us from sin; and may this book of the Torah never depart from our mouth; and may we prove worthy to enjoy the light that shines from the countenance of the King of life. Amen ●

Why I am a Jew

by Naim Dangoor

In 1930 when I was at Shamash School in Baghdad, our Hebrew teacher, Adon Rosen, spoke to us of a new book called *Mipnei Mah Ani Yehudi* "Why I am a Jew" and asked us to write an essay on this theme.

My essay consisted of one sentence: "I am a Jew because I was born a Jew". The teacher was displeased with my terse offering which, he said, he did not expect from a member of a rabbinic family. But I thought it was the honest truth and the whole truth. (Perhaps the question should have been phrased: Why I am happy to be a Jew).

I was therefore most intrigued to find recently that in his *Reminiscences*, Victor Gollancz makes an ardent reference to the author of that book. He writes:

I first met Edmond Fleg in 1925 and we remained intimate friends till he died in 1963 at the age of 89. He was Swiss by birth but became a naturalised Frenchman after fighting for France in the 1914-18 war. He loved France with a quiet and unselfish intensity and he loved the Jewish people and everything Jewish, and when independence came – the Land of Israel. I have never read his book *Ma France, Ma Palestine* in which he deals with this duality of devotion, but I am certain there was never any question in his case of a conflict of loyalties.

He was a complete Jew and his Jewishness in my experience was unique. I have met Jews who are versed in and fascinated by Jewish lore but who do not believe in the Jewish or any other religion. I have also met Jews who are religious in the best sense but have no interest or less a liking for the old Jewish practices, and I have of course met many Jews who detest being Jewish. Edmond was like none of these. He was a man of great spirituality but he was totally un-Orthodox in his way of living.

I had no contact with him during the war but kept in touch with him, so to say, by translating and publishing a proud little book, *Pourquoi je suis Juif* which Edmond had written in 1927 and dedicated to his grandson who was not yet born, and was never to be born.

I should like to round off these paragraphs by setting down his conclusions to "Why I am a Jew" which illumines not only his fidelity to Judaism but his Jewishness: See the sublime design which is revealed at the very beginning and which from age to age is realised.

Did the Greeks declare to the world in advance that they would show it Beauty? – the Romans that they would show it Law?

See this people, paltry and sinful, announcing what will be its history at the very beginning of its history.

See it choose the mission which chooses it and walking with it in the way which it has foretold.

See it, this people of eternal sinners, banished twice and surviving two dispersions and, as commanded by its prophesies, bringing back from its first exile the divine unity and preparing, by the second, human unity.

See it driven off the face of the earth always near to dying, and always finding some providential shelter to save it from death.

See it bearing its truth, and, to keep it pure, suffering it to spread through the world in the light of the blazing stake.

See it incarnating in its flesh, the two loves that torment it, and, at the very moment when it gives itself, with them, to all the nations of the earth, reconstructing, for its own survival still, the home of its memory and its hope, which is the universal hope, And tell me if, in this unique history, you do not feel the eternal presence of a thought and a will which had dictated its task to this people and have made its accomplishment possible, trying it by suffering, saving it in its trials, and guiding it step by step, from its grievous past to its triumphant future.

For me, my child, who have so long sought the proof of the existence of God, I have found it in the existence of Israel.

I am a Jew, because born of Israel and having lost her, I have felt her live again in me, more living than myself.

I am a Jew, because born of Israel and having regained her, I wish her to live after me, more living than in myself.

I am a Jew because the faith of Israel demands of me no abdication of the mind.

I am a Jew because the faith of Israel requires of me all the devotion of my heart.

I am a Jew because at every time when despair cries out, the Jew hopes.

I am a Jew because the world of Israel is the oldest and the newest.

I am a Jew because the promise of Israel is the Universal promise.

I am a Jew because, for Israel, the world is not yet completed: men are completing it.

I am a Jew because, for Israel, Man is not created, men are creating him.

I am a Jew because, above the nations and Israel, Israel places Man and his Unity.

I am a Jew because, above Man, image of the divine Unity, Israel places the divine Unity, and its Divinity.

Sometimes, my child, when I wander through a museum, and stand before all the pictures and statues and furniture and armour, gathered there from every place and every age, I think that one or other of my ancestors may have seen, touched or admired one or other of these things, in the very place where it was made and at the very time when it was made. This Sumerian idol, perhaps the very one that Abraham broke when he left his Chaldean home to follow the call of his invisible God. And I say to myself, from this remote father, right up to my own father, all these fathers have handed on to me a Truth which flowed in their blood, which flows in mine, and shall I not hand it on, with my blood, to those of my blood? Will you take it from me, my child, will you hand it on? (Perhaps you will wish to abandon it. If so, let it be for a greater truth, if there is one).

Whether you abandon it, or whether you follow it, Israel will journey on to the end of days ●

... And why I am not a Christian

Pakistani Michael Nazir-Ali, who recently became Bishop of Winchester, is the first non-white Anglican diocesan Bishop. He had been brought up in a Moslem family before he chose to become a Christian. At his inauguration last January he said that he considered it one of his main duties to convert Jews to Christianity.

What next! We tell this modern apostate – Thanks a lot, but No, thanks! Keep away from us. We do not want to be converted. We know about Christianity long before you discovered it, and we don't want to be converted. Like a billion Moslems we don't believe in the Virgin Birth of Jesus, in his Crucifixion, his Resurrection, or that he was (God forbid) the son of God. Paul, who was the originator and propagator of main-stream Gentile Christianity, said 1950 years ago and has been reiterated by Church leaders ever since, without Resurrection there is no Christianity. And that is that!

Our assessment of Christianity is not new. The Jewish King Agrippa II of Judea, in the tolerant Jewish shift of that time, gave Paul a lengthy interview and listened carefully to his doctrine. He was amused but not impressed by what Paul had to say. When the Messiah comes we shall all have one Faith. In the meantime, you keep your religion and we shall keep ours.

The *chutzpa* of old-Moslem, new-Christian Nazir Ali reminds me of an incident 64 years ago involving my outspoken and intrepid Uncle Sion and an Iraqi Government official, Thabit Abdul Nur, who switched from Christianity to Islam. Thabit had called my uncle "old Jew" and my uncle immediately retorted, "And you, Sir, are an Old Christian and a New Moslem!" Thabit took my uncle to court for "blasphemy" (!) and a fifty dinar fine was imposed. Even King Faisal could not prevail on him to drop his lawsuit ●

The Scribe is a precious diary of a people, a time, and a life well worth reading about. Each publication seems to jar my memories just enough to bring out a flood of wonderful bitter-sweet feelings of days gone by and of wisdom long forgotten in our hassled and hectic lives in the industrial world. How I miss those wonderful old faces that grace the photos you publish ... and how I long for those lazy afternoon rituals brewing the "Chai" and serving *sembousak* and *babaa betamar*, along with *geben akra* (Kurdish cheese similar to taste to feta cheese), let alone the times we gathered around the "Tanour" to bake them, en famille ●

New York Samira Galler (nee Balass)

I have received the first *Scribe* No.62 through Naim Lawy, a friend of the family. Really it is a joy to read. I thank you very much for doing such a wonderful job in reviving the roots of our ancestors of which I am very proud.

I take *The Scribe* with me wherever I go and show it to my friends here and there ●

Ramat Gan Mrs P Aboody (Saati)

The duty of Man

from *Reminiscences of Affection*
by Victor Gollancz.

Were they right, I wondered, who told their disciples that the sole duty of Man is to praise our Creator? But No, they were wrong. The major duty of man is to cooperate in the work of Creation.

Our Rabbis with that passion for reading sermons in the minutia of Scripture expressed it like this: And Isaac asked the Eternal, King of the Universe, "When You made the light, You did say in Your Torah that it was good. When You made the extent of the firmament and the extent of the earth, You did say in Your Torah that they were good. And every herb that You made, and every beast, You did say that they were good. But when You created Man in Your image, You did not say that he was good. Wherefore Lord?" And God answered him, "Because Man I have not yet perfected, and because through the Torah Man was to perfect himself, and to perfect the world!"

Scribe: How can man perfect the world? Man is fast depleting the resources of the earth and creating more and more pollution.

A time will soon come when our planet will be over-populated, and people will fight each other for bare survival. Brotherly love will go out by the window and the law of the jungle will prevail●

A future for Socialism

by John E Romain

Reuniting the Left

edited by David Miliband

Soviet socialism is dead. The notions of class and exploitation need no longer be considered as central to socialism. The same goes for public ownership.

The only sound argument for socialism is an egalitarian one. There is no mechanism for inducing innovation and improvement except market competition. So the only socialism worth considering is market socialism, but this can only have a marginal effect.

You cannot gut the whole structure of socialism and just keep its facade. We have to realise that both Socialism and Capitalism have failed and while it is desirable to prevent people from accumulating vast riches, this must not be done by hounding the rich individual, but by devising an economic system where vast amounts of wealth cannot be accumulated.

In a nutshell, I suggest the following:

- 1) Taxing all land values, government bonds and public loans, and all other fictitious values to vanishing point over a scale of fifty years.
- 2) Treat money as it is meant to be a means of facilitating exchange of goods and services and not as a store of wealth. This is achieved by issuing money in the name of the consumer and not in the name of the moneylender. Money should be dished out to people, free of charge, according to their recognised commercial needs.

The Torah dealt very precisely with these two points by the 50-year Jubilee system and the ban on usury. No one after Moses realised their import●

N.D.

The meaning of food in early Judaism and Christianity

by Gillian Feeley-Harnik

Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

This was first published in 1981 under the title *Eucharist and Passover in Early Christianity*. Its central thesis is that, in ancient Judaism, food was the language which expressed both the identity of the people and its belief in God. The various groups within Second Temple Judaism also used the language of food to distinguish themselves within the main stream. One of these groups, the early Christian community, radically transformed the language about food in order to interpret the work of its Founder. The Gospels are seen as a Midrash on the Passover story, with the Last Supper being a prelude to the Christian Passover, namely, the crucifixion of Jesus. While the early Christians believed themselves to be faithful to their Jewish heritage, their use of food language presented the Founder as a glutton who broke rules by eating with the wrong people, who substituted a human self-sacrifice for animal sacrifice and who commanded his followers to eat his flesh and blood.

J.W.R.

Scribe: The Jewish Passover Seder was not just a commemoration of the events of the Exodus from Egypt, but was in fact meant to be a holy communion of the Believers not open to non-Jews●

Iraq - My Testimony

by Esther Mercado

PO Box 2873,
Ramost Gan 52128

These memoirs by Esther Mercado are based on her diary which she began writing when only 13 years old. Written between 1948 and 1951, they reveal the tragedy experienced by a whole generation of Iraqi Jews after the Second World War, who became victims of the Fascist and Nazi movements which flourished under the protection of the nationalist regimes.

Mercado vividly recounts the events which took place among Iraqi Jewry during the 1940's; the pogrom of 1941, the influence of the Second World War, the operations of the Zionist underground, followed by the massive aliya of the early 1950's. The mass emigration to the Holy Land brought further pain to many Iraqi Jews as they were hastily dumped into camps of tents by a new fledgling state under siege from its hostile Arab neighbours. The author describes the poor conditions in the camps where her family initially settled. Despite the hard times, Mercado stresses that although life in Israel has been difficult for the Iraqi Jews, the community now lives in a state of relative prosperity. She concludes with the positive message that due to their great efforts and hard work Iraqi Jews now form an integral part of Israeli life.

Mercado's work is a living testimony of a harrowing period of upheaval and persecution through the eyes of a young Jewish girl who survived to pass on the value of her experiences to future generations●



Siegfried Sassoon

In the May 1994 issue of *The Scribe* No.61, I published my correspondence with The Queen in which I made reference to Siegfried Sassoon, poet of the First World War, and published two of his moving poems.

I was therefore interested to note that in her Christmas Message to the Commonwealth, which was broadcast worldwide on Radio and Television, Her Majesty referred to Siegfried Sassoon. She said: "The poet Siegfried Sassoon, amidst all the horrors of war, still found himself able to write these words: 'Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted; And beauty came like the setting sun'."

The two lines are from *Everyone Sang*, written in 1919:

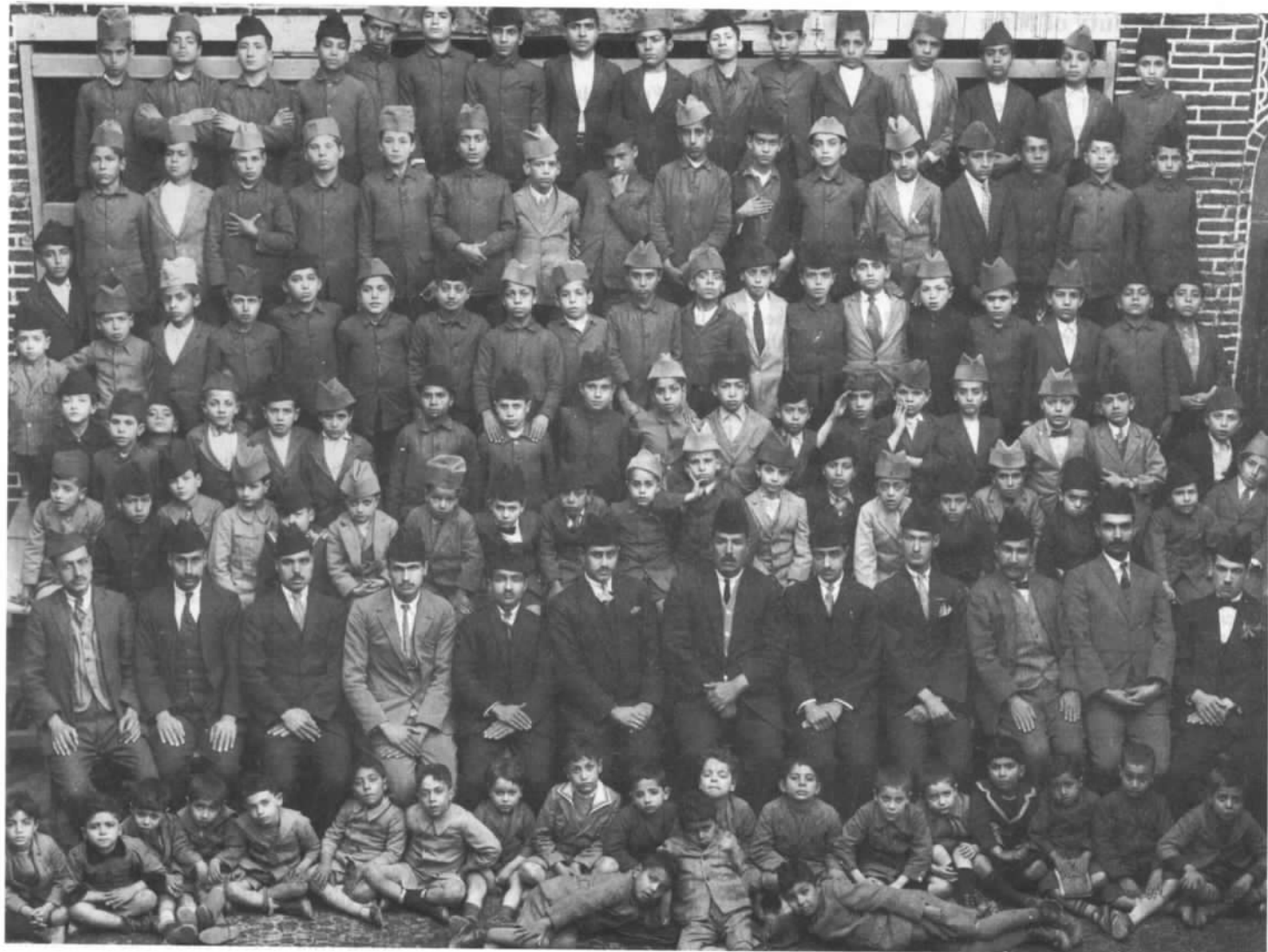
Everyone suddenly burst out singing;
And I was filled with such delight
As prisoned birds must find in freedom.
Winging wildly across the white
Orchards and dark-green fields;
on-on-and out of sight.
Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted;
And beauty came like the setting sun:
My heart was shaken with tears;
and horror
Drifted away ... O! but Everyone
Was a bird; and the song was
wordless; the singing will never be done.

According to *The Times*, this was the first time in 55 years that a poet was quoted in the Sovereign's Christmas message. In 1939, as Britain ventured into the Second World War, King George VI quoted from a poem entitled *The Gate of the Year*, published privately in 1908 by Marie Louise Haskins, a lecturer at the London School of Economics. He quoted:

I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year,
"Give Me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."
And he replied "Go out into the darkness,
and put your hand into the Hand of God
That shall be to you better than light, and safer than a known way."

I recently noted that these words are engraved on the entrance to King George's sepulchre in the Chapel of Windsor Castle●

N.D.



Sitting, Teachers. (1 to r): 1) Reuben Ezra Yehuda; 2) Aharon Darwish; 3) Barukh ...; 4) Eliahou ...; 5) Ezra Twena; 6) ... Dahan; 7) Menashe Eza Zelouf (Headmaster); 8) ... Gabbay; 9) Sassoon ...; 10) Heskel Uzair; 11) Barukh ...; 12) Sassoon Mizrahi.

Front row (1 to r): 13) -; 14) -; 15) -; 16) -; 17) -; 18) -; 19) -; 20) -; 21) Naim Reuben Battat; 22) Meir Sassoon Khadhourie; 23) -; 24) Yosef Muallim Hakham Saleh; 25) Abdulla Hakham Saleh; 26) Gabriel Hanuka; 27) Elia Uzair; 28) Yamen Shalom; 29) -;

Leaning in front: left 31) Salim Menashe Zelouf; and right 32) Sami Menashe Zelouf●

I would like to share the following information with your readers.

Jacob Masliyah, from Edmonton, Alberta, Canada is pleased to announce that he has published a book in his field entitled: *Electrokinetic Transport Phenomena* published by Alberta Oil Sands Technology & Research Authority.

Jacob graduated from Frank Iny Secondary School in the 1960s in Baghdad. He left for London. He has been a Professor at the Department of Chemical Engineering, University of Alberta, since 1977.

His wife, Odette (née Ishayek) and his three children Tamara, Ruth and Daniel, also live in Edmonton. The family is very proud of Jacob's accomplishment●

Edmonton Odette Masliyah

Please discontinue sending us your journal.

London Dutch Church

Scribe: If you have any complaints to make, please send them to us so that we can publish it in our journal●

Baghdad reminiscences

I am greatly honoured and grateful to realise that you are doing so much by the *Scribe* to bring together our Babylonian community that has been scattered all over the world. The several pages of the *Scribe* make a lot to open our consciousness and remind us again and again of our roots. May your endeavour be remembered forever.

I sat down this week and remembered Tah-t-Al-Takya with nostalgia so decided to describe my memories and feelings in order to share them with others●

Los Angeles Victor Ozair, M.Sc., P.E.

At the candy store there was a unique exhibition of sweet mouth-watering delicacies like *Baklawa*, *Zingoola*, *Massafan*, *Semesmii*, *Hagibada*, *Mulfoof*, *Buebe Kadras*, *Mlabbas*, *Halqoon*, etc. And all these savoury items came in several varieties.

A little further one confronts an exquisite and intoxicating aroma from freshly baked pastries at a bakery shop. These pastries included *Buebe-Abu-Al-Tamur* or date cookies, *Samboosak*, *Mulfoof* and *Booraq*. A few steps later there was a pickle shop

full with a gorgeous mixture of pickles made from turnips, beets, cucumbers, carrots, eggplant, etc. In the middle of this shop there was a large barrel full with *Amba* or mango pickle. The intense odour from the pickle and the *Amba* flickered through the air blending with the aromas from the bakery shop, and a slight touch of smoke from the barbecue restaurants nearby. This mixture of aromas and smoke gave a thick air imbued with special flavour pertaining only to this enchanting Tah-t-Al-Takya.

By the corner I noticed an old man sitting with a covered container. He was selling some choice specialities. These were sweet hot and red beets freshly baked under burning charcoal. The man took out from the container one beet, glittering like a red ruby. He peeled it neatly and presented it wrapped in a clean paper from a notebook. Next I met a merchant of another special delicacy. This was truly an appetite awakening and mouth watering one. It was the flavourful *Kubba Burgul*. This corner looked crowded all through the day with customers standing and devouring the *Kubba* showing excitement and pleasure●

Are they the tribe of Menashe?

by Kurt Fleischmann

Well, according to a recent report in the *Jewish Chronicle* 300 million Indians are claiming to be the descendants of the Tribe of Menashe.

So when I could not get any further information from the *Jewish Chronicle*, I tried the India Office and Library, and then, the Israeli Embassy who suggested I contacted Professor Tudor Parfitt, the author of *The Thirteenth Gate*, a book based on his travels among the Lost Tribes of Israel, at London University's School of Oriental & African Studies.

I began my interview with the Professor by saying: "I understand you are an expert on the Lost Tribes of Israel."

Then Dr Parfitt modestly said that some people believed that. I told him about the report in the *Jewish Chronicle* and then went on to ask him: "Do you think, as an expert in the field, that there is actually any truth in this claim by 300 million Indians that they are or even could be members of the Lost Tribe of Menashe?"

The professor hardly hesitated, replying with one word, namely NO!

He then, however, elaborated thus: "Not really ... It's quite a complicated phenomenon. But there is not really any historical connection between these people and the Ten Lost Tribes. Rather that they have taken the legend and applied it to themselves."

I then interjected: "Do you then believe it's for economic reasons and not any religious undertone?"

Parfitt replied: "I don't think it's necessarily for economic reasons; nor the belief of 300 million, but perhaps a few hundred thousands; no matter what the reports claim. It's also a very recent thing, dating from the 1950s. There is also a so-called ancestor of these tribals. His name was Mannie Harsee, which may sound similar to Menashe. Also as tribal people they don't fit into the structure of Hinduism. So they come then into the same category as the Untouchables. And by becoming Jews they put themselves into a different category. A rather better one, in a sense. One that improved their status. And the idea of a Promised Land at the end, knowing that the Bene-Israel, Jews of Western India, did go to Israel. The main idea is the seeking of a new identity." But there were other reasons: "They had been Baptists before, for about 100 years, having been converted by Welsh Baptist missionaries in the early 19th century; and you can see that, since Baptists use the Old Testament rather than the New, they sort of learned to identify with Judaism, rather than Christianity, and by implication with the Jewish people and the Jewish State."

When I interjected: "So you don't think there is really any proof that they could be what they claim they are?"

Professor Parfitt replied: "I don't think there is any possibility at all of their being connected with a genuine Lost Tribe of Israel." The professor went on stating: "In fact all of these claims are illusory, not genuine."

When I said, "This, then, is just a fable,

a fiction." Dr Parfitt admitted: "This is a very, very powerful myth, which is put into service for all kinds of reasons."

I then interjected: "What about the Falashas, being the Lost Tribe of Dan?" To which the professor replied: "Historically the claim is a complete lot of nonsense." "Why, then, did the State of Israel not just admit them, but helped them to come to Israel?", I wondered. To this the professor replied: "They were let in not for historic reasons, but for halachic ones." And he admitted "that there were many biblical texts that give credence to the Falashas. Texts which are accepted by the Rabbis, and consequently, Israel." But not, it was clear, by Tudor Parfitt, Professor of History.

The news item that gave rise to this article ended thus: "Indians, who claimed to be descendants from the tribe of Menashe, would not be encouraged to emigrate to Israel under the Law of Return," according to Israeli Absorption Minister Yair Tsaban.

According to Naim Dangoor, editor of *The Scribe*, Israel needed to confront up the rising number of Arabs, and it did not greatly matter if they could actually prove their origin.

He cites what Saudi Arabia is now doing: "They are now exporting 8 million tons of wheat every year, when they had to import all their food till recently." By using new technology, probably obtained from Israel, directly or indirectly to economise on the need for water. Thus turning the desert into arable land, as Israel is and has been doing. It was the Arab goat that ravaged the Middle East by eating the trees, and thus eroding the top soil. If Saudi Arabia, which is larger than the Indian subcontinent became fertile, its 8 million population could become 100 million. So the millions of Indians could become very useful, even essential, to Israel's survival, enabling Israel to compete in numbers.

We should welcome people who want to be Jews even if they could not prove they were of the Tribe of Menashe or any tribe.

Part of the trouble is due to Israel's use of the hostile Palestinians for cheap labour. If we had not used them they would have melted away into the neighbouring Arabian states. So why not use the Indians who want to be Jews and who seemingly want to live in Israel.

It is not necessary to admit 300 million Indians tomorrow; we must however start today to try to convince people that Israel needs an increased friendly population who want to be Jews and Israelis, in preference to a hostile minority who come for mostly economic reasons.

In any case, the Falashas had practised Judaism for centuries previously.

Indian tribes claim Jewish origin

According to a piece published by the Sino-Judaic Institute of California, the Shinlung are a group of tribes of approximately 2 million people that reside in several northeastern Indian states. They also reside in Burma and Bangladesh.

Members of the Shinlung tribe believe they are descended from Menashe, and many wish to come back to their true Jewish roots and migrate to Israel. About 5000 to 10,000 of these tribe members are actively involved in practising Judaism, trying to follow the Torah and perform the mitzvot.

The Shinlung were "discovered" about 100 years ago by Christian missionaries, who became excited when they realised that these people were probably Jews since they had customs very similar to the Jews, and felt they had the chance to convert these Jews to Christianity. With the help of British troops, these missionaries were able to rob the Shinlung of their religious treasures and destroy the Shinlung religious hierarchy, thus preventing their religious leaders and people from performing their own Jewish religious customs and practices.

The Shinlung call their god Y'wa although some use the term Pathien. They have feast days corresponding to the Jewish holidays and an elaborate system of animal sacrifices resembling the Jewish sacrificial system. They practised levirate marriage (a man marries his deceased brother's widow), buried their dead simply (no cremations) and maintained the patriarchal system of inheritance. On the eighth day a newborn boy was sanctified. They also slaughtered an animal and drained its blood before eating it, and wore blue and white *tsitsit*.

History

According to the Shinlung the tribe of Menashe settled in Persia and were eventually driven eastward to Afghanistan and then to China. Around 600 CE (some say during the time of the Mongol invasion) religious persecution forced them to flee from China and settle in Vietnam, where they lived as cave dwellers (shinlung). During that time the Shinlung were continually in a state of fear and of hunger and found it impossible to rest on Shabbat.

They were eventually driven from Vietnam by a Chinese king. They lost their Sefer Torahs and were forced to follow their traditions by memory. They wandered around Thailand and then through Burma for hundreds of years. Their priesthood was preserved until the middle of the 19th century, when Christian missionaries, supported by foreign troops, were able to end their traditions. Presbyterian missionaries are active in the region. By 1990 many had been converted to Christianity.

Thirty years ago a local prophet named Tanuma of Manipure began preaching to the Shinlung, saying that they would be destroyed if they did not go back to their old Jewish faith. He told them that they were all destined to return to Israel. The return to Judaism started in Churachandpur in south western Manipur and has since spread throughout the area. Small synagogues have been established around towns in the Imphal area. Those who have returned to Judaism but have had exposure to Christianity may still have some belief in Jesus, while others with less exposure will not have this belief. The Shinlung who presently want to go on aliyah do not have this belief and are eager to study Judaism.

Nabucco

by Simon Dangoor

Last October the Romanian National Opera brought an exhilarating new production of Verdi's epic masterpiece to London's Royal Albert Hall. In the plot, which is not historically accurate, Nabucco, king of Babylon leads his army as they march on Jerusalem, leaving a wave of destruction in his wake. With the city seized, the Hebrews are enslaved and forced from their homeland into exile. This monumental tale of revenge, destruction and jealousy is brilliantly recounted in Verdi's celebrated work, which features the classic 'Chorus of the Hebrew slaves'.

In Act One through passionate choruses, the priests and people of Jerusalem lament their defeat at the hands of Nabucco, King of Babylon and beg Jehovah to prevent the capture of the temple. In an impressive solo, 'Sperate, o figli', Zaccaria exhorts them to have faith in God. Nabucco's troops fill the temple and desecrate the holy place while Nabucco taunts the defeated Jews.

In the following act, the Jews have been carried captive into Babylon and Nabucco, away at the wars, has left Fenena as regent in his stead. The Hebrews are gathered together in a room of the palace, and, in a noble example of Verdian prayer ('Tu sul labbro') Zaccaria invokes the guidance of God. Nabucco subsequently returns and proclaims himself god, commanding the protesting Zaccaria and Fenena to bow down before him. There is a clap of thunder, and the crown is torn from his head by a supernatural force. When the crowd has recovered from its consternation, the king is seen to be mad and Abigalle snatches the crown.

In Act Three, Abigalle has been installed as Regent, with the support of the priests who demand the death of the captive Jews, amongst them Fenena. The second scene of the act takes place on the banks of the Euphrates, where the enslaved Jews sing the psalms of their lost fatherhood. 'Va Pensiero' is the first of Verdi's patriotic choruses, and its poignant melody is typical of the composers writing in this vein. Zaccaria upbraids the Jews for their defeatist attitude and tries to galvanise them into life and resistance by prophesying the imminent fall of Babylon.

In the final act Nabucco in prison awakens from a nightmare to hear the crowd down below crying, 'Death to Fenena'. Abdallo appears at the head of the guard and frees his master, who rushes out to rescue his daughter. The scene changes to the place of execution. A funeral march is heard and Fenena has a beautiful prayer as she and the Jews prepare for death. The arrival of Nabucco and his followers arrests the sacrifice, the false idol is thrown down as if by magic and all join in a prayer of thanksgiving to Jehovah. The general rejoicing is interrupted by the arrival of Abigalle, who in her remorse has taken poison and presently dies, calling on god for forgiveness. Zaccaria promises glory to his convert, Nabucco.

The opera was hugely popular in the land of its birth. At the time of its opening,

Italy was suffering under Austrian suppression. Italians compared themselves and their situation to the Hebrew slaves in captivity. The chorus of the Hebrews slaves was even considered seriously as a possible national anthem for Italy, so strongly did it enter the Italian psyche. It became one of the most popular tunes of the day.

The Romanian National Opera, based at the National Opera House in Bucharest was founded in 1885 and has earned a reputation throughout Europe for producing traditionally staged opera of the highest quality. Bringing a company of over 200 members and on their first ever tour of the U.K., they made their London debut with this excellent production of Verdi's Nabucco. They delighted their Royal Albert Hall audience, providing them with a rare opportunity to see this great operatic work performed by one of the most important companies to emerge from Eastern Europe. The performance was a great success with many present hailing it as the finest production of Nabucco that they had ever seen. The brilliant Russian conductor Alexandru Samoila previously worked with the Moldova Opera Theatre and the Kirov Opera Theatre, collaborating with many world famous singers and musicians before joining the Romanian National Opera in May 1988.

Nabucco was Verdi's first great success and was the opera that established him as one of the leading composers of Italy.

There is no doubt that Nabucco represented a tremendous advance on Verdi's two earlier operas. The frequent and highly successful revivals which it has enjoyed in recent years prove that it is still very much a living force. Nabucco is important in that it represents Verdi's first success, and in that he can be seen making a serious attempt at the musical portrayal of character.

London

Simon E E S Dangoor

N.D. Adds:

About the Hall

In 1851 Queen Victoria's consort, Prince Albert organised the Great Exhibi-

tion of British industry, and with the profits a large tract of land was purchased which now houses the Victoria and Albert Museum as well as the Science, Geological, Natural History, Imperial College and the Royal Albert Hall.

The building of the hall was financed by selling 1000 seats on a 999-year lease at £100 per seat. Until 1970 it was possible to buy these seats at £100. I personally bought a 5-seater box at £250. At a shareholders meeting I pointed out that the Hall was still insured for only £100,000!, the original cost of the building. Imagine my surprise when the council decided to increase the cover 1000 times to £100 million. Not only home to the Proms, the Albert Hall now hosts a multitude of popular events including boxing championships and pop concerts as well as its traditional programme of classical concerts. A private box in the Albert Hall can now fetch as much as £400,000 and a ticket for the last night at the Proms is a snip at a mere £1000!

About the writer

Simon (Eddie) Dangoor has just graduated from the University of Teesside with a BA (Hons) degree in English and Politics. He co-founded and edited a magazine at college, and edited and contributed to his university magazine. He has also done extensive work experience at the B.B.C., New Statesman and Society magazine and local papers. Already, he has worked for a number of magazines on a freelance basis, contributing articles on a diverse array of subjects ranging from politics to sport. Simon is a keen sportsman. He won many medals at swimming galas representing his county and he is currently a member of a successful Sunday league football team. He is politically active, supporting groups including Amnesty International and Greenpeace. His interests outside writing include music and theatre and he attends concerts regularly, as well as supporting his favourite football club Spurs whenever he can ●



The Royal Albert Hall (Photograph by Naim Dangoor)

I shall not forget thee, Babylon.

From
"Les Cahiers de l'Alliance
Israélite Universelle"

Si je t'oublie Babylone ...

L'histoire du premier exil des Juifs à Babylone après la destruction du Temple par Nabuchodonosor nous est connue à travers les textes bibliques d'Esra et de Néhémie. Le prophète Esra est d'ailleurs désigné comme Esra HaSofar, *Esra le scribe*. C'est en référence à ce passé que le journal des descendants des Juifs de Babylone a pris son titre, *The Scribe*.

Cette publication originale paraît depuis septembre 1971. On y lit des articles en anglais traitant de cette communauté bien particulière des Juifs originaires d'Irak.

Ces vingt-cinq siècles ont eu une importance considérable pour l'ensemble du judaïsme, principalement marqués par plusieurs courants ayant leur source en Babylone: les prophéties de Jérémie et d'Ezéchiel; la mission d'Esra le scribe quittant Babylone pour Jérusalem en 458 av.J.C.; les enseignements de Hillel l'Ancien, maître babylonien s'installant aux Pharisiens de Jérusalem au premier siècle av.J.C.; l'élaboration du *Talmud* de Babylone dans les académies de Sura, Pumbedita et Nehardea entre le deuxième et le troisième siècles de notre ère; les relations fructueuses entre les sages babyloniens et espagnols de "l'Age d'or" séfaraïte; et enfin la place prééminente des maîtres de Babylone à l'époque de l'Empire ottoman.

Cependant, l'influence des Juifs d'Irak va diminuer de la fin de l'Empire ottoman à la période du Mandat britannique; puis c'est le départ définitif des 125,000 Juifs irakiens pour le tout jeune Etat d'Israël en 1950-1951, lors de l'opération "Esra et Néhémie". Vingt-cinq siècles emblématiques, qui amènent une partie du peuple juif de l'exil au retour à Sion.

Les lieux de pèlerinage que constituent les tombeaux de Josué le Grand prêtre près de Bagdad, du prophète Ezéchiel près de Hillah et d'Esra le Scribe, près de Bassorah, ont heureusement été préservés et entretenus.

Le journal se voulant un organe de communication et d'échange entre les Juifs d'origine irakienne, une large place y est consacrée au courrier des lecteurs, ce qui nous permet d'avoir un aperçu de l'étendue géographique de cette population. Il n'est pas rare de trouver un lecteur de New York, né à Calcutta en Inde après que son père s'y fut installé en provenance de Bassorah. De Calcutta, il a émigré au Canada, puis aux Etats-Unis. Ce cas de figure peut s'appliquer à des correspondants de Johannesburg, Singapour, de Bombay ou de Buenos-Aires, entre autres.

Parmi les photographies présentes, on trouve beaucoup d'images de réceptions mondaines et diplomatiques. Mais on peut aussi noter l'intérêt pour les photos de groupe, et en particulier celles des élèves des écoles de l'Alliance, qui permettent à chacun de tenter de retrouver la trace de camarades perdus de vue.

Un des attraits de *The Scribe* tient aussi à la rubrique culinaire, régulière et très fournie, qui sait à la fois redécouvrir la cuisine orientale.

Les positions politiques défendues par *The Scribe*, sont évidemment très favorables à Israël. Toutefois, face à la guerre du Golfe et aux avancées du processus de paix entre Israël et les Palestiniens, *The Scribe* met en avant l'idée d'une confédération des Etats moyen-orientaux, dans laquelle Israël trouverait toute sa place en faisant largement appel à ses ressortissants originaires des pays arabes.

La bibliothèque de l'Alliance est sans doute la seule en France à posséder une collection complète de ce journal, ce journal nous permet de suivre le destin juif dans de nombreuses parties du monde.



When we remember the Babylonian Exile we think of how Nebuchadnezzar led the cream of the Jewish people captive to Babylon, and how we sat down and wept by its many rivers.

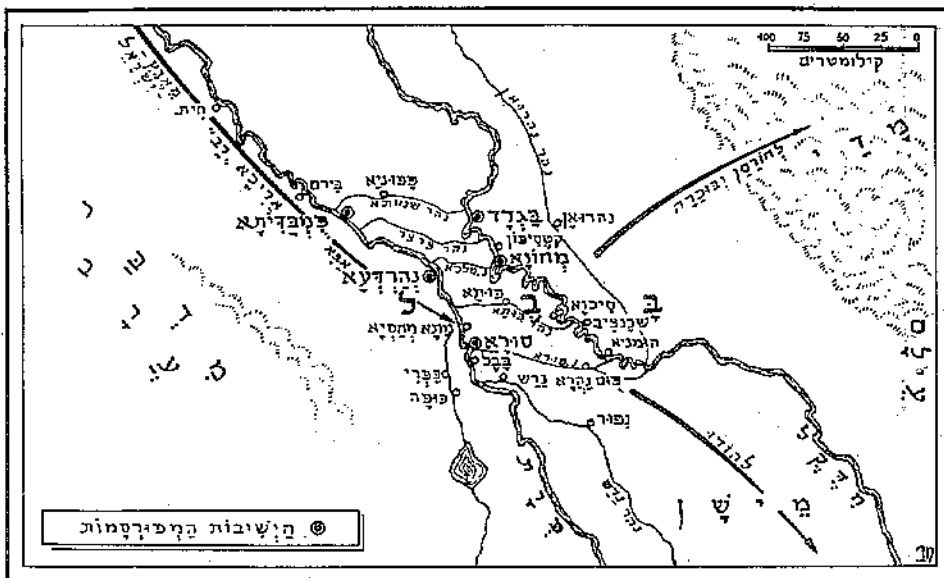
But that situation lasted only a few years. Soon Jewish architects and engineers were engaged in improving and beautifying the capital and young King Yehoyachin was released from imprisonment and given an exalted position.

In less than fifty years, a bloodless palace revolution, in which Jews took an

active part, brought in King Cyrus of Persia. Subsequently, many Jews returned to Zion to rebuild the Temple, but the majority preferred to stay in the Land of the Rivers. They prospered and grew in numbers and occupied the central part of the country. Their numbers reached over one million and their strategic role was the defence of the Persian Empire against attacks from the West.

It was in this relaxed and secure atmosphere that Judaism, as we know it today, blossomed and flourished.

N.D.



Centres of Rabbinical schools and the boundary of Jewish Babylonia according to b.Qid. 71b, which obtained at the time of the Arab conquest.

Source: Michael Avi Yona Carta's Atlas. Of the period of the Second Temple, the Mishnah and the Talmud. (Jerusalem 1966 - Carta). Ana, Rawa, Biram, Pumbedita, Anbar, Baghdada, Ctesphon,

Peruz, Shapur, Akbara, Awana, Mishkeni, Busra, Mahoza, Wulshpet, Husal, Metha Mehasia, Nipur, Herpnia, Meshan, Apmir, Nahrawan, Sura (The Exilarch's law court), Kafri, Nehardea, Hagronia, Pum Nhara, Babylon, Neresh, Nahr Isa, Nahr Sarsar, Nahr Malka, Nahr Kutha, Nahr Sura, Pum Nahra, Apmia, Sheknesib.

The Image of Jews in Arabic Journals, 1858-1908

From Dr Shaul Shayik,

Director of the Babylonian Jewry
Heritage Center, Or Yehuda, Israel.

Since 1908, i.e. since the Revolution of the Young Turks, Arab newspapers do not reveal their earlier admiration for Jews in general and the Jews of Eretz Yisrael in particular. In order to investigate the state of affairs before the Revolution of the Young Turks, Arabic fifty-two newspapers and journals that had been published during this period, were reviewed and examined in the light of the events of the period.

The attitude towards the Jewish people and the image of the Jew during this period was positive, with the exclusion of certain Catholic and Coptic newspapers, which adhered to their traditional animosity towards Jews and Judaism.

The gradual weakening of the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century led to the intervention of the Great European Powers in the internal matters of the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East.

The Muslims remained loyal to the Ottomans, and usually received traditional, conservative education that did not include foreign languages. However, in the conditions prevalent at the time, missionaries could establish modern schools based upon the Western model throughout the Middle East. The children of the various communities and religious sects, generally Christians, studied in these schools. Some of these schools were built by American missionaries who educated in a spirit of secularism that celebrated the equality of religion, thus receiving a positive attitude toward Jews and Freemasons movements. Many of the students of these schools continued with their education, completing their course of studies in European institutions of higher learning.

A small number of Arab intellectuals and men of thought were influenced by these Western liberal, democratic, humanistic ideals and strove to inculcate these Western ideals to their fellow countrymen, in order to imbue them with the values of freedom, justice, and equality, which in their opinion, every man regardless of race, religion, or creed was entitled to. They also openly demanded the granting of these principles and rights to the Jews. Some of them considered the press as the vehicle and platform for the dissemination of their ideas. They founded newspapers, editing them according to their personal prejudices and in accordance with their predilections to various political or special

interest groups such as local governors or religious sects.

One may catalogue the reviewed newspapers in the following categories:

A. Muslim newspapers.

B. Protestant papers.

C. Catholic and Orthodox papers.

D. Jewish newspapers and reporters whose language was Arabic.

The image of the European Jew, as drawn by the Arab newspapermen, both Muslim and Christian, is one of a nobleman, just and honest, energetic who uses his talents for his personal good and for the good of the state and nation in which he lives. He seeks peace and withdraws from any conflict or disagreement. He is the victim of European religious fanaticism, the victim of blood libels and other false accusations and innocent of treachery. The rich Jewish financial magnates and bankers symbolized their industry: energy, honesty, open-heartedness, solidarity and courage. The newspapers carried many reports of Jewish aid to their persecuted brethren, which "proved" the concept of Jewish solidarity. Similarly, their respected status and appearance before emperors and rulers throughout the world with the demand that these world leaders improve the conditions of their oppressed Jewish citizens was greeted with great esteem.

The European influence upon Middle Eastern newspapers formed a positive image of the Jew and merged with the image of the authors, newspapermen and rich and benevolent families of oriental Jewry. Thus, their image underwent a change, for Jews until now had always been regarded as second-class citizens. With the new image, the Jews could stand up straight and manifest national and ethnic pride.

This change that occurred during the nineteenth century opened the eyes of the enlightened Arabs and others among the nations of the Middle East to the primitiveness of their own nations in contrast to the enlightened and cultured nations of the West. They attempted to overcome the cultural, social and scientific chasm that characterized the difference between their countries and those of the developed and modern West. Their consciousness of the existing gap between them and their European contemporaries, increased their desire to investigate their ancient past and national history in order to discover the causes that would account for their cultural and military decline. They wished to substantiate for themselves and others that their backwardness was not dependent upon their Oriental Semitic origins, as the European theories of racism attempted to prove. They conducted a continuous debate with the West in order to authenticate racial Semitic supremacy, including the Jews, although they were born in the West. Thus! they celebrated the contributions of Jews to humanity. In their opinion, Arab social, cultural, political and military inferiority was the result of the despotism and cruelty of their leaders, the freeze upon original thinking and the conservatism of the religious fanatics, who suppressed the freedom and liberty of the individual and the public.

In their desire to adopt Western ideas of Liberty, Equality, Justice and Freedom for men in the Arab lands, they had to act against prejudices and entrenched tradi-

tions in Muslim societies. 'These endeavours and the resulting developments led to far-reaching changes in the attitudes of enlightened Muslim and Christian Arabs towards Jews as a nation and as individuals.

The rise and the fame of well-known Jews in Europe reflected political, socio-economic power, and resulted in respect and awe on the part of Arab newspaper editors and advanced liberal intellectuals. These Jews were the symbol of power in the eyes of those Arabs who were Oriental-Semites, and proved that the Semitic race was excellent in its very foundations.

One of the missions that the intellectuals, philosophers, and liberal editors of the newspapers in the Arabic language of this period took upon themselves, was ecumenicism among the religions and fraternity among the various ethnic groups and sects, including relationships of understanding and respect, brotherhood and equality, charity and justice to all citizens without any distinction between race or religion.

The nineteenth century to renaissance of Middle Eastern intellectuals led to the research of their past and roots which in turn led to an interest in the History of the Jewish people and religion, which is anchored and intertwined in the history of the Middle East. Subsequently, the Jews and Judaism stopped being a sealed book for these intellectuals. They became acquainted with "golden age" and glory of the Kingdoms of Judaea and Israel and the Talmud and its humanistic values. They rejected all prevalent biased ideas that had been ascribed to the Jews, the sources of which were supposedly to be found in the Talmud. These intellectuals portrayed the Jews as the seekers of law and justice, actually viewing them as the apostles of the Semitic race in western society. They were proud of the Jewish contribution to the social, cultural and economic realms among the nations in which these Jews lived.

These very same liberal editors and intellectuals pointed out the positive, noble image of the Jews, their fairness and honesty, and the fact that they were industrious and hard-working with a talent for organization. They exalted the generosity of western and oriental Jewish leaders and men of wealth, especially praising the Rothschild family and Baron Hirsch who epitomized this energy, generosity, and nobility. These wealthy Jews were labelled "Doers of Charity and Loving-Kindness." The character of the distinguished Jew, successful in his endeavors due to his honesty and energy, earning his money respectfully, was an image worthy of imitation.

The Arab intellectuals who suffered from an inferiority complex when comparing themselves to the developed, progressive West, grasped their glorious Oriental-Semitic past, with the history of the Jews woven in it. Thus the path to understanding and sympathy for the Jewish people, including sharing the suffering of the Jews in some eastern European countries, was but a short step.

Some of the newspapers pointed out that period of Jewish history known as the Golden Age in Spain as characteristic of the good relations between Jews and Muslims with good communal life ●



Alliance School for Girls 1925 by courtesy of Sami Sourani, Canada.

Front row (L to R): 1. Flora Nissan (Moshi); 2. Maurice Dawood Nessim; 3. Khatoun Ezra (Shina).

2nd row: 1. Saida Juda (Zubaida); 2 - ; 3 - ; 4 - ; 5...Saatchi; 6 - ; 7. Rosina Nissan; 8 - ; 9. Bertha Saul (Fattal); 10 - ; 11 - ; 12. Saida Jiji (Zilkha).

3rd row: 1 - ; 2. Renee Moallem; 3. Renee Meir (Noonoo); 4. Dorine Chwela (Mashaal); 5. Louise Zubaida; 6. Juliette Hayawi (Elias); 7. George Sabbagh; 8. Mme Sabbagh; 9. Albert Sasson; 10. Flora Somekh; 11. Rachel Hayawi (Soffer); 12. Shafika Jiji (Sourani); 13. Juliette Henguela (Elias); 14. Bertha Levy (Shohet); 15 - ; 16. Daisy Djedda (Khalastchy); 17 - .

4th row: _____

5th row: 1. Muzli Setty; 2. Marcelle Somekh; 3. Naima; 4. Teffeh Salman; 5. Rachel Badnani; 6. Violette Chwela; 7. Olga; 8. Louise Denous; 9. Leonie Shemtob; 10 - ; 11. Lucienne Iny; 12. Marcelle Juda Shlomo; 13 - ; 14 - ; 15 - ; 16. Marcelle Somekh Abdelnabi.

6th row: 1 - ; 2 - ; 3. Marcelle Setty.

Back row: 1 ... Khadouri; 2. Semha Somekh Elkabir; 3 - ; 4. Fahima Shashoua Mahlab; 5 - ; 6. Marcelle Shamoun; 7 - ; 8 - ; 9 - ; 10. Stephe Ezra; 11. Marguerite Obadia Yehouda; 12 - ; 13. Mouniba Darwish Saatchi; 14 - ; 15 - ; 16 - ●

A few weeks ago Nissim Dalah gave me the September copy of *The Scribe* which I read in amazement. Serendipity (unexpected happiness) sums it up.

Although not of Babylonian Jewish ancestry myself, strictly Ashkenazi, I have for many years had a deep interest in our collective history. I found the form and content of the magazine tremendous and I would love the opportunity to read future issues.

Many thanks for a very enjoyable 40 pages (including the recipes)●

Pinner, Middlesex

Alan Secker

Many thanks for your issue No.62. I was very happy to receive it and read it from cover to cover I cannot count how many times.

In page 27 reader clangers: I could not understand the comment of Mr M.K. because I don't think that anyone from *The Scribe* ever asked the reader to show any appreciation. The fact is that all readers are grateful to *The Scribe* in this wonderful work●

Manila, Philippines

David Sha(h)moon



The Marquess of Cholmondeley

An important sale was held recently at Christie's of London of furniture and paintings from Houghton Hall, the home of 36-year-old Marquess of Cholmondeley, a direct descendant of David Sassoon and considered to be the most eligible bachelor in Britain.

The sale was mainly of antiques and old masters which had been amassed by Sir Philip Sassoon and inherited by his sister Sybil, grandmother of the present Marquess.

Houghton Hall was built for Sir Robert Walpole, Britain's first Prime Minister, and came to the Cholmondeleys through marriage.

Centuries before the Rothschilds emerged from the Frankfurt ghetto, the Sassoons had established themselves as the most powerful Jewish dynasty in Baghdad. Indeed, Sybil and her brother Philip were the issue of the union of these two Jewish dynasties through the marriage of Sir Edward Sassoon and Aline de Rothschild in Paris in 1887, which was considered the most important wedding since the marriage of Napoleon III.

In a telephone call from north Carolina Lord Cholmondeley said how much he enjoyed reading about his ancestors in *The Scribe* and promised to keep looking for a photograph of that famous Sassoon-Rothschild wedding. He hopes that some of the £8m proceeds of the sale will help to restore Houghton Hall to its former glory for the enjoyment of its visitors●

The Karaites

While the German Nazi monsters were rounding up Jews for the extermination gas chambers, Karaite Jews were allowed to continue to live in Berlin in peace and security!

The Karra-ean and the Koran – both a reaction to the rising influence of the Babylonian Talmud. Karaites have returned to Israel, and are recognised as full and equal Jewish citizens.

A few years after the establishment of Baghdad in 762 as the Abbasid capital, the Exilarch died. This hereditary head of the Jewish diaspora is traced to King Yehoyachin, who was brought captive to Babylon in 597 BCE, and thus all the way to King David.

The succession should have gone to Anan ben David, the deceased Exilarch's eldest son, but the Geonim of the Academies of Sura and Pumbeditha, who had to approve the appointment, were aware that although Anan was learned in Jewish law, he held unorthodox views and tended to one of the messianic sects then prevalent in Babylonia. The Geonim recommended the appointment of Anan's younger brother, Hanania, as Exilarch, and this was duly approved by Caliph Al-Mansur.

Anan refused to accept this appointment, declaring himself as the rightful Exilarch. The Jewish leaders complained to the authorities and in 767 Anan was put in prison and condemned to death on two counts: first, that he was creating a schism within a recognised community and, second, that he was defying the decree of the Caliph.

In prison Anan met the Iman Abu-Hanifa, "who was in temporary custody", and who after listening to Anan's story advised him to claim that he was not a schism but an independent religious movement. An audience was duly arranged with the Caliph who agreed to set Anan free and allowed him to conduct his activities.

It is difficult to understand how Islam schisms within a recognised faith such as Judaism, would allow a new religious movement and how the Caliph, who was on excellent terms with Jewish leaders, would sanction such a major challenge to their authority. How did Anan get away with it?

The answer is simple. On the advice of Abu-Hanifa, Anan must have agreed to recognise Mohammed and Jesus as prophets and their teachings as valid for their own followers. This remained in fact one of the distinguishing hallmarks between, Karaite and Rabbinic Judaism. Some also believed that Anan offered the Caliph a large cash present.

Early Beginnings

The other feature of the movement is its reliance solely on the written scriptures (*Mikra*) and its rejection of the Oral Law which Rabbinic Jews accept. Although Anan is usually credited with the start of Karaism, the tradition goes back to much earlier times. It can be traced to similar movements in Palestine and Syria fifty years before, to the rift between the Sadducees and the Pharisees, the Samaritans and the Jews, the break up of Solomon's kingdom into Israel and Judah.

These differences were brought to a head by the rising influence of the Babylonian Talmud which was completed in 500

CE. Many outlying Jewish diasporas in Persia and Afghanistan, in Syria, Egypt and Arabia rejected the Rabbinic interpretation of the Scriptures. I believe that the emergence of Islam and the Koran as the Arabic version of God's Scriptures had its origin in the rejection of the Talmud.

This perhaps explains how so many Jewish communities in the Middle East, with the exception of Babylon, readily accepted Mohammad's mission.

Karaite Practices

Although Anan branded the rabbi's literary monument, the Talmud, as an imposture, and felt himself justified in asserting that he took his teachings directly from the Bible, he could not quite escape rabbinic influence. He borrowed various regulations of his code from rabbinic Judaism and although he availed himself of the rabbinic rules for the interpretation of the Bible, the modifications and exaggerations which he imposed upon these rabbinic rules frequently elicited absurd results.

For example, Exodus, 12, 15, states, "On the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses". Anan was quick to point out that *on* the first day is here taken to mean *before* the first day; and indeed, the leaven is removed on the forenoon of the day before the feast of unleavened bread. Hence he argued that by means of the rabbinic *gezerah shavah*, verbal analogy, that *on* in Exodus, 35, 3, "Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations on the Sabbath day" must also be taken to mean *before* and that no fire or lights though kindled before the Sabbath may be left burning after sunset. Entire Karaite communities were thus plunged into darkness every Friday night and all food had to be eaten cold.

Leviticus, 10, 9, prohibits drinking of wine before entering the Holy Tabernacle; but the Sabbath too is holy, hence Anan argued that it is forbidden to partake of wine before and during the Sabbath; Anan, interpreting the words of the Bible in a symbolic sense, held that sexual intercourse too was forbidden on the Sabbath. Anan's followers were also forbidden to leave their homes on the Sabbath except for purposes of communal prayers.

It was forbidden for them to light a fire on the Sabbath for the benefit of a child-bearing woman, even if her life be thereby jeopardized – but in any case, as Anan interpreted literally Exodus, 15, 26, "I am the Lord that healeth thee", he accordingly prohibited the use of medical aid. In addition to the fasts appointed by the Bible, Anan instituted the following: the seventh day of every month; Purim and Shushan Purim; a seventy-day fast, during which no food could be partaken of by day, from Nissan 13th to Sivan 23rd, including Pesach and Shavuoth. According to Anan even babies are obliged to fast on the Day of Atonement. Amos prophesied, "I shall

turn your feasts into mourning" – hence Anan considered it meritorious to fast on all festivals. The festival of Hanukkah is not observed by Karaites as it is not mentioned in the Bible.

Karaite laws relating to marriage are extremely severe. For example, blood relations of the wife automatically become blood relations of the husband's relations, prohibiting marriage between them. Furthermore, Karaites hold that the affinity between a man and his wife continues even if the marriage is dissolved. If in such a case the husband or the wife marries again, the affinity extends to the new families – hence members of the family of the first husband cannot marry members of the second husband's family; and this affinity continues to the third and fourth generations. Thus it frequently happened that in small Karaite communities, only a few marriages could take place since many members of the community were considered blood relations whom it was forbidden to marry.

Sexual intercourse is allowed only for the begetting of children, and hence forbidden as soon as the wife is pregnant. While in rabbinic Judaism the power of divorce is in the hands of the husband, Anan held that the wife too had the power of divorce. Similarly, Anan placed daughters on an equal footing with sons with reference to property inherited from parents. However, he denied to the husband the right of succeeding to the property of his deceased wife.

Anan so extended the number of animals which could not be used for food, that the abolition by him of the injunction against eating meat and milk together was rendered almost gratuitous. Moreover, Anan rejected any permissible minimum of prohibited things – and insisted that even a minute portion of anything prohibited, mingling with an infinitely large quantity of a thing permitted, was sufficient to render the whole of the latter prohibited.

The Rise of Karaism

In spite of its harsh code, the new movement went from victory to victory. It spread from Babylon to Persia, Syria and Egypt. It established a foothold in the Holy Land itself. It gained disciples as far afield even as Spain. It was the greatest threat which Judaism had known for many centuries past.

Several circumstances contributed to the success of the new movement. Sectarianism was then rife in the Mohammedan world. Babylon and Persia, in particular, were fertile soil for all sorts of religious and philosophic movements. Judaism did not escape this intellectual excitement. Anan was an eclectic who borrowed various regulations of his code from the different Jewish sects. As a result, these Jewish sects, finding congruous ideas in Anan's reading of Judaism, were drawn to

it; and Anan, energetic and determined, succeeded in forming a powerful movement out of them. The intellectual leaders of the Rabbanites were too short-sighted to recognise the danger, and believed at first that by simply ignoring the new movement they could destroy it.

At the end of the ninth and in the tenth century several rabbinic scholars, realising that rabbinic Judaism was in danger of being engulfed by the Karaite movement, began a systematic defence of their beliefs. Karaism ultimately failed because of certain inherent weaknesses. For example, Anan's eclecticism, which at first did good service to the new movement since it helped to unite the heterogeneous anti-rabbinic elements into a powerful sect, caused after a while much dissatisfaction. For Anan's code was much too strict for the liberal element in the movement, but not strict enough for the rigorists. Furthermore, Anan's principle, "Search well in the Torah", confiding to the individual conscience the task of interpreting the law, made unity among his followers exceedingly difficult. Indeed, Kirkisani, the great Karaite historian of the first half of the tenth century, complained that no two members of the movement agreed on everything.

The Karaites centre in Jerusalem was strong enough to vie with the Rabbanites for mastery, but their supremacy was brought to an abrupt end by the first crusade. Leadership of the sect then passed to Cairo and Byzantium, the latter gaining eventual primacy. Many Karaites fled to Egypt as a result of Rabbinic persecution.

By the twelfth century Karaism was on the wane. Its literary output decreased in quantity and quality. Some of its followers returned to the Jewish fold while others were converted to Islam. In the last few centuries relations between the followers of rabbinic Judaism and Karaites were practically broken, particularly in Russia where the great majority of Karaites still lived. In Russia the Karaites persuaded successive rulers to exempt them from the restrictive measures from which Jews had to suffer, on the grounds that their religion was clearly different to rabbinical Judaism.

At the beginning of World War II there were some fourteen thousand Karaites in the world, of whom some ten thousand lived in Russia, one thousand in Poland, with the remainder in the Arab countries, mainly in Egypt.

How they got to Lithuania

The Baltic state of Lithuania is one of the last known refuges of the Karaites. Unknown to the outside world until recently, a group of Karaites continue to practice their faith in Trakai, a village in Lithuania where they have a synagogue. How did they get there? According to the museum custodian, the Lithuanian Grand Duke Vyautas, whose realm stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, hired 300 members of a Turkish tribe living in the Crimea as his personal bodyguard and brought them to his northern capital. They turned out to be Karaites.

The Grand Duke was so satisfied with his mercenaries, that he later encouraged another 300 to move to Lithuania with

their families. And there they have survived to this day.

How did they survive the Holocaust?

Aaron Breitbart, Senior researcher at the Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Los Angeles, explains it thus; "The German Ministry of the Interior had engaged in a lengthy study of the Karaites before determining that, despite their origins, Karaites were non-Jews because their 'racial psychology' was not Jewish. This determination was subsequently reaffirmed on October 6, 1942, when *Einsatzgruppen* commanders were ordered not to molest Karaite communities".

Some Karaites enjoyed positions of trust under the Germans and according to the 'Encyclopedia Judaica', "the behaviour of the Karaites during the Holocaust period vacillated between indifference to the Jewish cause and some cases of actual collaboration with the Germans.

The Nazis found it necessary repeatedly to research the issue of this tiny minority and their conclusions seemed to contradict the very fundamentals of the Nazi's racial concepts. It appears that the attitude towards the Karaites originated from a high authority, immune to criticism. Thus, the final solution was decided more on religious than on racial grounds.

However, the Arab states made no such distinction and in 1948 expelled Karaites as Jews when the State of Israel was established. In 1956, during the Sinai campaign, the once flourishing Egyptian Karaite community of 7000 was uprooted overnight. Most of the emigrants from the Middle East came to Israel, where they were granted full citizenship.

Conclusion

Karaism had an important effect on Jewish thought. It stimulated the study of the actual text of the Old Testament by Rabbanites and, moreover, forced Rabbanite leaders to offer a philosophic defence of Judaism.

Indelibly linked to Judaism, yet keeping its distance from the mainstream, the Karaite community's determination to survive is surely worthy of respect. In a world where Christians, Jews and Muslims have fought each other in the name of God as a result of intolerance and rivalry, it is surely not right that Judaism should reject branches of its own development on grounds of dogma. Surely the acceptance of a plurality of religious thought and the tolerance of differing perspectives is the sign of a mature religion.

Karaism ultimately declined because of the rigidity of its doctrines. One can regard Rabbinic Judaism as a reforming movement. However, orthodox Judaism is again becoming rigid and this is the reason why we are losing many of its adherents. True Judaism has nothing to fear from competition of other faiths.

So, where do we go from here?

Awaiting the coming of *the* Messiah – or *a* Messiah – is part and parcel of our Jewish faith. But what are the functions of the Messiah?

Some take the view that the Torah is immutable and is good for all time. The function of the Messiah would be to settle small matters of detail such as whether to

lean on the left or the right at the Passover meal and whether to leave a cup of wine for Elijah?

Others take the view that the Torah of Moses was given for a Time and Place, and that the injunction not to tamper with it applies only to the rank and file. When the Messiah appears he can revise much of the Torah. Our Scriptures allow for this when it states that if a new Prophet like Moses arrives we should listen to him.

Thus the Messiah could become a unifying factor for the whole human race. "In that day the Lord will be One and His Name One."*

Simon E. E. S. Dangoor assisted Naim Dangoor in the preparation of this article.

Baghdad

Historical background

The Persians claim that Baghdad is Persian origin, and that Afrasiab, King of Turkistan, enlarged it and called it Baghdad, i.e. Garden of Dad, from the name of the idol which he worshipped.

According to Sassoon's *History of Jews in Baghdad* it is likely that Baghdad existed at the time of the destruction of the First Temple of Jerusalem.

The Talmud mentions Baghdad as the birthplace before c.245 CE of Rabbi Hona Baghdatha, which shows that a Jewish community existed there at the time.

Baghdad was in fact at the heart of Jewish Babylonia where ancient trade routes converged at the point where the Euphrates and the Tigris were at their nearest.

When Cyrus the Great allowed the Jewish exiles to rebuild the Temple, 40,000 returned to Jerusalem but 80,000 remained to form a buffer state in Babylonia in defence of the Persian Empire.

In 637, the second Caliph Omar told Khalid ibn Walid to organise a raiding party on the rich village of Suq Baghdad on the Tigris.

The raid was headed by Muthanna who told his soldiers to take nothing but gold and silver. The merchants of the twin cities of Khosroes (i.e. the twin capital Seleucia-Ctesiphon used to hold their market there once a year at about that time, making it a rich treasure house. The raiding party took the best of everything and departed at full speed by way of Anbar.

The Omayyad dynasty lasted 100 years, and the Arabs of Arabia were seeking a return of power to themselves, while the Persians were trying to assert themselves. In the family of Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, the Persians found what they wanted.

The first Abbasid caliph, Abul Abbas, first settled in Anbar, near Kufa. But this was soon overrun by supporters of the House of Ali. Abul Abbas therefore decided to move his capital nearer to Persia. But he died in 754 and his brother and successor, Abu Jaafar Al-Mansur, had to carry out this plan. Jaafar chose Baghdad for its strategic and communications advantages.

The Round City of Baghdad was founded in 762 and over 100,000 workmen were employed in its construction. Abul-Hanifa was one of the engineers supervising the work. He was later known as the Imam al-Aadham. The Aadhamiya suburb of Baghdad was named after him*

From the Israel Ambassador to Ireland

I am in receipt of your September issue and I wish to thank you for continuing to send me your magazine, which I enjoy reading very much.

I have recently been appointed first resident Ambassador of Israel to Ireland and I would appreciate it if you could now send your magazine, C/o the newly established Embassy of Israel, P O Box 3021, Dublin 6.

I was born in Baghdad and emigrated to Israel with my family in 1951. I received my education in Haifa.

During the years 1958-1961 I served with the Israel Defence Forces. In the years 1961-1964 I studied political science and history of the Middle East at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, where I received my B.A. degree. In 1964 I joined the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem.

During the years 1970-1978 I served as Consul for Information and Cultural Affairs in the Consulates General of Israel in Philadelphia and San Francisco.

With the implementation of the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, I was appointed in 1980 as Counsellor for Political Affairs in the newly established Embassy of Israel in Cairo. In 1982 I served at the U.N. as Member of the Delegation of Israel to the 38th General Assembly.

During the years 1983-1986 I served as Division Director in the Centre for Political Research of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In May 1986 I assumed my duties as Consul General of Israel in Sydney, Australia. Upon the conclusion of my tour of duty in Australia, I was appointed in September 1990 as Director of Egypt Division. In June 1993 I was appointed as Head of the Middle East Department.

In July 1994 I assumed the post of the First Israeli Ambassador Resident to Ireland.

I have published a number of articles on the Middle East, Arabic poetry and the Jewish community in the U.S.A.●

Zvi Gabay, Ambassador

Loyalties

I read your article "Loyalties" with great interest. When the Jews left Egypt, every nation of the world at that time had its own national god. For this reason God, who appeared to Moses in Sinai as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, became the God for the Jews. He saved them out of Egypt, and became their national God, as recited in Shema. The Torah in specific terms is the Jews' national constitution. As a matter of fact, most of the commandments in the Torah pertain to Jewish life in the land of Israel, where the Jews developed their national independence. It is true, the Torah has universal values that pertain to the whole world, but the basic structure of the Jewish religion is a national one. As a matter of fact, when Yiftah (Judges) wrote to the King of Ammon who complained about Israel's presence in the Bashan, Yiftah told him that "what Hanokh, your god, gave Ammon you inherit, and what 'Adonai' our God gave to the Israelites, we inherit." That was in essence a recognition that our God is ours vis-a-vis the other nations who each has their own god, as Hanokh for Ammon, etc.

The Jews never compromised to allow proselytizing in order to prevent Judaism from becoming a universal religion. The Jews never accepted converts with ease. So, whereas the loyalties may be directed to the religion, for the Jews it still has a national fervour.

As far as a Jew's loyalty to the country in which he lives, this was solved for us by Jeremiah the prophet when he specifically commanded Jews exiled to Babylonia, to live a normal life in their home of exile, to obey the laws of the land and to be loyal to it. A Jew's loyalty to Israel should not supersede that of his own country where he lives, unless that country behaves contrary to Jewish interests. In that case the Jew will not be able to live a normal life in that country.

New York

Prof. Heskell Haddad

Scribe: Without suggesting a parallel, German Jews followed the same philosophy, and see what happened●

Thank you for printing my letter asking for information in finding Ethel Widler. The September 1994 *Scribe* was fascinating. Naim Dangoor's article "Loyalties" and Baroness Miller's was mind stretching. I enjoyed your journal very much. In the article "Migration of Iraqi Jews" I found a possible explanation for the mystery of why David Widler wrote his letter in French. The August 1882 letter to the President for Israeli Emigrants at Constantinople was written in French because David probably learned French at one of the Alliance Israelite Universelle schools of the Ottoman Empire in Constantinople.

I don't know if my great grandfather David, born in Constantinople, had roots in Baghdad, but I am still hopeful that someone from your readership will have information on Ethel Widler●

Albany, Oregon

Diane Widler Wenzel



On July 22nd 1994, Israel's first Resident Ambassador to Ireland, Mr Zvi Gabay, presented his credentials to the President, Mrs Mary Robinson. The opening of an Embassy in Dublin was a sign of Israel's much improved diplomatic standing. It also meant that Jerusalem now has full ties with all the Member States of the European Union.

Two important aspects of Mr Gabay's agenda will be the enhancement of trade and tourism links between Ireland and Israel. At present, Israel is Ireland's 29th largest trading partner (expected trade volume 1994, \$125 million). But Mr Gabay believes that this position will quickly change for the better now that the two countries are moving towards closer cooperation.

Mr Gabay has expressed a particular interest in the development of tourism and cultural ties between Ireland and Israel and would like to see more direct links being established●

The Casablanca Economic Summit

by Percy Gourgey

This took place from 30 October to 1 November 1994 and its theme could be described as "from peace-making to peace-strengthening". It was exactly three years to the day that the historic Madrid Middle East Peace Conference took place.

Over the preceding fourteen months, the peace process initiated in Madrid, given a great boost by the secret talks in Oslo and reaching a high point in the signing of the Declaration of Principles on 13 September 1993 in Washington by Prime Minister Rabin and PLO Chairman Arafat with the backing of President Clinton, has transformed the political map of the whole region. *The Casablanca Conference could lead to the economic underpinning of a*

possible political Confederation, or Common Market, of Middle East countries.

Both international political and business leaders joined forces to stimulate economic cooperation in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa. Amongst those who attended the Conference, opened by King Hassan of Morocco, were over a 1000 leaders of business and government, and experts from over 50 countries. Subjects covered tourism, transport, environment, energy, agriculture, water, communications and professional training programmes.

The "Casablanca Declaration" referred to the founding of a Middle East regional bank and "the establishment of a future Middle East-North Africa economic community stretching from the Atlantic to the Gulf inhabited by over 250 million people."●



Alliance School for Girls 1926

**Taken at a Purim party in honour of the visit of Sir Eliezer Kadoorie to Baghdad.
By courtesy of Sami Sourani**

**Front row (L to R): 1 - ; 2. Violette Shemtob; 3. Salim Dabby; 4. Khatoun Ezra (Shina); 5. Hannah Shahmoon;
Second row: 6 - ; 7 - ; 8. Hanina Shamash (Yadou); 9. Saida Jiji (Zilkha); 10. Mme Sabbagh; 11. Fahima Shemtob; 12. Shafika Jiji (Sourani); 13 - ; 14 - ;
Third row: 15 - ; 16. Marcelle Aslan; 17 - ; 18 - ;
Fourth row: 19 - ; 20 - ; 21 - ; 22 - ; 23 - ; 24 - ; 25 - ; 26 - ; 27 - ; ●**

I enclose my husband's reflections on his return to his native country Bulgaria, with me, after 40 years:

Ramat Gan Esther Mercado

Reflections by Albert Mercado, Ph.D.

Call from a Distant Land

He could resist no more after forty years of recurring, intense dreams of the distant homeland. The powerful attraction of the mountain casting a long shadow over his native city, the so familiar streets of his youth, the house where he had spent his childhood and youth in the protected environment of home and family, in the lively circle of friends on the threshold of adulthood, a newcomer at the gate to the enchanted garden of first love. But all these appeared quite different in his dreams, twisted and distorted in long years of tortured imagination. Above the deafening silence of deserted streets, grey buildings looming dark, alien, a jagged skyline piercing a low black sky heavy with horror, with occasional bursts of pale grey lightning casting brief flashes of wan light across the menacing void, making the windows suddenly emerge from the darkness like gaping holes of stacked skulls, the facades stooping over him, a dried corpse about to fall apart and crush him in

the debris. Gusts of dry wind in the ominous silence of devastation. Why did you leave us? Yes, there had been a war, but somehow it had passed by, sparing you people. You could have stayed with us in your native land, breathing the air that fires the imagination with the music of poetry. As your punishment for abandoning us we shall appear in your dreams, but not as you remember us in your waking life. Trying to find rest and solace in sleep, you will see us lifeless, crumbling shells from a time long gone, the spectre of death that awaits you. One day you will return, and perhaps the mountain will redeem you.

Contemplation

Is it the white splendour of my mountain crest
or the distant rumble of the city down below,
I may never know.
Is it the wind stroking my field where flowers grow
or that wrinkled peasant telling eons of survival,
I may never know.
But the mountain is mine, and so is the field.
What mysterious power over me they wield.
I breathe the air that makes my autumn glow.
That much I do know ●

I was delighted to receive your beautiful publication dedicated to Rosh Hashana.

I must say that I took great interest in seeing the various articles dealing with the Eastern communities of Israel, which heritage is unfortunately slowly vanishing and needs to be revived.

I was sorry to read about the sudden death of the late Aviahu Ben David. I met him twice and was indeed impressed by his outstanding personality. It is a real tragedy to see such a young and dynamic man disappear. May his soul rest in peace.

I am sending you herewith a copy of my article about Eastern Jewish Musical Tradition which was recently published ●

**Misgav Ladach Hospital Reuben Kashani
Jerusalem Director General**

Akram Haron Fattal

Your article on page 10 of issue No.62 on Ronald Haron. I would like to inform you that Ronald has been able to trace his father's family. He is a grandson of the late Haron Fattal, his grandmother is Gourgia Samra (née). We contacted him immediately. Unfortunately his grandmother passed away on 18 October 1994, only days after he discovered her. Many thanks for your service ●

London Mrs Samira Blass (nee Samra)



Aziza Bint Mukamal with grand-daughter●

My great-grandmother, Aziza Mukamal, was born in Baghdad at the end of the 19th century. Aziza had been well-known all over the Middle East as a healer and legendary figure, who had medical cures for the poor and the rich.

She had her "medical office" on a hill over the city, where she would see her "patients", and where she had stored thousands of glass jars with her medications and cures, and native compounds of varied herbs. She had acquired her knowledge from her ancestors and through her studies.

She was rich and was very strong-willed and brave. She had proven that her medications were superior to the suggested treatment of one German surgeon at the Meir Elias Hospital when she treated an infected leg, avoiding amputation.

Against the current custom she had kept her maiden name, Mukamal, and not Shlomo-David, her married name. Her fame had been enormous, and when she died, there was mourning for her all over the Middle East and the streets of Jerusalem.

In this century, when we looked down on the previous 100 years of medicine, we lost a lot of precious knowledge. She had definite knowledge of penicillin. She learned from other doctors and her own experience, and it was not a form of magic.

In the United States, I am a medical doctor of arthritis and rheumatism, teaching my colleagues the diagnosis and cures for these diseases. I wish I had some of Aziza's precious knowledge at my disposal - or do I?

New York Ezra Sharon, MD,FACP

Scribe: In the Middle East cheese and yogurt cultures were used to treat infections long before penicillin and other anti-biotics were discovered●

The Statue of malice

by Meer S Basri

(translated from Arabic)

In the country of tyranny and dreadful death

The Statue raised his hands to the horizon.

His colossal head had a strange form,

The mud in it blended with silver.

His eyes glowed with hidden hatred,

His ear was deaf, his hearing blurred.

His heart was moulded of solid stone,

His callous face choleric and speckled.

The people looked at him on his lofty pedestal

Like Satan stuck in his vanity,

And were terrified in their meekness and anxiety.

Then the Tempest blew in the firmament,
Dispersed the fear out of the throbbing hearts,

And felled him like a paper lion●

Laura Kadoorie Club

In 1948 the Iraq government confiscated all Jewish clubs, including the Laura Kadoorie Club in Baghdad. Because of Sir Elly's British citizenship and his many benefactions to the Royal Family and members of the government, a generous compensation of £250,000 was allocated and eventually remitted to the family in Hong Kong.

The Kadoorie fortunes had suffered greatly by the war with Japan and by the Communist takeover in China and this payment came in very handy at the time. It must have grown by now to at least £8m in a fortune reputed to be worth some 4 billion pounds (give or take a billion).

As a large section of the Baghdad community are now concentrated in London, many of whom were members of the original Kadoorie Club, we invited Lady Kadoorie to do a great mitzvah by donating £5m towards the establishment of a badly needed community centre in London. To stress the seriousness of our proposition, we offered to add £1m from our own Foundation.

Unfortunately, our request fell on deaf ears. In her reply Lady Kadoorie wrote:

"Please excuse this very belated reply to your letter - the reason being that I have been away from Hong Kong for the past three months.

I have read the article in *The Scribe* (by Francis Mocatta) about my late husband. It is very well written and I am very pleased to have it.

I have no doubt that the Community Centre for Iraqis and others in London is a splendid idea of yours. However, the very many commitments we have - which I may say have grown considerably in the past year or two - precludes us from embarking on another large project. My family are in entire agreement with this and I am sure you will understand."●

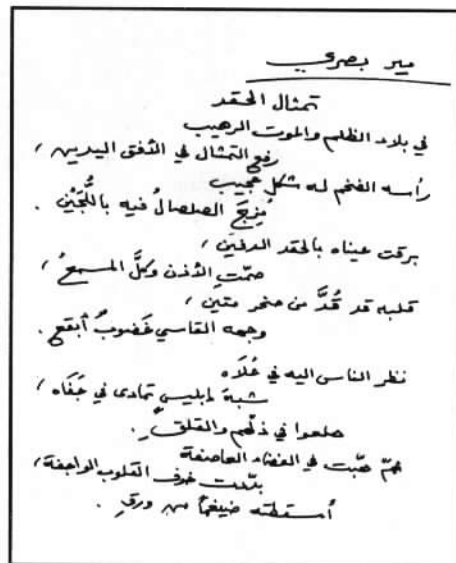
Hong Kong

Muriel Kadoorie

The recent tragic events as regards the acts of terrorism by Hamas and others have reminded me of your repeated article entitled "Peace is not enough." I keep wondering how true and right were your anticipation in this regard●

Ramat Gan

Esther Mercado



You can't take it with you!

- You can't take it with you.

- Then I am not going!

One old Egyptian miser thought of a way of outwitting his heirs whom he did not like. First he converted all his wealth into cash, which he kept under his mattress. Then, he secretly converted his cash into valuable diamonds and, a few hours before he died he swallowed the diamonds, to prove that you *can* take it with you.

On returning from the funeral, the relatives looked for the money but could not find it. They accused the wife and had her arrested. Under lengthy questioning she gave the names of all those who had visited her husband during his illness. The list was found to include two diamond merchants who readily confirmed that they had sold gems to the deceased. Putting two and two together, the police rushed to exhume the body but could not find it. The grave robbers had been there first!

This is not surprising. For 5000 years Egypt was plagued with organised grave robbers who formed a kind of powerful mafia. This was a lucrative business as the Egyptians buried their dead with valuable treasures. Not even the mighty pharaohs, even those buried inside elaborate pyramids, escaped the looting. One by one their mausoleums were emptied of their buried treasures. There was, however, one exception, namely, the young Tutankhamun. The Hebrew craftsmen and managers who were in charge of funerary arrangements buried the King not in his own grave, in the prepared grave of one of his ministers in the Valley of the Kings near Luxor. His was the only tomb of ancient Egypt to have survived through thousands of years until it was discovered intact by Lord Carnarvon 70 years ago●

N.D.

Thank you for your wonderful journal. I just shared my September copy with an elderly couple who live in my neighbourhood, Mr and Mrs Simon Levi.

This couple are originally from Calcutta and I cannot describe the joy they had reading *The Baghdadian Jews of India*, also the article on Burma. Mr Levi was born in Rangoon●

Beverly Hills

Moir Chalom



Left, The restored Shrine of Ezekiel at Kifil, near Hillah, Iraq. Above, The restored Ctesiphon Arch near Baghdad. It is the largest brick span in the world. At one time there was a Talmudic Yeshiva in this structure.

From Sir Terence Clark, former British Ambassador to Iraq.

In reply to your letter, the equestrian statue of General Maude was never inside the British Embassy compound, but just outside. It was pulled down by the mob in July 1958 and destroyed. The former British Residency stands on the Rasafa side and has been restored for use as a Museum of Folk Costumes.

I am writing a history of the British in Iraq. Might I be allowed to reproduce some of the photographs that have appeared in *The Scribe*, e.g. the opening of the Old Bridge, the guffas by Freddie Khalastchy, and the Nairn bus?

As requested, I enclose some photographs taken by me during my stay in Iraq●

London

Terence Clark

It was a pleasure to visit you in London and I appreciated your kindness in letting me tell you about my Aleppo-Baghdad railway project.

You will be glad to know that I saw Rabbi Rothschild in Leeds. He was most co-operative and showed me the material he has collected on the Baghdad Railway, which he kindly placed at my disposal. I cannot thank you enough for putting me in touch with him.

I also received your note about Sir Terence Clark (former British Ambassador to Baghdad). I was flattered to learn that he knew about my Yezidi book●

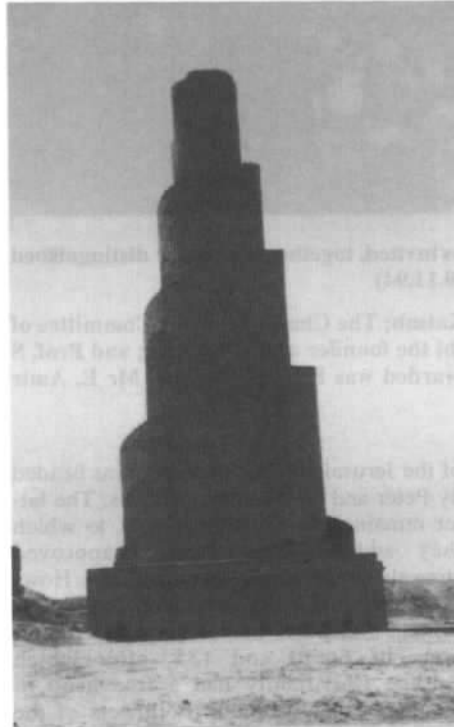
New Canaan, Connecticut John S Guest

I appreciate receiving *The Scribe* which I have found to be very informative concerning Iraqi Jewish culture and traditions. It brought back many memories of my young family life in Basra and Baghdad, and also I learned about the historical movement of Iraqi Jews that emigrated to other countries throughout the centuries. It is quite interesting to learn about Jews living in South East Asia, India and also China.

My children grew up in Israel and do not have the background of living in Iraq. Therefore the experiences and stories written about Iraqi lifestyles have been quite interesting, as it gives them a new perspective. They are excited to receive your journal to become more knowledgeable about Iraqi history●

Kew Gardens,
N. Y.

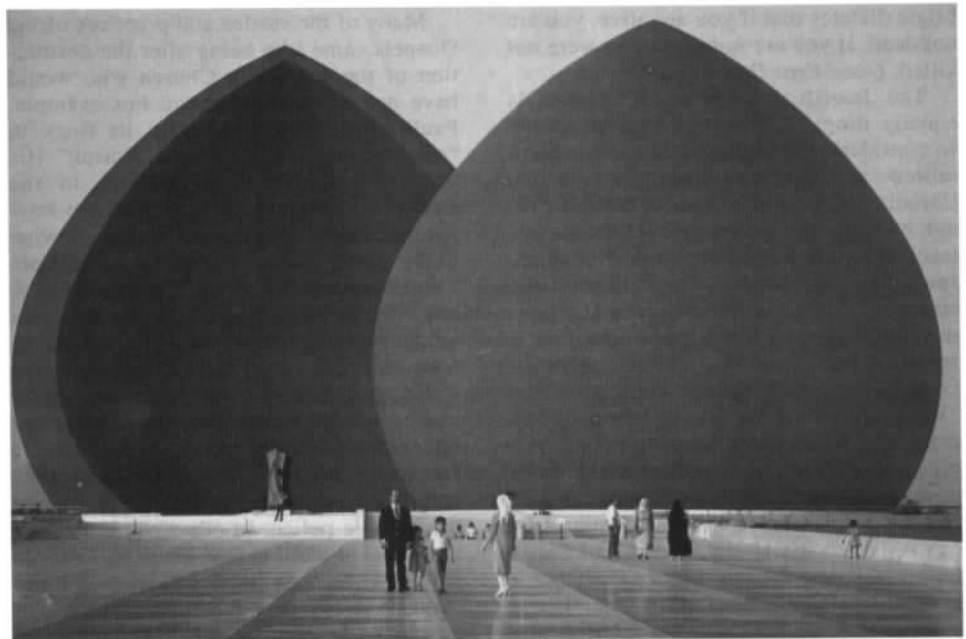
Violet Darwish



The restored Malwiyyah minaret at Samarrah.



Ruins of a synagogue in Ana before the flood. By courtesy of Sir Terence Clark, British Ambassador to Iraq 1985-1988. Photographed by him.



The 150-foot high tiled two half-domes in Baghdad erected to the memory of Iraqi soldiers killed in the war with Iran begun in 1980. It also commemorates the battle of Qadissiya when Arabs invaded Iraq and defeated Persia in 637 CE●



The Institute for Supporting Research & Arts was invited, together with other distinguished guests, to an awards ceremony at the Keneset (30.11.94)

Left to right: Chairman of the Institute, Mrs N Katsab; The Chairman of the Committee of Research and Art, Dr L Dabby-Joury; Mr M Bibi the founder of the Institute; and Prof. S Somech. Among those whom the prizes were awarded was Prof. S. Somech, Mr E. Amir (author), Dr. L. Lecker and Prof. Kraus●

Who killed Jesus?

What distresses me is that people do not see the total lack of logic in the "Jesus story" as told in the Gospels. We are told that the death of Jesus was preordained, in other words it was willed by God. He was sacrificed by the Father in order to save the world from its sins. He was then resurrected. To my way of thinking, whoever did Him in was obeying the will of God, and had no choice but to commit the Act. This cannot be considered a sin. We are then told that Jesus was resurrected by the Father. To me this means that He is alive. Logic dictates that if you are alive, you are not dead. If you are not dead, you were not killed. *Quod Erat Demonstrandum!*

The Jewish attitude towards Jesus is equally illogical, but it is understandably so considering the horrendous crimes committed against the Jews by Pauline Christianity. It is also clear that Jesus cannot be held guilty for these crimes. His teachings were hijacked by a renegade Jew, Saul, also known as St. Paul, who created what has become known as Christianity. Although the base or foundation is Jewish, the structure is undoubtedly Greco-Roman pagan. The concept of the "Virgin Mary" is obviously based on the story of Athena Parthenos, the Greek Virgin Goddess. The man-god image of Jesus is also borrowed from the Greek story of Adonis, with a bit from the Egyptian trilogy of Isis-Osiris-Horus. The cult of Osiris lasted well into the 6th century C.E., but it was ultimately destroyed by the triumphant Church who chose to sacrifice the concept of human brotherhood for uniformity. Both Adonis and Osiris were killed and resurrected.

Paul chose to depart from the teachings

of the Jerusalem Church which was headed by Peter and the brothers of Jesus. The latter remained loyal to the Torah, to which they added Jesus. They disapproved strongly of the action taken by Paul. However the group was destroyed during the Roman massacres that followed the rebellions of 66-70 and 135, after which Pauline Christianity had a free hand to mould the new religion. Followers of the defunct Jerusalem Church remained in existence well into the 5th century, when, here again the Roman Church declared them heretics and destroyed them. They were known as Ebionites.

Many of the stories and practices of the Gospels came into being after the destruction of the Jerusalem Church who would have never condoned them. For example, Pauline Christianity requires its flock to "eat" the body of Jesus and "drink" His blood, symbolically of course, in the Eucharist. This is a corruption of the Jewish practice of blessing the bread and wine during the Passover meal. The Jerusalem Church, which remained loyal to the Torah, would have considered the practice anathema as it represents symbolic cannibalism.

Then there is the story of Judas, which makes even less sense. Jesus preached openly in Jerusalem and in the Temple. He had a very large following. He attacked the money changers in the Temple in front of the Temple police. In other words He was well known and easy to identify. Why do we need someone to "betray Him"? I sincerely believe that the whole story was concocted in order to create the image of the greedy Jewish traitor. The author of the hoax gave him the name of Judas to make sure that no one fails to identify him with the Jews. The sad part about it is that it

I read with interest a copy of *The Scribe* which was passed on to me by a family member. I had heard what pleasure your publication gives to those in my family who came from Baghdad, as well as their descendants, and I was most interested to read it. I would be grateful if you could add me (the youngest grandson of the late Khedouri Shasha) to your mailing list.

Recently I have had the pleasure in studying the history of the exile in Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar and the prophetic literature of the time including Ezekiel, documented in *The Scribe* I received (May 1994). The Babylonian King took most of the skilled labourers, artisans, landowners, high-state officials and upper classes into exile. Not surprisingly many prospered, as Babylonian Jewry seem to do everywhere. When the chance came to return to Israel under Cyrus the Persian, many were reluctant to leave the homes and the successful businesses they had set up. This successful remnant, of course, forms our ancestors.

My lecturer was quite astounded to hear that one of the descendants of Babylonian Jewry was in the class, and I was able to not only tell him that the community continues to prosper, but also that we have our own journal. Long may it continue!●

St Mary's College, Clement Boden
Scotland

worked, and thousands, if not millions of Jews paid for this lie with their lives. The Holocaust would have never happened had the Church not demonized the Jew for some 17 centuries.

If Jesus was betrayed, it was by Paul and his followers who corrupted His teachings. Jesus was born a Jew, lived as a Jew, and like thousands of other Jews, died on a Roman cross. Ever since that time, the heirs of Roman perfidy have continued to crucify Jews. Jesus was never a Christian. I think it is about time the Jews tried to rescue Jesus from the Christians.

Before I close I would like to mention that Jewish history is replete with messianic claimants. All of them failed if the term Messiah is defined as the political redeemer of the Jewish people. Jesus did achieve one thing in that, through Him, the God of the Hebrew bible is accepted by most of the Western world. His life, had it not been corrupted in the telling by Pauline Christianity, would have been more beneficial than that of the other claimant, Bar Kochba, who was even anointed by Rab Akiba, and whose irrational rebellion against Rome when it was at its peak, led to the total destruction of the Jewish commonwealth. Sometimes I like to believe that when Jesus said "give unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's," He was counselling against violent rebellion.

Paul succeeded beyond his wildest dream. Antisemitism is alive and well throughout Christendom. Considering the huge volume of anti-Jewish literature written in the last 1500 years, antisemitism will be with us for a long long time●

Montreal

Naim S. Mahlab



David Sassoon Library Marg (Street)

An interesting ceremony, the renaming of a street in honour of David Sassoon, took place in Bombay in March last year. One of David Sassoon's many public philanthropies is the beautiful building housing the David Sassoon Library and Reading Room. In 1994 the adjacent Hope Street was renamed "David Sassoon Library Marg" at a lovely public ceremony - ('Marg' means 'Street' in Mahraji) - by Shri Chhagan Bhujbal, Minister of Maharashtra State for Housing Development. This was followed by a reception in the Library garden. Mr Moses Sultoon, Chairman of the Sassoon Trusts, was honoured as a special guest. The guests of honour were Smt. Sunita Shinde of the Municipality and Mrs Rachel Manasseh, whose late husband, Albert Manasseh, was a direct descendant, great-great-grandson of David Sassoon.

In the Library lobby stands a fine white marble statue of David Sassoon, in his usual Baghdadian attire, commissioned by prominent citizens of Bombay at the time of his death in 1864, as a mark of regard for this noble merchant prince, public benefactor and universal humanitarian●

London

Rachel Manasseh

Above: Unveiling the new plaque by the Maharashtra State Minister for Housing Development, Shri Chhagan Bhujbal, with guests of honour, Mrs Rachel Manasseh and Smt Sunita Shinde. A coconut is being proffered to the Minister who then breaks it against the stone●

Left: The white marble statue of David Sassoon in the David Sassoon Library lobby, specially garlanded for the occasion, which was commissioned by prominent citizens at the time of his death in 1864●

Somehow I got hold of two of your *Scribe*. I could not let it slip out of my hands until I finished reading them. It brought so much memories. It made me feel proud again to be a part of the "Baghdadi" community as I have been living for the last 28 years in the middle of nowhere ...

I left Baghdad for Israel when I was merely a kid of 16. When I saw the pictures and read some of the names in the *Scribe*, the memory became so fresh as if it were yesterday. Many of the people mentioned were household figures in our home. My father Yaacob Shohet was the Hebrew teacher at the Shamash High School in the early 1930s. He never made it out of Baghdad. He died in 1969 right on the banks of the Tigris River. My mother is Salha Nissan-Shohet, still living with my sister Amira in Columbus, Ohio. Both my aunts, Naima and Khatoon Nissan, were school teachers at Menahem Saleh Daniel, the all girls' elementary school in Tah-t-Al-Takya.

In the summer of 1949 I worked for the Dangoor business. I remember that it was imports of mainly paper goods and other things. I cannot remember the names exactly (I think there was one brother Abdullah), but I clearly do remember Naim Dangoor. He was very energetic, a

perfectionist and a very strict businesslike gentleman. (I learned a very good lesson from him and from my father there). I did not do well at work as I deeply felt that I was highly over-qualified for the position. Also, I was devoting all my efforts and thoughts to preparing myself to go to Israel. My father got wind of the happening, pulled me to one side and said: "Son, the time will be passing by anyway. Why waste it? Even learning how to sweep will serve you one day." So Naim took the broom and the time to show me that you never sweep against the wind ... A couple of years later, in the Israeli Navy as a rookie on the deck of the Q-28, after a rust chipping job, I stood up, tested the direction of the wind before I hit the broom. Yes, I did remember Naim very well.

I do have some Dangoor friends, Yaacob and Rita, first cousins (from Savion and who have Radio Milano as a business in Tel Aviv). Their daughter Adi grew up with my daughter Sally and they are still very close friends.

Now that a lot of water has trickled down the Yarkon River, the memories are coming back, so I feel sentimental●

Cincinnati, USA

Joseph Shochat

I have been a reader of your magazine for many years now. I am also of Baghdadian background; in fact, my husband comes from the family of Rabbi Moshe Shamash.

I am a cordon bleu trained chef and recently started in the banqueting profession covering a whole array of Iraqi, Sephardi, Continental and European cuisine for all occasions: kiddushes, weddings, barmitzvas, batmitzvas, sheva brachot, functions, home parties, Shabbath, etc. I have a kashrut licence from both the Sephardi and the London Beth Din●

Rochelle's Banqueting Rochelle Sassoon
12 Russell Parade
London NW11 9NN
Telephone: 0181-458 9396

We would like to extend our warmest appreciation for printing the Barmitzvah picture of our son, Richard, in the last issue of *The Scribe*.

Many of your readers abroad, including Canada, Hong Kong, the U.S. and Israel have contacted us to let us know how thrilled they were to recognise their young relations in the photo. You are doing a remarkable job in maintaining a strong and steady bond between the Iraqi Jews of the Diaspora●

London

Dalia & Henry Sehayek

From the Cross to the Crescent

Adapted from a lecture by Professor Geoffrey Lewis,
reported in the A.J.A. Review.

On the midnight of 2 August 1492, when Columbus embarked on his expedition that led to the discovery of the New World, his fleet departed from the relatively unknown seaport of Palos, because the shipping lanes of Cadiz and Seville were clogged with Sephardi Jews expelled from Spain by the edict of Ferdinand and Isabella. In 1497 Portugal decided to convert its Jewish subjects by force.

In the far away Ottoman Empire one ruler extended an immediate welcome to the persecuted Sephardic Jews of Spain and Portugal. He was the Sultan Bayazid II (r.1481-1512).

A Western traveller to Turkey in 1551 speaks of: The Murranos, recently banished and expelled from Spain and Portugal, who, to Christendom's great loss and harm, have taught the Turks many inventions, artifices and instruments of war, how to make artillery, harquebuses, gunpowder and so on. Similarly they have set up a printing press, never before seen in these parts, on which they produce a number of books in various languages.

The Ottoman State did not concern itself with the internal affairs of the religious minorities so long as they kept the peace and paid their taxes, which were assessed and collected by the leaders of each community. That was why Mehmet the Conqueror hastened to ensure that each community had a leader. In January 1454 he arranged for the election of a new Orthodox Patriarch and about the same time chose Moshe Capsali to be Chief Rabbi of all the Jews of Turkey. Isaac Sarfati, Chief Rabbi of Edirne, wrote to the Jews of Europe to tell them of the happy existence of Jews under the Crescent, in contrast to their wretched lot under the Cross; this led to a huge exodus, particularly from Germany.

How did the Jews make a living? In any occupation they chose, from the food business to mining, from banking to agriculture. At one period they conducted most of the trade with the Italian ports, the Balkans and eastern Europe. Jews were diplomats, bankers and tax-farmers, and for a long time had a near-monopoly of medicine. Jacob, physician to Mehmed II and his son Bayezid II, was a Jew. Suleyman the Magnificent's physician was Moshe Hamon, while his Grand Vizier's physician was Solomon Ashkenazi.

The best-known Jew of several who gained influence at the Ottoman court was Joseph Nasi. He was born around 1520, from a Spanish Marrano family who had fled to Portugal in 1492, only to fall victims to King Emanuel's forced conversion. The boy was brought up by his aunt Gracia, whose husband headed a jewellery and banking business with offices in France and the Netherlands. In 1553 she settled in Turkey, where Joseph joined her and, like her, publicly embraced Judaism. He became an intimate friend of Selim, "Selim the Sot", son of Suleyman the

Magnificent. By the beginning of the seventeenth century the Ottoman Empire was in decline, and the preeminence of Jewish merchants and doctors declined with it. A principal cause was the Capitulations, concessions granted by the Sultans to foreign powers, originally in order to encourage trade. Foreign nationals paid no taxes and were not subject to Ottoman law. The same privileges could be extended to non-Muslim Ottoman subjects by a diploma given by a consular authority. Jews who were Ottoman subjects, however, had no well-disposed consuls to give them a helping hand.

By the end of the seventeenth century, all the great cities had their communities of Spanish-speaking Jews. The population also included Karaites, Aramaic-speaking Kurdish Jews and Arabic-speaking Jews. And Donmes. In 1666, Sabbatai Zevi renounced his claim to be the Messiah and accepted Islam, after what must have been a traumatic interview with Sultan Mehmed IV. The present-day Donmes, "Converts", are descended from his followers who turned Muslim with him. Muslim Turks have never accepted the sincerity of their conversion, for they still retain their own identity as a sect with its own rites, not intermarrying with Jews or Muslims. Outsiders know little about them but they are popularly supposed to be very wealthy. The most famous of them all was Cavid, Minister of Finance after the Young Turk revolution of 1908. Another was Ahmet Emin Yalman, the greatest Turkish journalist, editor and newspaper proprietor of modern times.

The main Donme centre used to be Salonica, where Ataturk was born, who was also thought to be Jewish.

The centuries-old status of non-Muslims as protected but second-class citizens was ended by the 1856 Reform Decree, in which Sultan Abdulmejid announced the abolition and removal from official documents of all discriminatory expressions indicating that any community was held to be inferior to any other in respect of religion, language, or race.

In 1865 the Jewish community was given an Organic Statute, the Rabbinate Regulation, on the initiative of Fuad Pasha, the Grand Vizier, who wanted the Jewish committee to play a full part in the modernization of the Empire.

The secret baptism in 1856 of an Italian Jewish boy led to the foundation in Paris four years later of the Alliance Israelite Universelle. The first two opened in Baghdad and Damascus, but from 1874 on, schools were opened in several Turkish cities and were favoured by some Muslim parents who wanted to give their children a modern European education. The best-known Muslim Turkish pupil of the Alliance school in Bursa was Celal Bayar, President of the Republic from 1950 to 1960.

There are two men who deserve a

mention, however brief, in any discussion of Turkish Jewry. Hayim Nahoum (1873-1960), Chief Rabbi of the Ottoman Empire, was sent by the Ottoman government in 1915 to meet Allied representatives in an attempt to negotiate a separate peace with Britain and France. In 1918 they sent him to Europe to win friends among the neutral countries, and in 1919 he went on a similar mission for Mustafa Kemal and the Nationalists. He resigned as Chief Rabbi in 1920 but remained on good terms with the Establishment, serving in 1922-3 as a Counsellor on the Turkish delegation to the conference which culminated in the Treaty of Lausanne. In 1925 he was elected Chief Rabbi of Egypt and the Sudan, thereafter living in Cairo until his death.

The second is Professor Avram Galante (1873-1961). Turkey accepted thousands of refugees from Nazi Germany and Austria.

On 2 February 1923, Mustafa Kemal, later surnamed Ataturk, said in a speech at Izmir: There are some loyal elements amongst us, in particular the Jews, who have cast in their lot with the Turks, the dominant element. Because they have proved their loyalty to this nation and this country, they have lived tranquil lives hitherto and shall continue to live in tranquillity and well-being.

And in the main, Ataturk's successors have honoured his promise.

The 1992 estimate of the Jewish population of Istanbul is 30,000, with another 5000 in other cities●

I am writing to compliment you on the special Rosh Hashanah edition of *The Scribe*. Like most of your readers, I eagerly await each issue of this absorbing publication, with its articles on various aspects of our particular heritage - revealing our roots and adding so much to our knowledge of the history and traditions of Jewish life in "the land between the two rivers."

You feature events which very few of our generation remember - having only heard of them from our parents - not to mention the new generation, born outside Iraq after the mass emigration of 1950-51.

The stories of Iraqi Jews who emigrated in the 19th Century to India, Burma, China and other parts of Asia, together with news and letters from our compatriots living today in Europe and the New World, bind the past with the present, East and West, and present a compelling picture of our odyssey in recent generations.

The old photographs from the early part of this Century are not only interesting, but are also important for documentation. During the late 'forties, we had to destroy most of our photos, especially those showing family members and close friends, since the C.I.D., would question the whereabouts of people appearing in them.

We appreciate the time and effort you devote to this "labour of love", which is both a joy to the generation which lived part of their lives in Mesopotamia and a source of heightened understanding for their offspring and for the public at large●

Jerusalem

Shlomo Dayan



At the London Reception for General Barak – Uri David, host; Naim and Renée Dangoor; General Ehud and Mme Barak; Valentine and Menahem Barukh.

General Ehud Barak, former Israeli Chief of Staff, came to London after the lifting of the arms embargo on Israel. He came not to buy arms from Britain, but to sell Israeli arms to Britain, especially latest helicopters. He negotiated with Defence Minister Malcolm Rifkind, a Jew, who missed being at the Farnborough Air Show because he was at synagogue. Rifkind will go to Israel – the first British minister to pay an official visit to Israel proper.

Does Israel have the A bomb? Although General Barak is the best person to know, he said, “The answer is not important. What is important is that the Arabs *believe* we have the bomb.”

After General Barak’s talk the following informal discussion took place:



Sultan Bayazid II (b.1447-1512) son of Mehmed II “The Conqueror” (Fatih) 8th Ruler of the Ottoman Empire●

The Law of Return

One of the problems to be discussed with the Palestinians is the Law of Return. Not the return of Jews to Israel, but the return (would you believe it) of the 1948 Palestinian refugees to Israel.

Q. (N.D.): Why don’t you argue the exchange of refugees.

A: The Palestinians don’t accept that the Jews who came to Israel from Iraq and other Arab countries were refugees. They were olim to Zion. In this they are supported by none other than Israel Foreign Minister Shimon Peres at various Knesset debates. As such, they were free to return to the Arab countries. In fact, the migration of Jews to Israel, both before and after 1948, was the result of two forces – a pull and a push. Without the push of persecution and discrimination the Jews of Iraq would not have emigrated en masse as they did in 1950/51, leaving everything behind them. When the Jews were allowed to leave, informed estimates were that some 25% would go. But the memory of 1941 and the bombs thrown in 1951 pushed 80% to go.

Q.: Iraq has no claims on Israel. Why don’t you play Saddam against Assad?

A: Saddam and Assad belong to the same Baath party. Moreover, Assad is

rational and a responsible person. Saddam is mad.

In fact, although in theory they are both Baathists, Saddam and Assad are deadly enemies. Saddam would submit to any terms and conditions to make peace with Israel and thence America.

Scenario:

Stage 1. Saddam at peace with Israel, USA, subject to dismantling and inspections.

Stage 2. Saddam topples Assad.

Stage 3. Syria makes peace, without all Golan.

Stage 4. Israel and Saddam topple the Ayatollahs.

Stage 5. Carter to negotiate with Saddam to step down and retire in Libya or Switzerland.

Push and Pull

As stated by the late Dr Heskell Isaacs in his article in *Scribe 62* entitled *Migration of Iraqi Jews*, the emigration of that ancient community was subject to two forces – a “push” and a “pull”. The “push” was the discrimination and persecution in the home country, and the “pull” was the prospect of improved economic conditions and, after 1948, aliya to Israel.

Without the push, aliya alone would not have drained the whole community from its ancient homeland●

Sephardi Convention

by Maisie Meyer

I attended the American Sephardi Federation (ASF) National Convention held in Miami, Florida last January. The ASF has demonstrated the importance of preserving the authentic Sephardi lifestyle, its ethnic customs and traditions.

The Gala Opening was attended by some 500 participants from throughout the US, Latin America, Europe and Israel – probably the largest and most diverse Sephardic conference in the world. It was followed by the Opening Night Plenary, a unique blend of talks by leading Sephardi, and music from Morocco, Brazil and the Middle East.

Professor Moshe Lazar, of the University of Southern California, spoke brilliantly on "The Glory and Agony of Sephardi Culture". Throughout the four days of this historic gathering, delegates explored the rich tapestry of Sephardic tradition drawn from as far afield as Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus, Meshed, Istanbul, Tangier, Venice, Yemen and Shanghai. A concerted effort was made to find ways to foster a communal spirit among Sephardim to support our heritage, tradition, synagogues, communal institutions, schools and clubs, mainly by encouraging the participation of our youth.

An important subject of discussion was the Arab-Israeli conflict. Given that Sephardim have always lived in Islamic lands, it is important that their views are heard in these critical days when the Jewish world is debating whether Arab and Jew can co-exist peacefully. Dr Albert Sasson, a Moroccan Jewish leader who serves as Assistant Director General of UNESCO in Paris, urged that beyond the signature of peace treaties it was imperative to work at daily reconciliation between Jews and Arabs to promote and implement a culture of peace and tolerance and reciprocal understanding. Professor Heskel Haddad eloquently warned of the obstacles in the way of peace.

The Conference went on to explore the critical issue of how American Jews would relate to the new strong Israel at peace with its Arab neighbours, (*Inshallah!*), and the steps American Jewry should take to preserve the Jewishness of future generations, in view of the 52 per cent assimilation rate in America today.

Workshops provided a wide range of topics, including: The Last Jews of Alexandria, Ladino in Poetry and Music, A Tribute to the Sephardic Community of Shanghai, The Issue of the Abduction of Yemenite Infants from Israel, The Alternative to the Peace Process, Israeli Dance, The Spoken Ladino Language, Poetic Liturgy of the Sephardim, The Jews of Salonica, The Moroccan Synagogues and Community Identity, Cuban Jewry in Miami, The Sephardic Demography in the

The Stamps of Iraq

(by Freddy Khalastchy)

I have been interested in Iraqi stamps ever since I started collecting at the age of ten.

The first stamps used in Iraq were the Turkish stamps issued in 1863 (Fig 1). On 1.1.1868 the British opened their own post offices in Baghdad and Basra, where Indian stamps were used (Fig 2). These were closed on the outbreak of the First World War.

In September 1914 the British occupied Fao in Basra and began their advance towards Baghdad which was occupied on 11.3.1917. A quantity of Turkish stamps representing 25 different types were collected from various post offices. These were overprinted by hand 'BAGHDAD IN BRITISH OCCUPATION' and put on sale on 1.9.1917. The quantity printed from each type varied from 59 copies (Fig 3) to 1339 copies (Fig 4). On 17.9.1917 supplies of these stamps were exhausted from the post office. General Maude ordered four complete sets of 25 stamps to be cancelled on that date (Fig 5). One set was retained by him. The other three sets were presented to King George V, The King of Egypt and Viscount Acheson who later became Lord Gosford. One of these sets was sold seven years ago for £15,000.

On 1.9.1918 another set of Turkish stamps, this time overprinted in England 'IRAQ IN BRITISH OCCUPATION' was issued (Fig 6). This was a political move to show that Turkey had lost control over Iraq. One of the sheets of the 4 anna value had the inner picture of the

mosque inverted (Fig 7). This is the most valuable single Iraqi stamp currently valued at £12,000.

On 1.2.1919 a special set was issued for use in Mosul only (Fig 8). According to the Sykes-Picot Treaty, Mosul was not considered a part of Iraq. To avoid annoying the French, Britain did not allow Iraqi stamps to be used in Mosul. Instead this separate issue was made.

On 1.6.1923 the first stamps for Iraq proper were issued. These depicted historical scenes from Iraq (Fig 9). Stamps bearing the effigy of King Faisal I followed in 1927 (Fig 10) and 1931 (Fig 11). On 1.4.1932 Iraq changed from the Indian currency to a new currency of fils and dinar. As the stamps with the new currency had not arrived yet from England, the old stamps were overprinted in Iraq with the new currency (Fig 12). The new stamps finally arrived and were released on 9.5.1932 (Fig 13). Stamps depicting King Ghazi (Fig 14) were issued on 11.6.1934. Between 1942 and 1958 several stamps depicting King Faisal II at various ages were issued (Figs 15, 16, 17 & 18).

A republic was declared on 14.7.1958 after a bloody coup. Stamps bearing the portrait of King Ghazi and King Faisal II were overprinted with the words 'IRAQI REPUBLIC' in Arabic (Figs 19 & 20). From then on, various stamps were issued depicting presidents, ancient ruins, historical events, religious festivals, anniversaries and other themes.

I would like to hear from any reader who might have interesting information relating to Iraqi stamps. At the same time any readers wishing to expand on the subject can contact me at the following address: 32 Campbell Court, Gloucester Road, London SW7 4PD●

United States, The Syrian Jewish Rescue, and A Celebration of Yemenite Culture and Tradition.

Delegates shared the richness and beauty of a Sephardi Shabbath. Distinguished Rabbis, there were some twenty present, expounded on the excellence of our religious tradition. The pervading atmosphere was a reflection of the peace of Shabbath and was perhaps the highlight of the Convention.

The Spectacular Gala Closing Banquet and Dance brought the curtain down on a very successful Conference. Alice Harary was presented an award for her heroic rescue of Syrian Jews and well deserved accolades were given to those involved in the arduous task of organisation, notably the President Leon Levy, Isaac Benaroch, Serge Otmezguine and Edward Alcosso. It would seem certain that the 1996 ASF Conference, which is to be held in Israel, will also be an outstanding success●

London

Maisie Meyer

You are to be congratulated for producing a first class and newsy edition of *The Scribe* on the occasion of the New Year (September 1994). The picture of the Laura Kadoorie School in Baghdad was both vivid and memorable. The quality of your production and scholarship makes me wonder why we should have such poor Jewish newspaper reporting in Britain. You prove the job can be done so well and on a modest scale!●

Essex Radio,
Southend-On-Sea

Prof. Eric Moonman

Shanghai Jews 1845 – 1939

Abstract from the Doctorate thesis

by Maisie Meyer

From 1845 Baghdadi Jews settled in Shanghai via India and, over a century of existence, their numbers possibly never exceeded eight hundred. During this period they were exposed to great changes in their social, economic and political environment. Traditionalists believed that loyalties to the customs of their Baghdadi forebears, and occasionally even to Judaism itself, were being threatened. In this thesis the actions the Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai took to preserve their Jewish identity are examined, and changes in ethnic identity in Shanghai between 1845-1939 are analysed. Particular attention is paid to: their choice and the significance of the label 'Sephardi'; the religious and communal institutions they established in order to preserve their identity; their contribution to the economic development of the International Settlement; the reasons for their tenacious endeavours to be accepted as British subjects while remaining loyal to their religion; their reluctance to identify with the Zionist movement and their demonstration of solidarity with their co-religionists who sought refuge in Shanghai from Nazi persecution.

Notwithstanding the obstacles encountered in consulting documents preserved in the Shanghai archives, this thesis draws on a wide range of primary material, notably:



the Shanghai Police Department Records, Foreign, Colonial and India Office Files, the Central Zionist correspondence with Shanghai, American Joint Distribution records, and newspapers printed in China, and in India. Particular use has been made of the *Israel's Messenger*, the first Jewish periodical and the only Sephardi journal to be published in China. Factual information rather than the opinions of its editor, Nissim Ezra Benjamin Ezra, has been taken into account. Despite a widespread search the communal records have not come to light. Consequently emphasis has been placed on the available documentation and on interviews with people who once lived in the community. These data have been particularly useful in understanding such phenomena as value systems and modes of thought. Of course, memories fade or become coloured over time. Nevertheless, frequently there has been a consensus among informants, or information given by any particular individual has been logically consistent, so that confidence in the data would appear to be justified.

It will be shown that the hopes and beliefs of the founding fathers, as expressed by David Solomon Sassoon – that the traders who left Baghdad to settle in new countries would remain true to the tenets of the Jewish religion and to the traditional observance of Baghdadi Jews in particular●

Mrs Maisie Meyer

BA Honours Degree in English.

BA Honours Degree in Humanities.

MA International History at the London School of Economics.

PhD At the London School of Economics – “The Sephardi Jewish Community Of Shanghai 1845-1939 and the Question of Identity”.

Awarded a doctorate in August 1994●



Maisie Meyer with some of the participants in a “Celebration of Yeminite Culture and Traditions”●

My father, the late Nessim Shaul Ozair (Ezeir), was the first Jew who completed the Iraqi Police Officers Course organised by the British in Baghdad after the First World War. He was then appointed as the passport officer in charge at the Iraqi-Per-sian border in Basrah. During the few years at this post he provided substantial help to the Jewish community in crossing that border. At one instance he assisted my mother, Regina Yosef Hoory, with her father when they were crossing the border on their way to India. There he fell in love with her, so he wrote her lovingly to India proposing marriage. She came back following her heart to Baghdad and they got married in 1928. My father continued working in the Police Department in more responsible positions until he was fired for being a Jew after Iraq took full independence.



1926 – my father flanked by two policemen at the Iraq-Iran border near Basrah.

My family name Ezeir was changed to Ozair when we arrived in Israel in 1951. It is not clear to me how and why Ezeir was adopted by my ancestors. However, the village near Basrah, where the Prophet Ezra is buried, was named Ezeir after him.

I have been working for sometime on the Ezeir family tree and was able to reach back to nine generations. I can see in this tree several Ezeirs who gave their lives during Israel's War of Independence. I can find also the martyr Daood Ezeir who was killed while walking in a street in Baghdad during the pogroms of 1936-37. It is interesting to note in this tree community leaders, scientists, engineers, doctors, lawyers, merchants, bankers, musicians, farmers, etc. who have served in Iraq, in Israel and in other countries around the world.

This family tree needs more work and corrections. I would appreciate hearing from the Ezeirs who are interested in their roots and who can shed more light in this endeavour●

Ray Properties Victor Ozair, MSc, PE
President,
1516 South Bundy Drive
Suite 304
Los Angeles
California 90025, USA

The Baring Bubble

A young trader called Nick had much daring
He entered the markets without any caring
He made bets on derivatives
Then the debts became infinitives
And everyone named Baring is swearing●

London Debbie & Joe Shaya

We all want to go to Paradise, but are
reluctant to leave this world!●

Most people acquire enough
religion to hate others, but not
enough religion to show
toleration and love●.

The Arabs failed to lick Israel in sev-
eral conventional wars, so they resorted to
terrorism.

But can't they realise that in a terror
showdown they are at an even worse dis-
advantage?●

Members of my family emigrated from
Baghdad to Bombay in 1935 or 1937. Being
the only one of my family left in France, I
travelled to India to find my roots. I was
informed that many Baghdadian Jews left
Bombay for Australia and South Africa.

Would it be possible for you to help me to
trace my family?

I am the grandson of David Menache,
born in Baghdad to Roubain and of Schontob
Henna.

25 Avenue de la Gare Claude Menache
80200 Peronne
France

Scribe: We have referred your enquiry to
Lydia Collins, our genealogy specialist, asking
her to contact you with any useful information.

We are also sending you a copy of the
Hebrew book which recently appeared in Jeru-
salem on the Zubeida family, which is the
general name of the Menaches and the Roubains.
We hope that readers will contact you directly
if they can help in your enquiry●

The following song is taken from the collection of
"IRAQI" songs by Ibrahim Obadia.

Don't ask why I love her

Written by Ibrahim Obadia

Music by Salah al-Shibli

Performed by Salah al-Shibli

(Translated to English by Ofer Deshe)

*Don't ask me why I fancy her
I can't measure her beauty
Her smile is charming
Capture me with its gentleness
Her common behaviour amaze me
I am the happiest when she's
worrying
How lovely her nature*

*Don't ask me why I fancy her
I can't measure her beauty
When she gets mad I give in
When she is wrong I forgive
I shake her hand
and open her my heart
Don't ask me why I fancy her
I can't measure her beauty
Her expressions are imaginative
her laugh like a song
her language iraqi
she is the perfect woman -
real lover*

*Don't ask me why I fancy her
I can't measure her beauty*

لا تسألوني اش حببت

غنا: صالح الشبلي - ألحان: صالح الشبلي

* * *

لا تسألوني اش حببت أنا منها
مكدر أعد لو عديت محاسنها
حلوه أصيله شكدر أگول عنها
لا تسألوني أهوايه مفاتنها
تسحرني آبتسامتها
تأسرني أبلطافتها
تعجبني بساطتها
تسعدني رعايتها
وش حلوه طبيعتها
لا تسألوني اش حببت أنا منها
مكدر أعد لو عديت محاسنها
تتكلم ملامحها
لو تزعل أصلحها
لو تغلط أسامحها
وبأيدي أصفحها
ويحبي أفاطحها
لا تسألوني اش حببت أنا منها
مكدر أعد لو عديت محاسنها
نظرها خيالیه
ضحكتها غنائیه
لهجتها عراقیه
إنسانه مثالیه
محبوبه حقیقیه
لا تسألوني اش حببت أنا منها
مكدر أعد لو عديت محاسنها



Heskul Sultoon (my great-grandfather). He is the first husband of Khatoon Akerib. He died shortly after my grandmother Aziza was born. My great-grandmother remarried after her daughter married. (Photo approximately 1920)●

Rego Park, N.Y. Irvin Mouallem



The Mouallem family. This is the only photograph of my grandfather's entire family.

Front row (L to R): Florence and Heskul Naji.

Back row: Abdullah William (my father); Reuben Mouallem; Habiba (his mother) holding Musooda Sylvia; Semha; Rachel (my grandfather's sister).

This picture was taken approximately in early 1938. Florence died in October 1939. We only have a couple of pictures of her since most were destroyed after her death. I was able to get a copy of this picture from my aunt Toba, who was living in the United States at that time, and my grandparents had sent her a copy of the photo●

Rego Park, N.Y.

Irvin Mouallem

Jewish Continuity

The controversial link between Joint Israel Appeal and Jewish Continuity has raised a number of questions among which should be the high prices of kosher meat and poultry.

Kashrut is the cornerstone of a Jewish home and Jewish life, so that it is imperative to ensure that kosher food is not sold at exorbitant prices. Why should a Jew pay £8 for a chicken when the same can be bought for £2 at supermarkets?

Surveying the future from his high tower, Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks wonders if we shall have Jewish grandchildren. I tell Dr Sacks, "Atta ha-ish!" You are the man who has it in his hands to provide the correct answer. As head of Jewish Continuity you can make sure that Kosher food is available at reasonable prices.

Dr Sacks laments the fast disappearance of Diaspora Jewry through assimilation and intermarriage. As Chief Rabbi, he should take the lead in coming to terms with Masorti and Progressive Judaism that can act as a safety net for those who find Orthodoxy too difficult. A Jew should be recognised not only through the mother but also through the father. Conversions should be eased drastically, so that instead of losing a son we gain a daughter.

Unfortunately, Dr Sacks may be unable to do anything as he talks from inside a prison. The detachment with which Rabbi Sacks contemplates the future of his flock is frightening. He may feel that as long as he has a *minyán* at his *shul*, he doesn't care two sparrows about the size and composition of Anglo-Jewry●

Name and address supplied

American University of Beirut

A recent fund-raising Dinner of the Swiss branch of the Alumni Association of the American University of Beirut was held in Geneva. In recognition of his continued moral and material support of the University and to Lebanon, the Executive Committee unanimously appealed to Mr Salim Lawi to accept the title of Honorary President of the Alumni Association in Switzerland. Mr Lawi responded by expressing his gratitude for the honour. He also made a commitment to continue helping the Association achieve its mission and to keep AUB's flag flying high.

At the Dinner he was seated between the Ambassadors of Lebanon, Jordan and Syria, which may indicate the shape of things to come●

Arabic Spectrum Radio

There are now a million Arabs living in Britain of whom about 150,000 are Iraqis. On the multi-ethnic, round the clock Spectrum Radio, the Arabic programme occupies a prime period of four hours, 8 p.m. – midnight, and is very active and popular.

The programme constantly made anti-Israel and even antisemitic remarks and was recently fined £1000 and the presenter sacked for breaking the Radio Authority's guidelines. George Hye deserves credit for making and pursuing his complaints to the Home Office.

Most of the Arab exiles receive substantial housing and other allowances. A million pounds in legal aid was recently paid on behalf of an Arab who was later discovered to have large assets abroad●



Isaac Murad and family (my great-grandparents, great uncles and aunts, and grandmother). I am named for Isaac Murad. Standing beside him is his wife Jamila Gabbai, holding her daughter Toba. Standing in front of Isaac is Ephraim (Frank), Julius and David. The little girl in front with the defiant stand is my grandmother Semha. I do not know the person sitting on the far right. I had the pleasure of knowing all my great uncles and aunts in this picture. My great-grandmother Jamila died in New York one year before I was born. (Photo approximately 1910)●

Rego Park, N.Y. Irvin Mouallem



The Queen chatting with Dr. Jamil Elkabir after decorating him with an MBE for his community work.

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

- Mr S E Sassoon, New York
- Mrs Carol Basri, New York
- Mr Joe Cohen, London
- Mr Meyer Jonah, Los Angeles
- Mr Ezra Rabie, Lake Oswego
- Mrs Rose Horowitz, Los Angeles
- Mr Jack Rahameem, London
- Mr E Herbstman, New York
- Mr Robert Shasha, New York
- Mr Ronald Mukamal, Baltimore
- Mr Saul Khutaina, New York
- Mrs Julie Rodman, Lexington, MA
- "Snowbirds" (Iraqi Comm. of Ft Lauderdale)
- Mrs Helen Meyer and her son Joseph Meer (in memory of the late Yousef Meyer)
- Mr Edmond Murad, Newton, MA
- Mrs Samira Galler, New York
- Mr Frederick Sion, New Jersey
- Mr & Mrs Wilson Aboudi, New Jersey
- Mr Edmond Loya, Redwood City, Calif.
- Mrs F Shashoua, New Jersey
- Mr Edward Khamara, Mt. Waverly, Australia
- Mr Joseph Shochet, Cincinnati
- Mr Alfred Shasha, Scarsdale, N.Y.
- Mr Shlomo Dayan, Jerusalem
- Mr Fouad Shahrabani, Montreal
- Mr Jamal Izzat, London
- Mr A Aslan, Cherry Hill, N.Y.
- Mrs M Simon, London
- Mr Clemens Boden, Scotland●

The Iraqi "Snowbirds" of Ft Lauderdale appreciate the work of *The Scribe* in keeping us in touch and informed.

The Iraqi Community of Ft Lauderdale.

Committee Members: Morris & Evette Mashaal, Mounir & Joyce Peress, Linda Khalastchi, Alfred & Vivienne Saleh and Victor Chitayat●

A copy of your September *Scribe* was loaned to me by one of your subscribers who lives in Vancouver. I found the articles to be of great interest and wonder if our organisation might be included in your mailing list for future issues and some back numbers.

Because of the historical content, I believe *The Scribe* would be of value to those of our members who might be researching Babylonian Jewry●

Jewish Genealogical Institute of British Columbia **Cissie Eppel, President**

I recently had the opportunity to read *The Scribe* and I was so much thrilled by the articles it contained. As my name shows I am an Iraqi Jew and am much interested in the articles that you cover. It is enlightening. In fact a colleague of mine, who is not Iraqi, was also thrilled by the articles that you publish.

Thank you and may God help you in expanding your work and spreading the knowledge●

Bayside, N.Y. Sami Kattan



Your readers may be interested to know that Doreen Shaoul was recently inducted as the new President of the West London Medico-Chirurgical Society. The Society, founded in 1882, is a traditional feature of West London medical life. Knowing Doreen's lively personality and commitment to general practice, members are looking forward to an enjoyable year.

Doreen is the first woman GP President and is especially appreciated as there has not been a GP President since 1985●

London Marion L Horesh

The Eastern Jewish Musical Tradition

(Abridged)

by **Reuben Kashani**

The first scholar to make an organised attempt to preserve examples of eastern (Sephardic) Jewish songs was the musicologist Avraham Zvi Idelsohn who, during the years 1906-1916, collected folk tunes, examples of cantillation marks and eastern Jewish melodies. He also investigated the roots of eastern instrumental performance, in addition to the various influences on this music. The results of his researches were published in the ten volumes of *Otsar Neginot Israel*, or "Thesaurus of Hebrew Oriental Melodies" (the first five volumes appeared in Hebrew and the rest in German and English), as well as in other collections of Jewish music.

The eighteenth-century Italian composer Benedetto Marcello stated, "In the music of the Jews, as it is heard in their synagogues, may be detected a relic of the musical ritual of the Temple." But today there is no possibility of reconstructing the

music of the Temple, since early Christian music developed out of the Greek or Aramaic folk tradition.

Chanting and singing associated with ancient rites and the worship of the creator were accompanied by various instruments. The last of the Psalms, number 150, exclaims:

Praise the Lord!

Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament!

Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his exceeding greatness!

Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!

Praise him with timbrel and dance; praise him with strings and pipe!

Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!

Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord!●



Joe Cohen with his granddaughter Jessica Lipman.

Joe Cohen

Mr Joe Cohen, a founder member of the Ohel David Eastern Synagogue, Golders Green, and Vice President for the past 35 years, retired in May 1994. During his term of office, he contributed greatly to the management of the Synagogue and to the interests of the members.

Mr Cohen's children, Rosemary and Ashley, gave him a champagne party at the Totteridge Village Hall last September to celebrate his 80th birthday.

Guests were treated to a feast of Eastern delicacies. Mr Cohen's son Ashley gave a touching speech about his father's activities to date, and his elder brother Ellis also spoke. Mr Cohen's two younger grandchildren, Jamie (8) and Natalie (6) entertained the guests with a musical Rap song about their grandfather●

Memorial service for Rahma Mittana Luddy on Sunday, January 29th 1995 in London

"We are here to remember," said Reverend Nissim Morris, to the gathering of 160 old girls and boys of the Jewish Girls' School of Calcutta. The remembrance was in a spirit of thanksgiving for a life dedicated to education, mainly but not solely, for the pupils of the School of which she was Principal from 1929 until 1963. Tributes were received from all over the world and confirmed the words of her niece, Naomi Shaw: "The seeds she sowed in her lifetime are bearing fruit and are to be found in every country."

The remembrance was also in the spirit of appreciation for the services of someone who had given whole-heartedly to the community from which she came and in which she was reared. As Rabbi David said: "We came from the East with education and the spirit of learning which was put before us by our teachers." Rabbi Gubbay reminded Miss Luddy's old pupils that the process of education is a very arduous job and one which requires infinite patience to "ensure that everyone understands, the lessons have to be repeated over and over."

The sheer size of the attendance at the service, even at short notice, and the number of tributes to her work, made it clear that the majority of pupils and staff had access to the fine qualities beneath the forbidding kernel. We heard that her home was open to those pupils who needed sheltering for one reason or another; we heard of her respect for her servants and acknowledgement of their rights to an education, we heard also of the trust placed in her, and of her understanding and support in a range of difficult situations.

Those who came to the Memorial Service were well aware of the public life of Miss

As a token of my gratitude for *The Scribe* – a particular privilege that has come my way regularly for some years – please accept this one-off replica of the old Welch Coracle, not made by me but by a basket-weaving specialist to an ancient pattern, which may still be seen in use on the small rivers of Wales since Celtic times (none of those rivers is long though the Severn rises in Pymlimon), whose linings then were made of skin. Note the willow frame, the paddle, the leather thonged headband bound to the seat for bearing the lightweight vessel against the forehead when walking – like the beetle, and of course the mallet in the hole in the fisherman's seat, known as "the priest". Whence "priest"? I can only hazard a shrewd nonconformist guess that it was like the ritual instrument used by Roman Catholics to administer the last rites of their church. Nowadays, a lump of lead placed in a cavity of the "priest's" head will expedite the demise of the salmon which knows unless he gets away he'll soon be in "hot water"!

This primitive mode of aquatic propulsion will remind you of a larger model designed to ply the Tigris, and of course of that wonderful and heart-melting tale on the banks of the Nile, when "the babe Moses wept"! I had planned to visit The Teifi where veterans of the river still ply their



The above photograph, taken around 1934/35 at the Jewish Girls' School premises, No. 8 Pollock Street, Calcutta, shows Miss Luddy with some of her school staff.

Seated, left to right: Mrs Sally Morris (né Isaac), Miss Stella Benjamin, Miss Rahma Luddy, Miss May Vaughan, Miss Ramah Moses.

Standing, left to right: Mrs Sarah Abraham (né Raphael), Miss A Sinclair, Miss K Chalk, Mrs Sarah Isaac, Miss Una Murray, Miss Ramah Musleah, Mrs Dinah Samuel (né Isaac) and Mrs Hannah Howard (né Joshua).

Luddy expressed mainly through her contribution to a system of education which combined both secular and Jewish studies, sport and travel, team work and personal excellence.

Rabbi Gubbay said that in holding the memorial service we were contributing to the

elevation of Miss Luddy's soul. Ramah Musleah, a member of the staff of the Jewish Girls' School throughout Miss Luddy's term of office, asked that all the old pupils join in a prayer that their Principal's soul be bound in eternal life with those of our ancestors in Gan Eden ●

"up-turned beetles" and have myself photographed in one of them, reading the latest issue of *The Scribe*. Hopefully I shall do so when the salmon season starts and send it on (as Mr Dangoor requested) under the caption: THE SCRIBE REACHES THOSE PARTS WHICH OTHERS CANNOT. To reach those creeks and inlets is indeed remarkable.

Swansea, Wales

Gruffydd Thomas

Scribe: It was a pleasant surprise to receive the parcel containing the Coracle as used in the Welsh rivers. Your present is greatly appreciated.

In Iraq this type of craft is made of a more solid construction, but there is another type (called Kalak) which consists of logs floating on inflated skins, which are used to bring merchandise down the Tigris River, and when they arrive at their destination, the boatmen sell the timber and the skins. They then return to the north by road transport to start another cycle ●

I enjoyed Abdulla Anwar's anecdote about Germany's bad odour very much. I laughed and laughed till tears streamed down my cheeks ●

London

Alice Shashou

I was born in Kobe, Japan. I was a war baby. My mother Eliza Shawn (Mattuck) was born in Bombay and my father Edward Shawn (Ezra Sherbanee) in Baghdad. I have three sisters and a brother. We left Kobe in 1946 for Bombay.

My father left for Bangkok on business and my mother arranged for me to attend a boarding school in Bangalore, together with my two older sisters.

We left for London, then Vancouver in 1953. I went to Geshar Hezev, Israel, through Habonim and met my husband who also attended Habonim in Los Angeles. We got married in Vancouver.

I now live in Los Angeles and have a daughter and two sons. I am currently President of my Hadassah group. When I visited my mother recently in Vancouver I read *The Scribe* and enjoyed it very much. I would like to have my name on your mailing list ●

Granada Hill, Calif.

Joy Shapiro

I would be more than grateful if you would put me on your list of subscribers. I am having a hard time trying to borrow one from my friends, because no one wants to share it, even for a few days. I hope this publication will never cease ●

Forest Hills, N.Y.

Charlotte Kateb



On the occasion of the first Officers' Investiture of Habonim in Calcutta in 1938 by Albert Manasseh with Sir David and Lady Rachel Ezra. In uniform (seated): Sally Meyer (now Dr Sally Lewis). To her right Meyer Musleah; and to her left Ellis Abraham ●

I was happy to read your September issue for various reasons.

To hear again from Dolly (Dayan) Shadler, with whom we share a common great grandfather, Rabbi Shmuel Sadqa. I believe Dolly was a contemporary of my sister Grace Frankel who is living in London and I am sure would welcome old contacts after a span of over 40 years.

Rachel and Sarah Manasseh's very erudite discourse on our community in India was particularly revealing and nostalgic and pretty accurate. Both Habonim and Maccabi were flourishing in the 1940s and until the late 1950s, but then the exodus to Israel, Australia and the United Kingdom caused drastic reductions in our youth. Indeed India was one of the most tolerant countries, so different from any other country where antisemitism ruled in a pernicious way. We were fortunate to live and thrive in the Indian environment. I would like to add that Albert Manasseh was my mentor for many years. He was a noble lovely person and whenever and wherever we met latterly, it was like shedding the years instantly.

By the way, I had the privilege to lead a successful Indian team to the 1957 Maccabiah (3 gold and 3 silver medals for our team). My family moved to London in 1965 and am now back in the dynamic East in sunny Singapore since 1986.

I then had the good fortune to lead the first Singapore team to the 1989 Maccabiah earning a silver medal on the way.

As always "the wandering Jew" meshes India/London/Singapore but with Israel the pivotal force.

I have an urgent request from our cousin Dr Mercy Sadka and Philip Sadik of Perth to find out from among the Sadka descendants whether Sadkas, Mashaals, Noys, Nawys, Dayans, Mansoors, how do we get hold of one of Samuel Sadka's mezuzoth or scrolls. Apparently he was a prolific producer - among the top echelon ●

47 Binjai Park,
Singapore 2158

Samuel Marshall

Don't blame God

It is significant that the Holocaust affected mainly Ashkenazi communities, for they were willing to live as defenceless minorities in a hostile and vicious environment.

When Abraham found himself in a similar situation, he heeded the Divine command: "Get thee out!" Jews could have gone to America, Africa, Australia. Many did but others would not or could not go. There was a lack of leadership. Zionism was not and is not the sole answer for the Jewish people. Israel is too small to contain the whole Jewish nation. Long before the destruction of the Second Temple, the majority of the Jewish people lived outside Israel. There were many opportunities to form new nations elsewhere ●

A Jewish rabbi was caught in a flood, but he refused to leave his building, saying, "God will save me." When the water reached the first floor, a rowing boat passed by, but he refused to get on the boat. When the water rose to the second floor, a motorboat came along but again he refused to join. When the water reached the roof of the building, a helicopter hovered above, asking him to be lifted, but he kept saying God will save me. Then he drowned. In heaven, he went straight to the complaints department of Terrestrial Activities - planet Earth - and said: "What is going on? I put my trust in Heaven, but you have let me down." After tapping the computer, the operator told him: "At 3.30 we sent you a rowing boat; at 4 o'clock we sent you a motorboat; and at 5 o'clock we sent you a helicopter. It was your decision. There was nothing more we could do." ●

Can the Holocaust be regarded as a violent form of natural selection, so that those who have survived it are now of superior strain? ●

Preserving our Babylonian Heritage

Dr Victor Sasson recently gave a talk on the above subject at the Iraqi Centre in New York, which was attended by some 70 members of the Community, who warmly welcomed his interesting observations.

He concluded by saying that in the post-Exilic period, Ezra and Nehemiah struggled to preserve Jewish identity and continuity. There is, however, a big difference between the ancient past and present-day reality. We now live in an age of speed, mobility, and quick change and of pop culture. It is a much smaller world than it used to be and cultural/religious erosion is discernible everywhere. But one can adapt to one's environment, within reason, without losing our distinctive identity ●

Auschwitz Convent

In 1971 I was one of the first to warn Israel of the Catholic Church's plan to build a convent and a chapel in the grounds of the Nazi death camp where the Germans and their Polish collaborators exterminated 1.5 million people, 90% being Jews.

I wrote to the Chief Rabbinate in Jerusalem giving the news and added that future generations of Christian pilgrims may be told, "This is the spot where 'murderers of God' received their just punishment."

The Chief Rabbinate replied that they were not aware of this and that my letter broke their heart and asked for more details and promised to investigate the matter.

The manner by which the authorities have behaved in this respect confirms the vicious and unrepentant antisemitism of the Catholic Church ● N.D.

God and the Holocaust

Former Chief Rabbi, Lord Immanuel Jakobovitz, went to Auschwitz to represent the Queen at the 50th anniversary of the liberation of the death camp. He said, on the radio, I have no answer to the question, "Where was God during the Holocaust?"

How can we go about our daily business without having an answer to that important question. Should we abandon Yahweh for Baal and Moloch, and abandon the Torah for the law of the jungle? Lord Jakobovitz said that Abraham was also troubled by the same question. At the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah he asked God, "Should not the Lord of justice act justly. Should you destroy the righteous with the wicked?" Neither Lord Jakobovitz nor apparently Abraham quite understood God's reply. God said, "I would not destroy Sodom if there are righteous people there." What He meant was that in a wicked society there are no innocent people. Everyone has to suffer the consequences - both the wicked and those who consider themselves righteous ● N.D.

Who is a Jew

From Dayan Dr Pinchas Toledano

With reference to Baroness Miller's article on "Who is a Jew", the requirement that the mother should be Jewish is based on Deuteronomy, Chapter 7, Verses 3 and 4: "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them: thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For he will turn away thy son from following Me, that they may serve other gods; so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and He will destroy thee quickly."

By the words "For he will turn away ...", our Rabbis of blessed memory interpreted this verse to refer to the son of a heathen from Canaan. The Israelite's daughter should not be given in marriage to the heathen, because the heathen's father will bring up "thy son" (i.e. the Israelite's grandson) in idolatry.

Our Rabbis have deduced that a child born of a Jewish mother and a non-Jewish father is regarded as "thy son", i.e. a Jew, but not if born of a non-Jewish mother and a Jewish father.

Details of this Law are mentioned in Rashi's commentary taken from the Babylonian Talmud tractate Kidushin.

Wembley, Middlesex

Plurality of views within Judaism appears to be fashionable these days and Baroness Miller's somewhat unorthodox deliberations on "Who is a Jew" did not therefore come as a surprise.

I find it incomprehensible, however, that you should present readers with the "Khazar Canard" as contained in Lady Miller's last paragraph on "Who is Jewish"

The contention that present-day Jews (not necessarily only the Ashkenazim) are descended from Khazars, is far from new.

The motivation behind the story is clear: to re-write Jewish history in order to sever the link between the Jewish people of today and the biblical Hebrews, as this would automatically dislodge and delegitimise our claim to the Land of Israel. What is not clear though, is why *The Scribe* should lend its pages to give a new lease of life to this preposterous fantasy, without adding an explanation as to its origin and purpose. Providing a platform for tales such as this one can only serve to add credibility to one of the most outrageous Arab propaganda lies and help to put a question mark over our inalienable right to the land of our forefathers.

Wembley Park, Middlesex Mrs Ruth Willers

Scribe: We do not share your concern regarding the Khazar connection for the following reasons:

- 1) Not all present Jews are of the seed of Abraham. So, where do we draw the line?
- 2) The Hebrews of the Exodus were a motley crowd.
- 3) There were many conversions to Judaism during the second Commonwealth.
- 4) Ezra purified the genealogy of Babylonian Jewry, but not of Palestinian Jewry.
- 5) There were many conversions to

Judaism at the time of the Maccabees.

- 6) You may say all such conversions were of Semitic, Middle Eastern people; but in the first centuries BCE and CE there were many conversions to Judaism in the Greek and Roman worlds and in North Africa.
- 7) No one is saying that all Ashkenazim are descended from the Khazars. At worst, they are mixed with these converted Jews.
- 8) If we claim that Jews are racially pure, we expose ourselves to the accusation that Zionism is racism.
- 9) What about the Jews of Ethiopia and other places?
- 10) Who is an Arab? Are the people of Egypt, Iraq, Syria and North Africa ethnically Arabs?
- 11) Abdel Nasser defined an Arab as anyone who feels he is part of Arab culture.
- 12) This is good enough for our purpose. Anyone who is born a Jew or becomes a Jew can regard himself as belonging to the Jewish nation.
- 13) This logic was demonstrated in the recent case of the harassed English policeman who was regarded as an ethnic Jew because he had converted to Judaism.
- 14) When we say a Jew is one born of a Jewish mother, our concern is not the genes but the upbringing - not the nature but the nurture®

Zionism in India and the Far East

by Percy S. Gourgey, MBE

On a hot summer's day in the year 1920, three young men met under a street lamp in Bombay excitedly clutching some newspaper reports. These concerned various gatherings in London to celebrate the issuance of the Balfour Declaration in 1917 which gave immense and continuing joy to British Jewry who had grasped its significance for the World Zionist Movement and the eventual establishment of a Jewish State.

The young men were of Baghdadian origin - Judah Gubbay, Joseph S. Ezra and Ezekiel S. Somekh. They decided to form the Bombay Zionist Association, as they told me, many years later when I became its Honorary Secretary (in 1947). It was fitting to have done so at that time as shortly afterwards a visitor came from London. He was Israel Cohen, the Zionist historian and the then General Secretary of the World Zionist Organisation with its head office in London. Mr Cohen was on a visit to India and the Far East to spread the message of Zionism.

Until 1948, the BZA was active in organising lectures and meetings, Hebrew classes, a trickle of aliya to British Mandatory Palestine, and publishing a journal, *The Jewish Advocate*. It is interesting to note that in 1939 Pandit Nehru, the great Congress nationalist leader and first Prime Minister of India, wrote a letter to the *Jewish Advocate* in which he declared his belief that "with the withdrawal of the evil presiding genius of British Imperialism in Palestine, Arabs and Jews could together solve their differences." Doubtless he had in mind the rule of British Raj in India

with "its policy of divide and rule" concerning Hindus and Muslims. (In 1947, what the British did was "to divide and rule" when the dominions of India and Pakistan were formed!)

In 1947 the police interrogated me on Zionism, perhaps thinking it was a subversive movement like Communism. I asked them to release me and the next day took with me a copy of the Bible and Graetz's "History of the Jews" to make them understand the true significance of Zionism and its 3000-year-old history! They could not be bothered to read these books and accepted my word that it was not subversive and sought national liberation for the Jews as did Indians for themselves prior to independence in 1947.

In 1949 I paid my first visit to Israel to monitor the progress of Indian olim and also was privileged to have two interviews with President Weizmann in Rehovoth. In his autobiography, *Trial and Error*, Dr Weizmann wrote: "It was my good fortune during those fateful days of the United Nations' sittings in 1947 to come into close contact with the Indian delegation, which contained a number of highly distinguished men and women ... they took the initiative in proposing first, that I should visit India, second, that we should send a group of Jewish scientists to India to propose developments, and third, that Indian students should come to Jewish places of learning in Palestine ... here is a mighty opportunity to build a bridge between East and West." With the present flourishing relations between India and Israel since 1992 all these aims and more could be realised.

In 1897, when the First World Zionist Congress was convened by Dr. Theodor Herzl in Basle, Switzerland, he sent an invitation to Bene-Israel leaders in Bombay to attend, but they regrettably declined it.

In Rangoon, a Zionist Association was founded in the early 1900s by Jewish emigrants from Baghdad amongst whom was the great-grandfather of Judge Abraham Sofaer of the U.S. State Department - Judge Sofaer was born in Bombay.

During my visit to Sourabaya, Indonesia in 1953, I visited the Jewish Club, on the walls of which hung portraits of Herzl, Weizmann and Ben-Gurion.

In Singapore, a Zionist youth movement, Habonim, was founded in 1946.

In Shanghai there was a Zionist Association since 1917 through which the late N.E.B. Ezra, of Baghdadian origin, persuaded the Chinese Government to issue a statement of sympathy with the aims of the Balfour Declaration.

There is much more that could be said of the fascinating story of the Zionist movement in the Far East®

Jewish Hoba

Many Iraqi Arabs are now saying that the sufferings of the country and its people are due to the hoba (guilt) for having badly treated the Jews. This is the superstitious way of looking at it.

There is another explanation. The Jews of Iraq who, at one time formed over a quarter of the Capital's population, were well introduced in all branches of national life. We would never have let the country's leaders to plunge into the adventures which have resulted in Iraq's present impasse®

N.D.

The impotence of Democracy

by Naim Dangool

Democracy has no protection from the predators who use it as a stepping stone towards achieving dictatorship and totalitarian rule. The basic principle of democracy is majority rule. As Churchill observed, this is not the ideal system of government but the least evil!

However, majority decisions may be acceptable in solving minor issues; where there are major differences of race, colour, language, religion, or the choice between privatisation and nationalisation, a simple majority cannot give the 51% a mandate to dictate to the 49%.

The devil Hitler came to power through parliamentary elections but immediately proceeded to dissolve parliament and rule as dictator. The same process was going to happen in Algeria in 1992 when the Moslem fundamentalists were about to win a parliamentary majority but were frustrated by an army coup.

The Islamics are now crying "foul" and have resorted to terrorism and hijacking of their "democratic" rights. But everybody knows what they would do when they assume power. They would impose their strict Islamic rules on the whole population and replace democracy by the *sharia*.

When I lived in Turkey during the war I was pleased to note that the role of the army was not merely to defend the frontiers of the nation, but also the country's constitution. This is as it should be, for democracy is impotent unless it has a defender of the last resort.

Although this may not be a problem in mature democracies such as Britain, France and U.S.A., in all the fledgling regimes that replaced the colonial rule, the army must be groomed to defend the constitution not only from abusers of democracy, but also from the odd revolutionary colonel.

In the case of Germany, it was the army, under the aging Hindenburg that in fact helped and even urged Hitler on his way to absolute power. Germany's real grudge was not the treaty of Versailles but its defeat in 1918. Unfortunately, the democracies of Britain and France, because of internal divisions, did not stop Hitler in his tracks.

As a student at London University in the early 1930's I was tormented by the ease with which Hitler was allowed to rearm Germany. My teenage assessment was either that Britain wanted to give Germany a final thrashing which she did not get in 1918, or that Britain wanted a strong Germany to face the threat of Soviet communism, or that oil interests wanted to see the destruction of European Jewry at the hands of Hitler to prevent Middle East oil from falling into Jewish hands. Strange as it may seem, even 1935 this last possibility crossed my mind. In the event, the Holocaust was the only surprise to emerge from WWII. The British Foreign Office could not understand why the Jews took the Balfour Declaration seriously when it was only meant as an expedient to bring America into the First World War. In 1940 Churchill, Stalin and Hitler each wished that the other two would come to grips. Hitler had to lose the war because he was the only one whose wish did not come true.

What has clearly emerged is the desire of the German people to dominate Europe and also the world.

The Versailles canard obliged America to give Germany the soft treatment after its 1945 defeat. Marshall Plan aid and absence of military expenditure promoted German prosperity and has again made Germany the dominant power in a uniting Europe. Will Chancellor Kohl attain with ease what Hitler was unable to achieve?

The answer must be provided by Russia which has abandoned its Communist dreams and is anxious to join the European community. Britain and Russia at either extremity of Europe have much to fear from the countries between them, and should organise their strategy and foreign policy to outweigh Germany's influence. It is noteworthy that both Britain and Russia were not involved in the Holocaust.

On several occasions in the past Britain and Russia found themselves in the same political boat.

A London-Moscow axis can spin Europe like a puppet on a string●



Thank you for publishing my article in your September issue. Since then I have worked with many clients and given lectures and seminars on healing (both physically and emotionally) through the power of hypnosis.

For my fellow Iraqi friends who live outside New York or who are unable to see me, I am proud to announce the release of my 90 minute stress-management, self-confidence, healing relaxation tape (featuring the sound of my voice with a soothing music background, along with the sounds of the ocean, nature and sea gulls) which is currently being sold at ten stores in New York and many doctor's offices. These tapes are available by mail order for those who do not wish to leave home, by sending a cheque or money order for only \$18 (including postage).

Any feedback, comments or questions anyone might have would be very welcomed. I wish to thank everyone in the Iraqi community for their support and giving me the pleasure to work with them. It has been a real delight for me to get in touch with my roots and learn about my Iraqi heritage, despite my many years of education in England and the United States. Also being able to make a difference in the health and well being of the Iraqi-Jewish community has been an exceptionally rewarding experience for me. Thank you●

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Quotations

by Daniel Roberts

Forgiver. Forgive and let them remember.

Mother. There is no other.

Fool. You can't fool all the people all the time but you can fool some of the people some of the time and make a living.

Landlord. The duty of the tenant is to pay the rent. The duty of the landlord is to collect it.

Friend. He is someone who is always afraid of letting you down but never does.

Enemy. You learn from your friends, but you learn more from your enemies.

Hard person. You have to be hard to get the good stuff.

Millionaire. I'll keep the one and you keep the noughts.

Know-all. Better to teach someone who knows nothing than someone who knows everything.

Envious person. People go green with envy because they think the grass is greener on the other side.

Religious person. Religion brings man closer to God but separates man from man.

Sacrificer. You have to sacrifice something to get everything.

Giver of gift. Nothing is free except what comes from within you.

Strong person. If someone who is strong attacks someone who is weak he is weak.

Psychiatrist. He finds you guilty before you're proven innocent but he helps you to become innocent.

Briber. Peace will be achieved by bribing each other.

Smiler. A smile will take you a mile.

Madman. Laughing at the rain because he's getting a free shower.

Florist. When you plant seeds they eventually become beautiful flowers.

Someone who is always right. The trouble is when he's wrong.

New-born baby. Being born is like being shot and asked questions later.

Someone afraid of dying. If you're afraid of dying you're afraid of living.

Pauper. It's not how much you have but how much you want, the less you want the richer you are●

While reading your September 1994 issue of *The Scribe* I happened to see a picture of a group of girls from the Jewish Girl Guides of Calcutta. One of the names listed might have been my mother. I called friends and family in London to check this for me and was delighted to find out it really was my mother. I never saw my mother as she died giving birth to me and never saw a picture of her before.

My husband and I both enjoy reading the *Scribe* as it brings back fond memories of our life in Calcutta. I would like to thank everyone involved with your journal for the informative articles●

West Orange, N.J.

Trixie Jacob



Rabbi Heskul El Wakil

With all the due praise you have received, I wish to add that *The Scribe* is a treasure for our community. We are dispersed all over the world and the *Scribe* serves as our focal point.

I would like to ask you for the following favours.

Mr Hardoon of Shanghai was my mother's great uncle. I am fascinated to read all about his life. If there are articles or perhaps a book about him, I should like to order these.

My brother-in-law, Heskul Wakil, lives in Australia. Please put him on the mailing list for *The Scribe*. Also, please mail him the September copy (No.62) which is an extraordinary issue. His grandfather, Rabbi Heskul El Wakil, was known for his charitable work and distribution of food to needy children in the "midrash" in Baghdad.

Montreal Fouad Shahrabani

It is a long time since I resigned my duties as vice president of Congregation Bene Naharayim and the periodical *Publication of Babylonian Jewry* in New York to move to Florida.

Your *Scribe* No.62 was forwarded to me from New York and I savoured every bit of its pages which is, as usual, well done.

I am writing to let you know that my book is accepted for publishing in the near future. I request permission to include in my book the two photographs of Baghdad river scenes belonging to Mr F Khalastchy.

Florida J Horesh

Your last issue No.62 gave me quite a thrill. The photo on page 22 includes my late mother, Marcelle Shashoua, the tall girl in the back row, at about 15 or 16, back in 1925. It's not a photo I have seen before, as we did not have it in the family.

Mt. Waverley, Australia Edward Khamara

Needless to say how much we enjoy reading *The Scribe*. Of particular interest are the old pictures. I make sure that my children read it and ask questions. For what is left of nearly 2500 years of history of this diaspora? These few pages of the *Scribe* rekindles excitement in the heart of many of us who passed the difficult years of the 1940s and the early 1950s, before the exodus from Babylon, a country to which our ancestors arrived at with tears and we left it with agony.

Allow me to add to your collection two pictures of the Alliance School for Girls (appearing elsewhere in this issue). My mother Chafica Sourani and my aunt Saida Zilkha were the daughters of Moshi Jiji and nieces of Khedhoury Zilkha.

Nepean, Ontario Sami Sourani

I can finally clarify the name of my grandfather's father which I got from an old relative who knows the family well and is trying to make a family tree of all the Shashoua family. But it will take him some time.

The name of the father of my grandfather Shaul Shashoua is Yaacoob. So Yaacoob and the father of the other Shaul Shashoua (the father of Menashy) are brothers.

Tel Aviv Doris Fattal



Left to right: Gourgia Michael (wife of Heskul Michael and the daughter of Shaulk Shashoua, my mother); Meir Shaul Yaacoob Shashoua (son of Siraul Shashoua); Mesouda Shashoua (wife of Shaul Yaacoob Shashoua and daughter of Ezra Somekh).

The Scribe is a treasure at the home of every Iraqi Jew, disbursed all over the world. Each new edition is an extra precious jewel added to that treasure. It deals with all aspects of life: historical, political, educational, social, religious and other interesting subjects. It unites family members living in different countries. It refreshes the memory of those who forgot some important events that occurred several decades ago. It reminds them of their boyhood, school activities, friends and teachers.

Naim Dangoor is doing an enormous service for the benefit of all Iraqi Jews, which is much appreciated.

New York Elias Shohet

Reminiscences of my youth



I go back to 1925-26 when in my class in the Alliance School were many school mates from famous and influential Moslem families, amongst them: Ghazi-el-Dagastani, then general in the Iraq army; Ali El Sa'doun, the son of Prime Minister Abdul Muhsin el Sa'doun; Husein Ali el Khedheri; Husein el Zeebagh, etc. Our Moslem students didn't leave the class during Hebrew lessons given by Mr Bonfils.

Ghazi-el-Dagastani used to come to school every morning sitting in a coach driven by a 10 cm. moustached coachman called Asfour. Twenty years later, in 1944, I met General Ghazi in the Washash military camp, where I served as an officer in the Iraq army (reserve) after being graduated from the Military College as second lieutenant. It is difficult to describe the sensitive embrace that was done between two classmates after 20 years separation.

Ramat Gan Eliyahu Sion Zilkha

I was just given a copy of *Scribe* (June 1990), and even though it was an old copy, I enjoyed reading it. I am a Baghdadi Jew who left Baghdad in 1947 to study medicine in the USA and have been here since, though my immediate family are in England (London and Manchester) and, of course, all my relatives are in Israel. I am married and have two sons and two daughters and one grandson.

I would appreciate it if you can place me on your mailing list for *The Scribe* and if you have any extra old issues they would be appreciated also.



I enclose a photograph taken on 28 December 1937 of the Basket Ball team of Rahel Shahmoon School in Baghdad. The coach is Naji Lawi. I am in the second row, second from the right. I do not know the name of the other students. Thanks and keep up the good work you are doing.

San Francisco Rouben Akka, MD

by Alice Shashou

Spinach Quiche

Ingredients:

1lb (450g) frozen chopped spinach
6oz (175g) mushrooms, sliced
2 cups leeks, chopped
2 cups spring onions, chopped
6 eggs beaten
4oz (110g) Cheddar cheese, grated
4oz (110g) Edam cheese, grated
Parmesan cheese for the top of the Quiche
1 teaspoon dry onion
Salt and plenty of freshly ground black pepper
Nutmeg (optional)
3 tablespoons oil

Method:

Cook spinach with a little salt and no water added. Squeeze water out. Let it cool.

Cook mushrooms with a little salt and no water added. Let it cool.

Heat the oil in a non-stick frying pan. Add the onions and leeks and cook over low heat until transparent. Beat the eggs lightly.

Mix all the ingredients together and pour into a buttered round 10 inch pyrex dish. Sprinkle over the top.

Bake in preheated oven 350°F (180°C) for about 30 minutes or until firm and golden. Serve at once.

Note: You can prepare this Quiche in advance. Add the eggs at the last minute to all the other ingredients, then place in oven.

Potato Roulade

A vegetarian party dish

Potato cake:

1½lb. (675g) potatoes
3 eggs lightly beaten
1 cup milk, warm
3 tablespoons plain flour
Salt
Breadcrumbs, freshly grated (Parmesan) cheese

Filling:

8oz (450g) finely shredded frozen spinach
4oz (175g) mushrooms, chopped
1 red pepper
1 tablespoon dry onion
1 tablespoon oil
Salt, freshly ground black pepper

Prepare filling:

Heat oil in a frying pan and sauté onion until transparent. Add rest of ingredients and sauté until dry. Add 1 teaspoon butter and mix. Drain in sieve. Save.

Prepare potato cake:

Boil potatoes. Add salt when nearly cooked. Drain and mash. Pour in the milk. Let it cool. Fold the eggs, flour and salt mixing until smooth.

Oil a Swiss-Roll tray and cover with

Bakewell paper. Pour mixture into the prepared Swiss-Roll tray and bake in preheated oven 375°F (190°C) for about 10-12 minutes, or until done, but not over-baked. Invert the tray onto a towel that has been lightly sprinkled with breadcrumbs.

Peel Bakewell paper. Make a short cut at each side one inch up from the end of the potato sponge nearest to you.

Spread on the mixture of spinach filling over length of potato cake and roll it up supported by the kitchen towel. Sprinkle with freshly grated Parmesan cheese.

Put back in oven until lightly coloured and crisp.

Note: You can use any filling of your choice.

Murraba mal Portugal or Orange Marmalade

Ingredients:

4lbs (110g) or 6 large oranges with heavy skins
3lbs (1kg 350g) sugar
1½ pints water
2 tablespoons lemon juice

Method:

Rub the peel lightly with a grater to remove some of their bitterness. With a sharp kitchen knife, cut the orange peel into thin strips and place in a large container. Remove orange pulp and finely chop. Remove pips and tie in muslin.

Cover the peel with cold water and leave to soak overnight. Change the water once or twice.

Boil the peel in water for 5-6 minutes. Drain in a colander and boil again in water for another 5-6 minutes. Squeeze out all the liquid by pressing gently between your palms. Set aside.

In a large pan, add the water, sugar and muslin bag and boil until the sugar has dissolved completely. Discard bag of pips. Add the orange peel and pulp. Bring to the boil, then simmer gently until the peel is tender and has absorbed the syrup thoroughly and the liquid is much reduced.

Test setting point. Spoon a little of the marmalade onto a cold plate. Leave a minute, then gently pull your finger over the surface. If it wrinkles, the marmalade is ready.

For a smooth marmalade, liquidise peel and pulp before adding the sugar.

Seville oranges can be added for a different taste.

Tips

by Alice Shashou

If a cake cracks, it is because the oven was too hot.

The pan should be heated before the oil is put in. Food is less likely to stick and less oil is needed.

The healthiest oils to use for frying are olive and sunflower oils.

When making apple pie, mix one tablespoon of cornflower with the sugar – it thickens the juices perfectly.

To make your own fresh soured cream, stir one tablespoon lemon juice into a ½-pint carton of fresh double cream and stir well. Cream will

thicken as you stir.

Put salt in a pan before frying to avoid splashing oil all over the place.

Take eggs from the refrigerator an hour before you intend to make a cake. This will ensure that the whites whisk to their maximum volume.

Brush lemon juice on the avocados and cover with foil, then place in fridge to avoid discoloration.

Culinary Cultures of the Middle East

Edited by Sami Zubaida

and Richard Tapper

302 pp. Tauris £34.50.

Some people read cookery books in bed for pleasure, say Claudia Roden's *Middle Eastern Food* or Alice Shashou's *International Cuisine*, in preference to novels, and thus enjoy very economically the delights of the best cuisines, even without getting fat on them. It may indeed be true that a cook who writes well gives the same thrills that a novelist strives after, but with greater economy of words. In an age of fast food take-away, good cookery books may well be included in works of fiction.

The book under review is a valuable collection of seventeen papers, presented by academics who participated in a conference on Middle Eastern food at The School of Oriental & African Studies, London University. Some of the subjects covered are: The changing fortunes of rice, colours and smells in medieval Arab cooking.

Sami David Zubaida was born in Baghdad in 1937 and graduated in 1961 from various English universities in Social and Political Science. At present he occupies the position of a University Professor.

Lebanese Cuisine

by Anissa Helou

Published by Grub Street, London. £16.99.

The Lebanese cuisine consists mainly of Mezzes (Hors d'oeuvres) and grills.

Among the well known Mezzes are: Houmus, Baba Ghannouj, Falafel, Foul Medames, Kibbe, Tabboula, stuffed vine leaves, grilled chicken liver.

In Zahla in the good old days special cafes by the riverside used to provide 50 different kinds of Mezze with the special arak of the region.

Home made yoghurt:

Boil the milk in a stainless steel pan, pour into a bowl or individual glasses and leave to cool to a tepid temperature.

Whisk a little yoghurt (3 tablespoons of yoghurt to 1 ltr. of milk) until it is creamy and stir it into the warm milk. Cover and wrap it up with a towel and leave it for 3 to 4 hours undisturbed. Then uncover and keep in the refrigerator ready to be used.

To make curd cheese (labneh), place yoghurt in cheese cloth, tie it and hang over a bowl to drain.

White coffee:

A substitute for tea or coffee is to have hot water flavoured with a little orange blossom water with or without added sugar to taste. It is a Lebanese drink which is becoming popular in wider circles.