

**52 Pages**

# The SCRIBE

JOURNAL OF BABYLONIAN JEWRY  
PUBLISHED BY THE EXILARCH'S FOUNDATION

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## A Happy New Year 5757 to all our Readers and Friends

### Land for Peace?

On hearing the slogan "Land for Peace", currently bandied about in the context of a Middle East settlement, an outsider might well be forgiven to think that, having won all the wars launched by Arabs against Israel with the object of destroying her, Israel now wants land from the Arabs to give her a defensive stance, and thus enabling her to conclude a fair and lasting peace with her neighbours.

But, No! It is the Arabs who want land from tiny Israel. The Arabs are not short of land. In fact, they have too much land – 3 million square miles, against Israel's 10,000 square miles. It is therefore obvious that the purpose of taking land from Israel is to weaken her and thus making a future attack on her more likely to succeed.

Prime Minister Netanyahu is right in putting security first. What is more, Israel cannot give the Arabs an inch of land – peace or no peace. The principle that "Land cannot be acquired by war" cannot apply to defensive wars. If the Arabs can regain land every time – by means of some UN resolution, then we say down with the United Nations!

Land for peace, indeed; but it is the Arabs who have to disgorge part of their vast territory.

#### The solution must be global

At Oslo, Israel was hoodwinked into accepting that the Middle East conflict is between Israel and the Palestinians, and that its resolution can be achieved within the tiny area west of the River Jordan. In this way, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq would all emerge completely unscathed. Nothing can be further from the truth.

The Middle East conflict is between the Arabs and the Jews in general – witness the virtual expulsion of a million Jews from Arab countries, and the concerted and repeated attacks by these Arab countries against Israel. Hence the solution to the Middle East conflict must be global. Israel will ignore this fact at its peril.

Land for peace, indeed, but it is the Arabs who have to disgorge part of their vast territory, as well as a massive compensation to Israel ●

I think I know now why we have to judge great men by their mistakes and not by their achievements. It is said that all the good that comes our way is from God, who is most merciful and benevolent, and all the bad things are from our own deeds. That is why we may not take credit for our achievements, but have to accept responsibility for our mistakes ●

### Lord Saatchi



Heartiest congratulations to Baghdad born Maurice Saatchi for his elevation to a Life Peerage, a much deserved honour, which gives great pride to our Community. Congratulations also to Josephine Hart, Lady Saatchi, as well as to his parents Nathan and Daisy, who have recently had the Iraqi Synagogue at the J.P.S. named after them.

The Saatchis are credited, through their advertising agency with having put the Conservatives in office in 1979, and with having kept them there for a record 18 years.

Although they are now behind Labour in the polls, Maurice hopes to perform another feat next year by returning a Conservative Government for the fifth time.

Thereafter, Britain may be led by a new Disraeli – Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind or Home Secretary, Michael Howard ●

**Let us make a name for ourselves before we are scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth (Genesis, 11:4) ●**

### The Jews and Iraq

Iraqi Jews have an unfinished business with the government of Iraq. The wrongs done to our ancient and well-established community were not less than those done to Kuwait – terror and murder, torture and imprisonment, confiscation of property and expulsion. Iraqi Jews must be party to any final settlement with Iraq.

We were informed that the green light was given to WOJAC (World Organisation of Jews from Arab Countries) to take legal steps to attach Iraqi assets now frozen in USA, UK and Europe. Once attached, these assets cannot be released until the case of the Jews from Arab lands is heard and decided in court.

Giving an opinion on Jewish claims against Iraq, now estimated at 8 billion dollars, Professor Yoram Dinstein of Tel Aviv, a specialist in international law, hopes and trusts that the Gulf war will be terminated in a formal treaty, which will impose on Iraq the obligation to pay reparations. It is essential to ensure that the Claims Tribunal which will be established under the treaty will have jurisdiction to consider all claims against Iraq by nationals of the Allied countries, and not merely those originating from the invasion of Kuwait. It is clear that such procedure would exclude Iraqi Jews in Israel and those who are still stateless.

The Exilarch's Foundation, in fact, believes that the present status of ex-Iraqi Jews should not be the test. We must go back to the original sin – namely, the denationalization of Iraqi Jews, which was an illegal act under international law. It may be argued by Iraq that Jews who left in 1950/51 themselves renounced their nationality. But that was a condition for allowing them to leave the country, to escape persecution.

Therefore, the peace treaty should rescind all denationalization of Iraqis and the subsequent sequestration of their property. That will cover non-Jews too and will not exclude Iraqi Jews in Israel. The Claims Tribunal should be empowered to negotiate with a delegation of Iraqi Jews adequate compensation on the lines of German reparations after the second World War.

Now that Iraq is being allowed to export oil to pay for food imports, the time may soon come that a final settlement of the Gulf War is concluded. In order not to miss this coming opportunity we intend to consult lawyers specialised in International Law to advise us of our chances of success.

If you are interested please send a Registration Fee of £6 or US\$10 for our action group ●

N.D.

# ONLY ONE GOD?

by Naim Dangoor

**“HEAR O ISRAEL: THE LORD IS OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE”  
(HEAR O ISRAEL: THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE GOD)**

In the early years of school, we were taught that parallel lines did not meet. Then, one day in 1925, the news came, and we had to change our definition: Parallel lines did meet – at infinity. Big deal! What is the difference? It apparently has something to do with Einstein. The Cosmos consists of eternity and infinity – complete blankness, and no rules. Our finite and time-ridden Universe had to be the work of a Creator out of **nothing**.

Before the idea of God could dawn on Mankind, they had to accept that there was an act of Creation. Many ancient peoples believed the world was always there and there was no Creator, others believed in Spontaneous Creation. Our Universe may be just a soapbubble in a celestial bath.

As the world emerged from the last Ice Age, some 10,000 years ago, men came out of their cave dwellings, and roamed about looking for food. Our ancestor Adam crossed from East Africa into South West Arabia, (the Red Sea was a lake then). And as he walked in the Garden of Eden (at Aden, where else?) he came across the wild wheat. This discovery started agriculture and settled life (civilization). This makes Adam the father of our civilization. Adam's connection with agriculture is borne out by his name which derives from *adama*, which means soil.

I believe that the first chapter of Genesis can be attributed to our ancestor and hero, Adam, who was the first to break out of the mould of pagan beliefs. In the beginning, *Elohim* (the Gods) created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of *Elohim* hovered over the face of the waters. (Gen 1:1-3). The transition from a plurality of Gods to One God happened at the time of Enos, Adam's grandson (Gen.4:26). The move to monotheism followed the following logic: If there were many Gods in existence, they would soon, like idol gods, fight amongst themselves: one of them would eventually emerge Paramount and become the One God. This is ludicrous. True Gods do not fight among themselves; God being perfect does not associate with inferior Gods: God is neither a tyrant nor a usurper: there can be no monopoly in Heaven. Heaven is not a closed shop. In a Cosmos of infinity and eternity, there is room for an infinite number of perfect Gods, existing together in peace and harmony.

Pray, what is the difference between believing in an infinite number of perfect Gods living together in peace and harmony, and believing in one Single God? The difference is this: If there are an infinite number of perfect Gods, there is room for new additions and we who are created in the image of God can aspire to become eventually Gods in our own right, if we can discover the secret password. Otherwise, life is not worth living.

Jacob's dream of a ladder, whose head reached up to Heaven with angels ascending and descending, can be regarded as a precedent for man to aspire to divinity.

Parallel lines meet at infinity.

How far is Infinity?

How long is Eternity?

How can anyone aspire to live forever?

Can Death and Oblivion be the Ultimate Reality?

## The Stone of Destiny

Legend has it that the stone used by Jacob as a pillow, when he rested his head in Bethel, eventually reached Ireland by way of Egypt and Spain.

In Ireland it was supposedly used as a coronation throne by the High Kings of Tara, and was taken to Scotland when the Irish invaded the land of the Picts in the 9th century.

Kenneth MacAlpin, who united the Pict and Scot tribes, is believed to have been the first Scottish king to be crowned on the stone at Scone, hence it is sometimes called the Stone of Scone. And from then on, it served at the coronation of all Scottish kings up to John Balliol, the English puppet monarch, in 1292.

Four years later, in 1296, Edward I of England marched north to subdue the rebellious William Wallace and took the stone home with him, placing it under a specially made chair in Westminster Abbey as a symbol of Scotland's subjugation. All English and British monarchs since then



## Jacob's Dream A Two-way Traffic to Heaven

An engraving made in 1612 by the Spanish artist Juan de Jáuregui y Aguilar (1583-1641). It is one of the illustrations of L. De Alcazar, *Vestigio arcani sensus in Apocalypsi*, Antwerp (1614).

A copy of the book is in the library of the Warburg Institute●

“Jacob set out from Beersheba and went on his way towards Harran. He came to a certain place and stopped there for the night, because the sun had set; and, taking one of the stones there, he made it a pillow for his head and lay down to sleep. He dreamt that he saw a ladder, which rested on the ground with its top reaching to Heaven, and angels of God were going up and down upon it. The Lord was standing beside him and said, ‘I am the Lord, the God of your Father Abraham and the God of Isaac.’” (Gen 28:10-13)

have been crowned sitting on St Edward's Coronation Chair, with the stone underneath.

In a surprise move, Prime Minister John Major announced last July in the House of Commons that it was now appropriate to return this 336lb yellow sand-stone back to Scotland on the 700th anniversary of its removal. It would, however, remain the property of the British Crown and be taken back to London when future sovereigns were crowned.



# On seeing a king

by Naim Dangoor

The British Technion Society held last May a gala dinner at the Guildhall of the City of London at which the Guest of Honour was King Hussein of Jordan. The occasion of this £1,000-a-plate function was the Sir Winston Churchill Award. An Israeli bank manager seated next to me remarked, "I can't believe it; we have to invite an Arab King as guest of honour in order to raise money for an Israeli charity."

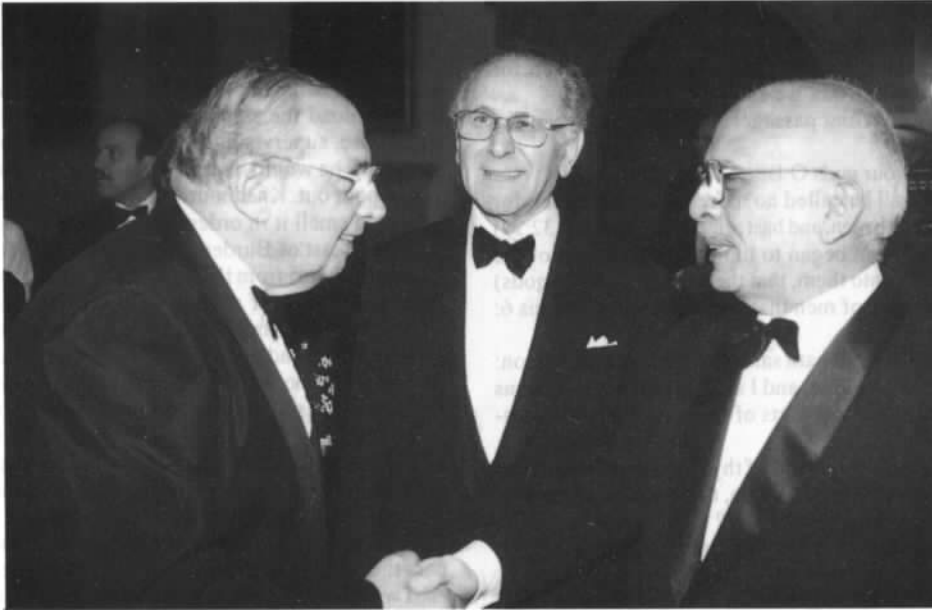
The Award was presented to King Hussein by Lady Soames, Sir Winston's daughter; and the gathering was addressed by the Chief Rabbi, Winston Churchill MP (Sir Winston's grandson) and by the president of Haifa Technion. The speakers reminded King Hussein of his meeting in 1918 in Transjordan between his great uncle the Emir Feisal and Dr Chaim Weizmann, uncle of the incumbent President of Israel. Israel's Ambassador Moshe Raviv proposed the Toast to the King, and the Jordanian Ambassador proposed the Toast to President Weizmann. King Hussein made a long impromptu friendly reply in which he pointed out that the Peace Treaty between Israel and Jordan is only the beginning of the mutual co-operation between the two neighbouring countries.

The officiating Rabbi informed the King of a traditional Jewish prayer which is recited on seeing, or being in the presence of a King. He said it in his best Sephardi accent as he thought it might fall softer on Hussein's oriental ears than the Ashkenazi pronunciation. The prayer was:

*Blessed Art Thou, O Lord Our God, King of the Universe, Who Hast Given Of Thy Glory To Flesh And Blood.*

This blessing must go back to the time when kings were absolute monarchs, the shadow of God on earth, ruling over their subjects by Divine Right.

This blessing must have been formulated in Babylon long after the Jewish people ceased to have a king of their own nearly 2600 years ago and regarded Royalty as something beyond their reach. The last Jewish King of the line of David was King Yehoyachin who was taken captive to Babylon in 597BCE. Herod, who reigned during the Roman period was Edomite and was always reminded of this disability. Tears came to his eyes once when he was called up to the Sepher Torah and made to read the portion - "... when you appoint a king over you, choose one of your brethren and not a foreigner." (Deut.17:15-16). However, the Hasmoneans had converted the Edomites to



Naim Dangoor greeting King Hussein at the Winston Churchill Award Dinner. The King appears pleased to be reminded that he had a valid claim on Iraq. In the centre is Mr Sidney Corob CBE, Chairman, The British Technion Society●

Judaism, and from then on they constituted a part of the Jewish people, Herod being one of their descendants.

Thus, if a Hashemite prince would take a Jewish wife, their son could arguably qualify as king of Israel.

It is to be noted that some Jewish leaders had mixed backgrounds. Moses was raised as an Egyptian and may even have been an Egyptian Prince. Joshua was of the Tribe of Ephraim and may have had Egyptian blood through Ephraim's Egyptian mother whom Joseph married. King David's great grandmother was Ruth the Moabite.

Following Yahoyachin's exile he was recognised as the first of a line of Babylonian Exilarchs that continued till the year 1270CE when the last Exilarch died. The office was revived in London in 1970 - exactly 700 years afterwards.

At the Reception in the Guildhall Library prior to the dinner, I had the opportunity to speak to King Hussein when I reminded him that, following the assassination of King Feisal II, the Throne of Iraq reverted to him as joint head of the United Hashemite Kingdom of Iraq and Jordan.

Ferial spoke to the King in Arabic but he replied in English as Court etiquette dictates in an English-speaking crowd. He told her, "I hope to see you in Amman." It is no doubt a Royal invitation.

Our friend George Elias bewildered Hussein's press secretary, Sally Khalaf, by telling her, "I lived 2550 years in Iraq and thought it was long enough to live in one place, so I moved on to England. I intend in the fullness of time to return to the Land of Israel." He impressed on her to mention in her report his long stay in Iraq, which would make Methuselah, who lived 969 years, a mere baby compared to our friend George.

Twenty years ago, a group of Arab sympathisers took out full page advertisements in the London Times, which stated:

"WANTED - A Balfour, to establish a national home for the Arabs in Palestine."

This advertisement appeared on consecutive days in Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Chinese, English, French, Spanish etc. I, immediately responded by inserting a reply in the Times stating in effect:

"If you want a Balfour to establish a national home, you have to wait some 2000 years, just as the Jews have waited."

Looking back on political developments in the Middle East of the

recent past, it is evident that the Palestinian Arabs, did not really have to wait at all. In the Kingdom of Jordan, hived off in 1921 from the Palestine mandate, the Arabs of Palestine amply achieved their purpose.

Since 1917, the Arab population in the area of the Palestine mandate, on both sides of the River Jordan, increased more than did the Jewish population in that area, in spite of the massive Jewish immigration from all corners of the world. So the Balfour Declaration of 1917 has benefited the Arabs more than the Jews. And while Israel is still struggling for a peaceful existence, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, without water, oil or industries, appears to be prospering and enjoying increasing influence in the region, an oasis of stability in a turbulent area.

The most important fact of the current Middle East peace process is the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan. It has been said, concerning Arab Israeli relations: No war without Egypt; No peace without Syria; but peace with Egypt has produced very few benefits for Israel, and Syria wishes to dictate peace terms as if she had won all the Arab Israeli wars. So Israel can chuck both to the wind and concentrate on peace and mutual development with Jordan.

In his speech at the Guildhall, King Hussein said significantly, "The peace treaty with Israel is just the beginning, meaning "You ain't seen nothing yet!" What can the Hashemite Monarch have in mind? He must have realised that Israel and Jordan complement one another. That far from being a threat and a danger to the region and to the Arabs, Israel is a perfect ingredient and a "God send" for the region. Between them, the two could dominate the region and its immense wealth and achieve stability and prosperity for all concerned.

This was the view taken by Feisal the First and would appropriately be taken up by his Grandnephew●

# The Editing of the Babylonian Talmud

*Abridged from*  
**Babylonian Jewry – Talmudical Era**  
by Rabbi Gershon Harpanas

In 372 CE Rav Ashi returned the Yeshiva of Sura to Matha Mehasia near Sura on the lower Euphrates, and he was the head of it for nearly sixty years.

Under Rav Ashi, this Yeshiva developed and became the place for the final crystallisation of the Talmud Bavli.

Many and great were the wise men of the sixth generation of the Babylonian Amora'im but the authority of Rav Ashi was not questioned amongst them.

The long period of Rav Ashi's leadership was marked by numerous positive characteristics, that created convenient conditions for carrying out the big task of the compilation of the studies of five generations of the Amora'im who preceded him, and the editing of the Gemara.

Isdagard II, King of Persia who ruled Babylon at this period was gracious, and honoured the leaders of the Jews and their wise men.

Huna bar Natau, the Exilarch in those days, who was also great in the knowledge of Torah, renounced his great and honourable position in favour of the authority of Rav Ashi.

Neharde'a, the city where the Exilarch lived, which was like a capital for the Jews of Babylon, also renounced its special position and all the important events were transferred to Matha Mehasia, the town of Rav Ashi and his great Yeshiva. From then onwards, all the conferences of the students and wise men were held there. Also the conferences of the Heads of the Jewish communities which took place every year on Shabbat Parashat Leh'lehai in Neharde'a, and headed by the Exilarch, were transformed to Matha Mehasia.

More than two hundred pupils learnt permanently in the Yeshiva of Rav Ashi.

The full honour and glory of the Babylonian Jews appeared at Yarhei Kala, in the months of Adar and Elul, when thousands of Torah students went en masse to Matha Mehasia to listen to the teachings of the Heads of Kala, and to discuss the matters of the tractate which was being learnt at that particular time by all the students throughout the land of Babylonia. Rav Ashi managed to conclude in his Yeshiva all sixty tractates of the Mishna twice.

Rav Ashi's friend in the work of compiling the Talmud was Ravina, one of the greatest wise men in Matha Mehasia.

Ravina was older than Rav Ashi, but, nevertheless, this did not prevent him from sitting in front of Rav Ashi, as a pupil before his teacher. Ravina died in the year 422 C.E. Rav Ashi lived for five more years and he died in the year 427 C.E. distinguished in knowledge, good deeds and honour.

The work of Rav Ashi, in the arranging of the Talmud Bavli, puts him in line with the most distinguished men of the Jewish people in all generations.

The Yeshiva of Sura, which was renewed through Rav Ashi in Matha Mehasia, continued to exist for about five hundred years after his passing. Thus Matha Mehasia, the city of Rav Ashi, remained under the influence of his work for a very long time.

The two Yeshivot of Sura and Pumbedita

continued their vital activity even after the death of Rav Ashi. The work of editing the Talmud, until its final termination, continued during the whole period of the generation of pupils of Rav Ashi, and its final conclusion was brought about through these sages.

In the year 474 CE, Rabana Avina, the son of Rav Huna, was appointed as head of the Sura Yeshiva. He was the son of the sister of the first Ravina, the colleague of Rav Ashi. He was the well-known Ravina Lubo who was privileged to complete the work of concluding the Talmud during the twenty-six years in which he reigned as the Rosh Yeshiva.

Ravina II was one of the most distinguished sages of his time, during the latter days of the Babylonian Amora'im. Already at the time of Rav Ashi's death, we encounter young Ravina acting as Judge.

The Talmud Bavli was finally summarised in an orderly form by Ravina II and his colleagues.

And this is what the sages said: "Rav Ashi and Ravina are the end of the teaching", meaning the end of the period of Amora'im who had the authority to decide in the sense that their opinions attained a permanent place in the Talmud.

The death of Ravina II on 2 December 499 marks the completion of the Babylonian Talmud.

In 30 BCE a learned woodcutter by the name of Hillel, left Babylon to go to Israel where he became head of the Sanhedrin. The seven generations from Hillel to Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi, who completed the Mishna was the period of the Tana'im and lasted two hundred and fifty years.

Thereafter Torah study moved to Babylon under the leadership of Rav and Shmuel. The seven generations from Rav and Shmuel to Ravina II are known as the Amora'im, the sages of the Babylonian Talmud. This period lasted for about three hundred years. The subsequent period which followed is referred to as that of the Savora'im and lasted for about ninety years.

The period that followed is called the Gaonic period which lasted for four hundred years up to the death of Rav Hai Gaon in 1038. The time of the Geonim is generally identified as corresponding to the Arabic period in history.

In the seventh century the religion of Islam entered the world arena, and its believers burst like a whirlwind from the Arabian desert. The Moslem Arabs stormed through the lands of the near east, smote the large Byzantine host in Transjordan (636) and the whole of Syria surrendered to them. Two years later, Jerusalem was handed over to Caliph Omar (638). Three years later, the Arabs succeeded in destroying the Kingdom of the Sassanids in the east, and conquered the Euphrates-Tigris valley and the Iranian highland eastward (all with Jewish financial and military help). By 642 Alexandria, the capital of Egypt, had fallen to the Islamic conquerors. Thus the Arabs completed their control over all the countries of the near east.

The Arab leader, the second Caliph Omar, who led the forces which destroyed the Sassanids, had extended his graciousness to the Jewish community in Babylon, since it constituted a large well-organised national minority. He decided to renew the office of Exilarch which had been suppressed eighty years previously with the execution of the then Rosh Hagola, Mar Zutra bar Huna, by the Persian King.

At the time of the Arabic conquest, Rav

Yitzhak Gaon, head of Peros Shavor Yeshiva in Babylon, made a magnificent reception for the General Ali ibn Abi-Taleb, the fourth Caliph, and the Arab victor received the Jewish sage with friendly countenance. Ninety thousand Jews of Peros Shavor participated in this reception.

After many years of oppression by the last Persian rulers, the whole Jewish community in Babylon felt comforted and honoured when Caliph Omar raised the Bustenai ben Haninai, a descendant of the previous Exilarchs and gave his recognition to the throne of the Exilarchy as of yore, and even presented to him the daughter of Kosro, the late Persian King, whom he married. Omar married her sister.

The twin academies of Sura and Pumbedita, which are often referred to as the Oxford and Cambridge of Babylonian Jewry were headed by fifty pairs of Geonim during the four hundred and fifty years of the Gaonic period.

Babylonian Jewry practised universal education at these academies. Each year was divided into two terms, and each term ended with the month of "Kala" in Adar and Elul. Most of the students of the yeshiva started to work for their livelihood at a certain age and ceased their full-time studies at the Yeshiva. Nevertheless, these Talmidei Hahamim continued to study even if only for a limited time each day and twice a year assembled for the intensive learning in Yarhai Kala. After spending five months at home, these students returned to spend one month in the Yeshiva in order to summarise together with the permanent Yeshiva students, the Tractate in which they had been engaged during the previous half year. In the months of Kala, all the students revised their learning, whilst listening to the lectures of the Gaon and the seven senior sages of the Yeshiva, called the "Rashi Kala" or "Alufin", who sat with three other haverim in the first row in front of the Gaon. The new Gaon was usually elected from amongst these ten senior sages.

It is said that up to thirty thousand students attended these end of term assemblies.

*Scribe:* In 872 both academies of Sura and Pumbedita moved to Baghdad. It is believed that the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge which were established in the 12th century were modelled on the Baghdad Jewish Academies of Sura and Pumbedita®

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*Scribe:* Our journal is sent free of charge to all our interested readers●

# The Bible as History

by Naim Dangoor

The Bible is a valuable historical record of great antiquity if only we can fathom its meaning and read it in its proper context.

The Book of Genesis is the story of our Civilization when an ancestor of ours invented – yes, invented, agriculture. Progress does not happen gradually, but in leaps forward. It takes a Moses, a Columbus, an Einstein to blaze the trail.

As the world emerged from the last Ice Age some 10,000 years ago, and men came out of their cave dwellings, they continued to subsist as hunter-gatherers. Then, one day, as this ancestor of ours was walking through the “Garden” at Aden, he came across the wild wheat which he found nourishing. Eventually, that discovery led to the Agricultural Revolution which allowed people to give up the nomadic life of hunters and gatherers and settle down to plant and grow the new cereals.

Our ancestor was given the name Adam to signify his connection with the soil (ADAMA in Hebrew).

Later tradition honoured him as Father of all mankind. This was a title of honour and must not be taken literally. We cannot assume that all mankind was descended from Adam, any more than to think that all the Turks are descended from **Ataturk** (Father of the Turks).

Adam was a great thinker and a prophet. Many of the tenets of Judaism can be traced to him. The opening verses of Genesis show that Adam believed in a Creator who created out of nothing – Time, Space and Matter. This was contrary to contemporary beliefs, and remained peculiar to the Tribe of Adam down to Noah and Abraham. The story of the serpent shows that man is held responsible for his actions. The Forbidden Fruit of the Garden was the wheat which Adam discovered its aphrodisiac qualities gave Adam and Eve their sexual awareness.

The story of Cain and Abel refers to the struggle between the new farmer and the old hunter, resulting in the farmer (Cain) slaying the hunter (Abel). The new order of farming prevailed over the old order of hunting.

The generation of Adam was only allowed to eat fruits and cereals, because animals were still in the wild and thus not accessible to a settled community. When Noah domesticated animals, his generation was allowed to eat meat. “By the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread,” refers to the regular hard toil by man to tend his crops. A day of rest every week was meant to be a reminder of the time when man did not have to toil for his food. The Sabbath Day was unique, and remained peculiar to the Jewish People for many centuries. See my article, “A Taste of Gan Eden” (Scribe No. 6). The creation of the universe in seven days shows the antiquity of the seven-day week.

The freeze-up had killed all diseases, except in equatorial Africa which remained, then as now, the source of new diseases. The discovery of a new source of food resulted in a population explosion and men fanned out up the Nile Valley and into Arabia in search of suitably irrigated terrains, Africa and Arabia were still joined at that time. Migrations followed the route to Canaan and the Lebanon foothills, and around the Arabian Peninsula to the Kurdish foothills where natural labour-free flow irrigation was available. The eldest known agricultural village was in Northern Iraq.

One may conclude that the civilization of Mesopotamia preceded that of Egypt by a number of years as, apart from its annual flood, the River Nile did not provide flow irrigation and had to wait till mechanical methods of irrigation were evolved.

## Genesis 11 : 1-3

1. And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech.
2. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there.
3. And they said one to another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had bricks for stone, and bitumen had they for mortar.

1. **The whole earth** refers to the Arabia Peninsula.

... **of one language** refers to the common semitic language which was spoken there in olden days, from which later branched Hebrew, Arabic and Aramaic.

2. **journeyed from the east** is rendered in other translations as:

... **journeyed east**

... **journeyed in the east**

... **journeyed to the east**

The secret is to know what is meant locally by “east”. In Iraq as in Babylon before, “east” can mean “south”. Thus, South Gate in Baghdad is called locally “East Gate” (*Bab-el-Shargi*), and the stormy desert wind that blows from the south is called “east wind” (*hawa shargi*) because it blows roughly **towards the east**. Likewise, the cool summer

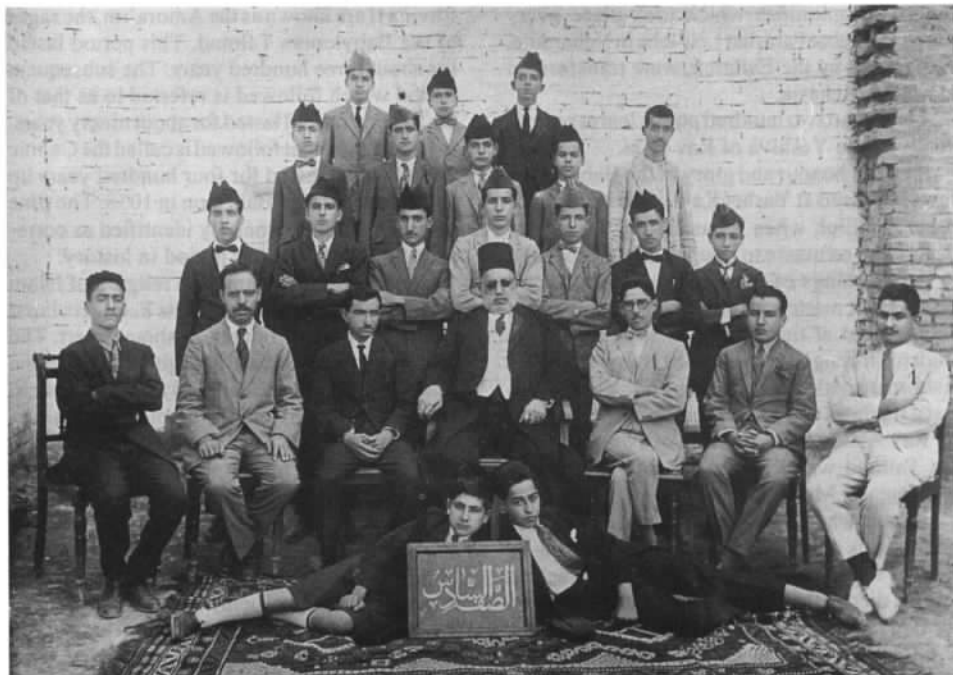
breeze that blows towards the west is called “west wind” (*hawa gharbi*).

So verse two means: As they journeyed from the south! This indicates one of the two migratory route out of Aden – one towards Canaan, and the other around the Peninsula towards Mesopotamia. (Abraham came to Ur later in one of these Amorite migrations.)

... **and they found a plain in the land of Shinar and dwelt in it.** This must have taken place after the Great Flood had swept Mesopotamia from the Turkish mountains. Most areas were still swampy, and it was not easy to find suitable land to dwell in.

3. **let us make bricks ...** that indicates when bricks were first invented. The shape and dimensions of this building material laid the foundation for the manufacture of the standard bricks for many years to come. When Frank Lloyd Wright visited Baghdad in the fifties, he told me that the invention of the building brick in Iraq was one of the major events of our civilization. The brick may appear simple and easy to invent, but when the New World was discovered in 1492, it was found that the American Indians had not yet invented the simple wheel!!

The Arabs claim that Adam spoke Arabic. But the fact that his name derives from the Hebrew word *Adama* which does not exist in Arabic, shows that the Semitic language which Adam spoke was more akin to Hebrew than Arabic. Adam is said to be buried near Mecca, which I do not dispute. I believe he was on his way from Aden to Canaan. The name of Mecca derives from the Hebrew word *Makka* meaning “a blow” (again no Arabic equivalent) which records the meteorite that had hit that vicinity and is revered by Moslems as the *Kaaba*, which, they claim, was established by Abraham as a



1926, the sixth form at Rahel Shahmoon School

Right to left:

Sitting: Abraham Twena; Anwar Shaoul; Moshe Sopher; Shamoon Mouallem Nessim; Thabet Hamdi; Reuben Zeloof; Dr Salman Darwish.

Standing:

2nd row: Sadqa Naji Chitayat; Eliahoo Bennoo; Dr Meir Mouallem; Dr Meir Kojaman; Gourgi Dayan; Ephraim Levi

3rd row: Khdhouri Hubaiba; (martyr) Yacoub Abdel Aziz, advocate; David Mattana; Dr Isaac Sourani

4th row: Rouben Eliahoo Battat; Naji Khabbaza; Anwar Zilkha, advocate.

sitting on the floor: Nathaniel ...; Dr Nadhem Myer ●

holy shrine. However, the Arabs, obviously have no direct tradition of Abraham of their own. Any connection they have with our Patriarchs, was borrowed from our history.

Just as Islam tries to highlight the "pure monotheism" of Abraham, we should endeavour to reach back to the basic beliefs of Adam as a basis for ecumenicism.

When Mohammed was told by the people of Mecca, "your revelations about Abraham, Moses and Joseph sound very much like what is already written in the Bible", he replied, "Do you expect Allah to confuse his Prophets by giving them different versions of the same event?"

The Koran blends three Bible stories together:

"Pharaoh told Haman: Build me a tower that will reach to heaven, that I may look on the God of Moses. I am convinced that he is lying. Thus, Pharaoh's plot ended in his ruin"●



1945, 6th form at the Alliance School for girls, Baghdad (sent by Claire Shahrabani-Zeloo) Left to right (seated)

1st row: Daisy Salman; Bedoor Jacob; Rebecca Cohen; Angella Bashi; Evelyn Ezra; Claire Yousfan.

2nd row: Doris Yousfan; Saïda Ferfoori; – ; Marcelle Salman (teacher); Rachel Lewaya (teacher); Dorine Ishayik; Bertha Shashoua.

3rd row: (Standing) Claire Moshi; Eve Menashi; Valentine Bakhsh; Claire Zeloo; Lili Shohet; Raymond Khazzam; Denise Saleh; Saïda Shashoua●

## Dead End Lanes

by Yehuda (Gergi) Barshan

reviewed by Professor Shmuel Moreh

This new novel in Hebrew by Mr Yehuda Barshan, dean of Jewish writers of Iraqi descent in Israel, is an antithesis of the well known novel entitled "Victoria", by Sammy Michael, which wrought an uproar in the community of the Iraqi Jews in Israel and brought both denials of the existence of such protagonists and expressions of insult at the story as a violation of their moral and social standards and a stigma on their past. This response, based on a failure to distinguish between reality and the literary fiction of an outstanding masterpiece, does not apply to the new, realistic work of Yehuda Barshan in his impressive portrayal of Jewish society, customs, traditions, language, poetry and wisdom of life. The novel covers the time span between the eve of the First World War and the days preceding the mass immigration to Israel in 1951.

*Dead-End Lanes* is a historical novel that documents the whole variety of social and cultural customs, especially the status of men in the family and their attitude to women, the matchmaking, the religious rituals, prayers on the tombs of the Prophets, life in the city and the countryside, relations between Jews and Moslems, etc., in an impressive realistic manner where every Iraqi descendant can see his or her own self impersonated. The reader senses the author's feeling of a mission, a legacy to be passed on through the generations.

In contrast to "Victoria", this novel does not place emphasis on dark sexual drives. On the contrary, the real driving force is in the striving to find livelihood in the numerous dark, tortuous, dead-end alleys of old Baghdad. Whereas "Victoria" begins with a description of the heroine on the bridge, with randy men fingering her body in the darkness (ibid., p.6) and lesbians in heat clinging to her as if to protect her from the men; whereas "Victoria" depicts an orgy on the bridge (ibid., p.21), *Dead-End Lanes* begins with a riot of a different kind: at night, one by one or in groups, barefooted robbers and pickpockets emerge from their lairs to the dark, narrow streets and alleys to rob the helpless Jews who have to surrender their money, watches and clothes. In

the daytime, the street is alive with artisans plying their trade: knife sharpeners, carpenters, kitchenware menders, etc.

... Decency was the main trait of Jews. Decency and ethics were their very soul and heart ... and any departure from them is a blasphemy and violation of the traditions of Jewish society. Jews attached particular importance to human decency, honour, honesty and attachment to values. According to the protagonist, shame was one of the most compelling feelings in the Jewish soul, "and if it died and disappeared after so many years, this is the result of a cultural cataclysm, a collision with the different customs that prevail in Israel" (ibid., p.40-41).

And contrary to the novel "Victoria", which ends where Victoria leaves the deceased Rafael. The elevator does not work: "she could have burst out crying, but she was unable to get up. On the ground floor there was another long corridor in front of her" (*Victoria*, p.304). By contrast, there is the optimistic approach of Barshan in the scene ( 80) at the end of the book: "Three Jewish families walked in succession on the other side of the Baghdad airport in a fast pace with their children; two of the three families were young and had numerous offspring, and behind them was a well dressed, smiling, radiant old couple. Their faces conveyed happiness and serenity" (ibid., p.159-160). This optimism of Barshan pictures the immigration to Israel as a wedding between the Diaspora of Babylon and the State of Israel after 25 centuries of yearning for this sublime hour.

*Scribe*: There is no such thing as bad publicity●

## "House of Israel – Go Home"

by Naim Dangoor

On his recent visit to Germany, Israel's President Ezer Weizman urged European Jewry to emigrate to Israel. Shortly afterwards, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl warned that European unification is a matter of war and peace.

Interpreted, it means that unless Europe submits to Germany, Germany would go to a third world war to achieve domination over all Europe. What the Kaiser and Hitler failed to achieve, Kohl would try to bring about by renewed threats and by fair means or foul.

I foresaw all the above situation in 1972 when I wrote (in *Scribe* No 4) "United Europe – a Threat to Jewish Survival". Twenty-four years on, history has caught up with us.

A Europe dominated by a militant Germany and by an increasingly powerful Catholic Church, both with strong traditions of anti-Semitism, is not the best place for Jewish survival.

The murder of the last Pope in 1978 by the Hierarchy and the Mafia of the Vatican demonstrate to what extent the Church of Rome can go to achieve its aim (see the book *In God's Name* by David Yallop). The recent meeting between Pope John Paul II and the Catholic Chancellor Helmut Kohl can be compared to the meeting in 1939 between Pope Pius and Hitler.

Now that Yeltsin has been re-elected, the British Government should attempt to forge close relations with Russia to counteract Germany's unwarranted power in Europe●

Doing charity is performing God's work●

Darkness cannot destroy what it seeks to hide●





of this advice reached London, contempt was heaped on him and he was instructed to reverse his advice. Thereupon, Turkish tugs pulled the ship into the Black Sea and left her drifting outside Turkish territorial waters. Soon afterwards an unexplained explosion sank her. Of the 769 Jewish refugees aboard only two were saved. They were admitted to Palestine as an act of clemency!

The *Struma* was only the most dramatic case of many immigrants' boatloads not allowed to reach Palestine.

David Ben Gurion was convinced that the British no longer backed a national home for the Jews. Others went further and formed terrorist organisations such as "The Stern Gang" which included Itzhak Shamir and a larger group named Irgun Zvai Leumi. This received arms and training from the right-wing anti-semitic government of Poland, which wanted to see as many Jews as possible removed from Poland to Palestine and therefore wanted the Arabs intimidated or driven out. In 1942 a Polish Zionist named Menachem Begin reached Palestine and soon became head of the Irgun. **He was convinced that Britain and the United States were Hitler's accomplices in murdering Europe's Jews. For Begin the issue was simple; the British and Americans could have saved the Jews of Central Europe but did not because they wanted the Jews not to be saved.** The thirty thousand Jews from his home town, Brest-Litovsk, were by 1944 reduced to only ten. Unlike Stern, Begin did not attack individual Britons, nor did he allow the Irgun to attack the British military as long as the war against the Nazis continued. He directed Irgun's bombs at immigration offices, police stations and Palestine Government buildings – these were engaged in the conspiracy, as he saw it, to bring about the slaughter of the Jews of Europe.

Some 27,000 Palestinian Jews served in the British Army, and in September 1944 the Jewish Brigade Group was formed from among them. It took the field with its own insignia bearing the star of David – an important step, Zionist leaders thought, towards the establishment of a Jewish state.

The Labour victory in the election of July 1945 gave the Zionists new hope. Labour policy was to allow Jewish immigration in such numbers as to become a majority. Moreover, the Mufti had recruited Arabs to fight for Hitler.

Like most Labour Party members, Foreign Minister Bevin had been a Zionist, but once in office he changed his mind. He went to the Prime Minister and said, "Clem, about Palestine. According to my lads in the office we've got it wrong. We've got to think again." It was not in Britain's interest to send the Jews of Europe to Palestine.

On the day Labour came to power, Attlee received a letter from President Truman urging him to lift restriction on Jewish immigration. A month later Truman wrote again, pressing Britain to admit 100,000 Jews from Europe.

But seeing the British Government was unsympathetic, David Ben Gurion increasingly emerged as the principal Zionist leader. The Haganah, the Stern and Irgun combined their efforts to force the British to concede or quit. In the words of Golda Meir, "We kept hearing the argument, 'the Arabs create so much trouble, therefore you have to give in', so in the end we decided, very well, we will create trouble!"

The first big instalment took the form of several hundred co-ordinated explosions throughout Palestine on 31 October 1945, caus-

ing more than 150 breaks in the railway network and blowing up locomotives, a train and three police launches on the Mediterranean (used to track ships bringing in illegal immigrants). Compared to the Arab rebellion, this was a highly professional military operation.

Bevin gave vent to his frustration with Truman's insistence on admitting 100,000 refugees by accusing Truman that he demanded Jewish immigration to Palestine only because he did not want too many Jews in New York. Truman saw this as a rude and tactless charge.

The alliance of the Haganah, Irgun and the Stern was by now proving its effectiveness. The British security force was built up to 100,000 (80,000 troops and 20,000 police) to deal with a Jewish population in Palestine of barely 600,000. When, at the end of June 1946, the British seized the Zionist headquarters in Jerusalem and arrested 2,700, including most of the leaders of the Jewish Agency, they still failed to remove the terrorist leadership.

On 22 July, the Irgun managed to destroy the southern wing of the King David Hotel, the headquarters of the British Government and forces in Palestine, killing ninety-one British, Arabs and Jews. Begin claimed that a warning was given which was apparently ignored. The Zionist call was now for partition and a Jewish state. When the British flogged suspected terrorists, Jews flogged British soldiers. When the British hanged three Irgun men, the Irgun arrested and hanged two British sergeants.

Soldiers and policemen in Palestine went uncontrollably on the rampage, assaulting Jews and smashing their property; five Jews were killed. Anti-semitic riots broke out in Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow and London. With Palestine reducing the British army, police and public to such a condition, the pressure grew for Britain simply to throw in the towel.

Between the end of the war and May 1948, the Zionist movement sent some 70,000 Jewish illegal immigrants, of whom more than 50,000 were intercepted by the Royal Navy and interned in Cyprus. The largest immigrants' ship came in July 1947. She was a ferry-boat that had sailed for years in the sheltered waters of Chesapeake Bay in the United States. The Zionists bought her and named her *Exodus*. The 4,500 would-be immigrants who travelled in her were used by both the Zionists and the British in one of the most ruthless propaganda battles in history. On arrival at Haifa the refugees were transferred by the British onto three transport ships. The British tried to use the *Exodus* in 1947 like the *Struma* in 1941 as a warning to others not to attempt the journey. By a stupid and inhumane decision, the 4,500 refugees were taken back to Germany, and forcibly disembarked at Hamburg. If the British were determined to translate what was already a major propaganda victory for Zionism into a triumph beyond their wildest hopes, why should the Zionists stand in their way?

Soon after, in September 1947, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) recommended that the British mandate should be ended as soon as possible and Palestine be partitioned into an Arab and a Jewish state. It proposed dividing the tiny area into seven segments, three for the Arabs, three for the Jews and an international Jerusalem. The 1939 White Paper offered the Arabs practically all they asked. But the Mufti insisted on all. On 29 November 1947, the United Nations approved the partition plan by 33 for, 13 against and ten abstentions, mainly through the initia-

tive and the effort of President Truman. The Cabinet decided that Britain should now give up the mandate and depart. In the early weeks of 1948 the Arabs took the initiative by blockading or ambushing roads to isolated Jewish positions and set off bombs in the towns. The Zionists responded in kind.

King Abdullah wanted a substantial slice of Palestine, partly to make his kingdom more nearly viable, partly to keep out the Mufti, whom Abdullah feared and disliked. He was privately tolerant towards the creation of a Jewish state and negotiated to that effect with a Zionist representative, Golda Meir, who visited him secretly, in Arab dress.

Upon the British departure on 15 May 1948, David Ben Gurion declared the independent State of Israel. That date marked the start of a war which is still going on. In the 1948-49 war, 1956 Suez war, 1967 Six-Day war, 1973 Yom Kippur war, Israel managed against heavy odds to prevail and defeat the armies of the neighbouring Arab countries.

In their contact with the Jews, the Palestinian Arabs became the most sophisticated work-force in the Middle East. All the Palestinian refugees suffered political discrimination as the Arab states, with the exception of Jordan, refused to grant them full rights of citizenship. Those who stayed in Israel enjoyed the economic benefits of a western type of state, and enjoyed more democratic rights than most citizens of Arab states. Israel had indicated that they would not let the refugees return to their homes until the Arab states would agree to sign a peace treaty. The Palestinians felt bitter towards the Arab states, which had let them down in 1947-48 and refused adamantly to allow them to settle in places where work and a normal life would be possible.

In November 1977 President Anwar Sadat of Egypt flew to Jerusalem, met Prime Minister Menachem Begin and began a process which led to an Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. Thus the first of the neighbouring Arab states formally recognised Israel's existence.

The story of Palestine from 1917 onwards is the story of two nationalisms provoked by the British.

*Scribe:*

1. The shameful pre-war anti-Zionist policy of the British Foreign Office and the British Military since the Balfour Declaration of 1917, and their wicked post-war policy to prevent the Holocaust survivors from finding refuge in Palestine – policy which neither Churchill nor the Labour government both declared Zionist, could alter, clearly demonstrates that the Holocaust was fully in line with the desires of the British inner policy makers.
2. Up to date, in the mandated territory of Palestine, which included Transjordan, the number of Arabs increased much more than the Jews, in spite of the immigration.
3. Many Palestinians left Israel at the behest of Arab governments telling them to get out of the way of war and promising to let them return when they defeated Israel.
4. Israel's promise to let the refugees return if the Arabs make peace was made in 1948. It cannot remain available forever. When a million Jews from Arab countries were evicted and found their way to Israel, it became an exchange of populations, similar to many such post-war arrangements.
5. Now that a Likud government is in power, the formula of land for peace cannot be carried any further ☹



# INQUEST ON THE HOLOCAUST

Fifty years ago, on 30th September 1946, the Nuremberg trials came to an abrupt end without handing out adequate punishments to all the perpetrators of the Holocaust. The criminals of Western Europe got away with it because of the communist bogey.

Whereas Roosevelt and Churchill had endorsed Henry Morgenthau's II plan to turn Germany into an agricultural country, on Roosevelt's death, Churchill managed to reverse the policy, and Germany was rehabilitated and helped to rise again and become now dominating and domineering Europe. Germany thus remains an even greater threat to the future peace of Europe and the world.

In the 50 years since Nuremberg much new evidence has come to light concerning the crimes committed not just by the Nazis but by the German people themselves and their Allied sympathisers in the thirties and forties. Before the murderous twentieth century comes to an end, those responsible for the Holocaust have to be properly dealt with.

In the name of Humanity, and in the name of Justice, we sentence to death, suspended for the time being, all who took part in the Holocaust and their political and spiritual successors. The government and people of Germany, France, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Austria, Hungary, Norway, the Baltic Countries, Poland and other occupied countries; of the Church and of the International Red Cross, the Mufti and his followers, the greedy bankers who purloined the deposits of Nazi victims and sent them back to their deaths.

All those who deny the Holocaust, who approve of Hitler's deeds, who propagate anti-Semitism and racism, inherit all the crimes of the Holocaust and deserve to receive its punishment.

All the above can escape their fate and earn forgiveness only by repentance, complete and genuine repentance●

## Some events of tragedy in the Holocaust

## Christian roots of the Holocaust

*from an article sent by*  
**Naim S. Mahlab, Montreal**

1. **June 29, 1941**  
Several thousand Jews are shot in the courtyard of the Iasi police headquarters. This becomes known as "Black Sunday".
2. **July 1-August 31, 1941**  
Einsatzgruppe D. Wehrmacht forces, and Escalon Special, a Romanian unit, kill between 150,000 and 160,000 Jews in Bessarabia.
3. **August 27-28, 1941**  
At Kamenets-Podolski 23,600 Jews are massacred by German forces under Fredrich Jeckeln; at least 14,000 of them had recently been deported from Hungary.
4. **September 29-30, 1941**  
Twelve thousand Jews of Minsk are killed at Tuchinka.
5. **November 20-December 7, 1941**  
Thirty thousand Jews are killed in the Rumbula Forest outside Riga, during the so-called Jeckeln Aktion.
6. **December 21-31, 1941**  
Fifty-four thousand Jews are killed in the Bogdanovka camp.
7. **July 28-31, 1942**  
Thirty thousand German Jews who had been sent to Minsk are murdered at Maly Trostinets.
8. **December 16, 1942**  
A ghetto is established in Kharkov. Three weeks later approximately 15,000 Jews are killed in the Drobitski Ravine.
9. **April 19-May 16, 1943**  
The Warsaw Ghetto uprising takes place and the Warsaw ghetto is destroyed.
10. **September 29, 1943**  
The last 2,000 Amsterdam Jews are sent to Westerbork.
11. **January 25-April 25, 1945**  
Fifty thousand Jews are evacuated on foot from the Stutthof camp and its satellites; 26,000 perish●

happened in Britain had the Germans succeeded in invading the British Isles. The few Jews who lived in the Channel Islands were delivered to the Germans by the local English population. The US and Canada were not much better. They refused entry to the few Jews who managed to make it to these shores, and forced them back to Europe to certain death. Unfortunately, the doctrine of Christ's killers is still being taught and has now been exported to the non-Christian world.

The deicide charge itself is patently absurd. The Gospels tell us that the birth and death of Jesus were preordained by God. In other words, he had to die to save the world. We are also told that Jesus was resurrected. To me this has to mean that he is not dead but alive. If he is alive, then he was not killed.

Christianity as it exists today, does not have much to do with Jesus who was born and died a practising Jew – he was not a Christian and did not claim that he was discarding Jewish theology. What happened after his death is the same thing that happened to all religions, which invariably adopted prior doctrines and mythology.

The possible sequence of events that followed the death of Jesus was that his followers preached the Gospels in the various Jewish communities of the Roman world.

Even the Cross may have been based on the Egyptian symbol of life, which is a cross with a loop on top. Pauline Christianity still insists that there can be no salvation except through Christ, thus alienating the majority of the human species. It has never been able to reconcile itself to the "chosen" status given to Jews by the Hebrew Bible, and attempted to nullify it by "abrogating" the covenant of the Jews with God, and appointing itself as "the new Israel". Not satisfied with this, it proceeded to demonize the Jew and vilify Judaism.

The total perversity of the Christian Church's attitude vis-à-vis its progenitor, the Synagogue, would be comical had the results not been so tragic. Such stupid accusation as the "blood libel" and the "desecration of the Host", which were force-fed to the masses by the Church, dehumanised the Jew and led to the total madness of the Holocaust●

# Reflections on the Israeli Elections

The new Israeli electoral system is not that crazy after all. It has given the elector the opportunity to choose the Prime Minister and at the same time to vote for a different party of his choice. As the result has shown, the smallest parties have come into their own.

The new Knesset is a better reflection of the Israeli political spectrum. Moreover, the Prime Minister is now in a stronger position to put together a meaningful coalition.

The narrow margin of 29,000 votes between Netanyahu and Peres is misleading. 200,000 more Arabs voted for Peres than did for Netanyahu. In an election where the main issue is the future direction of the Jewish State, it was imperative that the result should correspond to the wishes of the Jewish electorate.

It would have been a disaster if Peres was swept to power by the strength of his Arab backers.

In the event, the margin in the purely Jewish vote was 10 per cent in favour of Netanyahu, which is more decisive.

The religious party did well, especially Sash, which obtained 10 seats, mainly through the appearance on television of Iraqi-born hundred-year-old Rabbi Itzhak Kedoorie, foremost Kabbalist, promising a blessing to all those who vote Likud.

In fact, the Arabs shot themselves in the foot by casting 80,000 blank ballot papers which were disregarded. The Arabs gave Bibi his victory and then complained about the result.

The Likud victory was a miracle for Israel. For, while the peace process was meant to be a matter of give and take, Peres was giving and Arafat was taking. Now, a stop can be made to the partitioning of Jerusalem, to the surrender of the Golan Heights, to the establishment of a Palestinian state and to the large-scale return of Palestinian refugees not only to the West Bank but even to Israel itself.

Yigal Amir's assassination of Yitzhak Rabin has changed the course of Middle East history. For, while Rabin would have won the election hands down, Peres added one more to his previous four election failures. His useless 12-day whipping of the dead horse (Lebanon) which was intended to attract the Jewish voter, only resulted in alienating his Arab supporters.

The land-for-peace formula, and the Cairo summit demand that Israel vacate "occupied Arab land", is based on the UN principle forbidding the acquisition of land by war. This was adopted just so that Israel is denied the fruits of its brilliant military successes.

But, surely, the prohibition of acquiring land by war must only refer to aggressive wars. All the wars that Israel has fought were against Arab aggression. If the Arabs can be certain to regain all land lost as a result of their attacks on Israel, then they will not be deterred from attacking again and again.

Moreover, the vague label of "occupied Arab land" is loose enough to cover one day the whole of Israel.

No, the Arabs gambled and lost. They wanted all or nothing, and since they could not get all, they must end up with nothing.

No to returning the Golan. No to a Palestinian state. No to a divided Jerusalem. No to the return of refugees.

To those who chided us for siding with Likud, we say:

How do you like your egg?!

Rabin and Peres's mistake, was to accept the gift of the Nobel Peace Prize—not at the end of the peace process, but right at its very beginning.

The word "Shohad" is often translated as "bribe", but even in its lighter meaning as an innocent gift taken by an honest person, it can act as a bribe. The Torah warns men in office

against accepting "Shohad" for, it explains, such a gift "can blind the eyes of the wise ...".

Shimon Peres was blinded by the Nobel Peace Prize, and, while children's heads were rolling in Dizengoff Square, he was intent on giving away Israel's heritage as if there was no tomorrow ●



The above picture was taken at the home of Sami and Angela Shmoon on the occasion of the recent visit to London of Rabbi Itzhak Kedoorie.

Left to right (sitting): Rabbi Abraham David; the late Moshe Shmoon; Hakham Itzhak Kedoorie; the late A. Ben-David; Daisy Shmoon. Standing: Victor Tchenguiz; Sami Shmoon; Rabbi Abraham Gubbay; Naim Dangoor; Percy Gourgey. In the forefront appears Sami Balass ●

I am glad that you are continuing to publish *The Scribe* assisted by your capable sister Eileen. You had kept contact with the emigrant Iraqi Jews and brought them together to seek their roots and now you will bring together the descendant generation to seek their roots and heritage. Keep up the good work you started.

When times come to list achievements of emigrant Iraqi Jews, in modesty I like to add that: I was the first to graduate from the Harvard graduate school of Design with the degree of Master in Architecture (1944).

I was the first to become a member (full) of the American Institute of Architects.

I was the first to get a license to practice architecture in New York and New Jersey.

I was the first to become a member of the Harvard Club, New York City. The first with other groups to start the city of Dollard des Ormeaux, Quebec.

Montreal

Yusuf Meer

*Scribe*: It is heartening to know that we have friends who care for our work.

*The Scribe* was a necessary sequel to our dispersion from Iraq. I hope that future generations will find it a useful reference work.

Your list of "Firsts" is very impressive and it will give pride to many of our readers. Well done! ●

I found the leather-bound volume of *The Scribe* a beautiful book and a treasure to keep as well to read and hand down to the family ●

Toronto

Ms Ruby Ezekiel

## The Cordless Phone

I was standing behind a man the other day who was gesticulating with one hand, and talking apparently to himself. I first thought he was mad, then I said, maybe he was rehearsing his part in a play. But when he turned round I saw he was holding a mobile phone. How funny, I thought, we look when talking to someone we can't see!

Yet, when we go to a House of Prayer, stand facing in one direction, we bow and kneel and bend the knee, turn this way and that way, mutter our lips and kiss our thumbs, we look the same as the man with the cordless telephone – talking to One we cannot see!

الله ما أنتشعر - بإسقل أنغيد

God is not seen – but is worshipped by faith ●

Further to Ron Wiggins letter in *The Scribe* No 65, if the Arabs were urging the boycott of everything that originated with the Jewish people, then in theory that should include Christianity and Islam ●

London

Elie Dangoor

We love to receive *The Scribe* as we get lots of pleasure reading the articles and letters. Continue your precious work ●

London

Valentine and Saleh Shohet



# LIFE IN BAGHDAD

by Eileen Khalastchy

## Schools:

At school we used to play *awal abra* (leap frog), *habel* (skipping), *tookee* (hopscotch). Even at home we had fun playing these games. Our schools were not mixed boys and girls until 1949, when Frank Iny school opened.

Girls were protected. Boyfriends were unheard of, as it brought a bad reputation to the girl. Young people never lived on their own. No matter how old they were, they remained with their parents until they got married. There were no intermarriages, only in rare cases which were frowned upon.

Hebrew was taught in schools until the mid-thirties, when the Iraqi government forbade teaching Hebrew. A teacher named Gourji Chalawiya used to come home to teach us Hebrew. Although his voice was loud and he was very strict, he was a very good teacher. He taught many boys and girls.

Before electricity they used a *sg hij* (oil lamp) and boys used to study with that faint light. Later they had *afanuss* (lantern). Electricity came into effect in 1927.

Yoghurt was sold in *elba* (wooden containers) that were carried by Arab women on their heads in tall piles. (see illustration).

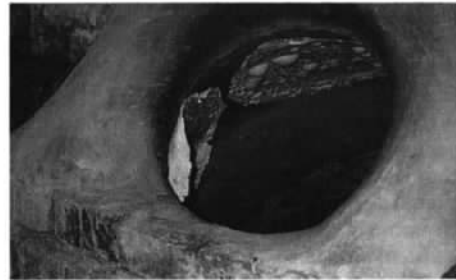
## Birth:

Women used to give birth at home by a mid-wife, *qabli*. They used to call the hardship and the pain the woman goes through *Sa'et el mensiyi* (the forgotten hour). If she has a boy they tell her *tsewaih em sab'a* (you make them seven), if it is a girl, they tell her *ala ghasa el benin* (may you get boys after her). Babies were protected from strong

smells as they affected them badly because of the dry climate, *yeshtam ghihi*. They used to put a block of soap between the baby's clothes so it got used to smells. Baby's nails were cut for the first time when it was one month old. Money was put in the palm of its hand when its nails were cut as a wish for his or her future prosperity.

Babies used to be wrapped tightly including hands and legs – *qemmata* – for the first few months so as to straighten and strengthen their limbs. Saffron was used for baby on the *setti* night around its ankles, wrists and forehead for good luck.

Children never had birthday parties. Actually, no one used to remember any birthday. They used to relate births to a war or epidemic or a big event etc. . . I think it started with few families to have birthdays for their children in modern times.



A traditional clay oven for baking bread as used in the Middle East and known as *astannur* and in Indian known as *tandoor*•

Respect and good manners, especially towards older people, were very important. Sons out of respect, never smoked cigarettes in front of their parents. It was bad manners to sit crossed-legged with the shoes facing the person next to you.

## Houses:

When buying or even renting a house, it was important to find out if it gave good luck or bad luck – *atba mlee ha*.

When selling a house, the neighbours had priority – *yeshfa'e* – even after completion, he could say *hassa smaet we hassa shfaet* (I have just heard and I want to exercise my priority right). Also, after the completion of the sale, the wife was entitled for *khel'a* – like a present to give vacant possession by negotiation. When moving to a new house, a sheep was slaughtered and the meat given to the poor.

In large houses they used to have *haram we diwan khana* (private quarters and men's quarters). Some people used to have space to keep a cow and have fresh milk every day. Also they used to have a big cage on the roof in the shade to keep chickens and one cock, so they could have fresh eggs every day.

The courtyard, *nim*, and the flat roof were paved with *tabuq* (paving bricks). Every day it used to be sprayed with water to cool the air.



## Suq al safafir:

All copper utensils were made by hand. The alleyway with shops on both sides was called *suq al safafir* (see illustration), which was very noisy.

## Tannur:

To bake bread in the *tannur*, we used to sit on low stools, *takhta*, around a round low table, *chambar*, to open the bread with a *shobak* (rolling pin); making a hard, round, small cushion, *malezqa*, on which we put the bread and stuck it inside the *tannur*. (see illustration). When the bread was ready, it peeled off and it was taken off with *amashag* (pincers).

In March and April, when orange trees were in blossom, their flowers, *oueddah*, gave a wonderful smell. We used to string them and make them into a necklace.

## Khlassa:

Butter was bought in lumps and to purify it, it was melted in a pan on fire. Then some rice was added to it to absorb the yoghurt from it and so leaving pure butter. That rice was called *khlassa* which tasted very nice. (Some add *silan* to it when eating).

## Ice:

Before fridges, blocks of ice used to be delivered to the houses every morning by teenage boys on bicycles. One of the delivery boys was Ezzat Ibrahim al-Douri who used to work at a Jewish ice factory. He is now the Vice-President of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad.

## Clubs:

We had four Jewish clubs in Baghdad: Rashid, Zawra, Rafidain and Laura Kadoorie. We had all sorts of entertainment there. In 1948, after the state of Israel was declared, all the clubs were closed and were used to accommodate Palestinian refugees. We also had the Alliance Club which opened in the mid-forties for graduated boys and girls, where tea-dances were arranged. A few marriages happened through those gatherings.



"Um al Laban"

In the early 1950's, the Mansur Club was opened for mixed communities. Many Jewish families became members there and we had good relations with other faiths. A few Jewish families were also members of the Railway Club. We spent wonderful times, swimming, bingo, cinema nights, oriental nights, New Year parties etc., until the Six Day War when our membership was withdrawn and our telephones cut.

A long time ago, women used to be invited to Henni parties without the men. To go back home when it was dark, the male cook used to escort them (houses were not far away). With all their jewellery and wearing *isagh*, they were very safe.

The wife never used to call her husband by name but, out of respect, she called him *eben ammy* (the son of my father in-law) or *abuflan* (the father of the eldest son). Women used wooden combs to comb their hair. Some were made of sandalwood which gave a lovely smell. It seems now the fashion is coming back, as it is healthier to use wooden combs.

Nails were not cut at night.

Until the late forties, someone used to carry a *beqtcha* (parcel) full of all kinds of haberdashery and laces and passed by known houses to ask if they needed anything. Things were made easy as you didn't have to go down town to buy what you needed.

Someone used to pass by the houses offering to mend broken crockery – *khayat farfour*. Also, someone to sharpen knives and scissors called *charrakh sekakin*. There was a special place where you could take your copper pots and pans to be tinned – *mebayeth gdoura*.

In the early thirties, when a new film was shown in the cinema, to advertise it a car used to pass through Rashid Street announcing the film and they also distributed circulars to passers-by with photos and names of the actors.

### Winter:

In winter it is very cold in Baghdad, but dry which makes it pleasant. Most of the time it is sunny, but when it rains, it rains heavily, sometimes for 24 hours nonstop; but then we have dry sunny days. We used to make a wish when a rainbow came out after



Goods were brought down river by *Kalak* (raft) buoyed by inflated skins which were all disposed of at destination. The driver would return north by road transport and start again. The "*partch*" carried by the woman is a means of transporting water.

a heavy rain. When we used to hear a crow crowing, it meant rain was coming.

### Honesty:

The Kurdish porters were very honest; they carried heavy loads up to 100kg on their back. During the Ottoman rule in Baghdad, they used to take *badal* (tax in lieu of military service) from Jews for not serving in the army. One man who wasn't well off and couldn't afford the *badal*, collected the money from few benefactors. He put the money in his pocket, happy to go and pay the *badal*. It seems his pocket had a hole and the liras were falling out of his pocket. A few yards behind him was a porter carrying merchandise. A few times he had to put down what he was carrying to collect the money. The porter knew the person and took the money back to him. The man couldn't believe the honesty of that porter; he tried to give him a reward but the porter refused and said "if someone had to put down what he

carried so many times and gave back what he found, is he for a reward?!"

### Travelling:

The custom was, when someone was travelling, a few days before departure we used to visit and wish them bon-voyage. Again, we visited when they came back to welcome them. When someone of the family travels, we spilt water in front of the door, so their journey would be safe.

When you are invited to a meal and have finished eating, you tell the host and hostess *sefra da'emi* (may your hospitality continue) and the answer is *awafi* (with good health).

When you praise someone for doing a good thing you say *ashet eekek* (may your hand live) and the answer is *we eekdek* – and yours●



Suq al Safafir

## Tips

- ◆ To keep parsley fresh for a long time, wash the bunch, trim the ends and put in a jar with water (like flowers in a vase), and leave in the fridge.
- ◆ One onion in a bucket of water deters the smell of paint in a room.
- ◆ When baking cookies or cakes, if the oven is too hot, put a container full of water underneath the tray, and the heat will be distributed evenly and the cookies won't burn.
- ◆ Orange peel cut finely and scattered where cats use parts of a garden; it will deter them from going there. Cats hate the smell of orange zest.
- ◆ Never eat fish when you are upset or after a quarrel as you will get red spots●

## Tips for minor ailments

*I found the following cures useful.*

- ◆ For rash: A bunch of coriander crushed in a food processor, then squeezed. A little of the juice to be drunk every morning before breakfast (a little sugar can be added to the juice to break the bitterness); the pulp of the coriander to be spread on the rash for half an hour or more then washed.
- ◆ A few grains of wheat put in a spoon on fire. The oil that comes out of the wheat serves for healing an itchy rash.
- ◆ To treat a finger with a boil, put the finger into a grilled whole onion while it is hot. This will hasten in bringing out the pus.
- ◆ A cotton wool soaked in hot tea and applied on an infected eye will help cure it●

**From a Reader**



**"Shehrezade"**  
The nonachord-cheese-vendor  
from  
**HALLUCI NOTATION**  
by Willy Y. Elias

## SALIM LAWI

By Mona Jeha KANAAN



**Salim Lawi**

Class, good taste and warmth were my first impressions as I stepped into the Lawi's home in Geneva. After two hours with Salim Lawi and his wife Eva, my impressions proved true.

A graduate of the Preparatory School of the AUB (known today as International College) Mr Lawi joined AUB and completed his two-year Brief Business Course in 1938. As he sat reminiscing about his AUB days, he specifically remembered Prof. Crawford's words: "The more civilized you become the less happy you will be." He chuckled as he told me about Mr Harik who used to listen attentively to a student as if he was in total agreement with what he was saying, then tell him, "you have diarrhoea of words and constipation of thought." He recalls with affection and gratitude Ms Assly, the Secretary of the Department at the time, who helped him to earn his AUB fees when he was in need by advising him to learn typing and then arranging for him to work for her brother who was the Director of SOCONY.

After he graduated he joined Zilkha Bank, later the Société Bancaire, as a simple employee, but with hard work and perseverance, he became a manager in 1948 and later on, a partner.

In 1944 he married Eva and they have three children, Solly, Mireille and Albert, all of whom are married and live in Geneva.

In 1969 Mr Lawi left with his family for Geneva where he became Director of the Société Bancaire and they have been living there ever since. However, as the main shareholder and

Director of the Bank's Lebanon Branch, he comes to Beirut every three or four months.

Mr Lawi has achieved a great deal in his field and his Bank in Geneva, where his two sons also work now, combines the traditional banking system followed in Lebanon and the Swiss investment banking system which he is sure will soon form a part of the Lebanese banking activities. This new dimension in banking will link the financial securities in the Lebanese market with the

rest of the world and will create new opportunities for future capital and portfolio asset management so as to cater to a new breed of sophisticated "Middle East" investors out of Lebanon.

Mr Lawi is very optimistic about the future of the Lebanese economy because he has full confidence in the abilities, capacities and efficiency of the Lebanese. He believes that the free banking system in Lebanon which stood firm in all the war years and remained untouched will surely have a positive effect on the country's economic future.

What struck me about Mr Lawi was his humility and modesty, his intellect and vigorous spirit. He points out that even genius depends on the data available and on the information that comes from what others accomplish and teach.

Salim Lawi feels indebted to AUB and ends our meeting by saying, "I owe AUB my loyalty." I believe the Honorary President of the AUB Alumni Association - Geneva Branch is a prototype of the graduates the founders of AUB had in mind●

I was interested in the article "Customs and Life in Baghdad" by Eileen Khalastchy that records our Iraqi heritage. I especially appreciated the translation of Arabic expressions into English, as well as the various pictures. I laughed at the large size of the front door key. On my last visit to Baghdad, I passed by the river island (Jazra) which was fenced and deserted, it brought back to my mind the good old days as mentioned in the article. Regarding popular remedies, I remember a shop at the entrance of Suq Haraj belonging to one Sasson who used to dispense various cures. He cured my face rash which even Dr Chopanian who was a skin specialist couldn't cure. These popular remedies have the advantage of years of experience. *The Scribe* has managed to unite the dispersed members of the Jewish Community and should be of benefit to all Iraqis.

I enclose a picture of a kebab vendor and a *kalak* (they appear on the previous pages)●

London

Jihad



**Model of a Babylonian Geonite Yeshiva, 7-13th Century C.E.**



# Zionist Centenary

by Percy Gourgey

"We will have a whole year of celebration in 1997 to mark the 100th anniversary of the First World Zionist Congress which ultimately led to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948," declared Mr Avram Burg, the Chairman of the World Zionist Organisation at the Jewish Agency Executive in Jerusalem in June, 1996.

He was addressing the meeting of the Zionist General Council, the highest organ of the Zionist movement in between Zionist congresses which are like the parliament of the Jewish people in respect of Israel. We were also addressed by Mr Shimon Peres, the outgoing Prime Minister. A view by a speaker that the main reason for the victory of Likud was the issue of security against terrorist and other attacks. At this meeting, I was appointed *amit kavod*, or Honorary Fellow of the World Zionist Movement, in recognition of my many years of service to the movement.

At the subsequent meeting of the Jewish Agency Assembly for Israel we were addressed by the new Prime Minister, Mr B. Netanyahu, in which he stated that assimilation and inter-marriage were the greatest threats facing Jewish people in the Diaspora and intensive education was the best answer●



My wife Daisy and I are addicted to your journal.

Information about me was published in the *Wright State University* and *The American Journal of Roentgenology* (among other journals).

I was born in Baghdad and went to Royal College of Medicine there, but graduated in Jerusalem 1953. I discovered 12 new signs of Radiology, such as the superior Triangle, the Flat Waist, and the Juxtaphrenic Peak, some of them are used in the Radiology Board examination. The identification of these signs is like detective work. Their use is in interpreting x-ray films. When I retired in 1995 I was Clinical Professor of Radiology in the University of Cincinnati, College of Medicine.

My father's picture appeared in page 3 of *The Scribe* No 65●

Cincinnati, Ohio Kenneth R. Kattan, MD

Thank you for sending me the back-issues of *The Scribe* which I requested. I found your journal most fascinating – a publication which I never dreamed existed and hope that it will continue.

I wonder if there is anyone there who can help me: I desperately want to find out more about my ancestors. I know only the following:

My great grandfather David Michael came from Baghdad and is said by family tradition to have been blind. His brother, Joseph Rahamin Michael, left Baghdad for Bombay and later Shanghai (year unknown), where he became chief opium dealer for David Sassoon's. He later set up his own company trading in precious metals, and became an anti-opium campaigner. In 1906 he was introduced to President Roosevelt. He and his forebears may therefore have been quite prominent in the Babylonian community, and records may well have mentioned them. I even have a published biography of his life (but not his early life!). An early "Who's Who" in the Far East state that Joseph Rahamin Michael, JP, was a General Broker and Commission Agent, born October 12th 1859, has lived 32 years in China. "Official timekeeper to the Jockey Club; one of the first who travelled by the new railway from Hankow to Peking before the Yellow River Bridge was completed. Takes a keen interest in local and commercial enterprises; advocate of stable currency for Hong Kong irrespective of China. Recreation; Gardening, swimming and racing. Clubs – Grosvenor, Piccadilly, Shanghai and Hong Kong, Jockey and Cricket. Address – 4, Century Crescent, Hong Kong."

In 1895, he called his two nephews out from Baghdad, Sidney Michael (my grandfather) and Sasson Hay Michael, to join and assist him in Shanghai.

The later lives of the Michael family are therefore well documented, but I am unable to find out anything about their origins in Baghdad. I have heard it said that the name Michael has been anglicised, but have no idea what it can have been originally! Certainly, my grandfather's mother-tongue was Arabic.

I have asked other Baghdadian families like the Kadoories, Smouhas, Shalams and Zilkhas, but all the original Baghdad inhabitants of these families are long dead.

Are there any records extant of the Babylonian community in the mid-19th century? Registers of births, marriages and deaths, maybe? Is there anyone who is knowledgeable on the subject that may be able to help me in my research? Any assistance would be most appreciated●

1267 VICH  
Switzerland

Nicholas David Michael

Assimilation is as dangerous to Judaism as anti-Semitism. It is the Jew's way of allowing himself to become absorbed by another culture and consequently becoming diluted into that culture. We have our own culture our own heritage and it is good for that reason it has survived the test of all these centuries. Those misguided Jews who are in favour of assimilation are not only denying their origins and heritage but they are also taking an active part in their own destruction.

Because we are a small minority, it is even more important for us Jews to segregate rather than assimilate in order to survive as a race and a people●

London

N.H.



My great-grandfather Ezekiel Joshua Abraham Gubbay who went from Baghdad to marry Aziza●

My husband and I enjoy reading every page of *The Scribe*. Your articles are very interesting, knowledgeable and a scholarly work. We admire your patience and hard work. Reading your journal has brought back memories and has brought me closer to my family roots.

In your January issue 1992 No. 52 and April issue No. 53 page 11, there is a photograph of 1917 – "A Baghdadi family in Shanghai". It was a joy to see my grand uncle's photo – David E.J. Abraham, the older brother of my maternal grandfather Ezra E.J. Abraham who is the 4th son of Ezekiel Joshua Abraham and Aziza the grand-daughter of David Sassoon.

My grandfather Ezra led a simple but deeply religious life. He had a room full of religious books many on Kabbala. When his children were very young, the family lived in a big bungalow in the compound in the Ohel David Synagogue in Poona. Part of the house was used as a Jewish school for a short period. It later had to be vacated and was given over to some Parsees where they still live. My grandfather who died in 1963 predicted the day and hour of his death.

Congratulations on the wonderful articles by Rachel and Sarah Menasseh about the Baghdadi Jews of India.

Thank you for sending me the 19 pages of the Sassoon Pedigree which Mr Dangoor had prepared many years ago from reliable sources, which is much appreciated. As usual you are very thorough, understanding and always willing to help.

It would be wonderful if the complete Sassoon family tree could appear in *The Scribe*.  
Kefar Saba (Mrs) Rachel Leah F. Heni Israel

*Scribe*: The Sassoon family tree appears on 2 pages elsewhere in this issue ●

Please let us know of any correction or change of address●

I am Professor and Chairman of the Department of Political Science at the University of California at Berkeley. I have been a Professor at U.C. Berkeley since 1971.

In 1976 I wed Yvette Assia, daughter of Naji Assia and Claire (Aslan) Assia, in a ceremony in London. We have been married for 20 glorious years, during which I have revelled in the joys of Iraqi-Jewish family life and cooking! We have two children: son David just celebrated his Bar Mitzvah; daughter Michelle is about to turn 16 years of age. This is a special season for us. During Spring 1996, my 50th birthday coincided with the anniversary of 20 years of marriage, with my son's Bar Mitzvah, and with my completion of 25 years on the Berkeley faculty!

We very much enjoy reading *The Scribe* that my parents-in-law receive in Los Angeles, and would enjoy it even more if we received our own copy.

The recipes you publish add spice to the reading, though it is difficult to imagine an improvement on my mother-in-law's cooking●

Oakland California  
George W. Breslauer



Left to right:  
Standing: Isaac Assia; David Breslauer; Ronnie and Michal Assia; Ourite and Abe Kamara; Claire Assia; George and Yvette Breslauer; Suzi Assia.  
Sitting: Michelle Breslauer; Natalie Assia; Daniella Kamara; Naji Assia; the great-grandmother – Mrs Renée Aslan (who resides in London), Jonathan Assia●



The Arabic Section of the BBC, London (1955). Naim Basri seated in the centre surrounded by the Arabic staff●

## Naim Basri

by Meer Basri

My late cousin Naim Heskell Basri was born in Baghdad in 1910. Educated at the Teachers' College, he became a teacher of sports at the Shamash School. He was also captain of the football team, a self-taught musician and a keen sportsman.

In 1937 he was sent to London to complete his higher studies. The war broke out and he remained in England and served as a teacher in British schools, replacing the many young men who went to the army. He was sent to Sweden to attend a course in Gymnastics.

The BBC Arabic Section was established in 1938, and he was one of the first engaged to serve the new Arabic broadcasting station. After some years he became head of the music department in which he exerted his efforts to expand and enrich. He established excellent connections with the famous Egyptian, Lebanese, Moroccan and other Arab singers, e.g. Mohammed Abdul Wahab, Umm Kalthum, Asmah, Fairuz and the Rahbanis, etc ..., and was deputed by the BBC to visit Egypt, Lebanon and North Africa to meet and engage the artists.

After serving the BBC for some thirty years, he died in London in 1971●

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# Shamash and Alliance Schools Alumni Reunion

by Victor Ozair – Los Angeles

The reunion of alumni from Shamash and Alliance schools at the Mann Auditorium (Heikhal Hatarboot) on the 13th of June, 1996, and at the Babylonian Heritage Center on the 14th was so unique, impressive and of historical significance.

About 3000 graduates and friends came to celebrate the reunion. They were all excited and happy to have this wonderful and extraordinary opportunity to be together with friends with whom they studied, they played and they went through all that struggle in Iraq.

The evening at Heikhal Hatarboot started with important speeches given first by Mr Moshe Shahal, the Minister of Interior Security and a graduate of Shamash school. Other speeches were given by the Mayor of Tel Aviv and the Mayor of Ramat Gan. Among the visitors there were members of the Knesset as well as the retired Major General Mr Moshe Levi, a former Chief of Staff of the Israeli army whose father had attended the Alliance school.

The musical program began late with charming songs and melodies given by the actress singer Shosh Goren – a graduate of Shamash school – and Iman and others. Skits of those past Scholastic experiences were performed gracefully by Mr Ishak Battat and Shlomo Battat. These skits aroused lots of laughs and warm applause. A short film was shown about some events in Iraq and about eminent personalities of the Babylonian community in Israel and other parts of the world.

At the Babylonian Heritage Center on the 14th, about six hundred people filled the main floor sitting throughout the morning listening attentively to speakers who told

humorous stories from school days. In addition to these stories, every now and then several performers led the audience with songs from the school flag ceremony of Thursday mornings and songs from the compulsory semi-paramilitary marches through the streets of Baghdad (Kashafa and Fetewa).

The crowd from 56 to 85 years of age, who have come from all around the world and from different parts of Israel specially for this reunion included many well known scientists, engineers, surgeons, doctors, professors, financiers, businessmen etc. These are the cream of every society they live in; yet they sat down with nostalgia reminiscing their childhood experiences of more than half a century. Long forgotten memories from that distant past engulfed them in a domain of deep longing, so they were all thrilled and excited to share the fun and the laughter and to sing so cheerfully those old songs.

How fortunate I was to attend that festive reunion and to share this happiness with my old friends. With all this excitement and warmth, memories from the past came to my mind. I remembered the first week of every school year when the students formed a book bazaar in a shopping area outside Alliance School. Crowds of students with their old books jostled and bustled marketing their books. In one corner there was the shop of Mr Fattal who sold English and French books.

In the other corner there was the shop of Heskell Abu Al Amba who sold mango pickles from a huge tank. There was also one seller who used to stand by a large trunk of a palm tree selling heart of palm or Jammur. I remembered the courtyard at the Alliance School where we used to play the Rendez-Vous game. I remembered the hard work and the additional daily early morning hours attendance to prepare for both the French Brevet as well as the government exams. I remembered the sport courtyard at Shamash school where Sami Mouallem (presently Prof. Shmuel Moreh at Hebrew University) used to have his boxing matches. Yet I remembered the extra effort and perseverance exerted in the study for the Matriculation, the English Proficiency, and the Baccalaureate exams. Those were the prime years of our youth filled – among the hatred of the Arab population and the economic hardship imposed on the Jews by the Iraqi government – with intensive scholastic responsibilities and great struggle to push forward to excellence with infinite dreams for better future.

This reunion was an unparalleled, one time event touched by emotion, beauty, and warmth. It will remain forever in our memory. Many thanks and appreciation are extended to the Babylonian Heritage Center at Or Yehuda for this fruitful accomplishment. Mr Mordechai Ben Porat is specially thanked for this endeavour. Also lots of appreciation are extended to the organising committee for their good work.

I wish to stress that the support and the attachment of the Alumni and their families to the Babylonian Heritage Center are sincere and strong and it is the duty of all of us to enforce and foster this masterpiece of achievement in Or Yehuda ●

## Why I left Shamash School

by Naim Dangoor

In June 1932, I came first in the final exam of the 4th Form of Shamash School, although I was the youngest student in the class.

Mr Brotman, who was returning to London after finishing his duty as headmaster, saw it fit to promote me directly to the 6th Form.

During the long summer holidays, I caught up on the curriculum of the 5th Form, but when school resumed, I was faced with a crisis: the students of both my Form and the upper Form resented my special treatment and went on strike. The school management refused to give in, and both classes were closed permanently. I had to continue my studies privately for a year at the hands of Mr Bogod, and in September 1933 I left for London to enter University ●



Shamash School Baghdad 1951 – 4th Form  
Sent by Esther Mercado

Left to right:

First row: Helen Gabbay; Estherine Khabbaza (Esther Mercado); Bertha Kadoury; Nazima Ibrahim; Hanina Shasha; Claire Rashti; Aziza Kattan; Hilda Zackaria.

Second row: Claire Kashi; Grace Rabby; Juliet Yaacov; Vivienne Shamash; Nahida Cohen; Rachel Shamash.

Third row: Ktelia Dangoor; Evelyn Elias; Yvette Shamash; Rose Doury; Daisy Shirazy ●



# Taxation and Foreign Domicile

Viewed through the eyes of an individual who has a foreign domicile, the United Kingdom is a tax haven. Before considering why this is so, it is necessary to review briefly the rules for determining where a person is domiciled.

## The law of domicile

Every person has a domicile. At birth, an individual acquires the domiciles of his father. This is his 'domicile of origin'. At the age of 16 he is legally capable of acquiring an independent domicile (a 'domicile of choice') if he so wishes. A domicile of choice in the United Kingdom is acquired if the individual is physically present here and intends to remain here indefinitely. However, if he can identify a time at which he is likely to leave the country (eg upon retirement), then he will not acquire a domicile here. He should also retain as many ties as possible with the country of his domicile. If the Inland Revenue wishes to argue that a person has acquired a UK domicile, then they must prove that this is the case. A married woman's domicile is determined independently of that of her husband. Domicile is a general law concept and does not apply to tax law alone. Individuals who are domiciled in a foreign country are treated favourably for income tax, capital gains tax and inheritance tax.

## Income Tax

Generally speaking, an individual who is resident in the United Kingdom is liable to income tax on his worldwide income. However, the foreign income of a foreign-domiciled individual will not be liable to income tax unless he remits that income to his country. He will, however, still be liable to income tax in respect of income which arises in the United Kingdom.

## Capital gains tax

Capital gains tax is charged on individuals who are resident or ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom. However, where a foreign-domiciled individual disposes of an asset which is situated abroad, he is not liable to capital gains tax on any gain that may arise unless he remits the proceeds realised from the disposal to the United Kingdom. If the foreign-sited asset is disposed of at a loss however, the individual cannot use that loss in calculating his capital gains tax liability.

## The remittance basis

The avoidance of both income tax and capital gains tax depends upon the foreign domiciliary not remitting income or gains to the United Kingdom. A remittance can occur in a number of ways, for example by the repatriation of cash, and the importation of goods bought with the foreign income which are then sold here. However, the gift of the income abroad to a person who then comes to the United Kingdom is not a remittance of the income by the taxpayer. Similarly the use of the money on an overseas holiday would not be regarded as a remittance.

## Inheritance tax

An individual is liable to inheritance tax on his worldwide assets only if he is domiciled in the United Kingdom. The foreign-sited assets of a foreign domiciliary are excluded from the inheritance tax net altogether. By concession,

foreign works of art owned by a foreign-domiciled person brought here for exhibition, cleaning or restoration are still regarded as sited abroad. However, it should be noted that if an individual has been resident in the United Kingdom for not less than seventeen out of the previous twenty tax years, then for inheritance tax only he will be treated as if he were domiciled here. This is referred to as "deemed domicile". Longterm residents need to be particularly aware of this rule. One other important point, is that where an individual is domiciled in the United Kingdom and has a spouse who is foreign-domiciled, the amount that can be transferred free of inheritance tax to the foreign-domiciled spouse under the spouse exemption is restricted to £55,000 in total.

## Reform

The individual who is domiciled in a country outside United Kingdom enjoys a number of advantages in relation to the United Kingdom taxation of foreign source income and foreign assets. The Government recently indicated that they intended to reform the law of domicile. The effect of the reform would have been to reduce this tax-favoured status. Happily these plans have been shelved for the time being.

*Scribe:* Surprisingly, at present, non-residents do not have to pay any tax even on capital gains arising inside the U.K. This prompted our following correspondence with the Government.

## The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, MP Chancellor of the Exchequer

"... Either bring in the non-resident into the capital gains tax net, or remove the tax altogether. Either way, you would repatriate the billions of funds now basking offshore."

## From the Inland Revenue, Capital and Valuation Division:

"... There is a perfectly good reason for the difference in this tax treatment. Non U.K. residents are not charged capital gains tax on gains made in the U.K. because this relief encourages investment into this country. Britain gets 40% currently of all inward investment into the European Union, partly because of this favourable tax treatment. This investment is crucial to employment in the U.K.

As to abolition, you may know that it is the Prime Minister's long-term aim to see capital gains tax abolished (and inheritance tax) as and when resources permit."

*Our reply:* "You represent, and may even be under the impression, that foreign investment in Britain is a plus point. But foreign capital does not come to our shores for nothing. In fact, every time a foreigner invests in this country, we are mortgaging to him part of our assets. It is nothing other than a form of borrowing.

The foreigner takes away his return and then takes away his capital gains.

For Britain to keep welcoming foreign capital and investment is a sure sign of continuing bankruptcy. For the Government to give tax perks to foreign investors adds insult to injury. To boast that 40% of all inward investment into the European Union comes to Britain, can only mean that more than all European countries, Britain is 'going to the dogs' - the German and Japanese variety.

You would not expect the Bible to speak about the balance of payments. But Deuter-

onomy 15:6 advises 3500 years ago that if a country follows a sound economic policy, then it will lend to other nations and it will not borrow, that is, it will have a balance of payments surplus and not a balance of payments deficit that has to be made good by foreign borrowing and 'investments'.

## From the Inland Revenue:

"... free trade, which requires free movement of capital, is an essential part of economic prosperity. The only two countries I am aware of which have had an absolute ban on all foreign investment in recent years have been Albania - until 1990 - and North Korea. The former was by far and away the poorest country in Europe - my experience there leaves me in no doubt that the population was poorer and sicker because it was denied access to the benefits of foreign investment which we take for granted. The latter is currently suffering from the threat of starvation. In both cases, the populations suffered from the absence of technology transfer which is a concomitant of international investment flows. A less extreme example is India, which has recently reversed its bias against foreign investment, having realised that the sole result of protectionism was a general welfare loss and lower living standards. In our own case, you will be aware of the fundamental improvements in management throughout British industry which have occurred as a result of first-hand experience of processes in Japanese-owned firms in this country.

You will also want to note the effect on British investments abroad if free trade were made more difficult. The UK derives a larger proportion of its GNP from its overseas investments than any other major economy in the world. We are absolutely dependent on the interchange of capital with other countries, not least because the UK domestic market is actually too small to support many key sectors - for example, aircraft development and manufacture, bio-technology and a whole range of information technology. If the UK did not participate in international joint ventures - involving both the import and export of capital - those industries would not exist in the UK. Further, the London Stock Exchange, Lloyds insurance market and the clearing Banks are massive contributors to both UK employment and to our balance of trade. Each would cease to exist in any recognisable form if significant barriers to capital movements were erected.

Very briefly, and using your example, the choice is between a car industry operating in Britain, and employing tens of thousands of people here, but using some Japanese and German capital, and no car industry at all. In any case, as I said, UK-resident subsidiaries of foreign groups are liable to CGT."

## Scribe:

1. Thank Goodness we are better off than Albania.
2. Either a Japanese car or no car at all?
3. We do not have to ban foreign investment, but we could uplift ourselves to become less dependent on them.
4. Let us hope that capital gains tax and inheritance tax will be abolished in the coming November budget.

The Arab is our Brother, we have no other.

Many thanks for *The Scribes* I have been receiving ever since it was born.

Isn't it fantastic the way it is developing, specially lately with so many people participating?? I can't imagine how we lived without it. Now it became a way of life and we take it for granted – all thanks to you. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it from top to bottom.

I herewith enclose an extract from my book which you may wish to include in your journal ●  
London Violette D. Shamash

## Depression

1. There was always poverty in Baghdad, but when the Depression hit in 1929 it became even worse.

My friend Daisy, well illustrated the situation in an essay. The subject was: "What do you cost your parents?" This is what she wrote: "Ever since I was born I have been wearing my elder sister's clothes when she outgrew them. Now, she wears high heels, so when they wear down sufficiently, they are just right for me. As I am 18 months younger than her, I get all her school books when she has finished with them. I get her copy books too, and I carefully erase everything she has written with an eraser so that I can have a clean exercise book to use at school. As my parents cannot afford the school fees we are here at the community's cost. If I am good, and look after my younger brother, my mother gives me one pessa (about half a penny) to buy *gargaree* sweets. My mother almost invariably cooks a soup for us so it is always easy to feed an unexpected guest by adding another glass of water, as she does for me... but my father is always served his meal before the gruel is thinned down. In summer we get a wooden containerful of yoghurt *Elba laban* everyday. My mother adds a pinch of salt and a glass of water to it then stirs it to a creamy mixture and offers the first glass of this to my father. She then adds another pinch of salt and another glass of water and my eldest brother gets the benefit of the second dilution, and so on down the line. We all sleep in the same room. We sleep on a thin mattress which we put on the floor, and we roll up our coats and use them as pillows. And we still have room if a guest wants to spend the night. In this way, Daisy didn't cost her family much.

2. Abu Naji was a middle aged man who had made an art of being thrifty. One day he went to see his friend Abu Shaul – who also enjoyed seeing with how little money he could get by. In fact they enjoyed their little rivalry.

Well, there they sat in Abu Shaul's patio solving the world's problems – soon Abu Shaul made a very weak tea with the dregs from the last pot. He brought out the two miniature glasses of tea and said to Abu Naji indicating the sugar: "One or none?" Abu Naji conceded a point to Abu Shaul.

However, when night began to fall, the host lit a candle hardly thicker than a matchstick. Abu Naji commented: "We have already seen each other now, so don't let us waste the candle. We can talk just as easily in the dark".

It was Abu Shaul's turn to concede a point. He blew the candle out.

Some time later, when all talk was exhausted and it was time for Abu Naji to go home, Abu Shaul was feeling around for the matches when Abu Naji said: "Don't light it

## Hong Kong

### With Vacant Possession?

by Naim Dangoor

The Torah of Moses decrees, "And the land must not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is Mine ..." (Leviticus 25:23).

Every 50 years there was to be a Jubilee when land reverts to its original owners; in a sense, to the State. In modern times this wonderful principle can be applied in practice by recognising only 50 years' leases of property, at a ground rent of two percent of the market value, the ground rent to be reviewed every ten years. In Britain many large urban estates have been run very efficiently on this basis, but the Law of Leasehold Enfranchisement is putting an end to this. Indeed, the reversion should be to the State and not to a private, or even a charitable estate.

The Law of the Jubilee does not apply to properties inside a walled city, but Hong Kong is not a walled city. Britain owned Hong Kong in perpetuity; it is only the New Territories' lease that will expire in 1997. However, it was decided that Hong Kong would not be viable without the Territories and so both are being given up. Thus, on 1st July 1997, Hong Kong will revert to the State of China.

Could Britain return the land without the buildings? Britain could not dismantle the buildings as these constitute landlords' fixtures. Can China insist on Hong Kong and the Territories being returned with vacant possession? The shrewd Chinese would have realised that it would be more profitable to have the occupants in place. China can convert the freeholds into short leases and charge a suitable ground rent – say, 2 percent per annum of the value of the property.

I admire the way Britain and China negotiated the peaceful and orderly transfer of Hong Kong and the Territories, the Chinese demonstrated that they are honourable businessmen. China could easily have had a walkover at any time in the last 40 years, claiming that Britain's acquisition of Hong Kong was by an "unequal" treaty. But China honoured its commitments.

In fact when I studied the Joint Declaration I found that the relevant paragraph conforms very closely to the mosaic law. It reads: Lessees may request an extension of their leases for a period of 50 years terminating on 30 June 2047, without payment of an additional premium. An annual rent shall be charged from the date of extension equivalent to 3 per cent of the rateable value of the property in that year. China will maintain Hong Kong as an outlet for its exports, and a window on capitalism. Indeed, it can be said that it is not China that will swallow Hong Kong but Hong Kong that will swallow China!

Britain will remain involved in the affairs of Hong Kong for 50 years up to 2047.

Apparently, one thing Britain forgot to address in the transfer treaty are the huge £28 billion reserves of the Hong Kong dollar which China will receive next year as a free gift ●

cont.

just yet please, let me put my trousers on again. It was pointless wearing them out if you could not see them.

Extracts from "*Goodbye Baghdad*" by Violette David Shamash (née Ishayek) ●

## Baghdad Reminiscences

by Eli Sawdayee – Israel

Thank you so much for your efforts in publishing *The Scribe*. From time to time I get hold of an issue and I enjoy reading it. It surely brings back many nostalgic memories.

Born in Baghdad 1929, I graduated from the Alliance & Shamash school and emigrated to Israel in 1950.

I have been interested in art since childhood. I followed a career in electronics, but never gave up my artistic aspirations. I continued to paint in oils and watercolours throughout the years, and once retired, devoted much of my time to painting (for my own pleasure).

In my childhood, I lived in a house in the Torat Street. Opposite our house was the house of the Nissan family, also the house of the Gourgi Family. Behind us was the House of Shaoul Shashoua and the House of the Rabii family. At the end of the lane was the House Al Hakham. As a matter of fact, ours were two houses built across the street and linked together by a covered overhead bridge. The house was built in the year 1898 by my great-grandfather Eliahu Reuben. In this house of my childhood lived my great-grandmother, Yumma Ammam (from the Mani family), my grandmother Aziza and seven of her children, three of whom were married. My father Meir and my Uncle Hiyawi Sawdayee had ten children between them. We also had a cook, a servant and two teenage girls each serving a married family. Imagine what a rich life we had as children in such a big house. My cousin Max Sawdayee mentioned this house in his book "All Waiting To Be Hanged" – page 185.

Nowadays I am doing a series of watercolour paintings from my childhood recollections of the Eliahu Reuben house.

Enclosed photos of three watercolour paintings 70cm x 50cm which I finished lately:—

The first is a woman lighting the Shabbat candle "*Qerraye*". I looked for the blessing in the book of "Brachot Shamaim" – writer and publisher Hacham Ezra Dangoor – in order to write it at the back of the painting.

I then found out that there is a prayer that the woman of the house recites before the blessing. I was so impressed by the words that I wrote all the prayer on the bricks in the background of the painting. They look like texture. No one notices the writing unless you draw attention to it.

The second is "*Beit le-Hebibe*" with a woman pounding Friday *qubba* inside a *Hawan*. The clay jars on the left were used to filter and cool drinking water. Underneath is a bowl of clay which receives the dripping filtered water from the jars. Hanging above the woman's head is a basket in which leftover food or fresh meats were kept protected from the cats – "In those times in Baghdad, meat and vegetables were bought daily since there were no provisions for keeping them for long in the hot weather".

The third painting depicts "*Mejalla*" when the mother together with her daughters-in-law sit baking cookies in the *annur*. Notice the well on the left hand side.

I hope you'll be interested in publishing these paintings which I am sure will bring good old memories to many of your readers ●



ויהי רצון מלפניך ?? אלהינו ואלהי  
 אבותינו שיהא עתה צת רצון  
 לפניך להיות עולה מצנה זו של  
 הדלקת גר של שבת קדש. לתמן  
 את כל-פגמינו של אדם וסנה  
 שפגמנו בגר עולם ובכל-עולמות  
 הקדושים. אלהים ?חגנו ויברכנו  
 יאר פניו אתנו סלה :

אל ?? ויאר לנו. כי אמה תאיר גרי  
 ?? אלהי יגיה חשפי :

כי עמה מקור חיים באורה נראה  
 אור: בית יצלב לכו ונלכה באור ??  
 ויהי רצון מלפניך ?? אלהינו ואלהי  
 אבותינו שתבחם עלי ועל עבדך  
 אישי ומצמידנו בקרן אורה. ותאיר  
 לנו בפנים מאירות באור פני מלה  
 חיים. ותמן לנו גרע קדש בנים  
 צדיקים חקמים ונבונים בתורה.  
 ותמנו חיים ארוכים. חיים של  
 שלום. חיים של טובה. חיים של  
 ברכה. חיים של פרנסה טובה. חיים  
 של חיוץ עצמות. חיים שיש בהם  
 יראת חסא. חיים שאין בהם בושה  
 וקלמה. חיים של עשר וכבוד.

אל מרה קבל מא תשעל אל מרנ תקול

לשם יחוד קדשא בריה הוא  
 ושכינתיה ברחילו ורחימו  
 ורחימו ורחילו ביהודא שלים בשם  
 כל ישראל. הגה אנכי מוכנת ומזמנת  
 להדליק גר של שבת קדש כדי  
 לעשות נחת רוח ליוצרי ולעשות  
 רצון בוראי לתמן שרש מצנה זו  
 במקום עליון :

Before lighting the lights say:

For the sake of the unification of the Holy One  
 Blessed be He and His Divine Presence, with rever-  
 ence and love, and love and reverence, in a perfect  
 unity, in the name of all Israel.

I am ready and prepared to light the lights of the  
 Holy Sabbath in order to give pleasure to my Maker  
 and to do the will of my Creator to establish the  
 source of this commandment in its lofty place. And  
 may it be Your will, O Lord our God and God of our  
 fathers, that now should be an acceptable time  
 before You for this commandment of lighting the  
 lights of the Holy Sabbath to be a burnt offering, to  
 rectify the misdeeds of mankind which we commit-  
 ted in all the Holy Worlds.

- 1) May the Lord show us grace and bless us, shine His face on us, Selah.
- 2) The Lord is God, and He will bring light for us. For You will light my candle, the Lord my God will light up my darkness.
- 3) For with You is the source of life, in Your light we will see light.
- 4) House of Jacob let us go in the light of the Lord. And further, may it be Your will, Our God and God of our Fathers, that You should have mercy on me and on Your servant my husband and to stand us in a lighted corner, and lighten us with a shining

countenance with the light from the face of the  
 Living God, and give us a holy seed, children who  
 are righteous, wise and understanding in the Torah,  
 and make us live long lives, a life of peace, good-  
 ness, blessing, good sustenance, fear of sin, no  
 shame or disgrace, a life of wealth and honour and  
 love for Torah, and fear of Heaven, a life in which  
 will be fulfilled all our hearts' good desires, for Your  
 service, Amen, may it be Your will.

May my prayer to You, O Lord come at an  
 acceptable hour in Your great kindness. Answer me  
 with Your true salvation (Repeat this line 3 times.)

May the utterance of my mouth and the thoughts  
 of my heart be acceptable before You, O Lord, my  
 Rock and my Redeemer.

(There is a mitzvah to separate charity at this  
 point and say:-)

May the graciousness of the Lord, our God, be  
 upon us; establish also upon us the work of our hands.

I am separating some money for charity to give  
 pleasure to my Maker and to do the will of my  
 Creator to establish the source of this commandment  
 in a lofty place. And further may it be Your will, O  
 Lord our God and God of our fathers, that through  
 this mitzvah of charity should come down a great  
 abundance and blessing, goodness and peace, kind-  
 ness and mercy and great wealth, and good  
 sustenance, great success; and it should be fulfilled  
 in us the verse which says "The Lord will command  
 a blessing in your crop and in all your endeavours".  
 "He will receive a blessing from the Lord and charity  
 from the God of his Redemption, and in everything  
 he shall be successful." O Lord save us. O Lord  
 prosper us.

On the eve of Shabbat and Kippur, first light  
 and then make the blessing. On the eve of a festival  
 which does not fall on Shabbat, first make the  
 blessing then light.

Blessed are You God our Lord King of the  
 universe who has sanctified us within His com-  
 mandments and commanded us to light the lights of  
 the Sabbath

Translated by Rabbi Aharon Bassous

# GIVE US BACK OUR EYE (A'YIN)

by Naim Dangoor

When the Greeks and Romans adopted their alphabets from the original Hebrew alphabet, which had no vowels, they changed some of the letters denoting useless sounds into vowels. Thus, the *a'yin*, which was appropriately denoted in the ancient Hebrew alphabet by a circle, became the vowel "o" in the Western alphabets. However, in the modern world, absence of the *a'yin* consonant is greatly missed and we invite readers to suggest a new letter to fill in this important gap.

The accompanying chart, showing various stages in the development of the alphabet, may be of interest

# Alphabetical development

	SOYTHIAN HIEROGLYPHIC	HEBREW ALPHABET	PHOENICIAN ALPHABET	SOUTH SEMITIC ALPHABET (ARABIC)	GREEK ALPHABET	ROMAN ALPHABET	HEBREW ALPHABET	ROMAN ALPHABET
1	𐤀	א	𐤀	א	Α	A	א	A
2	𐤁	ב	𐤁	ב	Β	B	ב	B
3	𐤂	ג	𐤂	ג	Γ	G	ג	G
4	𐤃	ד	𐤃	ד	Δ	D	ד	D
5	𐤄	ה	𐤄	ה	Ε	E	ה	E
6	𐤅	ו	𐤅	ו	Ϝ	V	ו	V
7	𐤆	ז	𐤆	ז	Ζ	Z	ז	Z
8	𐤇	ח	𐤇	ח	Η	H	ח	H
9	𐤈	ט	𐤈	ט	Θ	T	ט	T
10	𐤉	י	𐤉	י	Ι	I	י	I
11	𐤊	כ	𐤊	כ	Κ	K	כ	K
12	𐤋	ל	𐤋	ל	Λ	L	ל	L
13	𐤌	מ	𐤌	מ	Μ	M	מ	M
14	𐤍	נ	𐤍	נ	Ν	N	נ	N
15	𐤎	ס	𐤎	ס	Ξ	X	ס	X
16	𐤏	ע	𐤏	ע	Ο	O	ע	O
17	𐤐	פ	𐤐	פ	Π	P	פ	P
18	𐤑	צ	𐤑	צ	Ρ	R	צ	R
19	𐤒	ק	𐤒	ק	Σ	S	ק	S
20	𐤓	ר	𐤓	ר	Τ	T	ר	T
21	𐤔	ש	𐤔	ש	Υ	Y	ש	Y
22	𐤕	ת	𐤕	ת	Ϝ	V	ת	V
23	𐤖	י	𐤖	י	Ι	I	י	I
24	𐤗	י	𐤗	י	Ι	I	י	I
25	𐤘	י	𐤘	י	Ι	I	י	I
26	𐤙	י	𐤙	י	Ι	I	י	I
27	𐤚	י	𐤚	י	Ι	I	י	I
28	𐤛	י	𐤛	י	Ι	I	י	I
29	𐤜	י	𐤜	י	Ι	I	י	I
30	𐤝	י	𐤝	י	Ι	I	י	I
31	𐤞	י	𐤞	י	Ι	I	י	I
32	𐤟	י	𐤟	י	Ι	I	י	I
33	𐤠	י	𐤠	י	Ι	I	י	I
34	𐤡	י	𐤡	י	Ι	I	י	I
35	𐤢	י	𐤢	י	Ι	I	י	I
36	𐤣	י	𐤣	י	Ι	I	י	I
37	𐤤	י	𐤤	י	Ι	I	י	I
38	𐤥	י	𐤥	י	Ι	I	י	I
39	𐤦	י	𐤦	י	Ι	I	י	I
40	𐤧	י	𐤧	י	Ι	I	י	I
41	𐤨	י	𐤨	י	Ι	I	י	I
42	𐤩	י	𐤩	י	Ι	I	י	I
43	𐤪	י	𐤪	י	Ι	I	י	I
44	𐤫	י	𐤫	י	Ι	I	י	I
45	𐤬	י	𐤬	י	Ι	I	י	I
46	𐤭	י	𐤭	י	Ι	I	י	I
47	𐤮	י	𐤮	י	Ι	I	י	I
48	𐤯	י	𐤯	י	Ι	I	י	I
49	𐤰	י	𐤰	י	Ι	I	י	I
50	𐤱	י	𐤱	י	Ι	I	י	I
51	𐤲	י	𐤲	י	Ι	I	י	I
52	𐤳	י	𐤳	י	Ι	I	י	I
53	𐤴	י	𐤴	י	Ι	I	י	I
54	𐤵	י	𐤵	י	Ι	I	י	I
55	𐤶	י	𐤶	י	Ι	I	י	I
56	𐤷	י	𐤷	י	Ι	I	י	I
57	𐤸	י	𐤸	י	Ι	I	י	I
58	𐤹	י	𐤹	י	Ι	I	י	I
59	𐤺	י	𐤺	י	Ι	I	י	I
60	𐤻	י	𐤻	י	Ι	I	י	I
61	𐤼	י	𐤼	י	Ι	I	י	I
62	𐤽	י	𐤽	י	Ι	I	י	I
63	𐤾	י	𐤾	י	Ι	I	י	I
64	𐤿	י	𐤿	י	Ι	I	י	I
65	𐥀	י	𐥀	י	Ι	I	י	I
66	𐥁	י	𐥁	י	Ι	I	י	I
67	𐥂	י	𐥂	י	Ι	I	י	I
68	𐥃	י	𐥃	י	Ι	I	י	I
69	𐥄	י	𐥄	י	Ι	I	י	I
70	𐥅	י	𐥅	י	Ι	I	י	I
71	𐥆	י	𐥆	י	Ι	I	י	I
72	𐥇	י	𐥇	י	Ι	I	י	I
73	𐥈	י	𐥈	י	Ι	I	י	I
74	𐥉	י	𐥉	י	Ι	I	י	I
75	𐥊	י	𐥊	י	Ι	I	י	I
76	𐥋	י	𐥋	י	Ι	I	י	I
77	𐥌	י	𐥌	י	Ι	I	י	I
78	𐥍	י	𐥍	י	Ι	I	י	I
79	𐥎	י	𐥎	י	Ι	I	י	I
80	𐥏	י	𐥏	י	Ι	I	י	I
81	𐥐	י	𐥐	י	Ι	I	י	I
82	𐥑	י	𐥑	י	Ι	I	י	I
83	𐥒	י	𐥒	י	Ι	I	י	I
84	𐥓	י	𐥓	י	Ι	I	י	I
85	𐥔	י	𐥔	י	Ι	I	י	I
86	𐥕	י	𐥕	י	Ι	I	י	I
87	𐥖	י	𐥖	י	Ι	I	י	I
88	𐥗	י	𐥗	י	Ι	I	י	I
89	𐥘	י	𐥘	י	Ι	I	י	I
90	𐥙	י	𐥙	י	Ι	I	י	I
91	𐥚	י	𐥚	י	Ι	I	י	I
92	𐥛	י	𐥛	י	Ι	I	י	I
93	𐥜	י	𐥜	י	Ι	I	י	I
94	𐥝	י	𐥝	י	Ι	I	י	I
95	𐥞	י	𐥞	י	Ι	I	י	I
96	𐥟	י	𐥟	י	Ι	I	י	I
97	𐥠	י	𐥠	י	Ι	I	י	I
98	𐥡	י	𐥡	י	Ι	I	י	I
99	𐥢	י	𐥢	י	Ι	I	י	I
100	𐥣	י	𐥣	י	Ι	I	י	I

## History of Writing

Writing, which allows the recording of experience and ensures the transmission of knowledge, is the foundation of civilization. It is therefore not surprising that the oldest of all known systems of writing, the so-called *cuneiform* writing, was conceived and developed in the very country where civilization, as we know it, began, that is, *Southern Babylonia*, or *Sumer*. This is a region roughly delimited by the twin rivers Tigris and Euphrates, between Baghdad and their junction near the Persian Gulf.

Cuneiform writing was born of man's ingenuity out of the needs of commerce and administration, but has, in the course of its long history, been subjected to a dual evolution, internal and external.

Eventually, the number of signs was gradually reduced from about 1,000 to a little over 300.

The cuneiform writing was in use for at least three thousand years, the earliest known documents being dated to circa 3100BCE, the latest to the first century AD.

From Persia to Anatolia, from the Caspian Sea to the banks of the Nile, the cuneiform writing was for centuries the only international script and the great vehicle of civilization.

## The Alphabet

A system such as cuneiform or the Egyptian hieroglyphs is a very unwieldy way of writing, because of the great number of signs it requires.

An Alphabet, however, is a series of signs and symbols, each of which represents in theory one speech-sound (vowel or consonant), i.e. speech-sounds reduced to their basic elements. The number of sounds which can be distinguished as significant in most languages are so few that, with between 20 and 30 such symbols, it is possible to put most language into writing. Such a system is more economical than the simplest syllabary.

Some of the symbols used for the alphabet derive from hieroglyphic signs. (Column I)

The idea of an alphabet was first developed around 1800BCE in the Sinai area. It corresponds to the time when Abraham returned from Egypt. The final result was the North Semitic alphabet, used for the North-West Semitic languages such as early Hebrew, Phoenician and early Aramaic. (Column IV)

From these later developed the South Semitic (Arabian) script. (Column V)

In the 9th or early 8th century BCE, the North Semitic alphabet was taken over by the Greeks. The Ionic variety was officially adopted in 403BCE. The Latin alphabet was derived by the Romans (Column IX) from the earliest form of the Greek alphabet.

## Was the Alphabet a Hebrew Invention?

Alphabet writing was employed in Canaan and neighbouring districts from the time of the Patriarchs (eighteenth to sixteenth century BCE). Did the Second Commandment (*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything etc., etc.*) play any part in the invention of the Alphabet to avoid the representational scripts prevalent everywhere? In other words, is it possible that the ancient Hebrews who presented the World with the Bible and Monotheism, also gave it the Alphabet? Although the Ten Commandments were promulgated c. 14th century BCE, the basic concepts of the Israelitic faith are very much older than the Sinai legislation. According to Professor Tur-Sinai, the historic alphabet of twenty-two signs, as first developed and adapted to Hebrew and Aramaic, was created in Israel, for the purpose of Israel's religious law, and forms part of Israel's religious tradition. The Canaanitic alphabet, beginning and foundation of all learning, is a creation of Israel's genius and a witness to the ancient origin of its *Torah*.

According to the Bible, Moses wrote down the whole *Torah* as he was commanded to do by God.

The inventor of this system must, indeed, have been a very fine phonetician. For this achievement, simple as it now seems to us, the inventor is to be ranked among the greatest benefactors of mankind. No other people in the world had been able to develop a true alphabetic system. "It was one, and only one, of the gifts of the Semites to mankind." It was this alphabet which became the ancestor of all alphabetic scripts the world has known.

For at least five hundred years, two scripts were in current use in Palestine, in addition to Greek which in the Hellenistic period was well known in the aristocratic circles of Jerusalem: a) the old national script or Early Hebrew; and b) the script of the *lingua franca* of the whole Near East, Aramaic.

But in Babylonia, soon after the disappearance of the first generation of the Exile, the Early Hebrew script fell into disuse and was forgotten. The Aramaic script came into general use, from which Ezra the Scribe developed the Modern Hebrew Square (Ashuri Script).

Hillel the Elder who came from Babylon in the 1st century BCE established a school of *Tannaim*. The youngest and most famous of his disciples was Yohanan ben Zakkai, the founder of the Academy in Yabneh; this became the centre of Jewish life and thought, and was instrumental in saving the *Torah* from probable annihilation in the national disaster of the year 70CE; it thus assured the survival of Judaism

## Early Hebrew: main styles

Order	Monumental	Cursive	Book-hand	Column-Script	Samaritan	Modern Hebrew
1	א	א	א	א	א	א
2	ב	ב	ב	ב	ב	ב
3	ג	ג	ג	ג	ג	ג
4	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד
5	ה	ה	ה	ה	ה	ה
6	ו	ו	ו	ו	ו	ו
7	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז
8	ח	ח	ח	ח	ח	ח
9	ט	ט	ט	ט	ט	ט
10	י	י	י	י	י	י
11	כ	כ	כ	כ	כ	כ
12	ל	ל	ל	ל	ל	ל
13	מ	מ	מ	מ	מ	מ
14	נ	נ	נ	נ	נ	נ
15	ס	ס	ס	ס	ס	ס
16	ע	ע	ע	ע	ע	ע
17	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ
18	צ	צ	צ	צ	צ	צ
19	ק	ק	ק	ק	ק	ק
20	ר	ר	ר	ר	ר	ר
21	ש	ש	ש	ש	ש	ש
22	ת	ת	ת	ת	ת	ת

## from: The Story of Aleph Beth

by D. Diringier

Published by World Jewish Congress 1958  
British Section

by Lincolns-Prager (Publishers) Ltd.





Doctors and Nurses of the Meir Elias Hospital 1941. From The Babylonian Jewry Heritage Centre, Or Yehuda, Israel.

## Our Journey from Baghdad

by  
Clementine (Tina Shakerdge) Cominsky  
Florida

In June 1996, my family celebrated the 50th year that we have arrived in New York City. The journey, to say the least, was very exciting, but really was a living nightmare. We escaped from Baghdad in the middle of the night in April, 1944.

My father (Elias Shakerchi), the pharmacist, my mother (Semha née Peress), myself (Clementine), along with my younger brother (Aharon), sister (Esperance) plus my two infant brothers, (Ronald—23 months) and (Freddie—2 months), all left together for the United States as our destination.

Our departure by way of Cairo, without legal passports caused us to remain in Cairo for three months, until we could arrange passage to the United States. By the time our travel agent was able to arrange for our departure, we were apprehended and the Iraqi consul in Cairo confiscated our passports and ordered us to return to Baghdad. We had no choice, but to take the train back to Baghdad. Needless to say—what was awaiting us!

The first stroke of good fortune was to realize that when the train stopped the next morning, we were in Jerusalem. Luckily the train conductor allowed us to disembark at the train station. We managed to locate my father's

cousin (Shalom Levy), who lived in Jerusalem. He found living quarters for us and an attorney to assist us in remaining in Jerusalem and to help us to continue our journey to the United States, which was our original plan.

After two long years, equipped with a "Laissez Passer", issued by the British government in Palestine, my family departed by ship from Haifa to France. At the time of our departure, my younger brother (Aharon) decided to remain in Jerusalem.

When we arrived, we were delayed in Paris for twenty-one days until we could book passage to the United States. In desperation, we ended up by taking a cargo boat. We finally arrived in New York City on June 6, 1946. This exodus, with two infants, was filled with many frightening trials and tribulations, too lengthy to narrate at this time.

I am the proud mother of two daughters and grandmother of five grandsons.

P.S. My younger brother (Aharon) served in the Israeli Army. He married (Daisy), the daughter of (Shalom Levy) and is a proud father of (Shalom) and grandfather of five grandchildren. He just recently retired from service in the Israeli Government.

My younger sister (Esperance—Espie) is married to Abraham Haya, and they are proud parents of three children.

My two year old brother (Ronald) celebrated his 1st birthday in Baghdad, his 2nd in Cairo, his 3rd in Jerusalem, his 4th in Paris and finally his 5th in New York City. He is now fifty-four years old, a U.S. Army veteran, and a proud father of four children.

My baby brother (Freddie) is now fifty-two years old, and a proud father of four children.

My two older brothers came to the United States earlier. (Albert) in 1939, and (Steve-Saleh) in 1941. They both served in the U.S. Army. (Albert) is a proud father of two daughters and grandfather of two grandsons. (Steve) is a proud father of three children.

We miss our parents, but thank G— we are all doing fine and well ●

It goes without saying that your magazine is doing a great job as a mouthpiece for our dispersed Baghdadi Jews. The letters and the articles in each issue are evidence enough to prove this point. I am proud to add my name to the long list of admirers for a job well done.

I have noted with interest your word on Doctor Agha Elazar Levy, of whom I heard a lot and knew very little. I remember someone pointing to his home next to the Alliance School gate that was later occupied by his son-in-law, Monsieur Bonfils, who was my teacher and the teacher of many generations. I would like that you run a biographical section about early Baghdadis who were prominent in some kind of social or community activities and who lived in Baghdad in the twenties, thirties and forties. Educators like Bonfils, Sabbagh, Albala, etc. I do not know much about them and I believe that the readers of *The Scribe* would appreciate a word from people who knew these men and could write about them first-hand ●

Locust Valley Maurice M Sawdayee Ph.D  
NY





# ork Nadi on its 1st Birthday

i; Hamina Zilkha (Shasha); Alfred Shasha; Georgette Meer; Yusuf Meer; Isaac Sultoon; ... Dayan.  
 vi; ...; Helen Wallace (Shirazi); Grace Rubin Nissan; Louise ... (Nurse); Dureen Dabbi; Eleanor Meer Dallal; Carolyn Sion  
 yet; Martin Irani; Abe Wallace; George Sopher; ...; Naima Meer; Lucy Meer; Helen Bahary; Madeleine Abraham; Violette  
 si; Jack Sopher; Renée Dangoor; Naim Dangoor; Rose Meer; ...; Connie Nawi Aboudi; William Mizrahi; ...; Ezra Aboudi;  
 she Moshi; ...; Sam Beno; ...; Sidney Nissan; Joe Aizer; Salman Meer●  
 f Meer, Montreal and Daisy and Haron Iny, New York who kindly helped in identifying the names.

# GRACE BEFORE MEAT

Extracted from *Essays of Elia*  
by Charles Lamb (1775-1834)

The custom of saying grace at meals had, probably, its origin in the early times of the world, and the hunter-state of man, when dinners were precarious things, and a full meal was something more than a common blessing; when a belly-full was a windfall, and looked like a special providence.

The form then of the benediction before eating has its beauty at a poor man's table, or at the simple and unprovocative repasts of children. It is here that the grace becomes exceedingly graceful. The indigent man, who hardly knows whether he shall have a meal the next day or not, sits down to his fare with a present sense of the blessings, which can be but feebly acted by the rich, into whose minds the conception of wanting a dinner could never, have entered. The proper end of food – the animal sustenance – is barely contemplated by them. The poor man's is his daily bread, literally his bread for the day. Their courses are perennial.

When I have sat at rich men's tables, with the savoury soup and messes steaming up the nostrils, and moistening the lips of the guests with desire and a distracted choice, I have felt the introduction of that ceremony to be unseasonable. With the ravenous orgasm upon you, it seems impertinent to interpose a religious sentiment. It is a confusion of purpose to mutter out praises from a mouth that waters. The heats of epicurism put out the gentle flame of devotion.

The very excess of the provision beyond the needs, takes away all sense of proportion between the end and means. The giver is veiled by his gifts. You are startled at the injustice of returning thanks – for what? – for having too much, while so many starve. It is to praise the Gods amiss.

I have observed this awkwardness felt, scarce consciously perhaps, by the good man who says the grace. I have seen it in clergymen and others – a sort of shame – a sense of the co-presence of circumstances which unhallow the blessing. After a devotional tone put on for a few seconds, how rapidly the speaker will fall into his common voice, helping himself or his neighbour, as if to get rid of some uneasy sensation of hypocrisy.

I would have them postpone their benediction to a fitter season, (at the end of the meal), when appetite is laid; when the still small voice can be heard, and the reason of the grace returns – with temperate diet and restricted dishes. Gluttony and surfeiting are no proper occasions for thanksgiving. When Jeshurun waxed fat, we read that he kicked.

We may be gratefully sensible of the deliciousness of some kinds of food beyond others, though that is a meaner and inferior gratitude; but the proper object of the grace is sustenance, not relishes; daily bread, not delicacies; the means of life, and not the means of pampering the carcass.

The severest satire upon full tables and surfeits is the banquet which Satan, in the Paradise Regained, provides for a temptation in the wilderness:

*A table richly spread in regal mode,  
With dishes piled, and meats of noblest sort*

*And savour; beasts of chase, or fowl of game,  
In pastry built, or from the spit, or boiled,  
Gris-amber-steamed; all fish from sea of shore,*

*Freshet or purling brook, for which was drained  
Pontus, and Lucrine bay, and Afric coast.*

## But what meats:

*Him thought, he by the brook of Cherith stood,*

*And saw the ravens with their horny beaks  
Food to Elijah bringing, taught to abstain  
from what they brought:*

*He saw the prophet also how he fled  
Into the desert, and how there he slept*

*Under a juniper; then how awaked  
He found his supper on the coals prepared,  
And by the angel was bid rise and eat,  
And ate the second time after repose,  
The strength whereof sufficed him forty days:  
Sometimes, that with Elijah he partook,  
Or as a guest with Daniel his pulse.*

I am impatient and querulous under culinary disappointments, as to come home at the dinner hour, for instance, expecting some savoury mess, and to find one quite tasteless andapidless. Butter ill melted – that commonest of kitchen failures – puts me beside my tenor. – The author of the Rambler used to make inarticulate animal noises over a favourite food. Was this the music quite proper to be preceded by the grace? Or would the pious man have done better to postpone his devotions to a season when the blessing might be contemplated with less perturbation? I quarrel with no man's tastes, nor would set my thin face against those excellent things, in their way, jollity and feasting. But as these exercises, however laudable, have little in them of grace or gratefulness, a man should be sure, before he ventures so to grace them, that while he is pretending his devotions elsewhere, he is not secretly kissing his hand to some great fish – his – Dagon – with a special consecration of no ark but the fat tureen before him.

We sit too long at our meals, or are too curious in the study of them, or too disordered in our application to them, or engross too great a portion of those good things (which should be common) to our share, to be able with any grace to say grace. To be thankful for what we grasp exceeding our proportion is to add hypocrisy to injustice. A lurking sense of this truth is what makes the performance of this duty so cold and spiritless a service at most tables. In houses where the grace is as indispensable as the napkin, who has not seen that never settled question arise, as to who shall say it; while the good man of the house and the visitor clergyman, or some other guest belike of next authority from years or gravity, shall be bandying about the office between them a matter of compliment, each of them not unwilling to shift the awkward burthen of an equivocal duty from his own shoulders?

**Naim Dangoor writes:** The Jewish practice of saying Grace after Meals follows the Torah command "When thou hast eaten and art

satisfied, then bless the Lord thy God"... (Deut 8:10). This also conforms to the Jewish business bookkeeping practice of "First receive, then give credit by entering in your books".

אֲמַצְוֵי שֶׁמֶן מִצֵּד  
צֵדָה שֶׁמֶן אֲדָפוּעַ

(Enter then pay)

One thing I don't like in the Sephardi Grace after Meals is the way human donors are slandered and insulted. While thanking the Almighty for his endless benefactions to us, we attack the meagre donations of our fellow men saying that their gifts are small and their shameful deeds are great. This is merely a method of intimidating the rich into paying more.

This sentiment is unedifying and I ordered its omission from the Babylonian Hagadah published in London in 1985.

This phrase does not appear in Ashkenazi text nor does it appear in my grandfather's prayer books. I call on the Spanish and Portuguese to drop this invective from their prayer●

I wish to thank you for your help in sending me photos of Iraq for my coming book, *An Iraqi Jew in the Mossad – Memoirs of an Israeli Intelligence Officer*. 312pp, \$38.50, library binding.

Born in Baghdad to Jewish parents in 1920, I left Iraq in 1938 when rising Nazism spread across the country. My unique background allowed me to work with British Intelligence during World War II. I then served as an intelligence officer in Israel's 1948 War of Independence, and I was successful in breaking Egypt's military codes. After the war I joined the new Israeli government's intelligence service, the Mossad, working primarily in Turkey and Austria under an assumed Arab identity. This is the fascinating, behind-the-scenes story of Israel's intelligence service in the early years of the new nation's history●

Florida

Joshua Horesh

*The Scribe*, to borrow a phrase, is one in a million. It serves one and only purpose; that is to bring together, at least in writing, the remnants of the Babylonian Jewry, in Israel and in the Diaspora, and keep the Babylonian torch shining.

In your issue No. 65, on page 22, bottom photo, I appear in the centre of the top row.

In your last issue (No. 65) on page 39 – 3rd row, the complete names are:

Left to right: Albert Shashoua; Ephraim Asher; Victor Shohet; Abraham Cohen; Edward Dangoor; Jamil Shukur; Yehuda Ezer; Salim Khabbaza.

The late Yehuda Ezer was killed during the war of Independence in 1948. He served as an officer in the Israel Army. His death remains a mystery because the authorities refused to hand a letter sent by him before he died.

The photo was taken at the time when I was leaving Iraq after graduating with my above classmates from the Alliance Israelite in Baghdad and never returned again●

Florida

Joshua Horesh

Tall, educated businessman, 37, Mashaal family, seeks intelligent attractive woman, 25-33 for marriage and a family. Please Fax 416-443-0362 or write to P.O. Box 384, Niagara-on-the-lake, Ontario, Canada LOS 1JO

To rise to the top you must start at the bottom●

N.D.

## From the Chairman of the Babylonian Cultural Centre

I was very happy to read in the last issue of *The Scribe*, on your winning the award of the Board of Deputies of British Jews for Editors, quoting the statement of the panel of judges: "*The Scribe* was an excellent communal magazine with a very good archive of photographs and articles".

The Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center, together with its research institute, accept with gratitude and appreciation the "Statement" software. We feel that the magazine is a most important tool to preserve the Babylonian Jewry Heritage from different angles.

Our respect to all the persons who deal with this task●

Or Yehuda Israel Mordechai Ben-Porat



The letter of Naima M. Saleh concerning her brother (*Scribe* No. 65 Page 43) brought back many memories. I remember Edward Bashi well. Our families were close friends. I called on his mother, at the time, when I heard that he was missing in action. She was still hoping that he was alive somewhere in Europe. He had apparently written that he felt he had to contribute to the war effort, for which he paid the ultimate price. I remember him as a happy, intelligent individual.

I was not aware that his remains had been found and were interred in France. It is a small consolation for a tragic loss, but at least it eliminated uncertainty. In the enclosed picture, Edward appears the first on the left. The others are, front row: his sister Henriette, Violet Mahlab, Maurice Iny, Rachel Bashi, Naim Mahlab. back row: Salim Mahlab, two blurred faces, Bertha ... ? Faraj Gourgi.

The picture was taken before the war outside the home of Judge Dasoud Samra●

Montreal Naim Mahlab

Words fail me in English to express my deep appreciation of *The Scribe* and love and respect for its wonderful founder.

الله يطعك جمع و غفران و عيشة

ولا يخليك! وانت الله دائما على رأسنا!

Victoria-Australia Dr Edward Khamara



### The working staff of the Babylonian Jewry Heritage Centre

Left to right:

Sitting: Zvi Yehuda, Mrs Pnina Shaham; Mr Yigal Loushi; Mr Mordechai Ben-Porat; Mrs Idit Pinhas; Mrs Geula Elimeleth.

Standing: Mr Shmuel Azuz; Mrs Aviva Felus; Mrs Limar Naftali; Mrs Yafa Mesasa; Mrs Rachel Silco; Mrs Inat Albershtam; Mrs Niva Lev-Ari; Mrs Ruth Attar; Mr Moshe Solomon; Mr Yehizkel Aslan.



At the entrance of the Centre

## REPENTANCE

What are we, Lord, that we dare come to thee  
To ask forgiveness? We're nothing but dust  
Wrought into this good body by thy bounty –  
And our thoughts still wallow in greed and lust.  
Our deviousness and wickedness exceed  
The grains of sand on the thrashed seashore;  
Our intrigue and machinations can feed  
The devil till, bloated, he'll cry: "No more!"  
Yet the soul you've graciously planted in us  
Years for divine love, because it is innocent.  
Undeserving though we are, we come knocking  
On thy door, our hearts chastened, penitent.  
Forgive us our sins for we seek to be true;  
Then forgiveness will bring us closer to you●

New York

Dr Victor Sasson

القدر بعينه امة خزال

Al qerd be'ain ernmou ghazal  
A monkey appears to his mother as a gazelle.

ما تعرف خيرى لما تجرب  
خيرى

Ma te'eref khairi lema tjareb ghairi  
You can't appreciate me until you  
try others.

من يبي الخير يبي مطابق

Men yeji el khair yeji metabaq  
Prosperity comes one after another●

## Heritage

### Civilization and the Jews

by Abba Eban

Published by Summit Books  
Simon and Schuster New York  
Reviewed by Naim Dangoor

This best-seller which appeared ten years ago, has won, in the meantime, many famous awards. It tells a story of how a people so few in number could have had such a profound impact on all aspects of civilization ... religion, philosophy, law, drama, science, art, political systems, ethics ... and yet managed to preserve an identity in dispersion and exile, conditions under which no other people has survived.

The book is superbly illustrated with paintings, statues, sculpture, drawings and decorative arts throughout, in full colour and black and white.

Veteran Israeli statesman, diplomat, scholar and writer, Abba Eban has a mastery of the English language which was once compared by the late Lord Janner to that of Churchill. This is quite evident in the present volume.

Mr Eban, however, makes a number of assumptions which I believe are wrong.

1. Eban wrongly thinks civilization is linked to city life as opposed to rural life. In fact civilization has to do with settled life both urban and rural as opposed to nomadic life.
2. He considers Judaism to have started with Abraham, whereas its roots go back to the historic Adam, who started agriculture and is thus the father of our civilization. As Genesis tells us, at the time of Enos, Adam's grandson, "men began to call upon the name of the Lord". (Gen 4:26).
3. Eban calls the Great Flood a Babylonian myth, whereas it was a historic event. When I was working on the construction of the Baghdad bridges as an engineer, I observed the rise in the level of the Tigris, once in December because of the rain and once in April when the snow melted in the Turkish mountains.  
Soon after the world emerged from the last Ice Age, 10,000 years ago, a combination of warm weather and continuous heavy rain melted the deep snow of Asia Minor and inundated the whole of Mesopotamia and surrounding areas. The fact that the flood story was common in other parts of the world does not prove that it was a myth but that other floods occurred where similar circumstances obtained, by the presence of snow-capped mountains.
4. Eban says that the flood story was recorded in Gilgamesh 500 years before Moses, as if Moses had copied from other sources. In fact, the stories in the early chapters of Genesis were common to the people of the Near East and were transmitted orally through many generations.
5. Like most historians, Eban accepts Rameses II as the pharaoh of the Exodus. This is wrong. The Bible narrative is very clear: "And it came to pass in the course of those many days that the King of Egypt died ..." (Ex.2:33). This refers to the long reign and death of Rameses II. No Exodus yet. As was customary at the time, the new King Merneptah declares an amnesty, Moses returns from his long exile and the departure

of the Hebrews takes place in the confused conditions of the first year of the new pharaoh's reign. This must be taken as confirmed by the Merneptah *Stele* which refers to the encounter between that pharaoh and the Children of Israel. The *Stele* alludes to an Egyptian victory, but as Eban points out, totalitarian regimes always invented victories to put in their records. The Exodus was unwittingly helped by the attack of the Sea People on Egypt at that time.

6. Eban disputes the Biblical figure of 600,000 as the number of men of fighting age who took part in the great escape. Eban offers a figure of 25,000, others claim it was only 5,000 (why not 500?). Pharaoh would not have made a fuss about such small numbers. I would go for the higher rather than the lower figures.
7. The author is unable to reconcile the date of the expulsion of the Hyksos in 1550 BCE with the date of the Exodus some 300 years later. In fact the expulsion of the Hyksos refers only to the semitic rulers who invaded and ruled Egypt between 1659 and 1550 but not to the migrant labourers who remained in Egypt, and later became slaves, as a result of the 14-year plan which Joseph introduced as Viceroy of Egypt.

Eban wonders why not all the Jews have returned to Israel. Why should they? Even before the destruction of the Second Temple most Jews were in fact living outside Israel. If Jewishness is neither racial nor religious as he suggests, then what do we wish to perpetrate? Eban does not ask the question, nor, much less, provides an answer to it. We were meant to be a nation of priests, but we failed to convert the world by the sword. We chose the long arduous and hazardous road. After all, God chose us *because we are a stiff-necked people*. My guess is that our role and destiny in the world is to give birth to the Messiah.

Throughout his book, Abba Eban gives refreshing details that make his narrative more intelligible and more interesting.

*Excerpts from the book:*

#### On Usury:

Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-1273) proclaimed that "to take usury for money lent is unjust in itself, because this is to sell what does not exist, and this evidently leads to inequality which is contrary to justice.

"In order to make this evident, we must observe that there are certain things the use of which consists in their consumption: thus we consume wine when we use it for drink, and we consume wheat when we use it for food ... Accordingly, if a man wanted to sell wine separately from the use of the wine, he would be selling the same thing twice, or he would be selling what does not exist, wherefore he would evidently commit a sin of injustice ..."

#### On Martin Luther

In 1523 Luther wrote the pamphlet *That Jesus Christ Was a Born Jew* in which he criticised the treatment of Jews by the Christians. He wrote "If I had been a Jew and had seen such idiots and blockheads ruling and teaching the Christian religion, I would rather have been a sow than a Christian."

He also wrote "the Jews are the cousins and brothers of our Lord. Hence I beg my dear Papists to call me a Jew, when they are tired of calling me a heretic."

However, when Luther became disappointed at the refusal of the Jews to be converted to his

faith, launched against them an outrageous campaign of incitement, sparing none of the scurrilous libels, from the charge that Jews drank the blood of Christians to the accusation that Jews poisoned wells. In 1542, he published another essay on the "Jewish Question". In this pamphlet, *Against the Jews And Their Lies*, he stated how the Jews should be treated:

*First*, their synagogues should be set on fire.

*Second*, their homes should likewise be broken down and destroyed. They ought to be put under one roof or in a stable, like gypsies, in order that they may realise that they are not masters in our land, but miserable captives.

*Third*, they should be deprived of their prayer books and Talmuds in which such idolatry, lies, cursing and blasphemy are taught.

*Four*, their rabbis must be forbidden, under threat of death, to teach any more.

*Five*, travelling privileges should be absolutely forbidden to the Jews.

*Six*, they ought to be stopped from usury. All their cash and valuables of silver and gold ought to be taken from them. Everything they have they stole from us through their usury.

*Seven*, let the young and strong Jews and Jewesses be given the flail, the axe, the hoe, the spade, the distaff and spindle, and let them earn their bread by the sweat of their noses as is enjoined upon Adam's children. [*Arbeit Macht Frei?* - Ed]

#### On Mashallah, a Babylonian Jew

Maps executed by Jews and Marranos were employed by Portuguese, Spanish and Italian mariners during the early period of exploration. The first treatise in Arabic on the astrolabe—the device used for calculating the position of heavenly bodies and thus the position of a ship relative to the stars in the sky—was written by a Jew known as Mashallah of Basra around the year 800. And when the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama set sail from Lisbon for India via the Cape of Good Hope in 1497, his ships were outfitted with astrolabes newly perfected by the Jewish astronomer Abraham ben Samuel Zacuto.

*Scribe:* The Babylonian Jew, Mashallah, and the Persian astronomer, An-Naubakht, were commissioned to draw up the measurements of the Round City at Baghdad which became in 762 the capital of the Abbassid Empire.

## George Washington Visits the Sephardi Synagogue

In 1763, Newport's Sephardi Congregation Yeshuat Israel moved into the small Georgian temple now known as the Turo Synagogue—the oldest synagogue in the United States. The structure is similar to the Sephardic synagogues of London (Bevis Marks) and Amsterdam. In 1780, the synagogue building was used as a meeting place by the General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island and later by the State Supreme Court until 1784. When General George Washington visited the city in 1781, the town meeting was held there too. Nine years later, President Washington visited the Newport congregation and received an address from its president, in which he told Washington, "the same spirit who rested in the bosom of the greatly beloved Daniel, enabling him to preside over provinces of the Babylonian Empire, rests, and ever will rest, upon you." Washington's reply, which endures as an indelible statement of the most fundamental tenets of American



# The Jewish House in Baghdad

From an article by Prof. Gideon S. Golany, Pennsylvania State University, USA,  
which appeared in *Nehardea* magazine No.7, March 1995, Journal of the Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center, Or Yehuda, Israel.

The planning of the Jewish house in Baghdad was dictated by the effects of the harsh and difficult climate and by the socio-cultural needs of the Jewish community. Essentially, the plan consisted of four specific space levels below ground and three above, which developed around a courtyard. These two systems were the outcome of historical development that lasted several thousand years.

## The underground levels:

The four underground levels were necessary for the creation of appropriate spaces to provide various degrees of air cooling for the comfort of the residents in the afternoon hours of the summer, when the heat in the house was at its highest; to store and cool food. A fundamental rule was that in the summer the underground spaces were cooler than those above ground.

The first level was the *takhtabush* (floor-board) located half a storey above the *nim* and overlooking it. The entrance was from the courtyard level. It primarily served the older members of the household, who sought a lower degree of cooling than that of the *nim* and without having to use the stairs of the *nim*. The second level was the *nim* (semi-basement) itself, which was below the level of the courtyard. The *nim* was used by most of the household owing to its pleasant coolness, and it also contained earthenware water pitchers. Chimneys through the roof of the *nim* brought air that cooled the pitchers by water evaporation. The third level was the *sirdab* (basement), situated deeper and usually larger than the *nim*. The *sirdab* was used by the younger members of the household to take their rest, and to store food. The fourth level was the deepest of all, and called *Bir el-Tbila* (Ritual immersion pool). It served as a pool for bathing and cooling, and descended to a depth of 10-11 meters. This underground system to some extent supplied circulation of air and cooling to the courtyard above.

## The above-ground levels:

The above-ground system consisted of three levels. The first was the open-air courtyard level, enclosed by roofed structures on three or four sides, most of which opened onto it. The second level was the first storey, which surrounded the courtyard space in a system of roofed structures: the *tarma* (an open structure on pillars and usually encircling the courtyard), which served as a passageway and a light source for the units that surrounded it, the *liwan*, which was a hail with an open archway supporting the *tarma*, and the *odha* (room), which was closed with windows facing into the *tarma*, the *ursi* (or *jamkhana*), which was a room for leisure and entertainment and receiving visitors in the winter with glass windows looking onto the *tarma*, and the *kabishkan*, which was a mezzanine with windows overlooking the courtyard and the *tarma*. In addition, there was the *shanashil* room, which was connected on one side to the *tarma* and on the other overlooking and projecting over the street. It contained a special glass window array of wood and iron latticework. These windows permitted

a view and inspection of the street, the viewer being undetected by passers-by. The planning principle of this storey was to let air, ventilation and at times sunshine into all the units through the *tarma*.

The flat roof storey also encircled the central courtyard space with a rail on the inside and the outside. The roof was the largest continuous area in the house. It served as a sleeping place in summer and for sunbathing in winter, and also for drying fruit and vegetables, and for hanging the washing.

The overall height of the three storeys above ground was 9-10 meters. The two systems were integrated and complemented each other.

The rooms occupied in the Baghdadi house changed both seasonally and during the 24 hours of each day. The movement was dictated by the climate of each season and each diurnal period, and it served the socio-cultural needs of the family. In summer the family remained in the courtyard in the morning hours, in the *nim* and its annexes in the underground system in the afternoon, and on the roof at night. In winter the family used the courtyard and the first floor and kept almost entirely away from the underground system and the roof.

The functional division of these units, as well as the seasonal and diurnal movement, existed, wholly or partially, in all the Jewish houses built in the traditional style. The interconnected plan of the courtyard, the *tarma* and the *liwan*, for example, created a large area, and made possible large assemblies of people and receptions. The Baghdadi house afforded great privacy to each of the different age group of three or four generations of the extended family that lived in it. In addition, attached to the unit described here there was a smaller kitchen unit, which also was arranged around a separate courtyard of its own, and included the toilet, the shower and storerooms, and so on (the service quarter). Here too the house plan depended on the climate and social needs.

Apart from the climatic and socio-cultural conditions, the Baghdadi house was designed in accordance with external influences, which in the main were Persian or Turkish. The house-courtyard model itself came about as a result of the compact structure of the city, which resulted in density of houses side by side and back to back, so that only one facade side remained exposed to the street and the light. The courtyard was therefore meant to allow ingress of air and light deep into the parts of the house away from the street. So apart from its social purpose, the courtyard provided a major design solution for the Baghdadi house.

*Scribe:* The entrance from the street to the courtyard was the *Darbouna* (reception hall) which provided privacy to the courtyard and was used to admit vendors of fruits, vegetables and poultry. The *Darbouna* was sometimes large enough to tie up the riding horses of the family.

In larger houses, the courtyard contained a number of fruit trees such as orange, mulberry, crab apple (*nabeg*) and even palm tree sometimes.

The sewage was disposed of into a deep

brick-walled tank constructed beneath the courtyard that had to be emptied from time to time by professional people. The modern variety of this septic tank is constructed of two connected chambers in which the sewage disintegrates through bacterial activity, and the resulting fluid is absorbed by the soil. It thus requires very little attention.

*Naim Dangoor adds:* I visited some time ago a church in the City of London, built c. 1200 in which I found architectural features, such as the ventilation chimneys, very similar to Iraqi buildings. At that time Baghdad was at its height and had influenced construction elsewhere.

In the early thirties, Baghdad broke out of its walled confines in all directions.

So the Jewish community expanded mainly to the south towards Karradah where a number of garden suburbs sprang up. The Baghdad municipality had designated for residential developments 3 zones, of 300, 600 and 1200 square meters per plot respectively. A margin was required which resulted in houses built in modern designs without a courtyard and with a garden all around, relying on air-coolers and air conditioners. Long straight avenues, 120 feet wide were created which did not suit the local climate. At Bustan-el-Khass, houses were sold at £300 for a 30-year lease.

On my return from London University in 1938, I was approached by the firm of Hussein al-Ani and Edward Aboodie, who showed me various lands for residential parcelling, asked me to pick out for them the most suitable site.

I had no difficulty in choosing the area to the south on the Tigris bend, which I favoured since my childhood. This became in a short time the most fashionable and select "Masbah" residential area in Baghdad.

The Design of the Baghdad house was developed to suit the local climate and to provide adequate security for the residents. The rooms were around an open courtyard in the centre of which sometimes grew palm trees, orange and other fruit trees. In summer, people slept at night on the roof top and in a semi-basement during the afternoon siesta. The winding residential streets were mainly three metres wide to keep out the summer sun and to prevent marauding horsemen from raiding the neighbourhood. The building material was generally local bricks●

Dear Mr Dangoor,

Thank you for spotting the two errors in my biography of Winston Churchill (1945-1965). I will do my utmost to make sure that, if there is ever a reprint, these errors will be corrected. I do congratulate you on your eagle eye.

Yours most sincerely●

London

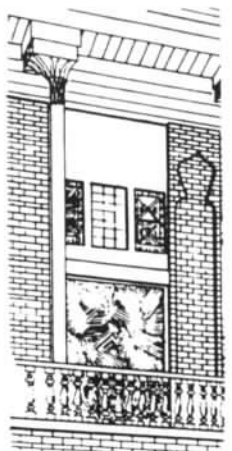
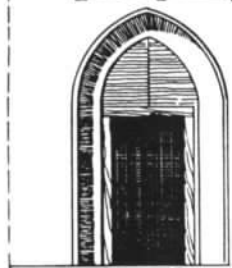
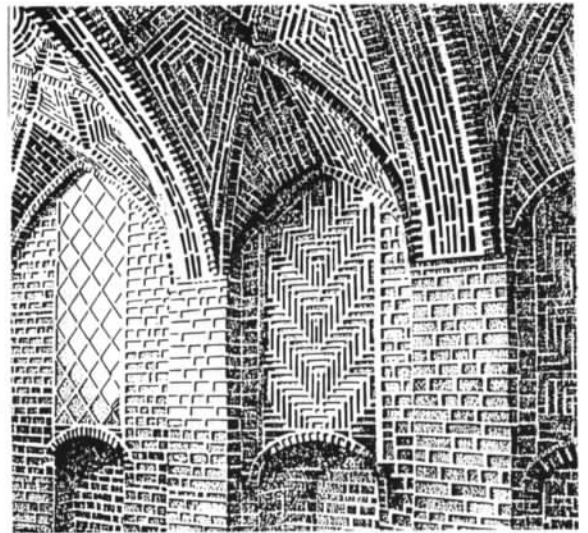
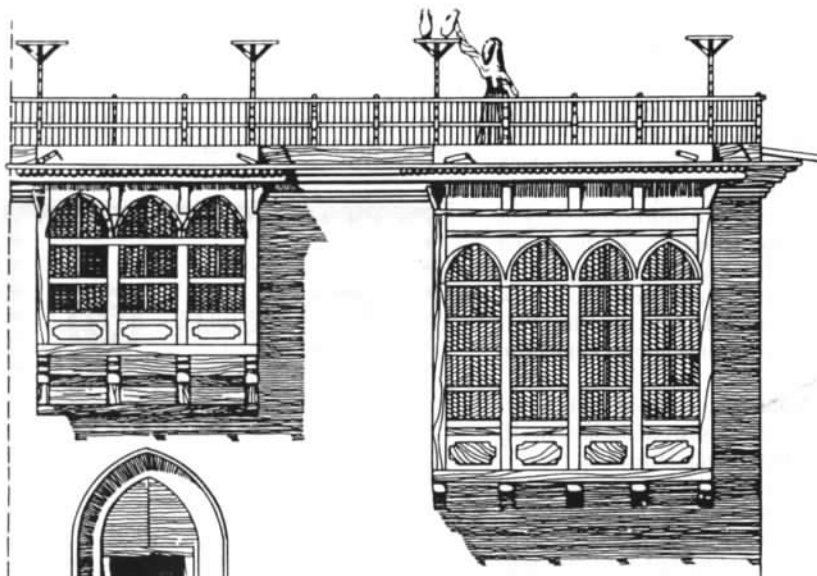
Martin Gilbert



# Architectural details of a typical old-type Jewish house in Baghdad

from the book by Gideon S. Golany

Published in 1994 by the Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center, Or Yehuda, Israel





I was a teacher in the Alliance School of Baghdad from 1937 to 1942. I was responsible to teach and send the sixth form students to the Government Arabic examination. In those 5 years my class came first over all Iraqi schools which was a remarkable achievement (see accompanying letter).

In 1942 I left Iraq to study architecture in Palestine and I graduated four years later from the Technion of Haifa. Since then up to now I have been running my own practice●

**Bat-Yam, Israel**

**Jacob Zilkha**

**Ecole de l'Alliance "Albert Sassoon"**

Bagdad, le 16 Aout 1942

Cher Monsieur Zilkha,

Les resultats des examens n'ont pas été aussi brillants que ceux de l'année dernière, mais très brillants par rapport à ceux des autres écoles. Notre Ecole de garçons a été classée première de l'Irak. Le mérite en revient, en bonne partie, à vous et à M. Georges; ce dont je vous félicite●

**M. Larédo, Directeur**



**At the Helical Minaret (Malwiya) Samarra, January 1941**

My grandfather Elyahoo Levi was born in Aleppo, Syria and got married in Baghdad. In the late 19th century my grandfather went down to India and settled in Calcutta. My cousin Saul got married and settled in London for a while and left for Los Angeles in the 50's.

Saul's commitment to Judaism, its imminent role on his tradition and culture, is unwavering. As a benefactor and supporter of several Jewish causes and interests throughout the community, Saul's loyalty and accessibility have been equally rewarding and formidable. Saul was one of the original founding members of the Kahal Joseph Congregation and served as its President for over twenty years. Today he remains active as a respected and influential member of its board of directors●

**London**

**Benjamin Solomon Levy**



**Equestrian statue of King Feisal at Baghdad West.**



**With a cycling group.**



**November 1940 on a picnic.**

I refer to the letter of Richard Moshi of London on page 39, issue 65.

Mr Sabbagh was the assistant director of the school all the time. To the left of Mr Sabbagh is Mr Dayan. Between Mr Dayan and Mr Mahlab is Mr Djarassi●

**Milan**

**Edward Yamen**

You can't imagine what excitement your *Scribe* is creating for all who read it. They are so hungry for our heritage and they are proud to belong to the Community. All of them speak highly of you and they admire your knowledge. Please receive their blessings and mine●

**Tel Aviv**

**Yeheskel Dangoor**



I enclose a photograph of my parents Albert (Abdallah) and Rachel Murad taken at their engagement in 1922. Also their wedding invitation later that year●  
New York Henry Murad

I usually enjoy reading *The Scribe* but I am saddened by your comments on Winston Churchill in the March issue. Those of us old enough to remember Churchill would know that, had it not been for him, we might not have been here ourselves.

When Germany attacked Russia, it was Churchill who said that he did not recant his views on Communism but those who fought the Nazis would have his support. It might interest you to know that Churchill in the early days of his Premiership wrote by hand on 10 Downing Street note paper to Harold Laski a wonderful letter of condolence on the death of Harold's father. Two more diametrically opposed people than Harold Laski and Churchill it would be difficult to find, but the letter does show the kindness and character of the man.

London Muriel Cansino

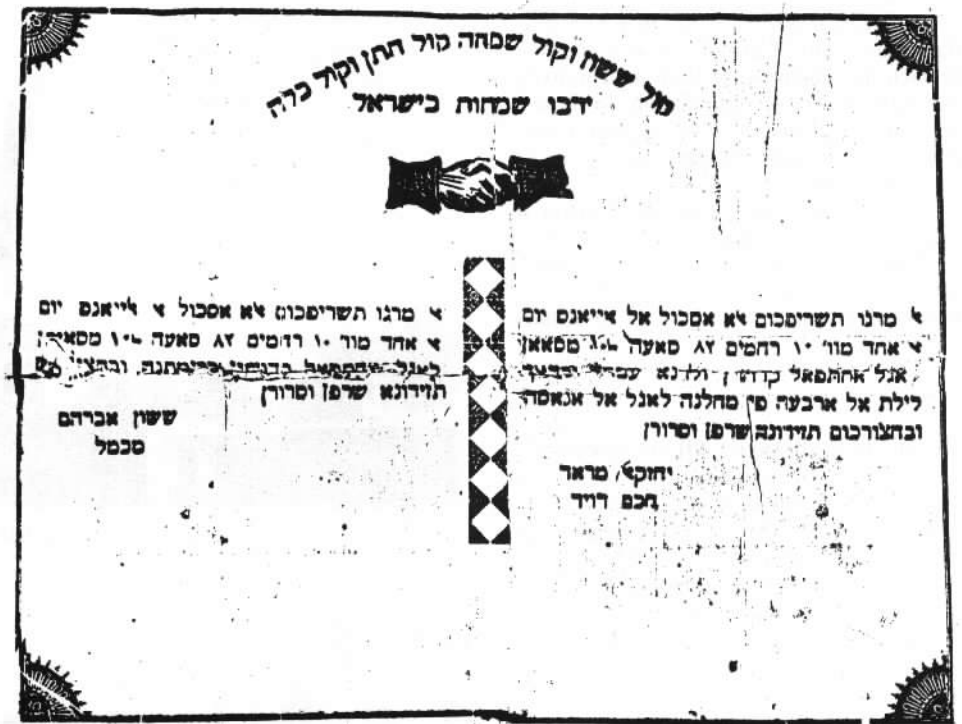
A similar letter was received from Mr Eric Nabaro, London

*Scribe*: Churchill did not fight the war to save Anglo-Jewry, it was a lucky escape. Britain did not declare war on Germany to save the Jews of Europe who were in mortal danger, but to preserve the independence of Poland. Churchill refused to bomb Auschwitz and utter an outcry to stop the genocide.

Churchill was a good man but, apparently, he did not wish to go against the policy of the Foreign Office●

لفلوس بجيبو والناس تهبوا

Leflous bejaibou welnass tehebou  
The money in his pocket and  
people love him●



### Translation of the above invitation

We request the pleasure of having you at the Alliance School Sunday 10th Rahamim at 5pm for the marriage of our daughter and your presence will give us pleasure and honour●  
Sasson Abraham Mukamal

We request the pleasure of having you at the Alliance School Sunday 10th Rahamim at 5pm for the marriage of my son Abdallah and then on Wednesday evening at our residence to get together; and you will honour and please us by attending●  
Heskel Murad Hakham David

### To Edward I on his conquest of Wales

'RUIN seize thee, ruthless King!  
Confusion on thy banners wait!  
Tho' fann'd by Conquest's crimson wing  
They mock the air with idle state.  
Helm, nor hauberk's twisted mail,  
Nor e'en thy virtues, tyrant, shall avail  
To save thy secret soul from nightly fears,  
From Cambria's curse, from Cambria's tears!  
—Such were the sounds that o'er the crested pride  
Of the first Edward scatter'd wild dismay,  
As down the steep of Snowdon's shaggy side  
He wound with toilsome march his long array:—

From a poem by Thomas Gray●

The best antithesis to "Victoria by Sami Michael is "Iraq my testimony" written by the brilliant author Esther Mercado from Ramat-Gan, Israel who gave a decent and ethical picture of the splendid Jewish community which lived in Iraq.

One should not devalue and demoralise poor people who lived in poor quarters. I saw those people who lived in the slums in Abu-Shibel and Abu-Siffain struggling day and night to afford bread for their families. I wonder why Mr Michael changes his colour and tongue whenever he is attacked by the readers. He once said that the book is narrated from his mere imagination and then he said he feels indebted to the poor of Abu-Siffain and Abu-Shibel. Does he consider that showing them in a bad light is his due payment to them?●

Israel Yehuda Barshan


I read with amazement in the March '96 issue of *The Scribe* the story of your brother Salim who was my classmate at Rachel Shahmoon Primary School. We used to study together at your home in Torat Street. I have another story to tell you which is quite different from Salim's. One afternoon just after the 1967 war, while I was living in the Masbah suburb of Baghdad, I heard a knock on my front door. I went to the balcony to have a look and saw a police officer with papers in his hand. As soon as he saw me he said: "Hadhrtak (are you) Sayed Noori Bahr-el-Eloom?" "Absolutely not" I replied "Sayed Bahr-el-Eloom is a Moslem Shi'ie Najafi and I am a "Yehudi-Baghdadi" (Baghdadian Jew). He looked at me and said politely, "Sure, you do not look like a Moslem "Alafoo Sada'anakom" (sorry to disturb you). He left without returning. I think the reason they suspected me was that my name was listed in the telephone book as "خوري حسني" Nuri Baher with no mention of my father's name Heskel●

Middlesex Nuri H. Baher

After the last elections, I met with many "educated, intellectual, and liberal" Israelis, and English Jews who commented that "the intelligent voted for Peres". This is their usual attitude towards the "unbearably unintellectual" others who chose Netanyahu.

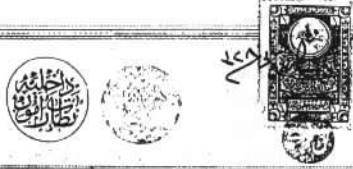
I would like to remind these Intellectuals, that they are the same people who, in the thirties in Germany, believed as blindly in their intellect, and consequently, we all know what happened to them●

London M. Naghar


  
**شهادة الميلاد**

اسم وشهرته	بدرى اسيله عمل الامين	والدهم اسيله عمل الامين	تاريخ ومحل ولادته	مدينه القطيف	سنة ومحل ولادته	سنة ولادته ١٤٩١	سجل نفوسه قيد اوليان محلي
درجات وسنوف مكرمات	سجل نفوسه قيد اوليان محلي	اشكال	محل ولادته	محل ولادته	محل ولادته	محل ولادته	محل ولادته

ملاحظة: اسم وشهوت وحال وصفي محمد اولان مسعوده بنته شوي...  
 اول مورثة حريده نفوسه قيد اوليان محلي...





**“Le Prince Perdu” sent by Bertha Fattal**

A play in the mid-Twenties at the Girls Alliance School. In the picture holding her supposed son is Rosa Sassoon (née Somekh) playing the part of the Queen. The Prince is acted out by the late Marcelle Yehooda Moshi Yehooda (née Shashoua). Holding the Queen’s train is Bertha Fattal (née Shaoul Saleh David). Victoria Yahya (née Cohen) as the minister; Louis Denous; Tiffeth Mouallem (née Sulman Yehouda)●

You have managed single-handed to bring together all the Baghdadi extraction of Jews scattered all over the world. *Kol Hakkabod.*

My compliments also to Eileen and her tremendously knowledgeable and factual articles about our life in Baghdad. It is most interesting especially to the generations born outside Baghdad and who would not know about those customs.

Please find photocopy of an Ottoman Birth Certificate of my late grandmother, Massouda Meir Masri (her husband was Ezra Meir Hakkak)●

London Ezra Hakkak

**Historical Society of Jews from Egypt**

Many thanks for placing the announcement in *The Scribe* (No 65). I have already received a number of calls from the USA and from abroad. This was very helpful. I am discussing the possibility of convening an international conference of Jews from Egypt, at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, to mark 50 years since the Jews started to leave Egypt in 1948 – hence the name “*The Second Exodus*” of our publication. I am in touch with Dr Jane Gerber, Director of the Institute of Sephardic Studies of CUNY. The tentative date of the conference is for early November 1997.

The nucleus of an academic committee has already been formed. We are presently exploring ways and means of raising funds to cover the expenses of initiating the Conference and carrying out the plan, including funds for the publication of a Jubilee volume of the presentations●

(HSJE) Victor D. Samra PhD  
 2416 Quentin Road Vice-President  
 Brooklyn NY 11229  
 Tel/Fax 718-339-0337

I have just seen a copy of your excellent magazine for which I congratulate you. However I am perturbed at seeing an article of mine on Sherira Gaon, p.38 issue 65, published without permission as acknowledgement to *Daf Hashavua*, the copyright of which is held by the United Synagogue. I must ask for an acknowledgement in your next issue.

I am sure neither the United Synagogue nor certainly I as the Editor of the *Daf* have any objections to your using material from the *Daf*, as long as due acknowledgement is made. After all, the purpose of the *Daf* is to inform the public.

London Bernard Koschland

*Scribe*: The article which appeared under your name, was sent to us by a reader without mentioning your publication. Like many other Jewish publications, all our articles can be reprinted with or without acknowledgement●

الربح القليل خير من الخسارة الكبيرة  
 A little profit is better than a big loss●

**Moses Sultoon**

by Percy Gourgey

In the death, after a short illness of Mr Moses Sultoon, aged 88, last March, Bombay Jewry has lost a prominent personality, noted for his dedicated work for the community. He was Chairman of the Trustees Council of the Sir Jacob Sassoon Charitable Fund. He also administered the affairs of the Keneseth Eliyahoo Synagogue named after Sir Jacob’s father, in Fort, Bombay, and Magen David Synagogue, named after Sir Jacob’s grandfather, in Byculla, Bombay. He was also Trustee of the Aline and Ezekiel Abraham Charitable Fund in Bombay. Born in Calcutta of Baghdadian Jewish parents, and emigrated to Bombay where he finally settled. He was an extremely observant Jew, and was known for his generous hospitality, especially for Jewish visitors from abroad, when his Sabbath eve dinners achieved legendary fame. A keen Zionist, he frequently visited Israel, and was buried on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. He never married. The Times of India said of him “The pillar has fallen”●

# A Visit to Cochin

by Valerie Collis, Cambridge

In February 1996 I arrived with a tour group in Cochin, a cluster of islands on the Malabar Coast of India. I had barely entered the town when I found myself subconsciously looking for stars of David, *mezuzas*, the famous Paradesi synagogue, evidence of a Jewish community. But I looked in vain: I was on Willingdon Island and Jew Town was in Mattancherry, 18 kilometres away and a mile across the water. Because of a strike, a fisherman agreed to take me across.

The Paradesi (which means 'foreigner' in the local Malayalam) synagogue is every bit as beautiful as the pictures I had seen of it. Originally built in 1568 on land granted to the Jews by the then Maharajah, it is in a cul de sac next to his palace in Jew Town and close to the harbour. The road leading to it is Synagogue Lane and the pastel coloured houses bore names such as Sassoon Hall and Solomon House. This is where the Jews lived in perfect harmony with the Christians, Muslims and Hindus. There was still the occasional *mezuzah* as well as the *magen Davids* I had been looking for. Carved oil lamps that used to be kindled on the eve of the new moon, sabbaths and holidays hung in the doorways of buildings where architectural influences from Portuguese, Dutch and British traders were evident. Only about 20 Jews remain in Mantancherry and these, once their dwelling houses where spices were traded, are shops now. There is still a spice market but the shops are run by the locals who cater for and depend largely on a different trade: tourism.

A man standing in a shop doorway wearing a *kippa* agreed to show me the synagogue. He was much paler in colour than the Indians around him, as were all the Jews I met in Jew Town. I was to learn that my 'guide' was Len Halluega, the nephew of one of the oldest and most prestigious families in Cochin. The Jewish women he introduced me to as we walked through the streets were wearing saris and speaking Malayalam. For many centuries the Cochin Jews of Kerala have identified enthusiastically with the local people adopting their language and many of their customs. But these cultural adaptations did not allow for any religious, ethical or legal compromise.

At the entrance to the synagogue, I was asked to remove my shoes so as to preserve the magnificent blue and white hand painted Chinese tiles that adorn the floor for which the building is famous and which were a gift of Chinese traders 300 years ago. Chandeliers from Bohemia, Venice, Holland as well as from here, hung from the ceiling. Len drew aside the elaborately embroidered red and gold curtain and opened the Ark which housed five beautifully tooled silver Torah scroll cases, one of which bore the gold crown presented to the community in 1805 by the Maharajah. In the centre was the raised *tevah*, surrounded by elegant brass rails from Amsterdam. Above us, on equally elegant brass pillars was a second raised *tevah* beyond which, behind a carved wooded screen, was the women's gallery. This beautiful building has been declared a national monument by the government as a result of which Len's uncle refuses to worship here considering it a museum and no longer a house of prayer. Unfortunately this reduced the number of adult males to eight which means the



Cochin Synagogue – built in 1568

congregation is dependent on visitors to complete a *minyan*.

Just before sunset, I was joined by dozens of people pouring into the synagogue; by the time the service began, there must have been about forty men and thirty women, tourists from all over the world, all of them certainly Jews. Seven Sabbath lights were lit and the service was conducted entirely in Hebrew with a strong Malayalam intonation. I was told that the liturgy was a blend of Baghdadi, Sephardi, and Yemenite traditions, and the tunes culled from ancient melodies originating in Kerala. The Cochin Jews have compiled liturgical books for all occasions in which they included many of their own compositions. Sitting in the women's area at the entrance to the main synagogue, I could observe the magical beauty of the place and sense the cohesion of those who were sharing my experience.

While in Jew Town that morning, I phoned Mrs Koder whom my family had known in days gone by when we all lived in Calcutta. Like us, the family originated from Baghdad and I wanted to meet her. The person I spoke to on the phone assured me that I would be most welcome to visit: 'it was open house on Friday evening, and no, there was no address: it was the red building opposite the park and Mrs Koder would love to see me.' Inside this imposing terraced house, once the residence of a Portuguese notable, two staircases curved upwards in front of me, flanked by a pair of huge white wooden swans. Upstairs a servant led me to Gladys Koder, a woman of about eighty with shoulder-length dyed blond hair. She was wearing a yellow dress and decked with gold chains and she sat amongst her guests, holding court in a piercing monotone (as she was stone deaf). Her presence filled the large drawing room which still preserved much of a past elegance. The walls were wood-panelled and through the glass windows which divided the rooms, one could see the table laid for dinner. There were some beautiful Chinese vases and countless photographs. There were rugs on the floor; Indian nibbles and *samosas* in dishes on the beautifully carved low teak tables; people were drinking whiskey. 'We are a dying

community', her sister-in-law Lily told me, stating the obvious. 'They have all gone, and we are getting old....'

No one really knows when the first Jews settled in Kerala. Routes to the Malabar Coast were forged by many peoples who came to trade in spices and teak. Jews had then settled in Cranganore just north of Cochin; that they came during the Babylonian exile; that they fled after the destruction of the Temple; that they travelled from Spain via Italy, from Assyria via Yemen; that a Jewish flute girl welcomed St Thomas who arrived with the first Christians in 55CE. What is indisputable is that the Jews were here in the 11th century, when their leader received a set of engraved copper plates from the Hindu ruler of Cranganore bestowing on them privileges that were usually afforded only to the local aristocracy. They included exemption from paying taxes, the right to collect tolls, the honour of using particular lamps, umbrellas, drums and trumpets associated with high ritual status. These copper plates are the earliest documentation of a permanent settlement in Cochin and testify to a unique relationship. They are preserved in the synagogue.

In 1341 a flood shifted the coastline, silting up Cranganore. A new harbour was created by this natural disaster, 43 miles south in Cochin, and the Jews followed. In 1500 the Portuguese arrived on the Malabar coast and their persecution resulted in the destruction of houses and synagogues and almost all the original documents of this ancient community. It was not until the Dutch took over in 1663 that harmony and prosperity were restored. This brought immigrants mainly from Europe and the Middle East and with these *paradesis*, a new era began. In 1664 the synagogue which had been destroyed by the Portuguese was rebuilt and became known as the Paradesi synagogue.

At some stage in the 16th century the Jews divided themselves into separate communities. They were influenced by their Hindu neighbours in this 'caste' division which in their case consisted of two main groups: the Malabari settlers who considered themselves to be of

## Circumcision

pure descent from ancient Israel, and the later immigrants from the Middle East and Europe. They became known as the Black and White Jews respectively; the White Jews remained in Mattancheri and the Black Jews moved to another island, Ernakulum. There they built their own synagogues and flourished separately, and the communities mutually refused to socialise or intermarry. Now the divisions have all but disappeared and those Malabari Jews still in Ernakulum come to Jew Town on High Holydays to form *aminyan*. There is no resident rabbi and never has been. Today, from a thriving and prosperous combined community of many thousands of people and eight synagogues, there are no more than 70 Jews in total, and the Paradesi synagogue is the only one that remains. The others fell into disrepair as numbers dwindled, and many of the ritual objects were taken to Israel.

The reason for the huge decline in their numbers is the migration to Israel in the early 1950s to lead a more religious life, and also by the apprehension of what might happen to India after Independence. None were forced to leave. Those Paradesi Jews who have stayed on in Cochin are the wealthy ones. Some have become lawyers and doctors and in 1968 they celebrated the 400th anniversary of their synagogue with, amongst other things, a gold-caparisoned elephant loaned from a Hindu temple, the presence of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Kerala music and dance.

I reflected on this once vibrant community which has moved on: it had given and gained so much. For those of it who remain cling on to their traditions and their Law. The last Bar Mitzvah was in 1974 and the last wedding in 1968. I pondered on the words of one Cochin Jew who had left: "... a root from the tree (of this fading Cochin community) is shooting up in Israel and starting to blossom".

In the jargon of Iraqi Jews, the Portuguese were referred to as *Partkaishi* to denote a callous person.

Bravo! The remarks with which you followed my letter on page 39/issue 65 showed without a shadow of a doubt how efficiently you handled the information materials bringing the logistical structure of *The Scribe* in a so high-grade level. It is a self-evident fact that the correction of names in a photograph was intelligently served as a vehicle for another correction in another photograph. Like all the best performances, things are instantly recognisable when they are well done. Your uptake merits an appreciative praise. *Yishar Kohakh!* Now about the pictures of Feisal I mentioned to you. I am glad in this connection to give a name to the young man standing to the right of Qadri. He was Dahood Noori, the son of Noori Nahom, the brother of Farha and the nephew of Abraham.

Milan

Edward Yamen

What I gave I have —

What I spent I gained —

What I saved I lost.

In relation to the interesting article by Kurt Fleischmann (issue 65 — page 10) which deals with circumcision and some of its aspects, along with the addendum equally interesting made by Naim Dangoor who treated the subject with thoroughgoing care, I feel under particular obligation to clarify some points of relevance along with comments which may be useful.

(1) Mr Fleischmann stated that every male is born with a foreskin which is removed by circumcision. This is practically true though there are babies born with a very much retreated foreskin: they are born as circumcised and it came to happen that I assisted in such a case while I was still under training. It was really a circumcision well done by nature. Such kinds of circumcision are known to the Iraqi mothers as *tihough el kamagh* (moon's circumcision!). No specific idea about the plain meaning of the word.

Under such circumstances, the *mohel* had still to carry out this significant and simplest operation by cutting the very little bit which he deemed necessary.

I would like to take this opportunity to mention a statement in the *midrash* that our prophet "Moses" was born *Mahool* — circumcised — which clearly means that he was born circumcised by nature.

(2) Mr Naim Dangoor in his addendum asked for an official ruling in writing that there is nothing in the *Halacha* against carrying out circumcision under local anaesthetic. Though I am not directly entitled to enter into a debate concerning this matter, I declare that as a beginner and then as a *mohel*, a local anaesthetic was an integral part of my practice. I should admit in the meantime that I did not know exactly how far that kind of water-coloured liquid, called Xylocain, worked on the baby! I was taught and have scrupulously followed the method by soaking a small cotton ball with this liquid and keeping it on the place for a while before cutting the superfluous part. That is it! I do hope and trust that this really helped to give an effective result and much less pain to the babies. It is very important to mention that the babies remained awake, crying and screaming when the knife did its job. So, they never seemed to have lost their senses due to the anaesthetic at any time. In this case a ruling does not seem strictly required.

It so happened out of curiosity that I asked my dentist and friend not a long time ago about the anaesthetic substance he injected in my mouth before carrying out an operation on me. To my surprise (and satisfaction) it was the same Xylocain. So I told him of my first encounters with this same liquid as a *mohel* a long time ago when I used it on the babies upon circumcising them. As a Rumanian Jew, the dentist understood fully well what I was talking about and he took it as a simple matter of fact, adding that this type of medicine is innocuous, effective and well known worldwide.

As regards circumcision in Islam, it is carried out most strictly and a Muslim regards it as the essential external element in belonging to Islam, though it is only a *Sunna* (custom) mentioned in the *Hadith* but not in the *Koran*. As is commonly observed in sociology, it is not always the most formally prescribed customs which are carried out most strictly. A Muslim

who has given up Prayer (one of the five Pillars in Islam) will refuse with horror to eat pork, which the *Koran* prohibits as one of those commandments such as usury, sculpture, playing cards, wine and alcoholic drinks etc. But that an uncircumcised Muslim man can exist is just impossible to believe.

Whereas circumcision in Christianity was abolished by Paul as a political act not even subscribed to by Peter, the same as happened to Saturday!

Also about circumcision in Christianity; Michelangelo made an unforgivable blunder to David, a big misrepresentation, showing David uncircumcised.

Milan

Edward Yamen

## Wilfrid Israel

I read your book review on page 17 of the last issue about Wilfrid Israel with great interest and appreciation.

The destruction of the airliner — IBIS — remained as one of the unexplained mysteries of WWII. One possible reason was supplied by Sir Winston Churchill who mentioned it in Volume IV of his *History of the Second World War* (The Hinge of Fate):

"Eden and I flew home together by Gibraltar. As my presence in North Africa had been fully reported, the Germans were exceptionally vigilant, and this led to a tragedy which much distressed me. The regular commercial aircraft was about to start from the Lisbon airfield when a thickset man smoking a cigar walked up and was thought to be a passenger upon it. The German agents therefore signalled that I was on board".

It may have been so but others were of the opinion that Wilfrid Israel himself may have been the real target. He was blacklisted by the Germans as a British Agent. His visit to Portugal in 1943 was to organise the movement to Palestine of 1500 refugees. According to some theories, the Germans believed that Israel was selecting scientists with special knowledge of atomic research, and putting them to work for the Allies. It may have been the case, and it is known that some of the personnel who worked on project Manhattan were picked by him. As a matter of fact, Einstein, on 7th December '47, said about him that he was one of the finest and most noble individuals he had personally known. His acquaintance with him goes back to the twenties. Naomi Shepherd, by writing the book, blamelessly wrote one of the most turbulent pages in Jewish history, when the ferocious German wolf was clenching the teeth, grimly determined to harm the Jewish lamb. But in her book, she brought afloat a bright story of a forgotten man! Wilfrid Israel had wished to be buried on a mountain, his death was recorded: "Lost at Sea".

Milan

Edward Yamen

Mohammed al Mas'ari has advocated in his fax circular bulletin that all Jews have to be killed. Later, this Saudi fugitive, qualified his statement by saying that he only means Israeli Jews. Surprisingly, synagogue-going Home Secretary, Michael Howard, finds no reason to prosecute him.

Whoever Jews he means, our Torah allows these Jews to find him and get rid of him first before he can find them.

# At the Memorial Foundation Conference in Buenos Aires

by Professor Eric Moonman, OBE  
Vice-President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews

I was shocked by the trauma the Jewish community has experienced these past two years. No sooner had the Buenos Aires community absorbed the horror of the bombing of the Israeli Embassy in 1992, killing more than 20 people, then they had to "dig deeply into their inner resources to cope", as one Argentinian Jew told me, with the second and more extensive bomb explosion. In no way was the first experience any support for what was to follow. The two incidents were different in a number of ways but they had the same deadening effects on the Jewish community both in Argentina and throughout other communities in Latin America.

A week after the 1994 AMIA bombing, in which 89 people were killed and 300 injured, a major rally took place with thousands of people, Jews and non-Jews. In the past two years President Menem, members of the Government and parliamentarians have expressed their distress and concern to the Jewish leadership on the failure to establish responsibility for the bombings.

Within the community, local researchers produced a series of descriptions of the families who suffered lost children under the title, "**Their Names. Their Faces**" (*sous Numero, sous Rostros*).

Argentinian public opinion, with some right-wing exceptions, is concerned about the Jewish fears and individual Government members never hesitate to attend Jewish functions, whilst the press is generally alert to Jewish anxieties. All this does not minimise the genuine worries of the Jews and many of the young have left the country. (There are some 60,000 Argentinian Jews in Israel).

Yet the Jewish community is well-organised; living largely in the beautiful and exciting city of Buenos Aires, with excellent school facilities for all ages and a well regarded Jewish University.

Argentine Jews readily acknowledge that they live in a tolerant society, according to Sergio Kiernan. The interactions of daily life – relationships with neighbours, business partners, fellow students, Gentile acquaintances – show that Argentina is not a bigoted country. The political history of the country, although rich in violence and upheavals, demonstrates that group prejudice is a dead end because it does not pay. Antisemites do exist, but their message has not influenced the political tone of the country.

There is clear concern over the failure to establish responsibility for the bombings, despite the fact that two years have passed on.

During my visit, another twist to the story of

the AMIA Centre bombing occurred when the Argentine Minister of Justice resigned on June 11. The community leadership is confronted with a delicate balance of maintaining pressure on the Government in its search for the guilty responsible for the bombing and yet urges restraint on its own members. The *Buenos Aires Herald* described the issue succinctly: "People sharing a common rejection of Nazi policies must concentrate on real issues, such as finding those responsible for these two terrorist outrages or opposing Barra's fellow-travellers still in government positions, instead of being carried away by internal community divisions."

Barra's exit should mark the end of his career, not the start of a growing split within those standing up to all forms of extremism." (Barra was the former Minister of Justice who, it was discovered only a few weeks ago, had been a member of a Nazi youth group when in his teens.)

For the record, the Jewish population in Argentina is around 300,000, somewhat the same as our population in Britain. It's a curious thing but after the bombings many people came back into the community. Within a month, 6,000 Jews signed up as members of AMIA, even people who were not on anyone's list!!●



April 1996 at the Israeli Embassy in London. Mr Shimon Peres on a brief visit to receive an Award from the Commonwealth Jewish Council.



## Serves you right!

A bomb goes off in Atlanta causing a hundred casualties among innocent Olympic visitors. Flags are flown at half-mast and security is tightened even more. Yet, when the Israeli athletes were kidnapped by Yasser Arafat and his terrorists, the games went on in Munich as usual and the whole drama merely provided live entertainment for millions of television viewers. When the eleven Israeli athletes were finally massacred at the airport by the German police, the tragedy was hushed up by a smoke screen of conflicting reports.

The callousness of the Olympic leadership is highlighted by their refusal to make reference to the Munich tragedy of 1972 in successive Olympiads. Last July, the families of the Israeli martyrs had to walk out of the stadium when, contrary to his earlier promises, the president of the International Olympic Committee, Juan Antonio Samaranch, omitted to mention the Munich victims. While sympathising with the innocent victims and their families, we say to the callous Olympic managers: It serves you right.

Like the Holocaust, Jews have to beg the world to believe the tragedies that befell us. We have to moan and wail, in the words of Aikha (Lamentations 1:12), "is it of no concern to all you who pass by?"

And, like the Holocaust, future revisionist historians will say of Munich that it never happened, or that it was merely a Zionist plot to gain sympathy, and cover up for Jews not paying their taxes.

Terrorism and crimes against basic human rights, always start against the Jews, and when they are met with universal silence and indifference, they continue against others. When Jews of Iraq were harassed, persecuted and pushed into Exodus, their property looted, and confiscated by the State of Iraq, no one raised a finger in protest. Now there are a million Iraqi Moslems roaming the cities of the world in search of asylum, millions are starving in Iraq amid vast oil wealth and Iraqi boys and girls beg in the streets of Baghdad and Amman and offer themselves to gratify their hunger.

When will people learn their lesson?  
Pastor Neumöller said during the war:

*First they came for the Jews,  
and I did not speak out,  
because I was not a Jew;*

*Then they came for the Communists,  
and I did not speak out,  
because I was not a Communist;*

*Then they came for the Catholics,  
and I did not speak out,  
because I was not a Catholic;*

*Then they came for the Trade Unionists,  
and I did not speak out,  
because I was not a Trade Unionist;*

*Then they came for me,  
and there was no-one left  
to speak out for me!●*

الشادي ما يعرف يرمقى  
يقول الارض مغوجة

Al shadi ma ye'eref yerqes  
yeqoul el arth me'eghouja  
The monkey can't dance but blames  
the uneven surface.

## Jews who escaped Iraq in 1970s hold Reunion

from the *Jerusalem Post*

Some 600 Iraqi Jews who escaped after their lives were threatened in 1970-1971 are expected to attend a reunion this evening to mark 25 years since their flight.

The conference, in memory of the last aliya from Iraq, will take place in Or Yehuda and will be attended by 400 people who make their homes here and 150 who will arrive from different parts of the world. One woman is expected to arrive from Vietnam.

The conference is being organized by Linda Menuhin, an employee at the Internal Security Ministry who, together with her younger brother, escaped from Baghdad in 1970 with the help of intermediaries, the Kurds in north Iraq, and the Israeli government. Disguised as poor Moslems, they fled to north Iraq, where they continued their journey on donkeys over the Iranian border to Teheran, where they were met by Israeli officials.

At the time, the shah was in power in Iran and cooperated with operations. From there, families made their way to Israel. Some did not stay here, but made their homes in the USA and Britain.

During 1970-1972, some 2,500 of the more than 3,000 Jews left in Iraq escaped the country, by road and on foot. Imminent threats on the lives of Jews followed the Six-Day War. Several Jews, accused in propaganda show-trials of spying for Israel, were hanged in Baghdad's main square, and others were arrested by secret police. Some returned home, others disappeared, and the bodies of others were sent back to their families bearing visible signs of torture. Families were told they had died of natural causes in prison.

Today, there are only around 75 Jews left in Iraq. Many details of the flights, which have not been published over the past 20 years, will be told by individuals this evening.

According to Menuhin, the Iraqi regime at the time gave off ambiguous signals, at times turning a blind eye to the plight of individuals and families, while persecuting Jews left behind. Her father disappeared without trace, apparently assassinated, after the rest of her immediate family fled.

The conference will also be in memory of a Jewish Iraqi philanthropist, Frank Iny, who financed the only Jewish high school in Baghdad. Most of those attending the conference are graduates of the school●

انا لغنيية وتعجبني لصدية

Ana leghniyi wete'ejebni lehdiyi  
Although I am rich I appreciate a present.

اذا طلعت لية ابنك  
زين لبيك

Etha tal'et lehyet ebnak zayen lehyetak  
When your son's beard appears,  
shave your own●

## Shamash and Alliance Reunion

Thousands of graduates from "Shamash", "Alliance" and other schools in Iraq came to Heichal Hatarbut to participate in the historical meeting, which was organised by the Babylonian Jewry Heritage Centre, to reminisce and to renew the contact with schoolmates as well as to contemplate the variety of the artistic programme on the schools in Iraq.

The Conference was opened on Thursday, 13th June 1996 after preparations of two years, in order to locate and contact the numerous graduates all over the world and to prepare the conference programme. After two hours of nostalgic meeting between old friends, the artistic programme which was conducted by Mr Daniel Peer, started by Babylonian songs sung by the Neherayim Choir and conducted by Mr Yitzhak Aviezer. The introductory speech was addressed by Mr Mordechai Ben-Porat, Chairman of the Centre, who referred to the importance of the Conference and invited the graduates to continue to hold social and cultural activities within the limits of the Centre.

Mr Ben-Porat praised the volunteers, Mr Abraham Shashou, Mr Yousif Meir, Dr Shaul Shehayik, Mr Yitzhak Salman and thanked Mr Yigal Loushi, Prof. Yitzhak Avishur, Academic Director and Dr Zvi Yehuda, Research Institute Director, together with the staff of the Centre. Among the guests were also Mr Shlomo Hiflél, President of the Jewish Foundation Fund, Prof. Gideon Golani from the States, Mr Latif Hoory from London, Mr Edward Dangoor from Paris and Members of the Executive Board of the Centre: Mr Arie Shemesh, Deputy Chairman; Mr Eliyahou Hoory, Treasurer and Mr Jacob Haham and Mr Avner Basri, Members of the Board Committee. Speeches were addressed by: Dr Shaul Shehayik representing the Shamash School and who was from its first graduates; Advocate Shimon Ben Yacov representing the Alliance School and Prof. Daniel Khazzoum from the USA representing the Diaspora graduates. Right after the introductory speeches, a film on the Jewish education in Babylon was screened reviewing the history of the Jewish education system for nearly two thousand years. The film was based on the research of Dr Zvi Yehuda and directed by the producer Yitzhak Haloutzi. It won the approval of the audience.

The main part of the evening was short plays depicting various aspects on the life in school conducted by Prof. Avishur. The actors who took part were Yitzhak and Shlomo Battat, Salman Abdalla and Shosha Goren, together with the graduates Ada Zakaria, Oved Elbig and Ovadia Bekhor. The musical part of the evening was uniquely rich and included performances given by "Neharayim Choir", "Ramat-Gan Oriental Band" and the singers of Avi Cohen, Iman and Yousif Baghdadi.

The festive evening lasted till midnight. Before leaving, many of the participants left detailed information regarding their school years, which will be computerised and used for documentation and research. A colourful album was printed especially for the conference that included rare photographs on the students from different schools in Baghdad edited by Dr Zvi Yehuda. The evening was videotaped. The album and the video cassette can be purchased in the babylonian heritage Centre, Hahagana Street, Or-Yehuda 60261; telephone No. 5339277-9, Fax No: 5339936●



**Left to right: ...; ...; Saleh Solomon; Kedouri Sasson Daniel; Stella Dangoor (Solomon); Paulette Moshi Shohet; Regina Solomon (Daniel); David Salman (Sala); Ezra Menahem Daniel.**  
**In the background: the pupils of Gan Yeladim School of Menahem Saleh Daniel.**

My strange story is as follows:

An established businessman in Baghdad, Iraq, named Salim Atrakchee was married to a woman who was unable to bear children. Salim was Muslim. However, during the course of his marriage, he fell in love with a beautiful Jewish girl named Juliette R.

Juliette agreed to bear children for him to help her destitute family.

In 1948-49, the older son Adel was born, and when Adel was one year old, Salim took the child home to his Muslim wife. One year later, I (Sami) was born. According to a previously made agreement, I stayed with Juliette.

Salim wanted to marry Juliette and asked her to convert to Islam. She refused and instead preferred to go and live in Israel (also according to a prior agreement). Juliette then fled Iraq with me for Israel, passing through Iran. In Iran, she met a man named Benjamin P. who married her before she reached Israel in order to spare her shame upon her arrival here.

In Israel, she divorced Benjamin and decided to begin a new life. She gave me (Sami) to her mother, who was by then already in Israel.

Both my mother (Juliette) and my grandmother always told me that Juliette was my older sister. I eventually understood that Juliette was my mother.

In 1954, Juliette remarried a well-known building contractor and bore another three children.

Three months ago, I decided to investigate my roots and to find more about my identity. I started to unravel the true story when I found Menashe P. Benjamin's brother, who told me that Juliette (Julia) is indeed my mother, and that my father was Salim Atrakchee and that I have a (full) brother named Adel. I understood from him that he had known Salim, Juliette and Adel in Iraq before Juliette and I left for Israel in 1951.

In addition, it seems that Adel Atrakchee requested help in finding his mother Juliette from a Jewish couple in London, in about 1989-90. He told this couple that his father, Salim Atrakchee, had passed away, and that his step-mother had told him about his mother Juliette, and her Jewish identity. He tried to locate his mother Juliette and help her financially as well as to give her happiness.

When Adel was informed that his mother Juliette was living a good life in Israel and was not wanting for anything, Adel returned to Baghdad.

Today, Adel does not know that I exist, and there is no one in Iraq who can tell him about me.

Since the day I discovered that I have a brother, from the same father and mother, my life has changed. I told my whole story on Israel's radio. Some wonderful people heard the programme, called me and gave me your telephone number, saying that you would be able to help me in my search.

I hope one of your readers will locate my brother in Baghdad who is a well-known businessman.

**Modi'in, Israel Sami Shmuel Yehudah**

*Scribe:* The above story has an important moral. Juliette did not succumb to the temptation of marrying her Moslem lover and thus kept her family united. The pull of her community traditions were too strong, and she ended up in Israel among her people.

This explains how the Jews have survived through many centuries. As Disraeli once put it – A superior culture cannot be submerged by inferior ones●

### “Anwar Sadat”

by: Joseph Finklestone  
 Published by Frank Cass 1996  
 Reviewed by Percy Gourgey

In 1975, two years before President Sadat of Egypt made his historic trip to Israel and spoke in the Knesset about his desire for peace with the State with which he made war in 1973, the author wrote to Sadat expressing his belief that Sadat was a man of peace and not war. The author was the Foreign Editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*.

This remarkable biography of Sadat was written with the co-operation of the President's wife, Jihan (born of an English mother). It chronicles the colourful career of Sadat – born in poverty, a nationalist who spent years in jail, later joining the Egyptian Army and joining Nasser in overthrowing King Farouk in 1952.

In May 1979, the author had a long interview with Sadat in Egypt which is reproduced in full in the book. As is known, Sadat won the Nobel Peace Prize with Prime Minister Begin.

The author describes in detail how Sadat was assassinated by Muslim fundamentalists in a military parade marking the 8th anniversary of the Yom Kippur War, and how “like Sadat, Yitzhak Rabin was a visionary leader, and victim of a ruthless assassin.”

This book provides an illuminating account of an exciting and crucial period in Middle East history●

**MIDRASH BEN ISH HAI** in New York continues to spread and restore the authentic Babylonian and Sephardi traditions under the inspiring and devoted leadership of Rabbi Ya'aqob Manasseh. Besides regular daily prayers, classes for different groups of all ages, there are lectures and community functions. A special commemoration of the FARHUD – the pogrom in Baghdad, during Shabu'oth 1941 – was presented for the anniversary by different speakers, members of the audience also giving their moving first-hand experiences. A special gesture was the donation of \$5,000 by Sasson, Rebecca and Diana Shahmoon towards a much needed Sefer Torah for MBIH, in memory of their parents, Ezra and Lydia Shahmoon, in the name of Moses Sultoon; this fund is being supplemented by other friends overseas and here in London. At the annual dinner on June 12, 1996 the young MBIH choir entertained the audience with shbahoht in our Babylonian tradition, the audience participating heartily.

The Midrash is firm in its belief that our children are the future of our people, and there is a special emphasis on youth activity from Torah classes to Purim carnivals. A special development is: **THE MIDRASH HIGH SCHOOL** for boys, opening in September 1996, emphasising the world of the Babylonian and Sephardi Jewish people, religion and culture, with equal emphasis on the general studies programme of secular education and computer technology in the modern world. This answers a special need in our community where no such High School exists in the general vicinity of Queens, New York. High School children have to find places in Ashkenazi institutions or the general system, where our culture and traditions are lost. Many come from immigrant families who need to be subsidised. In America today, forces of assimilation have had a disastrous effect on our people, the like of which we have never known. The glory of Babylonian and Sephardi Jewry and their illustrious Hakhameem appears to be vanishing before our eyes. MBIH pursuing the vision for the future has been working hard to restore the authentic, glorious heritage of Babylonian and Sephardi Jewry. We are creating future leaders, both lay leaders and Torah scholars, who will lead our people into the coming century. **THE MIDRASH HIGH SCHOOL** is a project of utmost importance and your support is vital●



1946, at the opening of Ezra Menahem Sports Centre, at Battaween, Baghdad.

Front row:

left to right: Meer Basri; Yousef Dahan (teacher); Paulette Shohet; Violet Shamash; Moshi Shohet; Haron Shamash.

In the picture also appear, Doris Aboody Moshi (Shukur); Edward Shukur; Gladys Shukur (Sopher); Daoud Peress●

Left: Senator Ezra Menahem Daniel and his decorations – the Orders of Rafidain and Red Crescent. Sent by Stella Dangoor.



## Books received:

1. **The End of the Nation States – the Rise of Regional Economies**  
How new engines of prosperity are reshaping global markets.  
by Kenichi Ohmae  
Published by Harper-Collins.
2. **Food in Antiquity**  
Edited by John Wilkins, David Harvey & Mike Dobson  
Published by University of Exeter Press.
3. **Plague's Progress – A Social History of Man and Disease**  
by Arno Karlen  
Published by Victor Gollancz, London.
4. **Christian-Jewish Dialogue**  
Compiled and edited by Helen P. Fry  
Published by University of Exeter Press.
5. **Essays on Ancient and Modern Judaism**  
by Arnaldo Momigliano  
Edited and with an introduction by Silvia Berti  
Translated by Maura Masella-Gayley  
Published by the University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London●

## A History of Jerusalem – One City, Three Faiths

by Karen Armstrong  
Published by Harper Collins 1996  
471pp £20.00

## About Time – Einstein's unfinished revolution

by Paul Davies  
Published by Viking  
316pp £17.00

The greatest scientific discovery of the 20th century is Einstein's theory of relativity, by which Time is no longer regarded as absolute, but a component of that four-dimensional amalgam known as space-time.

The book says: "From Judaism came the Western concept of time so central to the scientific world view. In contrast to the pervasive notion of time as cyclic, the Jews came to believe in linear time. A central tenet of the Jewish faith, subsequently inherited by both Christianity and Islam, was that of the historical process, whereby God's plan for the universe unfolds according to a definite temporal sequence. In this system of belief, the universe was created by God at a definite moment in the past, in a very different state from the one that exists today"●

I would like to tell you how very much I enjoyed reading *The Scribe*. I am so thankful to you for reporting all these stories and finding all those photographs. Finding your magazine was a joy to me and my husband and I always look forward to the next issue. I would like to fill in some of the blanks on the photograph on page 19, issue 62.

I am the girl in the front row, third from the left between Blanche Jiji and Louise Nessim Shakarchi. I am Farha Menashi Khetaina (Dayan, my married name). Student No. 22 is Violette Menahem●

Florida

Varda Dayan

## Essays on Ancient and Modern Judaism

by Arnaldo Momigliano  
Edited and with an introduction  
by Silvia Berti

Translated by Maura Masella-Gayley  
Printed by The University of Chicago Press.

This volume combines a collection of Twentysix of Momigliano's essays on a variety of Jewish themes and individuals, most of which appear in English for the first time. Arnaldo Momigliano (1908-87) was a classicist and historian. He was professor of ancient history at the University of London and visiting Professor at the University of Chicago●

I recently had the opportunity to read a copy of your journal, *The Scribe*, which I found most interesting. I was delighted to read it. I wish to send my compliments to all those who were involved in initiating this project and to everyone involved in preparing each issue. Such ideas contribute so much towards maintaining the heritage of the Iraqi Jewry. I am active in several organizations of the Iraqi Jewry in Israel. I graduated from the Shamash school in Baghdad, there I was active in the "Tnua", the Zionist underground movement. I immigrated illegally to Israel through Iran in 1950. Presently, I am the Deputy Director General of the Public Works Department.

I will be very grateful to receive *The Scribe* periodically●

Israel

Haim Eilam

مد / جلك على قد باطك

Medd rejlak ala qad besatak  
Do not stretch your leg beyond your rag.

خذو على قد عقلو

Khethou ala qad aqlou  
Handle him according to his intelligence.

# Israel's Agricultural Revolution

by Yitzhak Kiriati, Director,  
Agriculture & Chemicals Department,  
Israel Export Institute

From  
*International Water and Irrigation Review*

Israel is into its fourth agricultural revolution, from a small desert state, poor in water and arable land, into an exporter of \$1 billion a year in fresh and processed food and \$1.2 billion in agricultural inputs in 1993.

The first revolution was self-sufficiency. Necessity being the mother of invention, Israel's agro-technologists learned early on how to overcome such hurdles as low rainfall, lack of fertile soil, hot summer seasons and scarcity of investment capital. Then, as today, they were backed by a network of research stations, academic establishments and an agricultural extension service, turning this small country into one large agricultural experimental station.

Results have been impressive: high-tech irrigation methods coupled with high-yield crops and intensive animal husbandry have made it possible to feed a population that has grown from 650,000 in 1948 to 5.3 million in 1994.

The average Israeli milk cow produces 9,400 litres of milk a year, compared with 6,900 litres of milk in Denmark and the United States and 5,800 in Holland. Despite hot and arid summers, cold winters and flash floods, melons, peaches and pecans flourish. Fish and top-quality dairy cattle give high yields in the middle of the desert.

The third generation was about technology itself. Irrigation, greenhouse growing, planting and transplanting, poultry and dairy farming, spraying, harvesting, sorting and many other branches of agriculture needed Israeli equipment, Israeli drip irrigation systems, vegetable seeds, bull semen, agro-chemicals and other inputs are sold throughout the United States, Europe, Australia, Latin America, Africa and South-East Asia, to a total export value of about a billion dollars a year.

Increasingly, agricultural know-how has become a resource as valuable as its technology. Particular strengths are water management, super-intensive agriculture, agricultural development in arid, semi-arid and saline conditions, field and fruit crops, poultry and dairy farming, and warm water aquaculture.

One result of the Middle East peace process is that many new states benefit from Israel's agricultural expertise and experience in developing large-scale intensive agriculture. Regional joint ventures with Middle Eastern partners, from Morocco eastward to Oman, will bring the entire region to a higher and more stable economic level.

Israeli companies have established a strong reputation among farmers and agro-entrepreneurs in India and China. Many companies have found joint venture partners, for local manufacture of irrigation equipment, agricultural plastic sheeting and agro-chemicals. Israeli companies are developing markets in the Far East and carrying out major turnkey projects all over the globe.

Thus, the fourth revolution – a business approach to agricultural development – is a



George Elias of Manchester is deeply involved in the Gesher water project of Israel. The above picture shows him with some of his colleagues, taken at the Babylonian Centre. Left to right:

Standing: Shlomo Gabbay; Yehoshova Habooshi; George Elias; Dr Shaul Sehayik; Sasson Sehayik; Sadok Mahleb; Simon Somekh; Ezra Mani; Goorji (Rahamin) Sheberu; Eliahu Hillel; Naim Twena.

In front: Jacob Levy; Ovadiah Sehayik; Abraham Sharoni●



The above picture is of surveyors of major projects at the Ministry of Irrigation, Baghdad which dealt at the time with the Bakhma project on the Great Zab and the Rumaitha project on the Euphrates. I appear 4th standing on the left.

In view of the shortage of Iraqi surveyors, the Government employed surveyors from India●  
Ramat-Gan, Israel

Moshe Hoory

يخاف من خيالو

Yekhaf men Khyalou  
He is scared of his own shadow.

الجمال لو عاين حد بتو كان  
دقع وانكسرت غهقبتو

Al jamal lo ayan hedbetou kan  
waqa'a wenkasret gheqbetou  
If the camel can see his hump he would  
collapse and break his neck.

corollary of Israel's world leadership in agricultural know-how. Business-orientated operations in which production programmes are determined on the basis of market opportunities are the wave of the future. Joint ventures, regional projects and integrated total turnkey solutions "from the seed to the can" utilise the strengths and experience of Israel's agricultural companies, from the supply of technology to implementation, processing, distribution and marketing of the projects●

# Tisha'a Be-Ab

from an article by  
Rabbi Professor Dan Cohn-Sherbrok

Last July, Jews throughout the world observed the Ninth of Ab (Tisha'a Be-Ab). This was the day when the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Temple in 586BCE and the Roman general Titus devastated the Second Temple in 70CE.

Inevitably, in a post-Holocaust world, those catastrophes of long ago have become symbolic of the destruction of six million Jews during the Nazi era. Tisha'a Be-Ab has thereby come to represent both ancient and modern calamities that have befallen the Jewish community.

While pious Jews have remained faithful to the belief in an all-Powerful and compassionate God despite such tragedies, many Jews in the modern world have found it impossible to believe in a God of mercy. For those individuals Tisha'a Be-Ab has come to take on a new significance: it highlights the absence of God, rather than His abiding presence in the face of massacre and death.

The Jewish community is thus polarised between believers and unbelievers, all of whom are struggling to make sense of the calamitous history of the nation. Is there a solution to this dilemma? Throughout Jewish history there has been a recognition that there is no means by which human beings can understand the true nature of divine reality: this insight should pave the way to a revitalised theology of Judaism.

From biblical times there has been a conscious awareness that there is a fundamental distinction between God as He is in Himself and human conceptions of the divine. Scripture, for example, frequently cautions against describing God anthropomorphically. In rabbinic literature there are comparable passages which suggest that human beings should refrain from attempting to depict God's nature.

The recognition of the limits of human understanding can provide a basis for confronting the disasters that have befallen the Jewish people in ancient and modern times. God must not be reduced to human categories and then dismissed as irrelevant in the face of horrors that have occurred to the Jewish community. Rather, we must acknowledge our incapacity to understand God's ways.

Medieval Jewish philosophers such as Moses Maimonides argued that the ascription to God of positive attributes is a form of idolatry. Thus one cannot say what God is; one can only say what He is not.

*Naim Dangoor adds:*

If the ascription to God of positive attributes is a form of idolatry, then the ascription to God of negative attributes is blasphemy. For once Rabbi Maimonides is wrong.

At the Tisha'a Be-Ab Synagogue service we were given the biblical explanation why the First Temple was destroyed in 586BCE. The reasons were: immorality, homicide and idolatry.

At the time of the Second Temple, none of the above sins were prevalent. The Rabbinic view why the Second Temple was destroyed in 70CE was hatred without cause among fellow Jews. Our philosophers are still working out what sins we committed for which the Holocaust (a greater tragedy than the destruction of both

Temples) was the punishment. Possible candidates are: assimilation, political Zionism and eating forbidden food. But what about Torah scholars, children and babies, what were their sins? We might ask with our Patriarch Abraham, will not the supreme Judge do justly?

Such approaches make of Nebuchadnezzar, Nero and Hitler the obedient agents of God and the Jews remain the eternal villains. This won't do.

I obtain some comfort from the belief that we are punished not only for our own sins, but, having accepted the role of the chosen people, we suffer for God the wickedness of all mankind.

The most bizarre Tisha'a Be-Ab was in 1967 when, as a result of the Six Day War, the Old City of Jerusalem returned to Jewish hands after 1900 years. However, religious Jews went on to observe a few weeks later the Fast of Ab as usual. Quipped *Time* magazine: Jews Mourn Loss of Jerusalem. Another publication depicted a cartoon showing Nasser asking Moshe Dayan, "Can we borrow the Wailing Wall for a couple of hours?!"

Your item in the March '96 *Scribe*, **What is the Matter with Them?** is surprisingly revealing. To learn that Sir Philip Sassoon used to say he was a Parsee, and that well-heeled ex-Iraqi Jew would claim a foreign origin, such as Spain and even Latvia!

As a matter of fact, many Iraqi newcomers to Israel in the early 1950s found it convenient to disown their origin. But that was a result of the virulent Ashkenazi discrimination then rampant in Polish dominated Israel. It was part of their struggle for existence in a hostile environment among the Holocaust hardened remnants of European Jewry. But by and large, this practice prevailed only among a spineless minority of the *bedelek-Hesqeil, taqqit-lo-ma-taqqit* category.

Owing to the rag-tag nature of that mass immigration, many Iraqis in Israel now find it convenient to stress their specific points of origin. They would thus insist, for instance, that they are from Baghdad although nowadays Israel can at long last boast a minister of defence who hails from Kurdistan, in which martial capacity he may yet prove to be the best such minister Israel has ever had!

Israel

Ezra S. Soffer

I enjoy reading *The Scribe* and commend you on the excellent substance of each article. In reference to Benjamin Solomon Levi's article about his grandfather, I believe he is my cousin. His father and mine were brothers.

The issue of our mutual grandfather Eliahu Levi is as follows:

	Place of Birth		Sons	Daughters
Eliahu Levi,	Aleppo, Syria	1865-1911	5	4
Massooda Thebith	Baghdad, Iraq	1887-1948	3	1
Esther Judah	Baghdad, Iraq	1889-1970	4	3
Ezra Kelly Levi (my father)	Calcutta, India	1892-1954	2	7
Girgee Abraham	Calcutta, India	1894-1980	2	—
Isaac Levi	Calcutta, India	1896-1900	—	—
Rachel Judah	Calcutta, India	1898-1982	3	3
Judah Levi	Calcutta, India	1900-1969	2	7
Saleh Levi	Calcutta, India	1902-1910	—	—
Solomon Levi	Calcutta, India	1905-1961	6	1

My name in Calcutta was Tryphosa Levi

Richmond Hill - Ontario

Tiffany Borenstein



1968. The visit of Indian President Zakir Hussein to the Ohel David Synagogue and Mausoleum of Sir David Sassoon in Poona.

Left to right: Albert Menashe; President Zakir Hussein; Governor Cherion; Sophie Kelly; Moses Sultoon



### Breaking the Kippur Fast at Telma & Emile Kattan's, 1995

Photo sent by Alice Semouha Aboody, New York

Left to right

Standing: Ghatan, née Koukou, Edna Khamara, née Kattan, Beverly Said Mehr Shalom, née Tawfik, Joseph Koukou, Edward Kattan, Albert Said Mehr Shalom, Danny Koukou, Kelly Koukou, Bob Ghatan, Verna Rabii, née Jiji, Anwar Koukou, Cynthia Arazi, née Koukou, Elie Arazi, Ron Rabii (face turned).

Seated: Loretta Arazi, Loris Dallal, Evelyn Koukou, Renee Wortheimer, Bertine Kattan, née Noonoo, Violet Said Mehr Shalom, née Koukou, Alice Semouha Aboody, Doris Koukou, née Shashoua, with grandson, Jason Koukou, on her lap, Sima Koukou, with daughter Remi.

Seated on the floor: Elie Khamara, with Aaron Kattan on his lap, Atessa Kattan, Mr Isaac Said Mehr Shalom, Ylan Kattan, Diana Arazi, Sharon Arazi, Marco Ghatan ●

## عزوري ابن عرب

I am an Israeli citizen who grew up in Iraq and have been living in Israel for the past 44 years. At present I am working on the English manuscript of a book on my life with Arabs of all walks of life, city dwellers as well as Bedouin tribesmen who called me "Azzouri Ibn Arab", the son of Arabs, this being the highest compliment a Muslim can bestow on a non-Muslim compatriot in the Middle East

In 1951, I was brought out by the Israeli government, along with 150,000 Iraqi Jews. We were the third shipment of hewers of wood and drawers of water to share in the building of the Third Temple: the new State of Israel.

I am writing a book on my life with the Arabs of Iraq and the East European Jews in Israel. I am looking for a publisher in England or the United States for my 300-page book.

In your issue No. 65 page 45, I find the article on group survival rather strange.

Now (1.5.96.) that Israel is fully committed to the peace process, your earlier advice to us to "vote Likud" appears to be very much out of line.

Congratulations on Eileen Khalastchy becoming Assistant Editor. Judging by her articles on *Customs and Life in Baghdad*, I can count on *The Scribe* keeping us interested.

**Yehud, Israel** **Ezra S. Soffer**

*Scribe*: The full "compliment" might have been "عزوري ابن عرب — حيث عليك انت يهودي". Azzouri "son of Arabs, what a pity you are a Jew." What an insult!

As regards group survival, we reiterate that "Jews will become a nation when we accept

that group survival is superior to individual survival". Do you recommend, for instance, that Israel should give up half its territory to save the lives of 10,000 hostages?

You obviously misjudged the recent election result. In 1992, Labour came to power as a result of the ten billion loan guarantee carrot. Since then, the PLO have been receiving concessions with one hand and exploding suicide bombs with the other. At last, the Jewish elector has come to his senses and voted convincingly in favour of Likud as we have advised ●

### The following is my answer to Mr Ezra S. Soffer.

Dear Mr Soffer,

I am writing to apologise for causing you some sleepless nights over what I said regarding Jerusalem: First let me remind you of Hillel who said "Do not judge a man until you are in his shoes".

Unfortunately you were too fast to get mad at me. Specially you used some harsh language in your comment. The word "We" was not meant I only, but every Jew, you included.

I wish to say that I, like other Israeli Jews have paid my dues to my country. When I emigrated to Israel I was comfortably residing in another country, not with the Aliya from Iraq. At the time a friend called from Manchester warning me not to go in view of the difficult conditions there, but go I did. I lived in Israel between the years 1950-1960. Upon arrival I was sent to a *maabara* and it took me a month to find my way out. It was raining the first night and the music caused by the rainfall on the

tent's roof I lived in was not that melodious. Besides, my one year old son refused to drink the unsweetened milk and was crying all the time, he was hungry. I had to run in all directions in that desolate *maabara* to beg for a tiny bit of sugar.

At one time I remember I had to wait in line for more than an hour to get a one green tomato; many things were rationed at that time. Do you remember when meat was allotted to children once a week only. Well I think I endured, suffered and participated. Unlike many others I had money with me when I arrived in Israel but when I left I had less than half of what I had, due to the numerous devaluations of the Israeli currency.

I also served in the army reserves of Israel and at one time in the civil defence. The other side of me — I am as Jewish as any one would wish. I also served in the Iraqi army reserves and I am as Iraqi as the Tigris if I might say so.

**Montreal**

**Munir Ata.**

*Scribe*: "They also serve who only sit and wait." ●

## الكلان شغلو قاتين

Al Keslan sheghlou qatain  
The lazy person works double.

## العذخ اقدى من الصويح

Al ethegh aqwa men el souch  
The excuse is worse than the offence.

My attention was drawn to the editorial published in your *Scribe* issue No. 65, regarding my father Joseph Elias Gabbay.

Joseph had witnessed Mesopotamia undergoing three starts of governments of varied and different administrations, of the Ottoman, British rule of occupation 1918-1921 and of early Iraq.

In 1921 Winston Churchill installed King Feisal I in Baghdad with limited powers – a British protected Monarchy with a High Commissioner in Baghdad.

After the British High Commissioner in Baghdad gave permission on 5th March 1921 for the establishment of the Zionist Society of Mesopotamia, Joseph presided over Zionist activities as an ardent communal leader and advocate and contributed to the Jewish cause and ideals. He was a frequent traveller in the Middle East and Egypt, and had close association with contemporary Turkish, British and Arab government officials and politicians who befriended him and sought his counsel.

He was a celebrated lawyer, esteemed and respected by Arab and Jew alike. He held many government posts such as head of the telegraph line to India at Fao, Governor of Fao, Ottoman Magistrate and successful counsel in private practice. His partners in his law firm were two Arab Sunni notables – Naji Sewaidi and Tawfiq Sewaidi. Naji, who studied and qualified in law at Constantinople University, became Joseph's life-long friend.

Joseph was one of the three Aides-de-Camp to King Feisal I, Vice-President of the House of Assembly between 1924 until his sudden death in Baghdad in 1927. The basis of Joseph being an Aide-de-Camp to King Feisal is the recollection of late mother Lulu who died in Jerusalem in 1962. This was confirmed by my brother Shlomo, who had a law practice in Jerusalem and he died in London in 1995. Shlomo vividly recalled weekly meetings with the King at his Palace, as he accompanied his father and saw the palace guard present arms whenever Joseph called to the Palace. Shlomo was eight at the time and had a prolific memory.

Joseph was born in 1878. He was the seventh generation descendant of Joshua Gabbay (1680-1763) who came to Basra from Bahrain where he was in the pearls and gems business, trading with India and Baghdad.

The family became very distinguished in Baghdad where it was known as Shua Gabbay. One grandson was Yitzhak, known as Sheikh Yitzhak Pasha who ruled with firmness between 1745 and 1773 and acted as "Saraf Bashi" or the Imperial Banker for the governor of Baghdad. He also served as the Nasi (President) of the Jewish community. He died together with three of his sons in the plague of 1773.

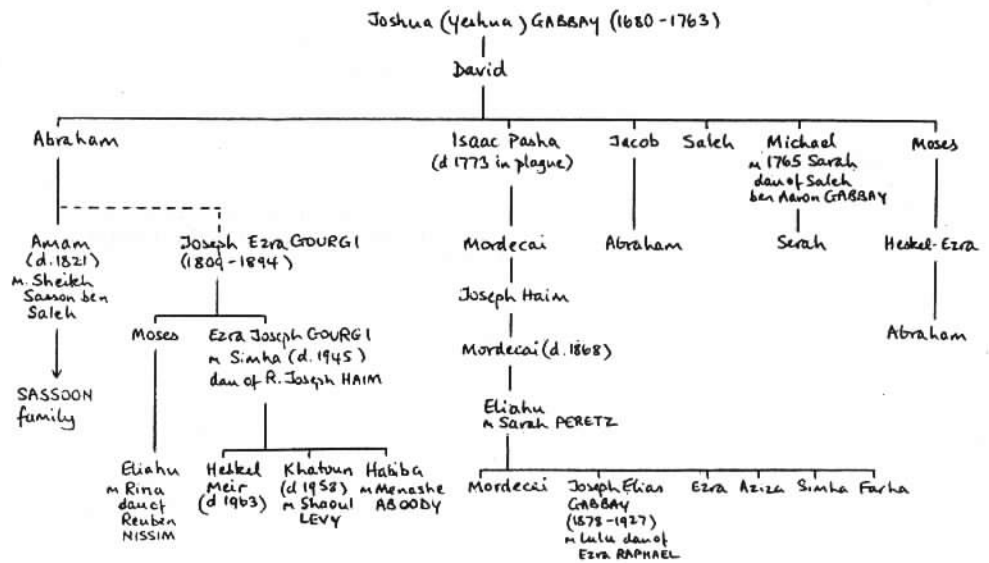
Joshua's son David had six sons, Abraham, Yitzhak, Jacob, Saleh, Michael and Moses. After the death of Yitzhak Pasha, his brother Abraham served as Nasi. His daughter Amam (1746-1821) married Sheikh Sasson who was Nasi from 1781 till 1817. He was head of the famous Sassoon family.

The most happy event in the life of my father Joseph was his attendance as one of the delegates at the inauguration of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem on 1st April 1925.

More details on my father's life appear in a privately circulated book called "Ottoman Counsel". Another of my publications is a book called "Discretion in Criminal Justice" (London, 1995)●

London

Edmond Gabbay  
Barrister-at-Law



The above brief Shua Gabbay (Gourgi) family tree was compiled by Lydia Collins from various sources●



My husband Frank and I enjoy reading *The Scribe* very much. All your readers must have informed you by now how much they treasure what you have accomplished.

In 1947/48, the New York Baghdadians formed a young people's club called the "Nadi". The headquarters was in the Old Ausoxia Hotel on Broadway between 74th and 75th St. N.Y.C. It was quite a success and quite a few marriages resulted from our gatherings.

In March 1950, some of the members staged a play "One Ghostly Evening", a picture of which I found the other day which I enclose.

Left to right:

1. John Rashti lives in Long Island N.Y.

2. Joy Michaels is now Bruné. She and her husband live in Geneva.

3. Lea Jacob – I seem to have lost track of.

4. And I – the black maid – live in Argentina. My "black" boyfriend in this play was the late Archie Gourgey (not shown).

Buenos Aires

Dorothy Battat-Shasha

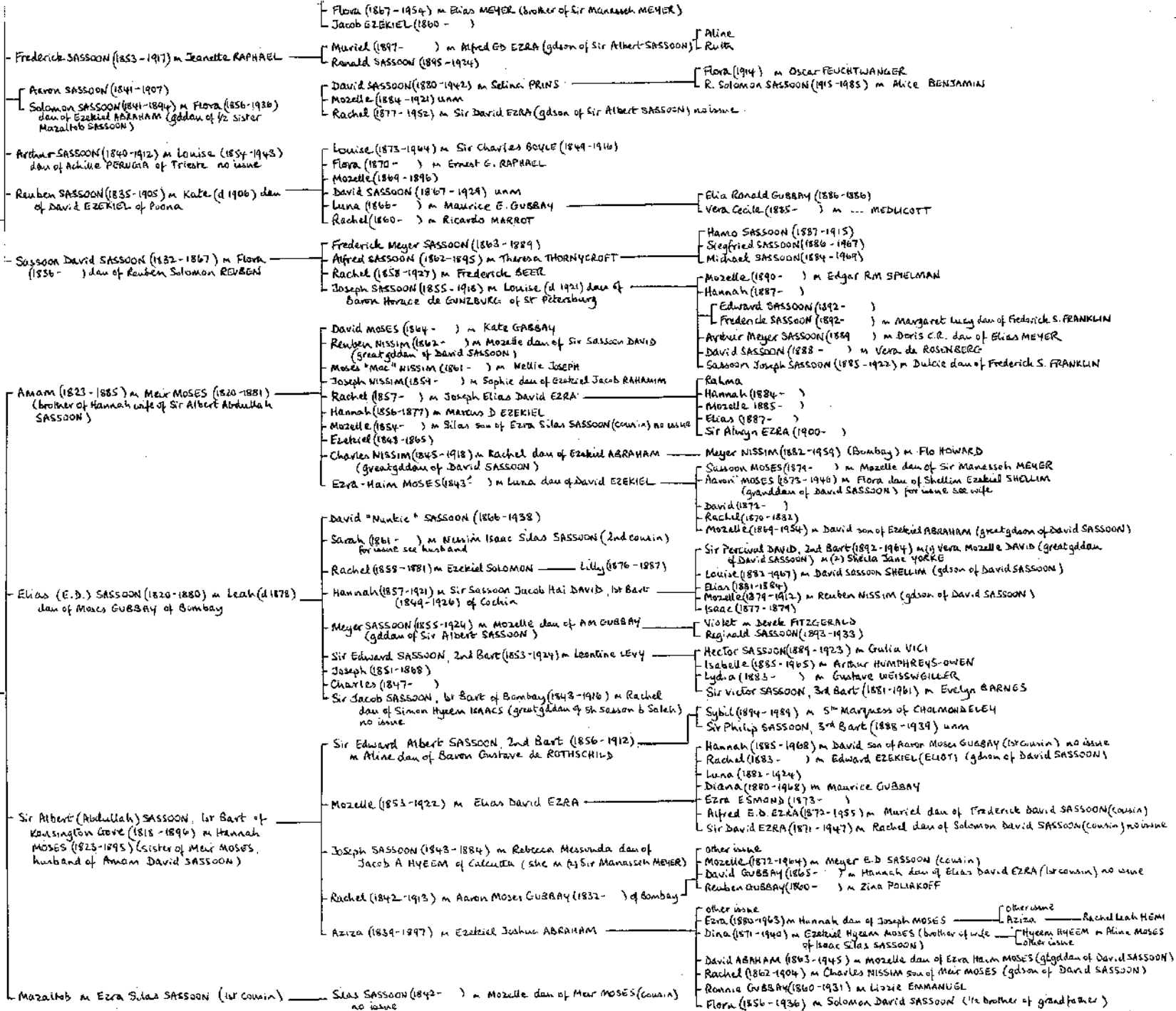
*Scribe*: A commemorative photograph taken on June 1949, on the first birthday of the Nadi is shown on the centre pages of this issue●

Sheikh Sassoon (1750-1830) son of Jacob ben David ben Yehoshua Gabbay  
in Amman (d. 1831) dau of Phtanah ben David ben Yehoshua Gabbay

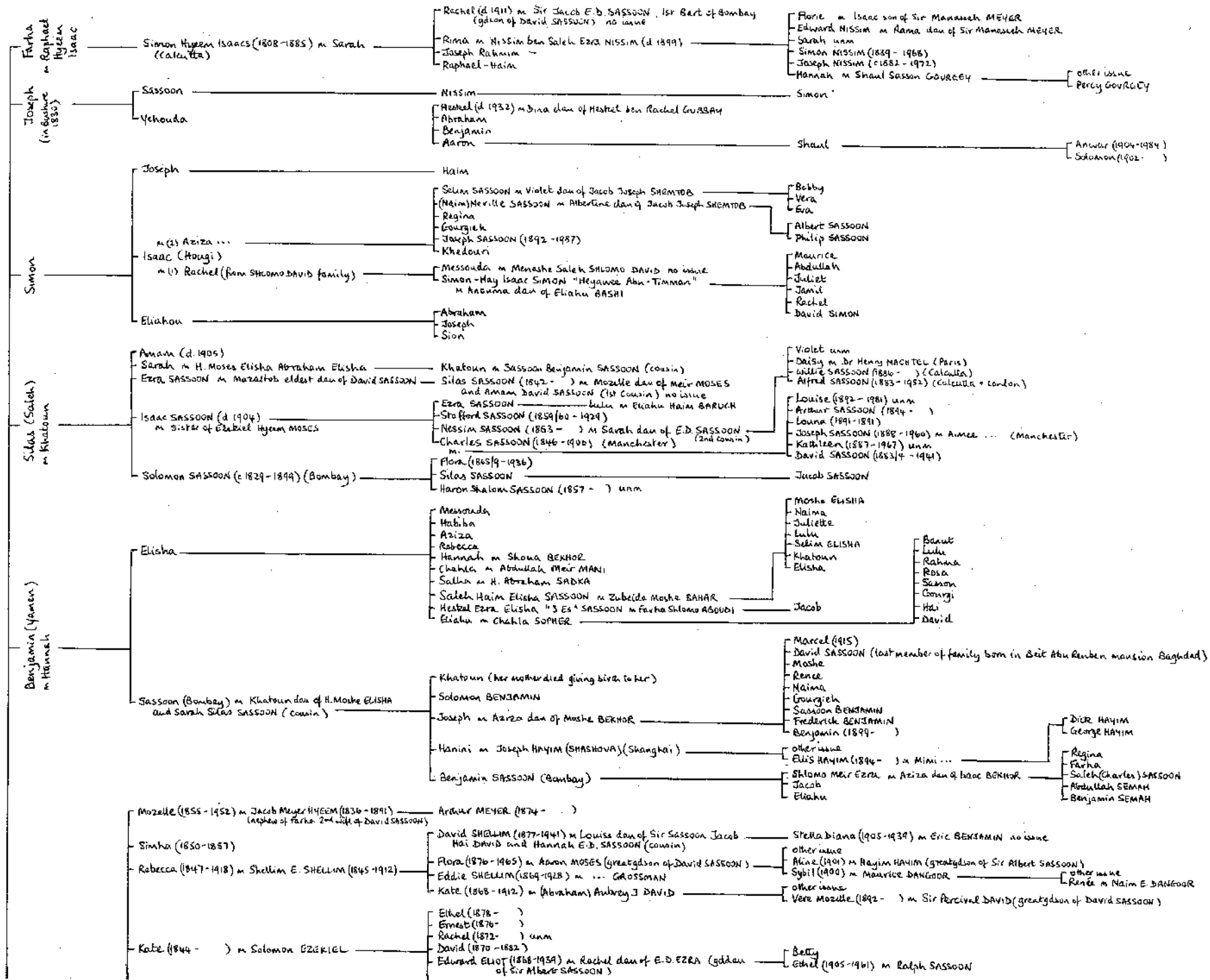
Reuben (elder son)  
(died young in  
1802 plague)

David Sassoon (2nd son)  
(1742-1804)  
m. (1) Aziza (Henanah) (d. 1826) dau of Abdullah JOSEPH  
(his sister: Khastoun was the mother of H. Abdullah  
SOMEKH)

David Sassoon (2nd son)  
(1742-1804)  
m. (2) Flora (Farka) (1814-1886) dau of Fanny HYGEM  
son of Abdullah JOSEPH (niece of her wife)







This concise family tree of the Sassoons was capably prepared by our genealogy specialist, Lydia Collins, assisted by her husband Morris

# The Frank Iny School International Reunion

by Ezra S. Soffer

For over two years Linda Menuhin (daughter of martyr Yacoob Abdel Aziz) worked diligently to bring this Reunion to the resounding success that it was.

Five hundred former students of Shammash and Frank Iny High Schools packed a ballroom in Or-Yehuda on 1st August to celebrate their first reunion in Israel, 25 years after their second Jewish exodus from Iraq in 1970-71. About 150 had converged from Canada, the US, England, France, Italy and even Vietnam for a night-long evocative reunion with their former Baghdadi classmates.

The unique feature of this reunion in Israel was its uninhibited Middle Eastern atmosphere. In the absence of the tethering black tie, there was a great deal of spontaneous hugging and kissing, besides a gushing pride just in being Iraqis! The 500-odd former classmates seemed to have shed 25 years of their lives and to be reliving the pranks and jokes of their former carefree school days.

Even Israel's foremost TV Hostess, Lila Neggat, balked at assuming the role of moderator. She knew better than to tamper with a hit! Now factor in the participants' gyrations to the oriental airs, bolstered by the mouthwatering dishes of salona, mhasha, kebbe burghul, patcha, sambusaq, btawa, and reinforced with lusina, melfouf, baqlawa and b'abee qadrassi, and you have covered the corporeal side of the celebration. On the purely emotional front were the nostalgic songs by Samir abu Faris who accompanied the revellers well into the early morning hours.

The unswerving, indefatigable initiator-director of this landmark event was Linda Menuhin, herself part of the 1970 exodus and today PR person for Israel's Ministry of International Security. Speakers for the students were Ing. Salman Ben-Zion, and Dr (Chem) David Bassoon. Then there was the short, moving speech by Frank Iny's charming granddaughter Carol Basri.

The 3-hour video cassette commemorating this reunion may be obtained through:

Telefax: 972-2-5345260

(Linda Menuhin) at:

£17 (PAL system)

\$30 (NTSC system)

plus £5 and \$6 for postage respectively.



Front row left to right: Norma Muallem (Aboodi); Sally Dalii (Samra); Ruth Shashou (Iny); Carmella Iny; Carmella David (Attar); Morris Dallal; Marsha Yamen (Sasson); Brighty Zubeida (Shashou); Leila Iny; Farida Moussa (Dallal).

Second row left to right: Ruben Ezer; Ezra Shahrabani; Simha Shemtov (Peress); Anis Shashou; David Gabbay; Viva Meni (Dangoor); Norma Peress; Samir Dallal; Sabah Naim; Yousif Attar; Vera Dallal; Jamila Abdul-Aziz; Miranda Dallal●



Front row left to right: Aziz Shahrabani; Hudda Muallem; Morris Shoet; Suad Abda; Lily Iny; Samira Eliahou; Meyer Attar.

Standing: Guilda Mashaal (Bakhash); Amis and Ruth Shashou; Suad Khazoom (Peress); Sabah Naim; Ema Ghazal (Abdui, Azer); Noori Dallal; Yousif Attar; Vera Dallal; Lydia Zaraa (Abda); Claire Shamash; Rachel Khalasatchi (Tweg); Amal Sawdaii (Shamash)●



Left to right: Miss Simha Leila, School Secretary and long-time teacher; Noori Bakhash; Nabila Shaya●



Left to right: Linda Menuhin (Abdul-Aziz), Organiser; Deputy Head Isaac Cohen and Mrs Cohen●

A short background of Simha Leila and Isaac Cohen who were the Principals of Frank Iny and Shammash and the guests of honour at the International Frank Iny and Shammash Reunion that took place on the 1st of August at the Whitehall Ballroom in Or-Yehuda.

The event was described by the majority as unique and one in a lifetime.

Simha Leila was born in Iraq 1919. She graduated from Dar El Muallemin in 1943. She worked as a teacher in a public school for three years then shifted to the Alliance. After the Taskit she joined the staff of Shammash and served as a teacher for 20 years. Eventually she served as the Principal of Shammash for 10 years, which ended with closure of the school in 1973. Sit Simha had the privilege of teaching 10,973 pupils throughout her 30 years' career in the education field.

Isaac Cohen was born in Iraq 1923. He studied at "Kuleyet El Handassa" and served as a teacher and principal of Frank Iny.

At the party I was amazed to see how my former pupils memorized what I used to say in class after all these years! They showed profound respect and appreciation. I was so moved that I could not get any sleep that night. I hope that they keep in touch with me in the future because it is a precious relationship for me."

### Extract from the speech of Linda Menuhin

It's a great pleasure to gather all of you here tonight. You've come from different parts of the world to share precious moments with us. Tonight we are united to salute the Frank Iny and Shammash management and to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of the last Jewish exodus from Babylon. Tonight we are privileged to have Frank Iny's daughter Annette Basri and his granddaughter Carole Basri who came especially for this occasion. We are lucky to have with us the management of Frank Iny stath Shak and Sit Simha along with Sit Yasa and other talented teachers who shaped this outstanding generation. Their influence on us went beyond academic achievements. It crystallised our concept of life.

Looking at you gathered here is the most moving compensation for endless hours of work and frustration.

Your positive response to the project and your actual presence transformed the dream into a successful reality .

*Scribe:* Abdallah Obadia, who now lives in Canada, was Headmaster of Frank Iny School, the first coeducational school in Iraq, since its inception until its closure, was conspicuous by his absence from the reunion. Most of the credit goes to him●

### BOYCOTT

Last month, President Clinton signed a law imposing sanctions on all those who trade with Libya and Iran, who are identified as sponsors of international terrorism.

The British Foreign Office and its European counterparts, instead of supporting the US initiative, have protested at this American "interference in the affairs of other countries". Such attitude clearly demonstrates European hypocrisy.

Those who for thirty years supported, endorsed and encouraged the Arab boycott of Israel and Jewish businesses, for no good reason, now abstain from combating terrorism.

Those who gave Hitler the green light to exterminate the Jews of Europe cannot attempt to occupy the high moral ground of mankind●

N.D.



### My Grandmother and the Thieves

Our grandmother, in her 70s in Shanghai, was gagged by four Chinese robbers who came into her house and into her bedroom, during the early hours of the morning. They asked her to open up her safe. My uncle Lionel who had his bedroom in the attic heard the commotion and came down to her room to see what was happening. He told her "Take your time, do it slowly". One of the men pushed a bayonet to his stomach and said "Keep quiet, don't say another word". My grandmother, with her mouth stuffed with towels took as long as possible to open the safe. But she had to open it and the men helped themselves to her jewellery and whatever else they wanted and left. Uncle Lionel asked my grandmother to take her time as he knew that his alarm clock would go off soon. He was a great rider of horses and went to the stables at the racecourse early in the morning everyday to ride as he loved it, and the horses needed the exercise. My grandmother was devastated and prayed God that the men's hands would turn to wax.

In the morning at dawn, Uncle Cyril came into Granny's bedroom and looked over her balcony to see where the men would have crossed the garden and jumped over the stonewall. He noticed that there was something shining in the middle of the garden, ran downstairs and crossed the garden to find that all the jewellery had been dropped. Uncle Lionel's alarm had gone off, the men must have thought that it was the police and Gran's wishes came true. Their hands did turn to wax.

Montreal

Joyce Rose

The above picture shows my grandmother Mrs Flora Moses (who was an accomplished piano player) and was the granddaughter of David Sassoon, seated next to music Professor Lazareff. The picture was taken before World War II after a recital in Shanghai, with Prof. Lazareff's students. The picture was kindly sent by Mrs Rose Horowitz to my sister Renee Dangoor●

لكن اليوم تغيرت لامورات  
والدني صارت طرهات  
لكان ضعيف بالحسيات  
انلقت علينا لفلوسات  
واللي كانوا متفوقين  
وويعد ويحد مستنقيين  
ساروا بالحكومة موظفين  
يهزون براسم ويقولون آمين  
الله يرحمها لهنيك الذكريات  
سارت سوائف وحتشايات

الولاد انشغلوا اكثر شين بالخرزعبلات  
والمعلمين شيعوهم عجولا وراجليات  
وبالسفرات الحب الله شوية غراميات  
وام كلثوم اندرخت والمقامات  
ايام وليالي وساعات  
وبياض الوجه بين بالامتحانات

بالفرصة والاضافي قضينا احلى لوقات  
سميط مجسب وهستق عبيد وتصنوفيات  
ويتفقيع السجر جوز وهستق جوة الرحلات  
هاي بالفرع التجاري من انزلوا لبنات  
وباخر السنة ضحك وغنيني وتمثليات  
ما تشاها حفلة باكبر الاوتيلات

The strict discipline of the school  
remembered●

## COOKERY CORNER

### Lemon Meringue Pie

*For the pastry:*

6oz (175g) plain flour  
4oz (110g) unsalted butter  
1 egg yolk  
pinch of salt  
3 tablespoons water

*For the filling:*

3 tablespoons cornflour  
2 egg yolks slightly beaten  
½ pint water  
5 tablespoons lemon juice  
2 level tablespoons lemon rind, grated  
4oz (110g) caster sugar

*For the meringue:*

3 egg whites  
3oz (75g) caster sugar

Sieve flour and salt in a bowl. Add butter and place in a food processor and process until mixture looks like breadcrumbs (you can also rub the mixture between fingertips).

Add water and process until a firm and smooth dough. Wrap it and leave to rest in the refrigerator for about 15 minutes.

Line a 9-inch fluted pie dish, without stretching the dough. Prick the base with a fork. Cut off surplus pastry with a rolling-pin and bake blind.

*To bake blind:*

Place pastry into the pie dish and prick the bottom with a fork. Line the inside with bakewell paper and half fill with dry beans. Bake 10-12 minutes at 400°F, 200°C or until pastry is set.

Take out beans and paper. Bake for another 5-10 minutes.

*Prepare filling:*

Mix water and cornflour in a saucepan. Bring to the boil and cook for 2 minutes, stirring all the time until mixture thickens. Remove from heat and allow to cool slightly. Slowly pour egg yolks into the cornflour sauce, then add sugar, lemon juice and rind and heat gently, stirring until mixture thickens. Do not allow to boil. Pour into pie dish.

*Prepare meringue:*

Whisk the egg whites lightly with a mixer until soft peaks form. Whisk in half of the caster sugar, then fold in the remaining sugar with a metal spoon. Spread or pipe the meringue over the filling making sure it covers the pastry case. Form peaks with a fork or the back of a spoon. Bake in a preheated oven at 400°F, 200°C for about 10 minutes or until golden brown.

### Bean and Macaroni Soup

450g (1 lb) dried beans  
1 onion, chopped  
2 cloves garlic, chopped  
2 tablespoons oil  
1 carrot, chopped  
1 cup cabbage, chopped  
1 leek, white part only, thoroughly washed and chopped  
¼ cup macaroni  
salt and pepper

In a large pan add enough water to cover the beans. Discard any that float to the top. Soak overnight, drain and rinse thoroughly. Add fresh water to the pot and bring to a rapid boil. Reduce heat and simmer, partially covered until the beans are tender. Remove one third of the beans with a slotted spoon and reserve.

Purée the rest with a blender. Sieve to get rid of the skins.

Meanwhile, sauté the onion and garlic, carrot, cabbage and leek. Add salt and pepper. When nearly cooked, add the macaroni into the soup. Stir the mixture so that the macaroni does not stick together or to the bottom of the pan. Cook the soup for 4-5 minutes or until the pasta is done. Add the reserved beans and purée to the ingredients in the pan and bring to the boil. Taste and adjust seasoning and thickness of soup. It should be thick. Serve very hot.

### Haddock and Spinach with Chive Sauce

450g (1 lb) smoked or fresh haddock  
½ pint or 1½ cup milk  
salt if using fresh haddock  
freshly milled black pepper

*The spinach:*

450g (1 lb) raw spinach  
12g (½oz) butter

*The Hollandaise Sauce*

3 x size 1 egg yolks  
125g (5oz) butter  
1 tablespoon white wine vinegar  
2 tablespoons finely chopped chives  
Salt and freshly milled black pepper  
2-3 tablespoons of the poaching liquid

Cook the spinach with the butter and a little salt. Drain in a colander to remove excess water. Place in an ovenproof dish. Meanwhile, cook the fish with the milk and place on top of the spinach.

Now prepare the hollandaise sauce just before serving (as it can curdle when re-warmed). Place the egg yolks and vinegar in a double boiler. Stir until the yolks thicken. Add a small piece of the butter and whisk over gentle heat, until butter is melted. Gradually add the remaining butter, fish liquid, salt, pepper and chives. Whisk the sauce until thickness desired, stirring continually to prevent curdling. Pour over fish and serve straight away. Serve hot.

*Note:* You can prepare the fish and spinach in advance and warm in oven when needed.

### Roulade of Aubergine & Peppers

*A Party Dish*

2 kilos (4lb) aubergines (eggplants)  
oil for frying

*The Filling:*

2 kilos 250g (5 lb) green and red peppers  
4 cloves garlic, peeled and thinly sliced  
2 onions, chopped  
2-3 tablespoons oil  
salt

*The sauce:*

2 lemons or to taste  
tomato juice  
4 tablespoons sugar or to taste  
salt

De-seed the peppers and grill under a medium heat until soft. Peel and slice thinly.

Fry the onions and garlic in oil and rinse with the sliced peppers.

Meanwhile, peel the aubergines in alternate strips. Cut into 1cm strips lengthwise.

Sprinkle with salt and leave in layers in a sieve for half an hour or more. Take out and dry on kitchen towel and fry in oil until golden. Leave on absorbent paper to drain. Place 1

tablespoon of the filling in the fried slice of the aubergine and roll. Arrange in an ovenproof dish. Mix lemon juice, tomato juice, sugar, salt and enough water to cover the aubergines. Cover with foil and place in pre-heated oven 350°F, 180°C for about 30 minutes. Uncover a little before the 30 minutes are up. Adjust the taste. It should taste sweet and sour. Leave uncovered in oven until the liquid is nearly absorbed. Serve hot.

*Note:* The dish can be served with sweet and sour meatballs.

### Jelly Fruit Cocktail

1 packet kosher strawberry jelly or flavour of your choice. Use according to packet instructions.

1 cup thick custard  
1 cup double cream beaten with a little sugar  
1 tin fruit cocktail, 450g (1 lb)

Mix jelly, custard, fruit cocktail and cream, adding a little of the syrup from the fruit cocktail.

Pour in a glass serving dish or individual dishes.

Leave in fridge to set.

### The Waiter and the Tip

A diner went to a restaurant, where he found the service very bad. But when he left, he gave the waiter a large tip.

The next day, encouraged by the large tip, the waiter paid special attention to his customer and gave him good service but received only a sixpence tip. Exclaimed the waiter to the diner, "Yesterday you found the service bad but you gave me a large tip. Today I gave you exceptional service but only received sixpence, I can't understand it."

"It is very simple," came the reply, "yesterday's tip was for today's service and today's tip is for yesterday's service".

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