

# The SCRIBE

## JOURNAL OF DESCENDANTS OF BABYLONIAN JEWRY

VOL. 1 NO. 4

MARCH - APRIL 1972

### EDITORIALS

#### **Oriental Jewry At Congress**

In a remarkable address to the Twenty-Eighth World Zionist Congress in Jerusalem last January, Mr. Shlomo Hillel, Minister of Police in the Israel Government, gave a graphic account of the position of the Jewish communities in Syria and other Arab countries. Not only did he refer to their recent past, i.e. since the end of the First World War, but he also outlined their long history in those countries. To the 500 or so delegates from the Diaspora, mainly from the United States, this may well have come as something of a revelation.

Of considerable interest is Mr. Hillel's own background. Born in Baghdad, he was active in the clandestine Zionist and Hechalutz movement there before emigrating to Israel in the thirties. While he served as a member of the Knesset and in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs he maintained contact with Jews in various Arab countries. In 1969 he was the first Iraqi Jew to become a Cabinet Minister appointed by Mrs. Golda Meir to succeed Mr. Eliahu Sasson, a leading Sephardi personality in Israel, as Minister of Police.

While it is not possible to reproduce Mr. Hillel's speech here, it provides ample evidence about the continuing ill-treatment of Jews in Syria, and the dangerous situation facing them in other Arab countries. In this connection one cannot refrain from expressing considerable regret at the policy of the British Government about the treatment of Syrian Jews, as stated recently by Earl Ferrers in the House of Lords. In reply to his first reason for inaction at present, viz., lack of diplomatic relations with Syria, might one ask what prevents Her Majesty's Government making proper representation to international organisations such as the U.N., the Red Cross and Amnesty to conduct the necessary investigations *and allay anxiety*? Secondly, although Syrian Jews are not British subjects, is action based on humanitarian considerations entirely without precedent? Thirdly, if there is no "sustained or consistent persecution" of Syrian Jews, why are they

still prevented from leaving Syria and Jews from this country or elsewhere in the free world not allowed to enter Syria and establish direct contact with the community there?

Unless there is an official conspiracy of silence, appropriate intervention is fully justified for the sake of suffering Syrian Jews including those gaoled for seeking to emigrate.

#### **Sephardi Delegates**

This Congress was notable not only for the appearance on this world Jewish forum of Soviet Jews, especially those from Georgia, but also for representatives of Sephardi communities in Israel itself, France, Britain, the United States and Latin America. Apart from the customary participation of the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Itzhak Nissim, there were Mr. E. Eliachar, President of the Sephardi Council in Jerusalem and Mr. I. Navon, Deputy Speaker of the Knesset who was elected Chairman of the Zionist General Council. They made their presence felt, and this against the background of the demonstrations staged at Congress by Israel's "Black Panthers" who are mainly underprivileged Oriental youth. (See editorial, *Scribe* No. 2.)

An organisation worthy of mention is that of ODED, composed of North African Jewish students whose aim is to engage in the process of "self-help", i.e. they themselves try to teach young Sephardi children of poor parents. They also seek to encourage North African students at present in France to migrate to Israel. One would hope that such an organisation would get the fullest possible support of the Jewish Agency and other international Jewish bodies. There is too the Porat Yosef yeshiva which caters for the needs of students of Iraqi origin.

Congress is nothing if not an opportunity at least of meeting people and one found encouragement in the active participation of so many Sephardi-Oriental delegates, including representatives of the World Sephardi Federation.

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# WE QUIT EGYPT TODAY

## Pharaoh Gives In To Moses

RAMESES, 15 Aviv—Moses' oft-repeated plea to Pharaoh Merneptah, to "let my people go", was finally heard today, just after midnight, when the King of Egypt, not only agreed to Moses' request, but actually insisted that the Israelites leave the country immediately.

### ORDER OF THE DAY

Sons of Jacob—tribes of Israel!

This month shall be unto you the beginning of months. This day shall be unto you the first of all days till the end of time. For today you have been delivered from slavery into freedom. Today you have become a nation.

Egypt, with its taskmasters and its heathen beliefs, is behind you. In front of you is the desert, vast and terrible. But this terrifying wilderness leads to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the land of your fathers. Be not dismayed, For if you will remain faithful to the covenant and willingly undertake all the sacrifices the Lord may extract from you—then He will allow no harm to come to you, and your enemy shall not overpower you.

As you have emerged today from bondage unto freedom, so shall you be free tomorrow in the land of your fathers. All the tribes of Israel are one nation; and all the cities of Canaan are one land.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord!

*MOSES, THE SON OF AMRAM*

### EXODUS INSTRUCTIONS

The following notice has been issued by  
Exodus Headquarters:

1. All Israelites of military age are to report immediately to their respective tribes.
2. Each tribe will camp separately under its own standard.
3. Everyone is to follow the instructions of our police, so as to avoid crowding, and to arrange themselves speedily in the order prescribed.
4. Information Tents will be set up at every corner of the Camp to answer pertinent questions and straighten out any difficulties that may arise.
5. People still arriving from Goshen and other parts of Egypt are to report at once to the Information Tents, where they will receive full instructions. Persons not belonging to any particular tribe will congregate in the northern corner of the Camp, where they will be given full instructions as to the manner in which they are to travel.

## 600,000 Gathering at Succoth

RAMESES, 15 Aviv, 2524 (since the Creation) and 490 (since the founding of Zion).—The Children of Israel—600,000 strong, not counting the women and children—are on the move. Under the leadership of Moses, the Man of God, they are preparing to leave Egypt after a stay there of over 200 years, the last 86 years of which were spent in bitter slavery.

The twelve tribes are moving in military order toward Succoth, the point of departure, each man with his own tribe, and each tribe under its own standard. The heads of the tribes are keeping in close touch with Moses, ready at a moment's notice to help launch the long-awaited exodus.

It is now midnight. A full moon is throwing a bluish light on the giant obelisks of Pithom and Rameses, the treasure cities the Israelites built for

Pharaoh. In awed silence this great people is preparing for the leap from slavery to freedom, from nameless obscurity to the glorious dawn of its life as a nation. Soon the rising sun will herald the beginning of a nation's history.

### Weather Report:

#### FULL MOON TO GUIDE US

The timing of the exodus, according to the priests of Ra, represents a wise choice on the part of Moses. The month of Aviv is the most convenient from the point of view of the weather, and since it is now the middle of the month and the moon is full, the Israelites are assured of a speedy advance both by day and by night.

# The Refugee Problem and Peace In The Middle East

by HESKEL M. HADDAD, M.D.

President, American Committee for Rescue and Resettlement of Iraqi Jews, Inc., New York

If one analyses the conditions before and after the declaration of independence of the State of Israel on May 15, 1948 and even looks back to the fateful date of November 29, 1947 when the United Nations voted overwhelmingly for the establishment of a Jewish and Arabic states in Palestine, one would recognise that aside from the bloody war which ensued between the Arabs and the Jews before and after the establishment of the State of Israel, that a human tragedy caught approximately two million innocent people, not only those living in the vicinity of the war-torn area of Palestine, but particularly involving those living in the vast expanse of the whole "Arab" world from the borders of Persia and the Persian Gulf to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean of Africa, where a million Jews lived for over 2,000 years.

If one analyses the extent of this human tragedy, in terms of numbers, one concludes with the following figures: Before 1948, there were 950,000 Jews living in Arab lands. In 1970, there were less than 70,000 Jews living in these countries, the majority having fled as refugees to Israel, roughly between 1948 and 1951. During the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, there were 650,000 Arabs who fled their homes from the war zone and became the Palestinian Arab refugees. The human tragedy that befell these two groups of people, Jews and Arabs, has not yet ended. For the Arab refugees, of course, it has remained a sad story for the last 23 years, because the neighbouring Arab countries refused to absorb these unfortunate Arab refugees among their midst, and instead forced them to stay in makeshift refugee camps which were only intended for a temporary period. These unfortunate Arab refugees were used by the Arab states, as a political weapon against Israel—on one hand accentuating their human tragedy and on the other using them as "hostages" for the destruction of Israel. "Hostages" in the sense that these poor refugees were not allowed to leave their camps and to live among the urban population of other Arab countries. They were kept in tents and tin shacks. They were indoctrinated to hate the Jews and were told to persist in demanding nothing else but repatriation into Israel as their only solution—a solution even the ignorant of the Arabs know is impractical.

## CREATION OF JEWISH REFUGEES

The Jewish refugees from Arab lands, on the other hand, were uprooted from their homes in the various Arab countries where they lived for over two millennia and were obliged to immigrate to Israel where they had to face the hardships of camp dwelling in tents, the hardship of cultural adjustment into a society which was largely European and Western, and all the hardships of being refugees—hardships only a refugee appreciates and understands. Yet, despite all the difficulties and the

trauma, these 850,000 Jews who came to Israel after the independence of Israel, were rather quickly rehabilitated by the newly developed war-torn State of Israel. They were granted citizenship in their new State immediately after their entry. Every effort was made to teach them the Hebrew language and culture and to make them useful citizens. Gradually homes were built for them. First, they were given makeshift tin houses and then they were given permanent apartments. Twenty years have passed and these Jews are free and equal citizens of the State of Israel.

## JEWIS DENIED RIGHTS

Yet the tragedy of the Jews in Arab countries has not ended. There are about 70,000 Jews still living in Arab countries. They are poorly treated by the Arab governments themselves, who since 1948 have introduced progressively restrictive laws against the Jews. They are used as virtual hostages either for political bargaining with Israel, or to be used as scapegoats for the benefit of the military demagogic and dictatorial regimes which exist in many of these Arab countries. The worst of the lot of these Jews is that of the 2,500 Jews in Iraq and the 4,000 Jews in Syria, where the regime in each of these two states is ultra-nationalist, Baathist, strongly Arabist in sentiment, and highly repressive in action.

Whereas the 3,000 Jews in Lebanon and the 10,000 Jews in Tunisia are living in relative freedom, though with a second class citizenship and still fearful of reprisals during incidents between Israel and the Arab countries, the 35,000 Jews of Morocco are living in a very sad condition, sequestered in a highly populated and poor ghetto, and virtually reduced into poverty and depravity, despite the fact that King Hasan II is pro-Western.

There are no Jews in Libya or Yemen and virtually none in Algeria. All of the Jews of Yemen, Algeria and Libya had to immigrate largely to Israel or to France and Italy between 1948 and 1960.

## JEWISH PROPERTY CONFISCATED

These 850,000 Jewish refugees from Arab lands left behind them considerable wealth in assets, belongings, and property. Even if each Jew had the meagre amount of \$1,000, reparation of \$850 million would be due to these 850,000 Jewish refugees. The facts are even worse. In Baghdad alone, the pro-Western government of Nuri Al Said, in 1951, confiscated in the banks in cash £35 million sterling, which is equivalent to \$140 million, that in addition to vast amounts of property and assets which the 150,000 Iraqi Jews left behind in Iraq. Similar assets and belongings and property have been confiscated in Syria, Egypt, Algeria, Yemen, Morocco and most recently Libya.

To be a refugee is to suffer through all the processes of flight and rehabilitation. Nobody can feel the plight of a refugee more than a refugee himself.

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# United Europe - a threat to Jewish Survival

by EXILARCH

Britain's entry into the Common Market will lead to the integration of Europe as an economic and, eventually, as a political unit.

After centuries of warfare and after two world wars that cost them their empires, European countries lost their world supremacy and have had to club together to measure up to the two super Powers, the United States and the Soviet Union.

It was de Gaulle who observed that the protracted warfare between Germany and France was an indication of their need, and perhaps even of their desire, to unite! (Compare 50 years of Arab-Jewish conflict.) The *rapprochement* between France and Germany was the basis of the Common Market which remained for many years dominated by France. To keep her lead, France resisted Britain's entry but in 1970 had to reverse this position when she was no longer able to contain the rising economic and financial power of West Germany which grew amoeba-like from the ruins of a reduced and divided *Reich*. And whereas it was Germany that first favoured Britain's entry, in the end it was France that accelerated it.

What will be the main forces in the future European union?

Despite Britain's entry which will only serve to delay German supremacy, the first force in Europe will still be Germany. Already with a population of over 60 millions, Germany will always look for opportunities to regain her lost territories and will orientate European policy in that direction. The domination of Europe that Hitler failed to win by force of arms, West Germany will try to achieve from within the Common Market. It is noteworthy that it was a German industrialist who gave Mr. Heath his prize of £40,000 (40 pieces of silver?) for bringing Britain into Europe.

America will exploit Germany's inner yearning for re-unification and will help her to be at the head of Europe and in the vanguard of a confrontation with Russia. One would recall President Kennedy's visit to Berlin in 1963 and his foolish call for German unity, declaring, "Ich bin ein Berliner!"

President Nixon's visit to China and his understanding with Chinese leaders virtually completes the encirclement of Russia—by Japan, China, Seato, Cento, Tito and Nato. A showdown with Russia becomes a possibility.

The other force in Europe of the future will be a united Christian Church. Although religion may not have much importance in the modern world, the Churches remain powerful organisations which see themselves threatened in the world by atheism, Communism and Islam. Christian unity may require many compromises but it will most probably come as a necessary step for Christian survival.

A Europe dominated by Germany and a united and militant Christian Church both with strong traditions of anti-Semitism, is not the best place for Jewish

survival. History has shown that organised forces, even though relatively small, can control and direct the silent majority along evil ways. But why single out Germany? Even France has strong currents of anti-Semitism and there is hardly a country in Europe that did not indulge at one time or another in violent anti-Jewish pogroms. Civilisation in Europe is only skin deep and a united Europe would turn nationalist both in relation to its minorities and to the outside world.

The savagery of the Crusades, the Inquisition and, in our lifetime, the Holocaust, directly resulted from the anti-Jewish teachings of the Church which in fact has neither repented nor basically reversed its policy.

Even at the Second Vatican 12 years ago the Roman Church would not completely clear the Jews of the baseless accusation of deicide, and in this attitude the Vatican was openly influenced by Arab pressure. Jews are branded as Christ-killers to blackmail them into accepting Jesus on the preposterous notion that the Messiah would not arrive unless all the Jews were converted to Christianity (*Daily Telegraph Magazine on anti-Semitism*). This so-called religion of love has been responsible for more hate, violence and misery than any other movement in human history. (See *The Golden Core of Religion* by Alexander Skutch.)

The Mufti and other Arab leaders played an important role in making Hitler change his policy against the Jews from one of deportation to that of extermination. This must never be forgotten. By 1980 Arab revenue from oil alone will exceed £10,000 million every year and this will give the Arabs immense influence in Europe to make it follow an anti-Jewish and anti-Israel policy. It is not likely that Europe will try to resist such pressure as witness European (and American) compliance with the Arab boycott office. In anticipation of the coming cataclysm, the cry should go out now: HOUSE OF ISRAEL—GO HOME.

For centuries Jews have been praying for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the return to Israel. Now that Israel is reborn, why do most Jews hesitate to return?

Toynbee explains that since the fearful national disaster of 586 BCE and the destruction of the First Temple, the Jewish aim of survival has always taken precedence over the aim to form a state. At all times when it has been open to the Jews to emigrate to a Jewish state in "Palestine", a great majority invariably preferred to remain in diaspora. This was so in 539 BCE when most of the Jewish exiles remained in Babylon; it is so today.

## NEW BABYLON

"The present-day Jewish diaspora in the United States which is the living counterpart, in importance, of the Jewish diaspora in Babylonia from 6th century BCE to 13th century CE is reacting in just

the same way to the State of Israel. Like their Babylonian predecessors and counterparts, the American Jews today are zealous in fostering a Jewish state in Palestine by contributing money and exerting political influence but are unwilling to emigrate in any significant numbers to Israel. Thus the situation before the destruction of the Kingdom of Judah in 586 BC was never restored. Since that date the diaspora has been Jewry's citadel. Since that date Israel has been part of the diaspora and not the diaspora part of Israel. Since that date there has not been a Jewish community in Palestine that has been co-extensive with the Jewish community in the World or has even been the most important part of it." *A Study of History* by Arnold Toynbee, Vol. XII page 485.

Such a situation can only be reversed by a breakthrough: make Israel self-supporting; rich, powerful and secure by means of a Middle East federation

that will make it worthwhile for many more Jews to return. (The wealth of the Middle East belongs to all the peoples of the region.) With 6 or 7 million Jews in such a federation, Israel's position would be completely transformed and the natural population growth in Israel would no longer be inhibited by lack of security.

Some Jewish leaders reason that it is safer not to put all our eggs in one basket; but did we really find security in dispersion?

The question also arises here: Are we a nation or are we a religious community? The short answer is that we are more than a nation; we are a religious community. Religion has always been the governing force in Jewish life from the time of Abraham. And, as happened at the time of Moses, a religious community can always claim nationhood whenever its existence is threatened.

HOUSE OF ISRAEL—GO HOME ●

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# Britain's Creation of Arab States

by *PERCY S. GOURGEY, M.B.E.*

Arab propaganda would have one believe that the promises made to the Arabs in the 1914-18 war at the time of their revolt against the Turks were not kept by the British Government. Thus they seek to foster the illusion of Britain "letting down the Palestinian Arabs"!

But an analysis of the origin of no less than ten of the eighteen sovereign independent Arab states shows that British pledges of independence to the Arabs in the First World War have been amply fulfilled. Even in the lifetime of Lawrence of Arabia two sovereign states, Transjordan and Iraq, were created as a direct consequence of British policy, and were put under the control of Arab rulers.

## EMIRATE OF TRANSJORDAN

Until its overthrow by British and Allied Armies in the First World War, the Ottoman Turkish Empire controlled for nearly 400 years all Arab and non-Arab areas in the Middle East. It was either by force of British arms or through application of British colonial policy that several of the Arab states in the Middle East and North Africa were created.

In 1922, Mr. Winston Churchill as the then Colonial Secretary, partitioned the biblical area of Palestine envisaged in the Balfour Declaration and the Peace Treaties. When Britain was appointed the Mandatory Power in Palestine by the League of Nations in that year, the British Government decided that the area of its Mandate should not extend east of the River Jordan, and in order to honour its obligation to Sherif Hussein, leader of the Arab Revolt and his son Feisal, the independent Arab emirate of Transjordan—hence the name—was created, and Abdullah, one of Hussein's sons was made its ruler.

Emir Abdullah was crowned King and his country's status raised to that of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in March 1946 by Mr. Ernest Bevin as

Foreign Secretary. (Thus the significant United Nations Partition Plan of November 29, 1947 for a Jewish State and a Palestinian Arab state constituted in reality the second partition of Palestine.)

On October 3, 1932, Iraq was admitted to membership of the League of Nations and became an independent country as a result of an agreed termination of Britain's Mandate assumed in 1923 in the Lausanne Treaty with Turkey which was defeated in the War. (Lawrence died in an accident in 1935.)

## WITHDRAWAL FROM ADEN

Kuwait became a British protectorate in 1914 after an agreement with Turkey in 1899 and Britain granted her full independence in June 1961, and defended her against Iraqi attacks in 1963. When Britain voluntarily withdrew from Aden in pursuance of her declared policy, the independent People's Republic of South Yemen came into existence on November 30, 1967.

Transitional arrangements were made by Britain and Egypt in 1953 leading to Sudan becoming an independent republic in 1956.

Libya, which was freed from Italian colonial rule by armies under Field Marshals Wavell and Montgomery in the Second World War was, in 1951, created an independent Arab kingdom under Idris of Cyrenaica at the termination of British military administration and U.N. trusteeship.

## THE ARAB LEAGUE

It is of interest to note that the British protectorate over Egypt, assumed in 1914 when Britain found herself at war with Egypt's nominal suzerain, Turkey, was concluded in 1922 and Egypt was ruled over by King Fuad.

In the case of Saudi Arabia, its first king, Ibn Saud, became King of the Hedjaz in January 1926

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# THE GEONIM OF BABYLON

by RABBI GERSHOM HARPENAS

After the lapse of 90 years, during which the pupils of the Amoraim, who were called the Rabbanan Savorai, headed the Babylonian Yeshivot, a new period of Jewish history began—that of the Geonim, which endured 450 years, till 4798 (1038).

Rav Hanan of Askayah, who revived the Yeshiva of Pumbedita (Falluja—Ed.) during the reign of Bar Haran Teshubin, is considered to be the first of the Geonim. During his time the crown of Pumbedita was restored to its former lustre (4349-589). About 40 years previously, the Yeshiva of Pumbedita had ceased to function, after its Sages had been compelled to move thence, and transfer the Yeshiva to Peros Shavor—a city near Nehardea.

But the Yeshiva of Peros Shavor continued its activities, even after the revival of the Yeshiva of Pumbedita, and was not liquidated until after three generations when the existence of the Pumbedita Yeshiva had become manifestly strong and secure.

Twenty years after the recommencement of the Pumbedita Yeshiva, the Sura Yeshiva also renewed its existence, headed by Mar, the son of Rav Huna (the last of the Sevoraim) who was the first son of the Geonim of Sura (4369-609). At that time Rav Hinnenai reigned over the Yeshiva of Peros Shavor, after Rav Mari Gaon left Peros Shavor and was appointed as the head of the Pumbedita Yeshiva. But Rav Yitschak Gaon stood at the head of the Peros Shavor Yeshiva.

## POLITICAL CHANGES

This generation saw a tremendous change in the political situation of the Middle East, which was destined to set its seal upon the course of history for a thousand years and more. **The religion of Islam entered the world arena, and its believers burst like a whirlwind from the Arabian desert.** The Muslim Arabs stormed through the lands of the Near East, and smote the large Byzantine host in Transjordan (636) and the whole of Syria surrendered to them. Two years later Jerusalem was handed over to Caleph Omar (638). Three years later, the Arabs succeeded in destroying the Kingdom of the Sassanides in the East, and conquered the Euphrates-Tigris Valley and the Iranian Highland eastward. 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 from the Iranian Plateau in the East, to the Mediterranean and the Nile Valley in the West.

**These geopolitical changes had fundamental significance for the Jewish people, and this was for two reasons:**

(a) **The great change related directly to Babylonia itself which for the previous 400 and subsequent 400 years, constituted the spiritual centre of the Jewish people.**

(b) **The new Islamic empire transformed Babylonia into a province in a mighty empire, which included the Jews of Babylonia, Eretz Yisrael, Egypt,**

**and the whole of North Africa, and later also Spain, in one contiguous entity. This fact helped the Jewish Diaspora in these lands (in which the main body of our people numerically and quantitatively resided) to preserve a constant and close relationship.**

At the time of the Arabic conquest, Rav Yitzchak (Sheikh Ishaq, buried in Baghdad—Ed.), Gaon of Peros Shavor, made a magnificent reception for the general Ali Abu-Taleb, and the Arab victor received the Jewish Sage with friendly countenance.

The Arab leader—Caleph Omar, who led the forces which destroyed the Sassanides, decided to renew the office of Rosh Hagolah, which had been suppressed 80 years previously, with the execution of the then Rosh Hagolah—Mar Zutra bar Huna, by the Persian King.

## A ROYAL MARRIAGE

Caleph Omar raised up Bustenai ben Hanini, one of the descendants of the previous Rosh Hagolah, and placed him on the throne of the Rosh Hagolah as of yore, and even gave him the daughter of Kusaro, the last of the Persian Kings. The Persian princess became a proselyte, and Bustenai married her in accordance with the Law of Moshe and Yisrael.

With the arrival of peace, and with no further anxieties as to the position of the two ancient Yeshivot, Rav Yitzchak Gaon conceded the special position held by the Yeshiva of Peros Shavor, in favour of the two ancient Yeshivot of Sura and Pumbedita, as in the days of the Amoraim. Henceforward, once more there stood at the head of Babylonian Jewry, two corresponding institutions, over which the ancient glory hovered—namely the two Geonim—the Heads of Sura and Pumbedita on the one hand, and the Rosh Hagolah—descendant of the Royal House of David on the other.

Notwithstanding this, the period of the Geonim was not short of tremors and crises. Various external causes sometimes disturbed the stability and position of the Jewish community in Babylonia. Occasionally, difficulties and crises arose from internal causes, within the Jewish community itself. The bearer of the high office of the Gaonate was first and foremost determined by the internal factors in the Yeshiva itself. Accordingly, the Gaon was usually distinguished by his deep comprehensive knowledge and his lofty character. Only in a few exceptional cases were external factors able to exercise any significant influence in the appointment of a new Gaon, and so they brought about the election of one unworthy of occupying the office. This situation did not obtain with regard to the appointment of Rosh Hagolah. This highly responsible and honorable position was hereditary, and not every heir was distinguished by the special qualities desirable for leadership of the people.

About 50 pairs of Geonim stood at the heads of the Yeshivot of Sura and Pumbedita over a period of

about 450 years, the average reign being about nine years only for each incumbent. This phenomenon is explained by the fact that Geonim were elected for their high office, generally speaking, at an advanced age, since the choice would normally be made amongst the senior Sages of the Yeshiva.

#### LEARNING METHODS

Each year was divided into two terms, and each term ended in the month of the "Kallah"—Adar and Ellul. During this month external students assembled in the Yeshiva—those who had left their studies on a permanent basis, and divided their time during ten months of the year between study and work. 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 the Kallah, all the students revised their learning, whilst listening to the lectures of the Gaon, and the seven senior Sages of the Yeshiva, called the "Rashei Kallah", who sat with three other Chaverim in the first row in front of the Gaon. The new Gaon was usually elected from their midst.

The Geonim did not compose many books, though some of them left us some very important books. But the characteristic literary material of this era was not written in the form of books, but in the form of very many letters, in which the Babylonian Geonim replied to all queries emanating from the whole of the Diaspora. A portion of the letters was preserved over the generations, and was even collected and arranged in special books which constitute collections of "Teshuvot Hageonim" (Responsa of the Geonim).

With the conquest of Babylon by the Arabs, and its annexation to the great Islamic empire, which stretched from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic, the borders that separated Babylonian Jews and the communities in Eretz Yisrael, Egypt, Kairouan, Spain, etc. were deleted. **All the communities of the West saw in the Geonim of Babylon, the supreme spiritual authority for the Jewish people.**

The Yeshivot of Babylonia became the highest and most authoritative institutions for Torah learning and spiritual guidance throughout the whole Diaspora. Financial support flowed from all the Diaspora to the Babylonian Yeshivot, and questions on Jewish problems were directed to the Geonim—the Heads of the Yeshivot, both in Halachic matters and communal affairs—or relating to Jewish philosophy, etc.

These questions arrived from the most distant communities, in writing, and delivered into the hands of the Gaon. Each question was read out in the Yeshiva, and its reply dictated by the Gaon, after the subject had been debated in the Yeshiva and the final conclusion had been read. Signed by the Gaon, the reply was transmitted to its destination.

During the course of the generation of the Geonic period, these replies grew into a comprehensive and varied literature, which serves as an important source for Halachic and philosophic research, and even for Jewish History.

The exemplary organisation of Babylonian Jewry

and its splendid Yeshivot, which disseminated their teachings to the whole Diaspora, was based on a Jewish settlement firmly attached to its soil, and enjoying a healthy economic situation and political autonomy within its boundaries. **The Jewry of Babylonia in the period of the Geonim, did indeed constitute a source of spiritual inspiration and national pride to the Jews in all the other exiles ●**

(From PAI-Views, London, January 1972)

#### The Refugee Problem . . .

*continued from page 3*

It is unfortunate that the Arabs who fled Palestine as refugees were not given by their compatriots the same opportunity of rehabilitation the Jewish refugees were given by their brethren in Israel.

There is no question that the most important aspect of the whole conflict between the Jews and the Arabs in the Middle East is the question of the refugees, because it dispels goodwill and promotes hatred. It is imperative that an atmosphere be created so that hatred can be toned down and goodwill can prevail. There is no such thing as traditional hatred between nations. Even the "traditional" enmity between the Germans and the French subsided and culminated in alliance as we see it today. There is no reason that a similar situation could not prevail in the Middle East.

One may argue that there are more Arab refugees on record than one may account for if a true census is carried out in all the Palestinian Arab refugees' camps! One may dispute that children of refugees can be called refugees! One may question the advisability of U.N. subsidy to the Palestinian Arab refugees! One may never, however, be able to avoid the question of these refugees and their tragedy, and thus seek a just solution for it.

#### POPULATION EXCHANGE

It is my proposal that the United Nations, in conjunction with the Arabs and the Jews, introduce a programme of population exchange and reciprocal repatriation for the refugees as a solution for the refugee problem—Jewish as well as Arab refugees—in the Middle East, and as a solution for the Jewish minorities still living and still persecuted in Arab countries. As late as June 1970, I found that these refugees were interested in homes if sincerely offered to them, and in jobs if provided. It is imperative that an educational programme be instituted to dispel the 20 years of hatred propaganda to which these refugees were subjected and to replace their despair with hope and the anarchy which existed in these camps, into a productive order.

Speaking as a refugee, which I am, it really does not matter for the refugee once he is given a home, a job and the means of enjoying life, and this is the crux of the matter. You see many of the Arab refugees now working in Israel as labourers, many of them have settled in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, in Canada, in Algeria, Syria and Iraq, wherever they received the opportunity of housing, education, and jobs. Not unless this problem is solved and justice granted to both Jewish and Arab refugees can we expect peace in the Middle East ●

## Letters to the Editor

From Mr. N. E. Dangoor

### THE LOST TEN TRIBES

May I correct the recent statement by Mr. David Kessler in the *Jewish Chronicle* (February 11) in which he suggests that the Jews of Iraq are descended from the Lost Ten Tribes?

The first 18,000 exiles brought by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BCE consisted of King Jehoiachin and Jewish nobility together with the artisans and craftsmen who were employed in a crash programme to make Babylon the most elegant city of its time. The remainder of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, were deported to Babylon in 586 BCE. These exiles did not all return to Palestine either at the time of Cyrus or at the time of Ezra. The majority, mostly the well-to-do, stayed behind (as is happening today among world Jewry), and were encouraged by the Persians to form in Babylonia an autonomous Jewish state which in time contained over one million Jews.

In contrast, the Ten Tribes brought captive by the Assyrians in 732 and 722 BCE were settled in outlying territories of the Assyrian empire, namely, in Armenia, Persia and Afghanistan, in exchange for local populations, this being the standard policy at the time for ensuring tranquility in conquered territories. Unlike Babylonian Jewry, the Israelites did not have a well developed religious tradition and fell an easy prey to subsequent Christian and Moslem conversions.

Jewish Babylonia retained its paramount importance for nearly 2,000 years and after the destruction of the Second Temple became practically the Jewish fatherland. Jewish Babylonia served Persia well as a buffer state against invasion from the west and remained steadfastly loyal to the Persian empire throughout the latter's existence. In 362 CE the Roman emperor Julian (the Apostate), on the eve of his contemplated invasion of Persia, tried in vain to win over Babylonian Jewry to ensure his supplies and lines of communication. He even promised to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple if they allied with him.

As a matter of interest, the Head of the Babylonian "Galuth" was referred to as King of Israel, Prince of the Exile of all Israel until the 19th century. This was noted by the traveller David d'Beth Hillel who visited Baghdad in 1824. The basis for this extensive royal title was, firstly, that the Exilarch and subsequently the Nasi, claimed descent from King Jehoiachin who had neither abdicated nor was deposed (Zedekiah reigned after him only as regent) and, secondly, because the Exilarch was recognised as the head of all Jews and Israelites living in the Persian and later, the Moslem empires in which lived 90 per cent of the House of Israel.

The hereditary royal office lasted till 1849 when the community was headed by a Chief Rabbi.

From Mr. E. S. Caustill

Thank you very much for the copy of Vol. 1, No. 2 of the journal *The Scribe*, which I thoroughly read article by article and enjoyed it immensely. I must

appreciate that it is really a Journal of Descendants of Babylonian Jewry, which also covers aspects of Oriental Jewry in general.

That a journal of this kind is of utmost necessity for our Community goes beyond doubt. Very hearty congratulations for your and your Committee's brilliant efforts and may the same be crowned with rapid success which it really deserves.

E. S. CAUSTILL,  
62 Leadale Road, N.15

From Mr. F. Ashe Lincoln, Q.C.

Many thanks for letting me see the copy of *The Scribe*, which I found very interesting.

I have no doubt that there is room for a publication such as this, which will be able to give information from a very specialised viewpoint and be of help to a much neglected section of the Community.

With all good wishes.

F. ASHE LINCOLN,  
2 Harcourt Buildings, Temple, E.C.4

## Britain's Creation of Arab States

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and the first country to accord recognition to his regime was Britain on May 20, 1927.

In 1941 when Syria was under the rule of Vichy France directly influenced by Hitler, British forces helped the Free French to liberate Syria. (It was in an extension of this campaign that Moshe Dayan, fighting under Palestinian British command, lost an eye.)

In September 1971, three Arab countries—Bahrain, Qatar and Oman—former British-protected territories, were admitted as independent member-states of the United Nations. The United Arab Emirates, the former Trucial States of the Persian Gulf—came into existence as a result of British policy of withdrawal from the Gulf by 1971, and a week after their independence, joined the United Nations on December 9, 1971.

All these states are today members of the Arab League which was itself promoted by Churchill and Eden towards the end of the Second World War. Thus Britain should shed any "guilt complex" in respect of her pledges of independence and aid for the Arabs ●

Comments and articles welcomed. The views of individual contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the journal.—Ed.

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Published by Committee for Descendants of Babylonian Jewry, edited by P. S. Gourgey, MBE, and printed by the Ranelagh Press, Park End, Hampstead, London, NW3 2SG.

Annual subscription £1.50 or \$4.00 including postage.