

# The SCRIBE

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A HAPPY NEW YEAR 5733 TO ALL OUR READERS

### Our Second Year

As the Jewish New Year, unlike that of the non-Jews, is an occasion of spiritual and mental stock-taking—the rejoicing and celebrations follow a fortnight later in the Festival of Succoth—we would like to review our record since *The Scribe* was launched on the previous New Year.

While aware of the constant need to learn and improve, we are fortified by the many expressions of approval, some of which have been published, from members of the Babylonian or Iraqi community in Israel and various countries of the Diaspora. It is perhaps fitting, in response to requests, to recall the reasons for reviving the ancient name of Babylonian Jewry. Firstly, as observed in the first editorial of *The Scribe*, it is to bring to light the latent cultural and spiritual treasures of our glorious past. These include references to (1) the Babylonian Talmud, which because of the eminence of its scholars and the circumstances under which it was produced, takes precedence over the Talmud Yerushalmi, (2) to the teachings of Hillel the Great who originated in Babylon, (3) to the Mishna of Rabbi Judah the Prince, a direct descendant of Hillel (4) to the Gaons of the Religious Academies of Sura and Pumbeditha, including Saadia and a predecessor, Rav Amram ben Sheshna Gaon whose Seder Rav Amram 1,100 years ago provided the basis of the Orthodox Ashkenazi and Sephardi Prayer Book. In a word, we have embarked on a voyage of discovery with splendid horizons ahead.

Secondly, the Jews of modern Iraq have little cause for gratitude to that country with its intermittent persecutions of this most ancient of its communities, its confiscation of their property which, if uncompensated for, amounts to bare-faced robbery, its arrest and imprisonment of their members culminating in the barbaric public hanging of nine Jews in so-called Liberation Square, Baghdad, in January 1969. If the Jews prospered in the first 12 years of post-Turkish Iraq after the first world war this was because they were under beneficent British mandatory rule. In a similar sense, the Jews of Europe have little to be thankful for to that Continent which, despite their invaluable contributions to its culture and civilisation for over 1,000 years, "re-warded" them with 6 million martyrs in Hitler's Europe. This is by no means to detract from the commendable efforts by the West German leaders

and people to make amends for the wrongs committed by the Nazis, though the reparations fall short of the immense losses suffered by European Jewry. Thirdly, every Jewish community should recall its past history and contribution to the mosaic of Jewish thought and culture, if only to deepen consciousness of its heritage and ensure its continuity. Fourthly, knowledge of, and pride in, their background will more effectively provide the weapons to combat assimilation. Thus, far from having any doubt about use of the term "Babylonian" to describe the community, we exhort other Jewish communities to explore their respective backgrounds and intensify the romance of being a Jew.

### Uganda's Asians

Sir Alec Douglas-Home has taken time on TV to condemn Idi Amin's treatment of Uganda's Asians as unjust and inhuman. He has spoken twenty years too late.

When, in 1950 and thereafter, the Jews of Iraq were denationalised and their property confiscated without compensation, no Foreign Minister spoke on their behalf and H.M.'s consulates all over Europe were instructed not to issue visas to Iraqi Jews. Yet it was the British Government that had in 1920 guaranteed the rights and interests of the Jews and Kurds of Iraq against Arab tyranny when it imposed Arab rule on Iraq.

International law and order is not divisible and once the Arabs tasted blood they would repeat the acts at every opportunity—for Amin is doing an Arab-inspired act.

The British Foreign Office has always been too soft with the Arabs and Britain has consistently suffered from this policy of appeasement. But then it was the Appeasement policy with Hitler (in which Douglas-Home himself was involved) that resulted in the Holocaust and the loss of the British Empire.

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# THE PROPHET AND THE KING

from an article in Hebrew in "Beth Mikra"

by PINHAS NEEMAN

Is the prophet's status superior to that of the king in Israel? The Scriptures indicate the contrary: the king is God's messiah, not the prophet. The status of the king is equated to that of God: "Thou shalt not revile God, nor curse a ruler of thy people" (Ex. 22:27). In Psalms 105:15 we are warned: "Touch not Mine anointed and do My prophets no harm." No harm should be done to the prophets but

it is forbidden even to touch the king.

The king of Israel was chosen by God. It is written: "Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose." "Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David, his father."

If the reverence to the king and his importance were so great, in which matters, then, was the prophet more important than the king? It seems that the superiority of the prophet over the king of Israel was due to the fact that the king had to be elected a second time after being chosen by God. The nation gave its approval to the election of its king but had no right of interference in the prophet's election who was chosen by God alone. Therefore the prophet didn't depend on men and because they didn't elect him, they couldn't depose him.

Since the time when the people didn't want anymore that God shall speak to them "from the fire" God chose a prophet from the people, who will be God's spokesman to the people (Deut. 18:18).

The prophet sometimes had to prophesy even against his will. He is not only a mouthpiece in the world through which God's words reach man: he assimilates God's words, gives them his personal print and his own style. The prophet's role was difficult and dangerous. He had to stand firm against all the people, who could fight him.

Why did an antagonism exist between the prophet and the nation? The prophet is exceptional in society, extremist in his requests and has only one idea—that of morality; he doesn't take expediency into consideration. HE IS NOT INTERESTED TO KNOW WHAT CAN HAPPEN BUT ONLY WHAT MUST HAPPEN. The fact that he doesn't compromise generates a source of antagonism between him and his environment.

The prophet's campaign against his environment was led in three directions: religious, moral-social, political-constitutional. In worship matter the Cohanim were combatted because, "They feed on the sin of My people, and they set their heart on their iniquity." The social struggle was against the rich people and the mighty ones "that join house to house, that lay field to field". The most difficult struggle was the political one against the kings and their advisers.

The first prophets didn't want any monarchy as it is pointed out in Samuel's speeches to the nation who came to him and asked for a king. "The Lord your God is your King." Afterwards, when the later prophets accepted the reality of monarchy, they expected from the nation in general, and the king and his ministers in particular, a higher moral life, more confidence in the forces of the nation and less reliance on its neighbours.

In many cases the prophet took part in the administration of the kingdom and in the conduct of war. In the year 701 BCE, twenty years after the

## INTRODUCTION

Josephus coined the term "theocracy" to describe the political structure of ancient Israel and the idea of God's rule over His people. Israel was governed by an aristocracy composed of the king (descendant of David) and the priests (descendants of Aaron) as the executive, with the prophet providing the word of God.

There was always friction between these two forces—the timelessness of the prophet's message often clashing with reality, ending on many occasions in disaster for the Jewish people.

Jeremiah sought to prevent the state from interfering in religious matters by advocating, in effect, the separation of religion and state, thereby paving the way for universalism in religion which accounted for the spread of Christianity and later of Islam.

In the Babylonian galuth, under Persian overlordship, matters were happier and the large autonomous Jewish community prospered under the leadership of the exilarch (of the House of David). But as the Talmud emerged, Judaism became the domain of the specialist rabbis and friction again appeared between the secular and the religious leaderships. Very often this resulted in interference by the non-Jewish government of the day and gradually weakened the position of the community.

The ultimate responsibility for the nation should remain with the king and therefore the role of the prophet should be to advise and warn but not to interfere—in line with the doctrine of free will by which we are held responsible for our activities only if we have the freedom to choose between good and evil and not told what to do. Every form of religion, every system of government and every type of education, whether at home or at school, must aim at enabling the people to exercise this freedom of choice. Our God-given reason must be our last resort and ultimate authority. This can best be illustrated by a recent air disaster in Yugoslavia when a charter plane landed upside down. The passengers were hanging from their seatbelts and a voice told them over the loudspeaker not to move. One young Yugoslav ignored this advice and dashed to safety—seconds before the plane caught fire killing all those on it.

The controversy over relations between State and religion in modern Israel should be decided in this light ●

D.

# A QUESTION OF SURVIVAL

by GASTRONOME

The average man today enjoys luxuries that would make an ancient potentate green with envy—the motor-car, radio, electric light, television—to name but a few. We who live in modern cities with jet planes bringing produce from all the corners of the world, with deep freezers and vacuum packs keeping food fresh for many months, do not often realise what hardships our ancestors (God bless their souls) went through in the frequent times of famine, war and siege in their struggle for survival to transmit to us their heritage of beliefs and experience.

In the Middle East provisions were kept in the form of olive oil and vegetable oils; dried fruits—figs, raisins and dates; basturma and cheese; wine and vinegar as well as various grains such as wheat, barley and rice. Bread and vinegar were the staple food in ancient Israel. The large storage jars found in Masada show the ingenuity of ancient peoples within their limited means.

One form of wheat which lent itself to storage and ready use was burghul or cracked wheat. Burghul, the ancient food of the Middle East, is made today by washing, cooking, drying and crushing whole wheat. It is used dry, soaked or cooked according to recipe need. Though it becomes tender when cooked, it retains its kernel identity. Its production has been improved by modern methods of chemistry.

Burghul can be mixed with meat as in kubba burghul, mixed with vegetables as a salad or used as pilav. We give below two recipes from *A Book of Middle Eastern Food* by Claudia Roden (Penguin).

## Tabboula—Burghul Salad

The earthy quality of burghul is harmoniously balanced by the light, refreshing aromas of parsley and mint.

- ½ lb. fine burghul (cracked wheat)
- 3 tablespoons finely chopped spring onions and/or 1 large onion finely chopped
- salt and black pepper
- 1½ teacups finely chopped parsley
- 3 tablespoons finely chopped fresh mint or 2 tablespoons dried crushed mint
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 tablespoons lemon juice

disaster of Samaria, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, marched on Judah and asked Hezekiah to surrender the capital. But Isaiah advised the King to be steadfast. His advice was not only based on faith but on a deep understanding of the political situation. He was proved right and Judah remained free for another 116 years.

In 586 BCE it was conquered by Babylon when Zedekiah, who was bound by his ministers, did not listen to the prophet Jeremiah ●

Soak the burghul in water for about ½ hour before preparing the salad. It will expand enormously. Drain and squeeze out as much moisture as possible with your hands. Spread out to dry further on a cloth.

Mix the burghul with the chopped onion, squeezing with your hands to crush the onions so that their juices penetrate the burghul. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Add the parsley, mint, olive oil and lemon juice and mix well. The salad should be distinctly lemony. A little finely chopped cucumber and tomato may be added to the preparation which is highly individual but parsley is always used abundantly.

One of the best tabboulas in London is made by Mrs. S.D. We recently discovered that S. knew the secret of preparing a better tabboula in that she does not soak the burghul in water but just washes it and lets it soak in the liquid of the other ingredients. An even better procedure would be to soak it in the lemon juice and to add the other ingredients fresh when the salad is required.

## Burghul Pilav

- 1 lb. burghul (cracked wheat)
- 2 onions finely chopped
- 1½ lb. lean stewing lamb, cubed
- 3 tomatoes, skinned and chopped
- 1 small tin tomato concentrate
- ½ lb. margarine
- salt and black pepper

Fry onions in a saucepan in about ¼ lb. margarine until soft and a pale golden colour. Add the meat and turn it over moderate heat for a few minutes to colour the cubes all over. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Add the tomatoes and tomato concentrate, cover with water and simmer gently for about 2 hours, or until the meat is tender, adding more water as required.

In another pan, fry the burghul in the remaining butter for 10 minutes, stirring constantly. Add salt to taste, then pour in meat mixture together with its sauce, which should measure about 1 pint. Stir well and cover. Simmer gently for 10 minutes, or until all the liquid has been absorbed. Then steam for a further ½ hour on an asbestos mat over very low heat, with a cloth stretched under the lid to absorb the steam. The burghul should be plump and soft. Jointed chicken may be substituted for lamb ●

Some say that, after the Munich tragedy, Israel and the Arabs must now be excluded from international games. They equate the victim with the criminals.

This perverted mentality and twisted reasoning can be illustrated by an incident some years ago when Italian Jews could not get visas for Iraq. Thereupon, the Italian government retaliated by not issuing Italian visas to Iraqi Jews!

# **The Power of Middle East Oil** *by EXILARCH*

Money serves a number of useful purposes: firstly, it is the means of acquiring goods and services and the other necessities of life. Secondly, at a higher level, it is the means of storing wealth, of saving for the future, to use as and when the occasion demands.

Thirdly, in its highest role and when amassed in large amounts, MONEY IS POWER—economic and political power both national and international. In this capacity money does not have to be spent and becomes not only indestructible but it actually grows by itself. It is in this context that we have to look on the oil of the Middle East where two-thirds of the world's reserves are located and the world slowly becoming more and more dependent on that source for fuel. This realisation has enabled the oil-producing countries to raise their prices so that today the West has to pay for their oil needs not in millions but in billions. By 1980 the Arabs will receive nearly \$28,000 million every year in oil revenues. The implications are:

(1) That a large part of this money will be spent on buying consumer and capital goods thus making the Middle East one of the biggest markets of the world enabling its countries to dictate to their suppliers.

(2) A steady balance of payment surplus is building up in favour of the Middle Eastern countries rising up to \$15,000 million by 1975. This would be enough to impose great strain on the dollar and other Western currencies and provide Arab leaders with a bargaining power in relations with the West. It is stated that already over half all new Eurodollar bond issues is taken up by the Bank of Kuwait. Such amounts of highly mobile funds were the cause of the dollar devaluation last year and forced the sterling to float last June. By making repeated attacks on vulnerable currencies, these funds can play havoc in the international monetary structure.

(3) For some time to come the West will need the oil more than the Middle Eastern countries need the money and this again will give Arabs a leverage in international affairs, which Sadat is already trying to exploit.

In democratic societies most of such wealth would be used for the welfare of the people but

most Arab countries are ruled by dictators who retain large sums for power politics and adventures on an increasing scale.

This situation can best be illustrated by Libya with a small, illiterate, population ruled by a dictatorship that receives the vast oil revenues, which remain mostly in cash. Gaddafi has used the power of his wealth to lure Mintoff and thereby disrupt the Nato defence structure in Malta. He gave help to the IRA in Ulster in order to embarrass the British Government. He gave Idi Amin of Uganda a £1,000,000 bribe to send away the 700 Israeli technicians. Most recently Gaddafi communicated to Amin more cash and some of his madness and as a result Amin is taking the drastic step of expelling 100,000 Asians from Uganda in a tyrannical way, which reminds us of the recent expulsion of 90,000 Persians from Iraq.

But madness is an art and Gaddafi hopes to replace the Israelis in Uganda by Egyptian technicians and the Asians by Arab traders.

The Arabs are thus using the power of their oil wealth to expand in all directions as they did 1,300 years ago through the surprise conquest of the Middle East under the banner of Islam. This cheque-book form of Arab imperialism should be of concern to all.

But why should we oppose Arab expansion? Because the Arabs have no civilisation to offer and they only thrive by lowering the standards of living of the countries that come under their control. After the Persian and Greek civilisations ran their courses, the Middle East reverted to the desert conditions to which the Arabs are accustomed, helped greatly by the goat which ate all trees and green growth. That is why the Arabs find Israel a thorn in their side. With Arab population rising steadily and Jewish population remaining static, with all the wealth concentrated in their hands, Arab leaders are not in a hurry to settle accounts with Israel, hence it is safe to say that under present conditions the Arabs will never make a lasting peace with Israel. But even if it comes, peace is not enough. It is therefore important that Israel should look further afield and organise a strong, democratic, multi-national, confederation of the Middle East and make sure that the natural wealth of the Middle East which belongs to all Middle Eastern peoples, including Jews, must not be used by one element to destroy another.

## **Libyan Jew Gaoled**

The case has recently come to light of Giulio Hassan, a Libyan Jewish engineer who has been in gaol since Col. Gaddafi seized power in September 1969. That Hassan should be adopted by Amnesty, an organisation devoted to seeking the release of political prisoners and none too pro-Jewish despite its many Jewish supporters in the U.S. especially, is indicative of the seriousness of his situation. Cannot the U.N. Human Rights Commission take appropriate action in spite of its many Arab and Communist members?

## **Was Hijaz part of Israel?**

Now, it is well known that the territory of the Israelites did not comprise an area larger than the Jordan province and Palestine, Syria and the region of Medina and Khaybar in the Hijâz . . . The kingdom of Solomon flourished and extended to the borders of the Yemen.

From THE MUQADDIMAH,  
by the Arab historian  
IBN KHALDUN (1332-1406)

# THE LESSONS OF MUNICH

The massacre of 11 Israeli sportsmen at Munich cannot help to advance the rights of Palestinian refugees. Predictably, it did their cause more harm than good. It is part of a campaign of terror financed by Arab oil-producing countries aimed at intimidating Israel and eventually destroying the Jewish state. It is similar to the public hanging of 11 innocent Jews in Baghdad in the campaign of terror carried out by the Iraq regime in 1969.

But the Arabs have always used terror in their conquests and expansion. When the Arabs conquered Iraq 1,300 years ago, their commander Khalid ibn Walid swore aloud in the middle of the decisive battle that if the Arabs were victorious the blood of their enemies would flow in a stream. The battle was won and the oath literally fulfilled. The Persian prisoners, soldiers and civilians, were all preserved for one gigantic slaughter and the blood of the slain poured for days in the surrounding canals.

A few years previous to that, in the campaign to drive the Jews out of Hijâz, the Jewish tribe of Qurayzah was forced to surrender; thereafter all the men were treacherously put to death and the women and children were sold as slaves.

Fifty years ago when the Arabs had just been released from the oppressive Ottoman yoke, it might have been possible for Jews and Arabs to work together to develop the Middle East. But now that Arab leaders have found easy wealth and undreamed-of power, they have developed true to their

traditional character which is diametrically opposed to the Jewish ideal:

WE WANT TO BUILD, THEY WANT TO DESTROY;  
WE WANT TO PLANT, THEY WANT TO PLUCK-  
OUT;

WE WANT PEACE, THEY WANT WAR.

Jewish determination not to be intimidated by terrorism brings to mind the famous story of Al-Samawal, a Jewish chieftain who lived in Arabia 1,500 years ago. His daughter was taken hostage by some raiders who asked him to surrender certain people who took refuge in Samawal's house. He told them, "Kill your hostage but I shall not dishonour my trust." The main business street in Baghdad is named after him, Al Samawal street, as a reminder of his loyalty and in honour of the Jews of Iraq who were handling most of the country's commerce.

The picture that emerges of the Munich tragedy is that the Israeli sportsmen were hastily led to their slaughter on the airfield near Dachau in order not to defile the "holy" Olympiad and not to delay the games. It was convenient to dispose of the whole affair in the same memorial service that was already arranged for the next morning. Those responsible for the tragic outcome of the operation symbolise the unholy civilisation of Europe—materialistic, violent and intolerant—that in our lifetime was capable of producing the Holocaust.

*Wish you a very*

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# TWO GRANDMOTHERS

## A study in contrasts

by OLGA SOMECH PHILLIPS

My two grandmothers, one oriental, the other occidental, present as vivid a study in contrasts as one could find in the Jewish Community.

My paternal grandmother conformed more to the Mizrahi (or Orthodox) pattern, whereas my maternal one is somewhat less suited to these columns.

Katun Judah (or Yahooda), my father's mother, was born in Baghdad about 130 years ago—belonging to one of the patriarchal Oriental families, she was a near kinswoman of the late Mrs. Flora Sassoon, whose home in London was a centre of Rabbinic learning. This grandmother was married at an early age to a great-nephew of the famous Rabbi Abdulla Ben Abraham Somekh, about whom there has been a small volume compiled in Hebrew by Abraham Ben-Jacob, including all the ramifications of this early Baghdad family.

### ENGLISH FAMILY BACKGROUND

My mother's family was part Anglo-Jewish in origin. Her father was born in the Island of Ely, and brought up in Norwich, his father coming from Morocco—his mother was of English birth. His wife, my other grandmother, Julia Bendon (née Hart), was born in Canterbury and her mother in Cheltenham although her father was Polish. The name Hart lives on today in the well-known clothing firm of Hart and Lever. There were some good citizens in this family. Grandmother's brothers were Sir Israel Hart and Alderman Henry Hart, who had the freedom of the City of Canterbury, unusual for a Jew in an ecclesiastical city, and her cousins the Levys had to their credit a baronetcy in the person of Sir Maurice Levy.

The eight Bendon children passed their infancy at 11 Warrington Crescent, Maida Vale, and afterwards moved to 50 Hamilton Terrace, St. John's Wood. My grandmother died at 22 Marlborough Place in the same neighbourhood.

Both my mother's parents were heart and soul in the Anglo-Jewish community and its life, although strict orthodoxy was not their special quality. This grandmother could read the Bible in a fine, sonorous English, and assisted her husband in his good works. In an old magazine called *Young Israel* one reads in the 1897 number how she entertained members of the Jewish Deaf and Dumb Home:

"On the 31st, in response to Mrs. George Bendon's kind invitation, we set out between the showers to Warrington Crescent, where we received a royal welcome. It was too wet to go out into the grounds, but the time sped happily enough till tea was announced. The appearance of the tea tables fairly took our breath away—everything was so nice. Our hostess presided, and the Misses Bendon and the domestic staff of the house attended our every want. It was, indeed, a sumptuous meal, and we did full justice to it. After saying grace, we had a few games, and then said goodbye to our friends, thanking them for all their kindness."

My grandfather did much to better the position of the Ministry and was on very friendly terms with

Chief Rabbi Dr. Herman Adler who came to him personally to appeal against the idea of introducing an organ into the Bayswater Synagogue. Rabbi Dr. Sir Herman Gollancz regarded my grandfather as one of the great stand-bys during his ministry at the Bayswater Synagogue.

Such was the environment of my maternal grandmother, very different from my Eastern ancestors'.

Both the Judahs and the Somekhs had been reared for generations in a pious orthodoxy—akin to that of Eastern Europe. As is known, the old Jews in Baghdad lived under a greater spirit of toleration than their co-religionists in Russia or Poland and were as static as the old Anglo-Jewish families; but as was said by a European Rabbi: "The Baghdad Jews might live in palaces, but they never forgot their Judaism."

My grandmother, Mrs. Eliahoo Somekh, reared a family of four sons and two daughters, some of whom married Europeans. She was a matriarchal type, unusually fair in appearance for an Oriental. She lived for many years in Marseilles, where her husband died. After his death she lived with her eldest bachelor son in Cairo and was to us in London something of a myth. One of my contacts with her, apart from my uncle Mosheh's letters, was a golden Magen David specially made in the country of her adoption which she sent me to wear as a child. It was unusual and beautiful and I had worn it all my life till, alas, it got into burglars' hands.

After living a circumscribed life for years, my grandmother in her nineties decided to travel, so my father bought her a villa in Nice and as a young married woman I saw her for the first time. She spent most of her days in prayer and contemplation, and her dreams were those of a mystic. She was highly psychic and though we did not speak the same language, she often seemed to understand me.

Although she observed strictly every Fast and Feast in the Jewish Calendar, she was tolerant of others who did not do so. She had the fine manners belonging to an old civilisation, and was generous to a fault. Being endowed perhaps with a little of her second sight I sometimes wear a gold-embroidered cloak inherited from her, when I am doing graphological studies.

Although my two grandmothers were such poles apart in their upbringing, they both made their own contribution to Jewish life.

If I am mixed in my attitude to Jewish matters, it must be realised that I had this diverse heredity—East is East and West is West, but sometimes the twain *must* meet. I have tried to make them meet in my own personality, particularly in my feeling for Jewish affairs: sometimes my Mother's forebears prevail, sometimes my Father's, but I endeavour to take the best from both and blend them into an harmonious whole ●

## BOOK REVIEW

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

### THE SEPHARDIM—A Problem of Survival?

by Rabbi Abraham Levy, Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, London, 1972.  
46 pp. 60p. Available from 4 Biddulph Road, London W.9.

This is a welcome and learned treatise on a subject of increasing importance to Jewish communities in Israel and the Diaspora. It is the outcome of a visit to Israel at the end of 1970 under the auspices of the Sir Robert Waley Cohen Travelling Scholarship.

Of the 1,750,000 Sephardim in the world the vast majority live in Israel, constituting over 50 per cent of its Jewish population. (The term Sephardim is here used in its widest sense to include descendants of the exiles from Spain and Portugal after the Expulsion of the fifteenth century as well as Jews from the ancient communities of the Arab countries of the Middle East and North Africa.) Hence their social and cultural standards have an important impact on the nature and development of Israeli society.

In this work Rabbi Levy has sought to analyse the distinctive features of the Sephardi outlook, as prevailing in Sephardi communities and institutions of higher learning and to assess the chances of a major Sephardi revival in Israel and the Diaspora to contribute to Jewish thought as a whole. These distinctive features are summarised as Synthesis (cf. Dr. Weizmann's Synthesis of "political and practical Zionism"), Wordliness and Tolerance, and the author advances the important argument that these characteristics could provide the "golden mean" between the extremist attitudes prevailing among the Ashkenazim who constitute the predominant element in Jewish life.

He outlines aspects of Jewish education among the Sephardim in the past, traces the history of the office of Rishon-le-Zion, the Sephardi Chief Rabbinate of Israel and refers to the paucity of Sephardi institutions of higher learning, especially after the Holocaust.

In the United States, attention is drawn to the Sephardi Studies Programme of Yeshiva University in New York under the direction of the Haham, Dr. Gaon, and in London to the Judith, Lady Montefiore College sponsored jointly by the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation and the Jewish Agency (and originally set up by Sir Moses Montefiore in 1869). In Israel there are the Metivta Gedola in Jerusalem run by the Council of the Sephardi Community under its energetic President, Mr. E. E. Eliachar, and the Porath Yosef, founded in 1923 by an Indian Jew, Joseph Abraham Shalom, on the advice of the erudite Baghdadi Rabbi, Joseph Hayim. The latter institution has produced the well-known Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Tel-Aviv, Ovadia Yosef, who was

## OBITUARY - Joseph Nissim

Mr. Joseph Nissim Ben Saleh Ezra Nissim, who died in London on 24 July 1972 at the age of 90, was a barrister of over 60 years' standing specialising in company law. Before practising at the Bar in London, to which he was called by the Middle Temple (at the same time as Earl Attlee), Mr. Nissim had a distinguished career in the Indian Civil Service. Prior to and during World War I he occupied the posts of Legal Remembrancer to the Government of Bombay and Judge in the Satara District of Bombay Presidency.

Early in the war he pleaded successfully for Baghdadi Jews in India who had Turkish nationality who were about to be detained by the Government as "enemy aliens"! This was comparable to the position of German Jews in Britain after the outbreak of the Second World War. In May 1917 it was at his suggestion that the then Secretary of State for India made a declaration in Parliament of "increasing association of Indians with the governance of their country" which formula was later included in the ensuing Government of India Act. This was regarded as a procedural precedent for declarations or statements affecting the constitutional development of other countries under British rule.

Mr. Nissim, who was a member of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Synagogue for nearly 70 years, set up, through the will of a generous friend, a Charitable Fund benefiting charities in India, Israel, the Far East and Britain, mainly for those, in the words of the deed in 1933, "of Babylonian origin". Mr. Nissim also played an active part in company meetings in the City.

Before gaining academic distinction in St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1906, Mr. Nissim, who was a nephew of Sir Jacob Sassoon, graduated with honours in law and economics from Bombay University. He was a man of brilliant intellectual attainments, shining integrity and above all, a good heart. May he rest in peace.

*From an address at Ohel David Synagogue,  
London, by P. S. Gourgey*

born in Baghdad. As education is the key to the Sephardi revival, concrete, indeed, crucial, assistance could be given by the wealthy Sephardim of the West to these two institutions. Graduates of both could in time occupy positions of increasing influence in Israel. Rabbi Levy gives an interesting account of his interview with Dr. Warhaftig, Israel's Minister of Religious Affairs, on the question of equal opportunities "for the Sephardi minority" as described by the Minister.

In this work the author has thrown out a bold challenge to Sephardi leaders in Israel and the Diaspora. In short, it is: "Encourage education, promote moderation, or have assimilation!" Will the challenge be taken up?

## Letters to the Editor

From H.E. Mr. Michael Comay, Israel Ambassador

I note that in the sixth issue of *The Scribe* you deplore the lack of balance in the approach to the Middle East refugee problem, and stress the claims of the Jews settled in Israel from the Arab countries. Over many years we emphasised this theme of a "two-way migration", an "unplanned exchange of minorities", in the debates on the refugee problem at the United Nations. Amongst other things, we always stressed that the Jews also had a claim for property abandoned or confiscated in their countries of origin.

From Mr. Albert Hayim, Hong Kong

In his article Mr. Ben-Jacob stated that Blilios was of Iraqi origin. I am sure the Blilios family—of London, Calcutta and Hong Kong—originated in Corfu Island when it was a British colony. The original emigrants left Corfu about 1850 or 1860.

[Mr. Ben-Jacob replies: It is true that the Blilios family originally came from Corfu. My article mentioned Sima Blilios whose husband Raphael Emmanuel Blilios lived in Baghdad before he emigrated to India.]

### IS MOROCCO SAFE? MARK II

In our first issue of September-October 1971 there was an article under the same title as above, following the providential escape of King Hassan II of Morocco from an assassination attempt in his capital of Rabat in July 1971. For the 40,000 Jews of Morocco are only safe while his rule lasts. He escaped again, by the grace of God, from another attempt on his life in August 1972. He assured his Jewish citizens of his continued concern for their welfare and interests. He recalled that in the riots following the Six Day War of 1967 he hastened to protect the Jewish minority, and punished the angry mobs frustrated by Israel's victory of the aggressive Arab armies. While we have every reason to appreciate King Hassan's sincerity, as indeed that of his late illustrious father, King Mohamed V, we feel that all efforts should be made by the Jewish authorities in Morocco and international organisations such as the Jewish Agency, the World Jewish Congress and B'nai B'rith, to expedite emigration from Morocco, with their property. For it is Gaddafi of Libya who is seeking to overthrow the king and who has doubtless influenced Amin of Uganda to expel first the Israelis and now the Asians (and soon European business executives?) in pursuit of a pernicious racist policy. The international Jewish organisations are now rightly concerned about the atrocious poll tax levied by the Soviet Union on those Jews who wish to emigrate, but this problem should not be overlooked. In short, the Jews of Morocco should go while the going is good ●

### OLD COPIES WANTED

We have received many requests for previous copies of *The Scribe*. Readers with old copies are requested to send them back for recirculation.

**A Nation that has been defeated and has come under the rule of another nation will quickly perish**

From THE MUQADDIMAH, by the Arab historian IBN KHALDUN (1332-1406)

The reason for this may possibly lie in the apathy that comes over people when they lose control of their own affairs and become dependent upon others. Hope diminishes and weakens. Now, propagation and an increase in civilisation (population) take place only as a result of strong hope and of the energy that hope creates in the animal powers (of man). When hope and the things it stimulates are gone through apathy, and when group feeling has disappeared under the impact of defeat, people become unable to defend themselves.

Here, we possibly learn another secret, namely, that man is a natural leader. When a leader is deprived of his leadership and even prevented from exercising all his powers, he becomes apathetic, even down to such matters as food and drink. This is in the human character. A similar observation may be made with regard to beasts of prey. They do not cohabit when they are in human captivity. The group that has lost control of its own affairs thus continues to weaken and to disintegrate until it perishes. God alone endures.

This may be illustrated by the Persian nation. In the past, the Persians (Parsees) filled the world with their great numbers. When their military force was annihilated by the Arabs and the Persians came under their rule and were subjugated, they lasted only a short while and were wiped out as if they had never been. One should not think that this was the result of some persecution or aggression perpetrated against them. The rule of Islam is known for its justice. Such disintegration is human nature. It happens when people lose control of their own affairs.

It is noteworthy how civilisation always collapsed in places the Bedouins took over and conquered, and how such settlements were depopulated and laid in ruin. The Yemen where Bedouins live is in ruins, except for a few cities. Persian civilization in Iraq is likewise completely in ruin. The same applies to Syria and Egypt ●

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

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