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The Kurdish Dilemma

The Kurds have resumed their struggle for freedom against the Baghdad government as it became clear that the 1970 agreement for autonomy would not be implemented. General Barzani, the Kurdish leader, has stated, "These Arabs seem to favour a 'no-war, no-peace' policy with us also," (a reference to the Arabs' similiar attitude to Israel).

The Kurds, a gentle people, have been in the Middle East for 4,000 years in the region where the Ten Tribes of Israel were settled and where, in the first century CE, the Jewish state of Adiabene (capital—Arbil) was situated. In 1170 Benjamin of Tudela reported very large Jewish settlements all over Kurdistan. The Kurds today number over ten millions spread over Turkey, Syria and Iraq.

The root of the Kurdish dilemma is that Iran and Turkey are opposed to the ultimate creation of a Kurdish state. Turkey is trying to integrate its Kurdish minority and Persia changed its name to Iran to cover Persians, Medes and Kurds. America, too, views a separate Kurdistan as a weak link in Cento defences. Geographically, Kurdistan is landlocked with no access to the sea.

The only hopeful course therefore is for Kurdish self-government within a Middle East confederation that would not pose a threat to the territorial integrity of Turkey and Iran. General Barzani has rightly stated that the Kurds are a factor in the Middle East. As such he should have the courage to join forces openly with Israel and possibly Hussein's Jordan and Lebanon to liberate the Middle East for the benefit of all its inhabitants ●

Baghdad Abortive Coup

Col. Kazzar, Iraq's chief of security, and forty of his collaborators in an attempted coup, have recently been arrested and executed. Kazzar has boasted that he tortured and killed over 5,000 people including of course many Jews who have mysteriously disappeared, feared killed.

The Iraq government should take this opportunity to disown the atrocities committed by Kazzar's henchmen, free their surviving prisoners, disclose the facts of the reign of terror, and pursue a humane policy towards the remnant of the Jewish community ●

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Inflation

As governments grapple with accelerating prices, galloping inflation ceases to be an economic problem and becomes a moral and religious issue: mankind is being led on the road to a new form of slavery.

Inflation is caused by the bad distribution of wealth and the resultant pull on prices at the higher end of the scale. The malady is on three levels: the ease with which big money is made; the facilities for storing large fortunes; the fast compounding increase of wealth on its own. A wealth tax especially on land values would provide a quick remedy and bring down the mad rates of interest of up to 20 per cent now prevailing.

Huge oil fortunes amassed by Arabs are playing a leading part in commodity speculations and attacks on vulnerable currencies. The world will soon have to find a way of dealing with this ever-present menace ●

With This Issue: SCRIBE PICTURE SUPPLEMENT No. 4
Baghdad Alliance School 1902—Lower Forms 4 and 5.
Names were kindly supplied by Mr. Albert Hayim of Hong Kong and Mr. Sasson Bekhor, London.



Ben-Zvi, Israel's second president, in Iraq, in 1935. Front row from right to left: David Remez (father of Ambassador Aharon Remez), Yitzhak Ben-Zvi President of Israel 1952-1963, Sasson Rushti, Aharon Cohen, R. Shalom Reuben. Picture taken during a visit to the Shrine of Ezekiel in Kifil. It is noteworthy that at Yad Ben Zvi, the former residence of Israel's presidents, the following quotation from the Book of Ezekiel is prominently displayed: Thus saith the Lord God: I will even gather you from the people, and will assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered and I will give you the Land of Israel.

THE PERSONALITY OF MOSES

by P. S. Gourgey

In the United States the "Jews for Jesus" movement among American Jewish students is being countered, among other ways, by a "Christians for Moses" campaign. For the Christian faith seems based more on the personality of its founder than on the ideals sought to be proclaimed: these are entirely Judaistic in origin, form and content making the Christian message repetitive. The famous precept of "love thy neighbour" is first referred to in the third of the Five Books of Moses, Leviticus c. 19 v. 18, a fact glossed over by would-be detractors of Judaism.

In attempting to delineate the personality of Moses, as distinct from his imperishable achievements and message, one is aware of the tendency of our rabbis to ignore or understate this in order to emphasise the validity of his universally applicable teaching and prevent the worship of a man, however great. Hence the bare mention of Moses in the Hagada, of which he was the hero! *i.e.* It seems necessary if it will lead to the admiration, and consequent emulation, of the greatest Jew and prophet who ever lived.

PRINCE OF ANCIENT EGYPT

One may imagine what reserves of character had to be summoned up for a man enjoying the title and privilege of a Prince of Egypt throwing it all away in order to identify himself with the lowliest element of the society in which he lived. Moses did just that when he killed the Egyptian overseer ill-treating a Hebrew slave and fled into the desert.

As a mere mortal, it was not through any blinding flash of revelation or achievement of instantaneous glory that Moses ascended to supreme spiritual heights to qualify himself to receive the Ten Commandments at Sinai, during Shavuoth—*zeman matan toratenu*—thus enshrining for eternity the principles of civilised society. We learn that in the second 40 years of his life he laboured as an ordinary shepherd. His lonely occupation conceivably gave

him the time to meditate, to pierce his inmost soul, to strip away, as it were, layer after layer of consciousness and confront his true self to attain perfection—the *nirvana* of subsequent Buddhist conception, through absorption into the Supreme Spirit.

COMPASSION AND HUMILITY

Yet Moses' crowning quality was his humility (he was called 'anav', the meek) and he disclaimed any monopoly of the gift of prophecy wishing everyone to exercise it. It is significant that the site of the first revelation of God unto Moses was from a lowly thorn-bush in the wilderness where he was grazing the sheep of Jethro his father-in-law. (Ex. 3). The burning bush (seen as a reflection of the flame within him?) teaches two lessons, firstly, of assurance, for just as it was not consumed, though crackling with fire, so will the House of Israel survive despite prolonged persecution. Secondly, just as sympathy is a Divine trait, so is humility. In the eyes of God, the haughty is despised—the meek and the humble hear the Heavenly Voice and see the celestial light that never fails. The Midrashic example of Moses' humility and understanding concerns his ministering to Joshua in the last days of his life, reversing roles, in order to fortify Joshua in his awesome responsibility as Moses' successor. Such leadership has rarely if ever, been demonstrated.

When the Almighty revealed Himself to Moses—the moment of truth for mankind—the greatest impact was that of Compassion, not Might or Glory. The Thirteen Attributes of God, the *shlosh esrei* midot, were then expressed: "The Lord, The Lord, God merciful and gracious . . ." (Exodus c54, vv6 and 7).

The significance of Moses' humility on which was based his indomitable will was appreciated by Churchill when, in describing Moses' mission, he wrote: "The donkey is saddled; Zipporah and the two children are placed on its back, and through the dust-

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SPOT AN ANCESTOR

A selection from the register of military taxpayers of the Baghdad community in 1892.

Eliahu Abed Aghasi
Moshi Abed Aghasi
Moshi H. Yosef Aghasi
Abraham Aharon Aghasi
Abdulla Aharon Aghasi
Eliahu Aharon Aghasi
Reuben Aharon Aghasi
Isaac Aharon Aghasi
Jacob Aharon Aghasi
Shmuel Aharon Aghasi
Eliahu David Yona Alu
Saleh Abraham Abed Agha-Eliahu
Sason Ezekiel Asfa
Aharon H. Moshi Abul Timman
Elazar Meir Agha-Elazar
Shalom Agha-Elazar
Rahamim Abraham Asher
Abraham Rahamim Asher
Yosef Isaac Asher
Ezekiel Saleh Asher

Eliahu Saleh Asher
Asher Saleh Asher
Saleh Meir Aslan
Ezekiel Meir Aslan
Shaul Meir Aslan
Jacob Meir Aslan
Eliahu Aslan Meir Aslan
Abraham Aslan Meir Aslan
Abudi Aslan Abraham Aslan
Selman Sason Shimon Aslan
Sason Isaac Aslan
Menashi Sason Isaac Aslan
Eliahu Reuben Altibarmagh
Ezekiel Eliahu Altibarmagh
Reuben Ezra Eliahu Altibarmagh
Nissim Ezra Altibarmagh
Moshi Ezra Altibarmagh
Eliahu Ezra Altibarmagh
Hayim Altibarmagh
David Arwili
Isaac Yoseph Arwili
Ezekiel Isaac Arwili
Hayu David Isaac Arwili
Jacob Isaac Arwili
Abraham David Arwili

Eliahu Aghababa
Ezekiel Yehuda Aghababa
Shaul Eliahu Aghababa
Ezekiel Ezra Saleh Aghababa
Yosef Shmuel Aghababa
Asher Shmuel Aghababa
Aghababa Shmuel Aghababa
Heskel Hayim Nathaniel Abulghas
Isaac Abdulla Elias
Saleh Abdulla Elias
Fathi H. Aharon
Shaul Fathi H. Aharon
Abraham Hayim H. Aharon
Shlomo Sason M. Aharon
Ezuri Sason M. Aharon
Ezekiel Rahamim Abu Dawud
Saleh Rahamim Abu Dawud
Yehuda Agha-Dawud
Moshi Agha-Dawud
Mordecai Abed H. Abraham
Shabi Yosef Abraham
Nissim Ezekiel M. Abraham
Kedouri Ezekiel M. Abraham
Rueben Ezekiel M. Abraham
Saleh Agha-Shimon

AFGHANISTAN

The recent coup in Afghanistan that made the country a republic brought to an end a royal line that claimed descent from King Saul of Israel.

Early Rabbinite and Karaite biblical commentators regarded Afghanistan (Khorasan in medieval Hebrew and Muslim sources) as a location of the "lost" Ten Tribes of Israel. The Afghans themselves have a tradition of Israelite descent and this belief appears in the 17th century Afghan chronicle *Makhzan-i-Afghan*. In the book *Tabaqati-Nasiri*, a native work, it is stated that at the time of the Shansabi dynasty there were a people called Beni-Israel who settled near Herat and about the year 622 converted to Islam by a person called Qais or Kish who led some Afghan nobles to Arabia to embrace Islam. The Prophet Mohammed greeted him as "King" as he claimed descent through 47 generations from Saul (Talut). Qais died in 662 aged 87. All the modern chiefs of Afghanistan claim descent from him, in particular the Durrani, the Yussafzai and the Afridi tribes.

In 1925, when King Amanullah Khan visited Baghdad he told Sir Elly Kadoorie, at a garden party given by King Feisal I, that he was descended from the tribe of Benjamin (the tribe of King Saul).

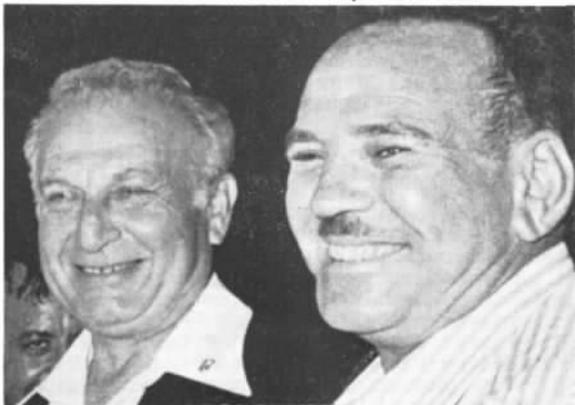
It is interesting to note that the shrine of Benjamin is situated on the border between Persia and Iraq and that all the other eleven children of Jacob were born in Iraq.

Babylonian Jewry had another association with Afghanistan. Persons unwanted by the Jewish leadership, such as counter-candidates over the exilarchate, often went to live in or were exiled to Afghanistan, where Balkh and Ghazni were important Jewish centres. Benjamin of Tudela (1170) describes "Ghazni the great city on the River Gozan where there are about 80,000 Jews". At that time there were also extensive Jewish settlements

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clouds and blazing sunlight, the smallest, most potent, most glorious rescue force in history started on its expedition."

In reflecting on the Divinely-inspired personality of Moses, one is struck by its power and depth which alone made his achievements possible ●



Mr. Joseph Dangoor, assistant adviser to the Israel Government on Arab affairs, recently paid a visit to the Community in London. Here he appears in an informal photograph with Israel's new President

in Persia, Iraq, Kurdistan, Armenia, Georgia and Arabia—all paying tribute to the Babylonian exilarch.

Josephus (1st century CE) writes concerning the Ten Tribes thus: "The Ten Tribes are beyond the Euphrates till now, and are an immense multitude not to be estimated by numbers." ●

CHILDREN'S CORNER

by a Correspondent

Almost every Jew of Iraqi origin must have heard something about the famous Sassoon family, known after Sheikh Sassoon (1750-1830) whose name sparkled in the annals of Babylonian Jewry as the sheikh (leader) of the Jewish Community in Baghdad during 36 years, from 1781 until 1817. Besides the many duties of his high position, Sheikh Sassoon was the treasurer of eight consecutive Walis or governors (the Sultan's representatives) in Baghdad. The last of them was Daoud Pasha, a fanatic and antisemite.

One day a word came to Sheikh Sassoon that the freedom of his son David, and perhaps his life was



Ofair Sassoon, the youngest descendent of the Sassoon family in Israel

under threat. Knowing Daoud Pasha and his ruthless ways, Sheikh Sassoon, accompanied by his son David, fled in 1828 under the cover of darkness to Basrah and from there to Bushehr on the Persian Gulf. (Some historians say that his son David fled first with the help of his father who followed him some time later).

Far from their native land, the Sassoons resumed, now on a larger scale, the leadership of their community. At the same time their name started to glow in the world of business whether in India, the Far East, England or other parts of the world.

The youngest descendant of the Sassoon family in Israel, Ofair, will celebrate his third birthday on the 24th August. His father Daniel ben Anwar ben Shaul ben Aharon ben Yehuda ben Yossef (one of David's six brothers who was in Bushire in 1830) ben Sheikh Sasson, just like his ancestor Sassoon, fled with his wife Ibtisam, from Iraq in 1966, again via Basrah to Bushehr on the Persian Gulf to a widely open world in search of freedom, dignity and real existence. Thus history repeated itself ●

WHO WAS DEUTERO-ISAIAH?

by N. E. D.

Modern opinion is virtually unanimous that the Book of Isaiah is to be considered the work of two distinct authors: First Isaiah (ch. 1—39) whose prophetic career in Jerusalem covers the years c.740—700 BCE and that of an unknown prophet, Deutero-Isaiah (sometimes referred to as Menahem Zion—the comforter of Zion) whose prophecies reflect the experience and events of the Babylonian Exile c.540 BCE.

The identity of Deutero-Isaiah has not been discovered but the interesting hypothesis of Jacob David Brach attempts to identify this prophet with Jeshua the High Priest who played a leading part in the Return to Zion and went up with Zerubbabel from Babylon to start the rebuilding of the Second Temple. In Deutero-Isaiah Hebrew prophetic literature rises to its highest level; the concepts of monotheism and of God's universality reach their full development. Zoroastrian dualism is rejected and combatted:

I form the light, I create darkness,
I make peace, and create evil;
I, the Lord, do all these things.

(45:7).

The Prophet conceives of Israel as God's servant, whose mission it is, *even at the cost of suffering*, to spread His truth among the nations. Jeshua's importance is recognized by contemporary prophets—Haggai and Zechariah. He perhaps saw himself as the Messiah:

The spirit of the Lord is upon me because
the Lord has anointed me to preach good
tidings (gospel) to the meek . . .

(61:1)

indeed as the universal Messiah:

I, the Lord, have called thee with righteous
purpose and taken thee by the hand;
I have formed thee, and appointed thee to
be a covenant (testament) to all peoples,
a light for all nations. (42:6)

Subsequent difficulties were not favourable to this claim. This may explain his return to Babylonia (and burial near Baghdad) and also the merging of his writings into the Book of Isaiah to conceal his identity. Isaiah was chosen, as Brach expounds, because of the similarity of the names and also because the second part "completes" the first part. The Dead Sea Scrolls show that as early as the second century BCE the Book of Isaiah was identical to its present text which indicates that the merging was done by an earlier authority, which points to Ezra the Scribe. Ezra must have decided to play down messianism, introduced Rabbinical Judaism and guided it along the road of Pharisaism which eventually led to the Mishna and Talmud within a secure fence. It brought reforms through "legal fictions" rather than through the authority of a Messiah. This left aside messianic aspirations and Sadducee and Karaite traditions and led to the separate emergence of Christianity, Islam and the Karaite sect. It is possible that alongside Rabbinical

Pharisaic Judaism the Messianic movement of Jeshua continued to exist until it finally erupted in the form of Christianity. Christianity is often described as the daughter of Judaism; it would be more correct to look on it as its sister. The book of Jeshua was the forerunner of the Gospel: Deutero-Isaiah is the most quoted O.T. book in the New Testament. It is also noteworthy that Jeshua (in Greek, Jesus) was also the name of the Nazarene. We can thus better understand the recurrent attacks on Pharisees in the Christian Scriptures.

The concept of the Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah is the only valid explanation for Jewish suffering throughout the ages. But we must remember that anything worth suffering and dying for should also be worth fighting for. This course of action was followed by Bar Kochba who was acclaimed as Messiah by Rabbi Akiba.

The same school of thought must have persisted long afterwards among the Jewish communities in Arabia and was given vent by Mohammed, a prophet in the best Hebrew traditions, who had no hesitation to draw the Sword of Islam to back up his mission. However, the Rabbinical view remained wary, Jews were rightly afraid to lower their fences.

In his "*History of the Jews in Babylonia*", Vol. V, Dr. Jacob Neusner records the following interesting conversation between two Jews at Carthage at the time of Mohammed: One reports to the other that the Arabs had killed the Candidatus Sergius at Caesarea and continues, "And they say that a prophet has appeared coming up with the Saracens and proclaims the coming of the Anointed, the Christ who cometh. But I asked a Rabbi who said that surely prophets do not come with sword and chariot. I fear lest the Christ who came first, whom the Christians worship, was himself he that was sent by God." ●

TOYNBEE ON DEUTERO-ISAIAH

Arnold Toynbee has been greatly maligned and perhaps misunderstood for his statement in which he labelled the Jews as "fossils". Here we give Toynbee's views on Deutero-Isaiah (from "*A Study of History*", vol. XII).

p. 435 Half-way through the 6th century (BCE), on the eve of the establishment of the Achaemenian Empire, Deutero-Isaiah attained a vision of Yahweh not only as being righteous and loving, but also as being the One True God of the Universe. In Deutero-Isaiah's eyes all other gods were not simply inferior; they were non-existent.

p. 496 The Jews must constitute themselves the One True God's missionaries to the rest of mankind and must make it their paramount aim to convert the World to the vision that has been vouchsafed to the Jews themselves. The pursuit of this aim would require the Jews to unite with their Gentile converts in a world-wide religious community of the followers of the pure religion of Deutero-Isaiah. This way has not been closed by the advent of Christianity and Islam. The Jews' own manifest destiny is still intact for them to embrace if they will.

p. 517 The greatest of the Prophets up to date, though not necessarily the last of them, would be, not Muhammad, but a Jewish Seer who inspired his fellow Jews at last to dedicate themselves to their universal mission wholeheartedly. The world has been waiting for this prophet for 2,500 years ●

THE IDENTITY OF DEUTERO-ISAIAH

A hypothesis by the late Jacob David Brach as told in correspondence with Judah T. Radai.

Translated from *Beth Mikra*

With regard to the name of the prophet, the divisional school of thought (that which claims two authors) maintains that all that is known about him is that he is called "Deutero-Isaiah" (Second Isaiah) merely as a convention, and that his name was certainly not Isaiah. To this, our interpreter, Mr. Brach, responds that the opposite is true: his name was indeed Isaiah, and only through the identity of the names of the authors of chapters 1—39 and of 40—66 were the two collections unified.

For his dedication we should refer to portion 49 : 1—6 ending with, "it is too slight a task for you, as my servant, to restore the tribes of Jacob, to bring back the descendants of Israel: I will make you a light to the nations, that you may be my salvation (yeshuati) unto the earth's farthest bounds." The whole portion is clearly influenced by the ordainment of Jeremiah, who lived two generations previously. This verse hints at the identity of the writer by way of a play on the words "yeshuati, yeshayahu", and the same was done with previous prophets: Ezekiel 3 : 7—9; Malachi 3 : 1; Hosea 1 : 7 and First Isaiah chapter 12.

Moreover, in chapters 40—66 of Isaiah are interwoven the names "yeshua'a" 12 times, "yesha'" four times, "teshua'a" three times and the verbs "nosha'" three times, "hoshiya'" 17 times and this is so extensively used, that it thus offers an easy proof, at least in our interpreter's claim.

And now his method proposes to regard the names Isaiah (Yeshayahu) and Jeshua (Yehoshua) as identical and interchangeable. We found prior to this that the theophoric component may stand either before or after the name. That unhappy king of Judah is sometimes called Jehoiachin (Yehoyakhin), sometimes Jeconiah (Yekhonyahu) (Jer. 27 : 20), sometimes Coniah (Coniyahu) (ibid. 22 : 24); and in Ezra the same person is called both Hodaviah (2 : 40) and Judah (Yehudah), (3 : 9) and only by these exchanges can the identical form of Hodaviah be explained in Neh. 7 : 4. It is possible that a rigorous investigation of the Scriptures will reveal additional examples.

The pair of names "Jeshua" and "Jehozadak" is repeatedly used in Isaiah 40—66: "My victory (zedek) is near, my deliverance (yesha') is gone forth" (51 : 5) and, similarly, 45 : 8, 21; 46 : 13; 49 : 24—5; 51 : 6, 8; 56 : 1; 60 : 17—18; 61 : 10; 62 : 1; 63 : 1; 64 : 4. We read this coupling (apart from Psalms) again only in Zechariah (9 : 9), the contemporary of Jeshua:

Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion,
shout aloud, daughter of Jerusalem;
for see, your King is coming to you,
his cause won, his victory gained (zadik ve nosha'),

humble and mounted on an ass. . . .

If we accept that Isaiah is derived from Joshua, we indeed know of a Joshua in the days of Zion's return: could this not be Jeshua, son of Jehozadak the high priest, in the days of Zerubbabel? And if

it is he who wrote the chapters 40—66 then his name is not forgotten in the least: he is the first to be mentioned in the list of those who returned to Zion in Neh. 2 : 2. Mr. Brach claims that this indeed is the unknown prophet.

The identification of Yeshua with Yeshayahu leads us also to the possibility of identifying Yehozadak the High Priest (son of Seriah) with Zedekiah the King who in his youth (according to Brach's theory) sought asylum with Seriah and was adopted by him. Thus Zedekiah (Yehozadak) was a Davidic prince by birth and became High Priest by adoption. (Thus Jeshua, son of Yehozadak, would have the necessary lineage for his claim to be the Messiah) ●



Albany Wiseman

At the tomb of Jeshua the High Priest in Baghdad:
Hakham Ezra Dangoor on his election to the Chief
Rabbinate 50 years ago.

MAX DIMONT ON JESHUA THE HIGH PRIEST

from *Jews, God & History*.

A wag once defined Zionism as a movement of one Jew sending a second Jew to Palestine on a third Jew's money! This remark could very well have originated in Babylonia where wealthy Babylonian Jews, who had prospered and became refined in their new home, began (around 500 BCE) subsidizing the return to Jerusalem of less fortunate Jews, and in this way there was a continuous trickle of Jews back to the homeland after the first mass aliyah, which had been drawn mainly from the zealots and the poor. However, it had a distinguished leadership: two princes of the royal house of David—Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel (who both hoped to become King of Judah) and the Zadokite priest Jeshua (who hoped to be anointed High Priest). Only Jeshua's dream was realized—Sheshbazzar who began the rebuilding of the Second Temple and Zerubbabel who finished it, mysteriously disappear from the pages of the Bible. (According to Seder Olam Zutah they returned to Babylon). It is possible that the Persians would not tolerate the establishment of a royal house in Judah. On the other hand, the Persians did not oppose a Jewish High Priest. It is not surprising therefore that we read in Zechariah (6 : 11) that a crown of silver and gold was placed on the head of Jeshua as he was anointed High Priest and ruler of Jerusalem. (It is possible that Jeshua said these verses at his coronation: Sos asis b'Adonai: I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he

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TRAVELS IN MESOPOTAMIA

Many travellers from the West journeyed through the Middle East and left interesting reports of their adventures and observations. John Eldred journeyed in Queen Elizabeth I's reign with a caravan of 4,000 camels. Tavernier, with a smaller one of 600 camels. They accomplished the journey from Aleppo to Baghdad in about a month. Every night their camp is made like a tiny fortress against thieves. The caravans used carrier pigeons which were valued at over £300 apiece. Here we give Tavernier's story as they sail down the Tigris, from "*The Six Voyages of John Baptista Tavernier*", London, 1678.

The 15th of February (1652) we put off from Mosul. Our *kalak* (raft over inflated goatskins) carried thirty passengers and sixteen tons of goods. After six hours we stopped near a hot bath. It was thronged with sick people who came for treatment. We kept watch all night; but for all this the Arabs stole two coverlets from a merchant and some clothes.

The 16th, we came to a huge dam 200 feet wide, which makes a fall in the river of about 20 fathoms. It was reputedly built by Darius to stop the advance of Alexander the Great. We had to land ourselves and our goods and load them on horses for re-embarking down stream. We watched with wonder the *kalak* suddenly fall 120 feet yet kept afloat by the leather-bottles. The water-men that guide the boat tie themselves and their oars fast to a perch bent like a semi-circle to defend themselves from the force of the water. And indeed this is the dam that renders the Tigris un-navigable.

The *kalak* being come to the place where we expected it, we put our goods aboard, and lay in the same place upon the bank of the river. For the Arabs, if they perceive the merchants asleep, cut the cords of the *kalak* and setting it adrift, swim after it, and rifle away what they please.

The 17th, we came to lie at a place which was full of wood where we made great fires, and shot off our muskets often in the night to scare the lions.

The 18th, we were upon the water eighteen hours. That evening the Arabs brought us milk, meats and fresh butter. They swim from the other side of the river with a *boracho* under their stomachs and another upon their heads, wherein they bring their commodities for which they will have no money, but only tobacco, biscuit or pepper.

The 19th, we met with **Alfin Sou, or the River of Gold. All that day we saw none but Arabs and Kurds marching along the banks of the Tigris, the Kurds upon Mesopotamia side and the Arabs upon Assyria side. They were at war, and both sides marched in very good order.** The young men went foremost with bows and arrows and some muskets, but several half-pikes. Next to them, their wives, virgins and children, with their cattle, herds and camels; after which they marched the old men in the rear. The Kurds and the Arabs sent out horsemen to scout upon the high grounds; for as soon as they find any advantage, they presently swim their horses over the river and fall on. We rowed nineteen hours to avoid them.

The 22nd, we met with a great channel (*Nahrawan*) cut out of Tigris which runs up as far as just over against Baghdad and there falls into the Tigris again. We landed upon Chaldea side at a place called Samarra. When they knew us to be Christians, they would not permit us to set our feet in the mosque. Five hundred paces away stands a tower very ingeniously built. There are two staircases without, that belong to it, made twirling like a periwinkle shell.

The 23rd, we saw nothing all day long but pitiful huts on either side of the river, made of the branches of palm trees where live certain poor people that turn the wheels by means whereof they water the neighbouring grounds.

The 24th, we were twenty-two hours upon the water never stirring from the *kalak*. The reason is, because the merchants having taken out of the *kalak* all their money and the best part of their merchandises, give them to the country people, who carry them very faithfully to Baghdad; this the merchants do to avoid the payment of five in the hundred in the city.

The 25th, about four of the clock in the morning we arrived at Bagdad which is usually called Babylon, yet it is a great distance from the ancient Babylon. They open the gates by six and then the customers come to take an account of the merchandise and to search the merchants themselves; they take them to the custom-house to pay any duty.

The city is about 1,500 paces long and 700 broad and cannot possibly be above three miles in circuit. The walls are of brick and terraced in some places with large towers like bastions. Upon all these towers are mounted about sixty pieces of cannon. There are three gates upon the land side and one upon the river which you must cross over a bridge of 33 boats. The castle which is in the city contains about 150 cannon but without carriage. The garrison consists of 300 *janissaris* commanded by an Aga. The city is governed by a Basha who is generally a *vizier* and has always ready at command six or seven hundred horses. Another Aga commands 300 *spahis* and two Agas command 3,000 *ginguliler*, i.e. men of courage. The keys of the gates of the city are in the custody of another Aga. There are also sixty cannoneers who were commanded by an expert artist, Signor Michael. He put himself in the Grand Signor's (Murad IV) service when he went to beseige Bagdad in 1638. Though the Turk had the good fortune to carry the city in a small time—not so much by virtue of the breach which Signor Michael had made in the wall, as the sedition and revolt that happened at the same instant among the Persian defenders.

The Persian garrison agreed to deliver up the city upon condition they might march away with their arms and baggage. But the Turks did not keep their word. For so soon as the Turks were got into the city the Basha's told the Grand Signor that to weaken the force of the Persians, it was necessary

for him to put to the sword all the soldiers that were in the city, and thereupon there were about 20,000 massacred in cold blood.

As to the civil government of Bagdad there is none but a *cady*, who does all, acting even the *mufti*, with a *deftedar* who receives the revenues of the Grand Signor. There is nothing of beauty in the city but the *bazars* which are all arched. The city is full of trade, but not so full as it was when in the hands of the King of Persia: for when the Turk took it, he killed most of the richest merchants. However there is a great confluence hither from all parts for trade or devotion, because they that follow the sect of Ali do believe that he lived at Bagdad. Besides, all they that are desirous to go to Mecca by land, must pass through Bagdad, where every pilgrim is forced to pay four piastres to the Basha. You must take notice that there are in Bagdad two sorts of Mahometans, the *Rafedis* (Shia) or Heretics and the Observers of the Law (Sunni) in all things like those in Constantinople. The Rafedis will by no means eat or drink with a Christian and very hardly with the rest of Mahometans. The others eat and drink and converse with all the world.

In the year 1639, after the Grand Signor had taken Bagdad a Rafedi who was a carrier of water not only refused to give a Jew to drink, who desired it of him in the market place, but abused him also in words. Thereupon the Jew complained to the *cady* who immediately sent for him. He asked for his cup and gave the Jew to drink, and then made the porter drink also out of the same cup. After that he ordered the Rafedi to be bastinadoed, and this lesson to be taught to him while he was chastising: that we are God's creatures, as well as Mahometans as Christians and Jews. This has made them less zealous in their superstition, though they are the chiefest part of the inhabitants of the city.

As to their funerals, when a husband dies the wife pulls off all the headgear and lets her hair fall about her ears; then she besmears her face with the soot of a kettle and frisks and leaps about after such a ridiculous manner, as from others would rather produce laughter than tears. The women present strive to out-vie one another in a thousand apish tricks, clapping their cheeks, yelling like mad people and then, of a sudden, setting themselves to dance to the sound of two drums for a quarter of an hour. Among them there is one more accustomed to this foolery than the rest, that fills your ears with mournful dinns to which other women make answer.

And because that by their law the husband is obliged to lie with his lawful wife on Thursday night or Friday night, on Wednesday morning the women go to the baths, where they perfume their heads and bodies with a sweet water. They go out sometimes when their husbands give them leave to visit their kindred; but then they are wrapped up from head to foot that it is impossible for their husbands themselves to know them if they meet them in the streets. Most Persian women* would rather stay within all the days of their lives than go out without a horse. The women of Bagdad are very richly habited after their fashions; but they are not contented to wear their jewels about their necks

*Iraq's population is mainly of Persian origin

and wrists, for they hang them like bracelets about their faces and will bore holes in their ears to put in a ring. The Arabian women only, bore the separation between the two nostrils where they wear hollow rings—some are so big that you may almost thrust your fist through them. They also make a round ring about their eyes with a certain sort of blacking (*kohl*). The men, too, in the desert, put the same near their eyes, to preserve them from the heat of the sun.

Of Christians there are three sorts: Nestorians, Armenians and Jacobites. Their custom of feasting on the third, seventh, fifteenth, thirtieth and fortieth days after a funeral is very inconvenient for the poor; for they being desirous to imitate the rich, run themselves sometimes so far in debt, that they are forced to sell their children to the Turks to discharge themselves.

There are several Jews also in Bagdad, but more that come every year in devotion to visit the sepulchre of the Prophet Ezekiel, which is a day and half's journey from the city. In short, since the taking of Bagdad by Sultan Amurat, the number of inhabitants cannot be less than fifteen thousand souls, which shows that the city is not peopled according to its bigness ●

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hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness).

The crowning of Jeshua as High Priest was of great significance to the Jews because it gave them a form of self-government which was acceptable to the Persians. After having been successively ruled first by Judges, then by Kings, Palestine was to be ruled, with but a brief interruption, for the next five hundred years by High Priests. However, the power of the Sanhedrin and the Popular Assemblies, always kept Jewish government under secular control with the High Priest as its titular head ●



The late Mr. Ezra Haddad, author and educationist, who died a year ago, with the late Mr. A. G. Brotman, long time Secretary of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. Picture taken 45 years ago in Bagdad when Mr. Brotman was principal of Shamash School and Mr. Haddad was principal of Wataniya School.

Letters to the Editor

From Mr. Joseph Acri, Tel Aviv.

I was very interested in the photo you published of the late Abraham Elkabir and his staff (in which I appear) taken in 1933. At about that time there was a vacancy in Mr. Elkabir's department of accounts and I was among the 134 persons who applied for the job. In the test I came first with 94 marks and a Moslem came second with 56 marks. Yasin Elhashimy (then Minister of Finance) ruled that he did not want any more Jews in the ministry. Elkabir insisted: either the winner in the test or nobody. The deadlock lasted four months after which time the minister gave in and I got the job ●

In a letter from Jerusalem Mr. Mordechai Ben-Porat, M.K., recalls the high hopes that the late Abraham Elkabir and his Jewish contemporaries had at the birth of the independent Iraq state and their desire to serve it to the best of their ability. Mr. Ben-Porat writes:

In the early days of January, 1921, Abraham was invited by his friend Sasson Heskeli to visit him at his office at Khedeiri Building in South Gate. Sasson had been appointed Minister of Finance in the first Iraqi government formed two weeks before by Abdul Rahman El-Kilani with the blessing of Sir Percy Cox, British High Commissioner. Sasson, trying to convince Abraham to accept the post of Accountant telling him, "We will serve our own country, a country with a glorious past and a promising future, endowed with fertile land, plenty of water, vast untapped natural resources and people willing and eager to go ahead for the regeneration of their country which had been devastated by many centuries of neglect and destruction. . . . Ours will be a pioneer task and we want you to participate with your intelligence and activity in the job of creating a prosperous and advanced state."

Lately, when he visited Israel, Mr. Elkabir opened his heart before me saying that the new Iraqi regime have ruined the country. "They have taken Iraq away from me."

Abraham Elkabir entrusted in my hands his memoirs covering some 900 pages discussing the Iraqi regime since its very beginning and expressed his wish that they come into use only after his departure ●

From Dr. J. D. Khazzoom, Professor of Economics at McGill University, Montreal.

I appreciate your remarks about the agreement reached by the World Sephardi Federation and the Finance Minister of Israel.

Only through the organization of pressure groups, preferably a political party, could the Middle Easterners count on gaining their fair share of the national pie. Pressure groups are legitimate entities in a democracy. Indeed the present situation in Israel is the result of well organized pressure groups which are not countervailed by any group that represents the needs of the Middle Easterners.

For quite sometime during my early adulthood in Israel I held to the view that the organization of a political party that speaks for the under-

privileged segment would be anti-Israel. But then I wonder: is a party dedicated to the welfare of the majority of the people really an anti-Israel party? The East European group in power has shown so little ability to see the connection between crowded housing conditions, inability to prepare homework, truancy, school dropouts, vagabondism, juvenile delinquency, criminal records which effectively block every chance for gainful employment in the future. When I entered college in Israel in 1953, there were about 30 other students from Iraq who entered with me. When we graduated there were only five of us. Some could not make a go of it for "simple" reasons, such as the fact that the bus to their camp stopped running before the end of their regular lecture time in the evening. The cumulative effect of missing those lectures finally took its toll. I studied in cafés for three years when I was in college because there was no place to study with five people sharing the same room; more than once I thought it was time to call it quits. The Iraqi community in Israel knew of these problems. They did what they could to help us but their hands were too short. They did not sit in parliament, and we, in our young and perhaps less honest ways, did not want to vote for them for parliament. Perhaps it was too painful for us to admit that we were the laggard Israel that people talked about.

Similarly, food subsidies and community services are not geared to the needs of the Oriental majority. The presence of a political group that represents the needs of the underprivileged segment of the population in Israel can do more than just air these grievances. It can make sure that they are corrected which is not the case today ●

From Mr. D. Segal, (Principal of Shamash School, Baghdad, in the thirties).

I always find *The Scribe* interesting but the last issue was particularly so because of its reference to events nearer my time and of people whom I knew or whose names I recognised in Mr. Abraham Twena's diary. During the war not too much news which did not have a propaganda value for one's own cause was published and here in England no one knew that the Iraqi Jews had been sorted out for separate treatment. On looking back it was only to be expected.

Incidentally, my wife was the English teacher at Laura Kadoorie School and some of your readers must have been her pupils. They would know her either as Miss Fried or Mrs Segal and she would be pleased to hear from any of them.

3 Thorgill Grove, Bricknell Avenue, Hull ●

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

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