

# The SCRIBE

## JOURNAL OF BABYLONIAN JEWRY

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### TIME FOR A REVOLUTION

It is forty years since the United Nations passed the partition resolution recognising the right of the Jewish people to have a state of their own in Palestine. Jewish rights in the Middle East do not, of course, stem from that resolution, nor from the Balfour Declaration, or even from Biblical promises. The Middle East has been our main habitat since time immemorial. The right to nationhood was maliciously denied to the Jewish people since the rise of Christianity and later, Islam.

These 40 years since the modern State of Israel was conceived are in a way analogous to the 40 years that the Children of Israel spent in the Wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt, at this season 3224 years ago, when the enslaved Hebrews struck for freedom and embarked on their circuitous route towards the land of their ancestors.

Forty years of warfare, of harassment on all sides, of hardships and quarrels, without friends – Forty years awaiting the birth of a new generation.

Now that Israel has a new generation of Sabras, born in freedom and not in captivity, it is time for a revolution. Time for a modern Joshua to lead the Jewish people into the Promised Land of our dreams.

The manifesto for such a leader would be on the following lines:

#### REGIONAL POLICY

1. Israel must have a *regional policy* and take interest in the area bordered by Turkey and Iran. Israel must play a major role in the affairs of this region and share in its wealth. If, as is widely accepted, Israel has and has had the right to exist then all the trauma of the region for the last 40 years can be attributed to the folly of the Arab leaders who were bent on denying Jewish rights in the Middle East.

Equilibrium in the Middle East can only be achieved by taking the region away from Arab monopoly and putting it into the melting pot.

#### RELIGION AND STATE

2. The state to follow Orthodox Halachah in every important aspect. But beyond that there must be complete freedom and equality for all. The gulf that separates the Orthodox and the Reform Jews is not one of observance but of "status". As long as the two factions do not see eye to eye on matters of marriage, divorce and conversion then they cannot inter-marry. As such they are two different religions and effectively two separate races. In order to preserve the unity of the Jewish people, which is an aim of Zionism, the two factions have to find

a common formula on matters of status. There is room for compromise on *both* sides.

If agreement cannot be reached on joint status rules then the Israeli government should recognise Reform as a separate religion and accord them the same rights as those enjoyed by Christians and Moslems.

Babylonian Jewry had a similar problem when in 760 Anan Ben David revived the Karaite movement. As the government in Baghdad forbade any schisms of recognised religions, Anan was duly put in prison. He was released when he claimed that his was not a schism but a different religion. The Orthodox need not fear competition from Liberal creeds.

#### TAXATION

3. All forms of direct *taxation* on the individual should be abolished – income tax, capital gains tax, wealth tax, inheritance tax, making Israel virtually a tax haven. Such taxation is immoral as it encourages cheating, dishonesty and unemployment. It promotes the grey and black markets. Jews are individualists and do not submit to such imposition and regimentation.

Instead, taxation to be based on land values which would cover not only government expenditure but should also provide for a *National Dividend* to be paid to citizens in accordance with Israel's priorities at the time. The Torah, recognising Jewish inclinations, decreed the system of the Jubilee whereby all land reverts to the State every 50 years. A 2% land tax or more would produce the same result. We lost our country partly because we allowed land to go to foreigners. When the Arabs conquered the Middle East they appropriated all land, whether private or public, on the basis that it became theirs by conquest. In modern times, it seems, private ownership of land has to be respected by successive regimes. However, the land tax would take care of that.

The national dividend gives a citizen

a share in the wealth and performance of his country, and makes citizenship a privilege rather than just a duty.

#### MONEY AND CREDIT

4. Money is a form of credit and as such it should be issued not in the name of the State or the moneylender but in the name of the people. Its main function is to facilitate the exchange of goods and services and not as a store of wealth. The collection of the land tax and the distribution of the national dividend would provide the necessary monetary circulation and would reduce the need to borrow money and pay interest thereon. The Torah warns against usury, which arises when money is treated as a commodity.

#### POPULATION

5. Even without *aliya* Israel's population should double every 25 years and could have become 20 million by the end of the century. But while the Arabs are increasing, the Jews remain static. **This is the pattern of a defeated ideology.** Unless Israel can do it from within, *aliya* won't help.

#### ECUMENISM

6. When the Second Temple was destroyed 1900 years ago we stood alone. Now the majority of the human race acknowledges and worships the God of Israel. The Jewish people must take note of this and extend the hand of friendship and brotherhood to the Christians and Moslems.

#### THE TEMPLE

7. When the Arabs conquered Palestine with Jewish help Caliph Omar offered the Jews the freedom to rebuild the Temple. When the Jews declined the offer, Omar built a mosque on the site. But the Jews never gave up their right and claim to the area. When the Third Temple is rebuilt it must be open to all mankind as prophesied in the Bible. There will be no animal sacrifices there ●

# The Fall of Babylon

O daughter of Babylon,  
May you be plundered;  
How enviable is he  
Who will repay you  
For all that you did to us.

Fallen, fallen is Babylon, that great city,  
Mother of harlots and abominations of the earth,  
Because she made all nations drink  
The fierce wine of her fornication.

Saddam is spending millions to rebuild the old city of Babylon and restore it to its ancient splendour. The project is accompanied by a tourist city that will include hotels, restaurants, recreation centres and theatres. The main hotel has been designed to resemble a 300-foot-high ziggurat, a terraced pyramid crowned by a temple. The project began in 1980 and will be completed by the end of the decade. An initial \$20 million was spent last year on the tourist city alone.

The Iraq government views the Babylonian Empire as a modern symbol, a source of inspiration for its six-year-long war with neighbouring Iran, and takes pride in its decadent culture. The Arabs had no accomplishments of their own and have, whenever possible, appropriated other people's achievements as their own. Islamic civilisation – its literature, architecture, art and science – was the product of Persian, Jewish and Byzantine contributors. Even its religion was created in a Jewish environment and its development was greatly influenced by the Jews of Iraq. Caliph Mansur's capital, the Baghdad Round City, was designed and planned by the Persian architect An-Naubakht and the Jewish mathematician Mashallah. The Arabs had no building materials of their own, so they used old bricks plundered from ancient monuments and buildings.

At a recent visit to Babylon by an American journalist, a spokesman for the Ministry of Information, Salam Yacoub (who is probably a Talkeifi), blamed the "treachery" of Babylonian Jewry for the capture of Babylon in 539 BCE by King Cyrus of Persia. It is true that the Jews, who were brought captive by Nebuchadnezzar fifty years earlier, and who represented the cream of Jewish society, awaited the opportunity to mete out justice to their captors. In a joint plan with the Persians the course of the Euphrates was diverted and Babylon was captured in a lightning assault. That night, during a feast to the pagan gods of Babylon, a palace revolution was staged, in which Daniel played a major part, and King Belshazzar was slain. He had seen the famous writing on the wall: 'MENE, MENE, TEKEL UPHARSIN – Your days are numbered, you were weighed in the balance and found wanting, your Kingdom will be divided'. And divided it was, in three parts, between the Medes, the Persians and the Jews – who took the central part of the country, from Ana down to Sura and eastward towards Baquba and the Nahrawan canal.

This is not Jewish treachery. As an Arab saying asserts, the enemy of your enemy is your friend. But in betraying

their friends, the Arabs are past masters and quite unscrupulous. Indeed, Jewish loyalty to friends and allies is legendary and is recorded even in Arab annals. The famous story of Al-Samawal comes to mind – a Jewish chieftain who lived in Arabia 1500 years ago. His daughter was taken hostage by Arab 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 was named after him as a reminder of his loyalty, and in honour of the Jews of Iraq for their commercial integrity. Jewish loyalty to our Faith at the cost of great suffering and heavy losses, finally rewarded by the establishment of the State of Israel, is most remarkable and is said to be the inspiration for Moslem fundamentalism now sweeping the Middle East.

The destruction of the First Temple by Nebuchadnezzar was perhaps the greatest tragedy in Jewish history, from which we have not yet recovered. Abraham had left Ur of the Chaldees to avoid the local tyranny and oppression, but they caught up with us in our new habitat. Jewish moral superiority to the pagan ways of Babylon is best illustrated by Daniel and his colleagues, captives from a defeated country, refusing to "defile" themselves with the royal food and wine offered to them and subsisting on cereals and water, without ill-effects. They looked around them and did not like what they saw. The Book of Revelation, which must have been written by a Jewish author, puts it poetically: "Then I heard another voice from heaven that said: 'Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins and share in her plagues. For her sins are piled high and God has not forgotten her crimes. Pay her back in her own coin, repay her twice over for her deeds! Mighty is the Lord God who has pronounced her doom!'" How thrilling it is to realise that the few Jewish exiles in Babylon were blazing the trail for all mankind by upholding the moral standards that have become accepted by the whole human race. As

Disraeli once put it: "A superior culture cannot be submerged by an inferior one".

For over 1000 years Babylonian Jewry played a major role in the political and military balance of power in the Middle East by forming a buffer state for the Persian empire, eventually against the Roman empire. In 342 C.E. the Roman Emperor Julian, who renounced Christianity, wrote to the Jews of Babylon offering to rebuild the Temple at his own expense if they would not resist his attack on the Persians. But the Jews declined his offer and remained loyal to their Persian allies. During the reign of Khosro II (the Magnificent), a joint Persian-Jewish force captured Jerusalem in 617. Churches were destroyed and 37,000 Christian prisoners were brought captive to Babylon. His successor Yazdagird III who married a Christian girl, turned against the Jews, who soon invited in turn the new Moslems to take Iraq and Palestine and offered them decisive military and financial help. In his book "The Arabs" Philip Hitti brands this help "Jewish treachery", which shows the characteristic Arab ingratitude to their friends and allies.

Military history demonstrates that attack is much easier than defence. It is much cheaper to raise an invading force than to maintain for years a defensive force, with equipment going obsolete.

In 1969 when I bought the community centre in Kensington from the Parsee Association, their president enquired who is going to use the building. When told "Iraqi Jews" he commented, "You were responsible to bring the Arabs to invade Iraq and Persia and drive us out of our country".

Ancient legends serve as a reminder that the people who inhabit the rich agricultural plain of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers have always been pitted against the Persians and the Jews. By his war with Iran and his hostility towards Israel Saddam is trying to live up to that tradition.

To ensure the security of Israel and stability in the region the best option is for a Middle East confederation which



*Belshazzar sees  
the writing on the  
wall, by Rembrandt.*

gives Israel a say in its affairs and a share of its wealth. The moderate Arab states, who are shivering in their boots, cannot do better than to endorse such a plan. If however they wish to remain committed to the destruction of the Jewish state then Israel should cultivate its traditional entente, since the time of Cyrus, with the rulers of Persia whose people are, on the whole, more committed to civilised behaviour than their Arab counterparts.

When Iran celebrated the 2500th anniversary of Cyrus 15 years ago I felt that history requires that the Jewish people participate in this celebration; and since, for political reasons, Israel was not invited I led a large delegation of Iraqi Jews to the Savoy and was warmly received by the Iranian Ambassador in the presence of a large gathering of British Ministers and foreign diplomats.

Finally, one cannot help reflecting that in the present Gulf War history may be repeating itself. Iraq was enjoying undreamt-of wealth and prosperity, but the rulers of Iraq, drunk with power, chose the road of tyranny at home and aggression abroad. They hanged innocent Jews, they massacred thousands of their opponents and built a nuclear plant to terrorise the region.

By identifying with the old Babylonians and by their bellicose attitude towards their neighbours, will the people of the twin rivers again bring on their heads the tragic ending of Babylon? It would be at the hands of the same neighbour and again with Jewish help. As the Gulf War moves to a climax, time will tell. The lesson to the Iraq regime: he who lives by the sword shall die by the sword. Iraq is paying for the blood it shed of its innocent victims ● N.E.D.

## Belshazzar's Feast

SIR WILLIAM WALTON composed *Belshazzar's Feast* not as an oratorio but as a choral symphony. It is not really a religious work, despite its Bible subject, but a piece of historical drama; the triumph of the Jews over the fall of Babylon is celebrated in music at least as violent and merciless as that of the pagan feast – Walton supposing there to be little moral difference between them. Hence, no doubt, the resistance to the work's performance in church after its debut in 1931 under Malcolm Sargent.

Taken as a choral symphony the work falls naturally into three movements. The first, introduced by a trombone fanfare, is an extended setting of Psalm 137, 'By the waters of Babylon'. Walton has chosen to begin with the slow movement, a lamentation sharply tinged with the bitterness that will later erupt into triumphant scorn. In the second movement the baritone's unaccompanied description of the riches and corruption of Babylon leads into the account of the Feast itself – a magnificent celebration of the pagan gods, following the blasphemy of drinking from the sacred vessels plundered from the Temple in Jerusalem. There follows an eerie passage in which the baritone describes the writing on the wall; and this leads to the last movement, an exultant setting of Psalm 81 as a chant of triumph over the fallen city, broken only by a moving passage for semi-chorus, 'While the kings of the earth lament', as the fact of a great city's destruction is seen to be always a cause for grief.

*(Abridged libretto)*

By the waters of Babylon,  
There we sat down; yea, we wept  
And hanged our harps upon the willows.  
For they that wasted us  
Required of us mirth;  
They that carried us away captive  
Required of us a song.  
Sing us one of the songs of Zion.  
How shall we sing the Lord's song  
In a strange land?  
O Babylon may you be thrown down with  
violence  
And shall be found no more at all.

Babylon was a great city,  
Her merchandise was of gold and silver  
Of purple, silk and scarlet,  
Sheep, horses, chariots, slaves,  
And the souls of men.

Belshazzar the King  
Made a great feast,  
Made a feast to a thousand of his lords,  
And drank wine before the thousand.  
He commanded us to bring the golden  
vessels  
of the Temple of the House of God,  
That the King, his Princes, his wives,  
And his concubines might drink therein,  
After they praised their strange gods,  
The idols and the devils,  
False gods that can neither see nor hear.

And in the same hour, as they feasted,  
Came forth fingers of a man's hand  
And wrote: '*Mene, mene, tekel upharsin*':  
'*Thou art weighed in the balance  
and found wanting*'.

In that night was Belshazzar slain  
And his Kingdom divided.

Then sing aloud to God our strength:  
Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob;  
For Babylon is fallen, fallen, Hallelujah!

Then sing aloud to God our strength,  
While the kings of the earth lament  
And the merchants of the world weep.  
They cry, Alas, Alas, that great city,  
In one hour her judgement is come.  
Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob  
For Babylon is fallen, Hallelujah!

# The Jews of Iraq between 1920 and 1970

## Selections from the paper by Simha Horesh Part 2

In 1936, the feeling of terror was so strong, the Jews closed their businesses on October 7 to 9 in protest. The effect of their strike was that the government issued a declaration that people causing incitement would be punished. Nevertheless, the attacks continued until the fall of the government in October 1936.

The ex-Mufti of Jerusalem Amin al-Husaini who arrived in Baghdad in October 1939 conducted widespread pan-Arab activity and established contact with Axis powers with a view to Arab-Nazi collaboration. To the pan-Arabs, the Nazis became an ideal to be copied and with Hitler's victories in Europe, they saw their salvation from British and French intrigues at Germany's hands. The attacks on Jews had been resumed in December 1937 and through 1938, but were suppressed in October 1938 when the government started taking active measures against inciters. This was after the Munich crisis of September when the government adopted a stern attitude towards Dr Grobba the German Minister in Iraq and other Germans. After that there were no more attacks on Jews up to 1941, but the incitement continued.

Rashid Ali al-Gaylani's seizure of power in April 1941 by a coup d'état was the culmination of a process going on since the mid-1930s, when disenchantment with Britain and admiration for Germany grew side by side. At the outbreak of the Second World War, Iraq promised to honour its obligations to Britain under the 1930 Anglo-Iraqi treaty which afforded to Britain "on Iraq territory all facilities and assistance ... including the use of railways, rivers, ports, aerodromes and means of communication." Iraq also broke off diplomatic relations with Germany. However, with the fall of France in June 1940 and continued German victories in Europe, the pan-Arabs, already more than sympathetic to Germany, were convinced that Britain would lose the war and could see no reason for remaining committed to the losing side. As regards the Jews, being the enemies of the Nazis, they were naturally considered as allies of the British and as such they were alien to the nationalist current.

Pushed by the dominant party in the army, Gaylani made conditions limiting the freedom of landing and passage of British troops in Iraq; as a result, he found himself at war with Britain. For Britain, there was no room for compromise, too much was at stake: Iraq's fall into Nazi hands endangered the whole area, so vital for British interests. The reaction was swift and British troops opened hostilities against the Iraqi forces on 2 May at Habaniya Camp and then started their march on Baghdad. From the outbreak of hostilities, the Jews automatically became the fifth column in Baghdad. By the 29 May, conditions looked really bad for Gaylani and his group and a Committee of Internal Security was set up to negotiate an armistice with the British forces, now outside the gates of Baghdad. In the meantime,

Gaylani and his group, the Mufti and the Germans, had all left Iraq.

The Regent and his supporters returned to Baghdad on 1 June and a number of Jewish notables, along with other notables of Baghdad, went to the airport to greet them. On their way back, the Jews were attacked by soldiers, reputedly returning from the front after the armistice. One Jew was killed and a number of Jews injured. This was like the starting signal and an onslaught was started on the Jewish quarters. The police made no effort to protect the Jews and some policemen even took part in the killing and plunder alongside the soldiers, youth squads and the mob that joined them. The second day the multitude from poor quarters on the outskirts of Baghdad joined in the looting. Only in the afternoon of the second day were steps taken to check the attack. A curfew was imposed and units of Kurdish soldiers stood by ready to shoot at the mob and soon enough quiet prevailed. In the meantime, an estimated number of 179 Jews were killed and hundreds of others wounded. The damage to property was extensive.

The massacre of the Jews took place when the Regent and the strongmen of the pro-British regime were in Baghdad, when the British forces stood at the gates of Baghdad, when there existed a Committee for Internal Security headed by the Mayor of Baghdad Arshad al-Umari and composed of the Governor of Baghdad, the Director General of Police and the Commander of the First Division. None of them was ready to assume responsibility for giving orders to shoot at the mob to stop the attack, all waited for someone to give the order and that was only given by the Regent late in the morning of the second day. Accusations have been made of deliberate inaction with a view to let the army, the youth squads and the populace, for years incited by Nazis and bitter over the fall of Gaylani's regime, spend their wrath on the Jews so that the pro-British regime could be resumed in relative quiet.

The events of 1941 brought a severe shock to the Jews. True, their life in Iraq over the centuries had not always been easy, but a massacre of this size was a hard eye opener as to how vulnerable their position was. Already in 1936 they had found out that they could not count on outside help; still, the government had at the time come forward to protect them before things got out of hand. For eighteen days trade in Baghdad was at a virtual standstill, until the Prime Minister intervened to ask the Jewish merchants to go back to their business. The return of British presence to Iraq was, as expected, greeted with relief on the part of the Jews.

Different reactions could be discerned within the Jewish community. Some chose to emigrate to India, Palestine or any other place they could get to, but this was on a very limited scale. The great majority convinced itself (perhaps because there was no other alternative) that the incidents of June

1941 were isolated and due to the lack of a responsible government at the time. This was strengthened by the fact that discrimination against Jews stopped during the months that followed the outbreak and by the economic prosperity that prevailed at the time. Within the Jewish youth, there were two currents of thought: the first, that if they were to live in Iraq, then they had better learn how to defend themselves in case they were to be subjected to another onslaught; the other, developed somewhat later among the Jewish intelligentsia mostly, turned to Communism as the solution to the Jewish problem. For all of the Jews, the trauma remained deep inside, and although they tried, more or less successfully, to live their lives as if nothing had happened, they were never free of it and this was apparent in their subsequent mass emigration which would not have been of such dimension had this not been so. To their relationship with the rest of the population and to their trust in them and in the government, an irreparable blow had been dealt.

Attempts were made by the Jews in Baghdad to buy arms for self-defence, but this was not an organised effort. A few young people got together to form underground organisations to resist any possible attacks, but they did not have the means to make their movement effective and only when emissaries from Palestine came to Baghdad in 1942, was an organisation by the name of *Hagana* established that could claim to have the ability to take up the defence of the Jews. As long as the Germans were advancing in North Africa, the Jews continued to hear threats of further attacks. The Palestine problem was the centre of attention with the Arab countries and there was hectic political activity around it. However, till the end of the war, there was relative peace for the Jews in Iraq. This must have been due in no small measure to the government's purge of pro-Nazi elements in its various institutions — although a number of well protected ones remained in office; most of the pro-Nazi teachers from Arab countries were included in the purge.

In the meantime there was a revival of Zionist activity, an influx of Zionist emissaries and seminars and lectures on Zionism. The Zionist movement that was established had three branches dealing with education, defence and emigration to Palestine. Jewish youth were taught the use of arms and allocated to the Jewish quarters which were divided with a view to their defence in the event of attack. Zionist activity at this stage caught the imagination of Jewish youth like fire. Zionism offered them exactly what they hungered for: a sense of belonging, pride in their heritage and hopes for a more fulfilling future. Zionist activity in Iraq was clandestine and utmost secrecy was observed in all its operations, since the movement was illegal. The ultimate aim of the movement was to get the Iraqi Jews to Palestine, its immediate one was to ensure their safety until then ●

(To be continued)

# LETTERS

**From Mr Mordechai Ben-Porat  
Chairman, Iraqi Jews Traditional  
Culture Centre**

I am most impressed by your Journal and find your reports on historical material relating to Iraqi Jewry as well as your reports on current events in the Iraqi Jewish communities in Israel and the rest of the world highly interesting and informative. I should like to remind you that the title of Exilarch carries with it the distinct prestige and responsibility it bore in the days of the Babylonian Exile (on 12 August 1986 Mr Ben-Porat wrote to congratulate Mr Dangoor on his acceding to this title -Ed).

Although I did not pay particular attention to any inaccuracies that may have appeared in previous issues of your Journal, I feel obliged to bring to your attention that there are two distinct inaccurate statements in your Journal No. 21 of January 1987:

1. In your literary criticism on *The Lure of Zion* by Abbas Shibliak, a member of the executive of the PLO, you write:

"Although the bombs, which were the work of Israeli agents, have been written about before, Shibliak's contribution is to present the evidence (from Israeli press accounts and FO documents) ..."

First of all, let me point out that **no Israeli or Jew had any part in the criminal action quoted - the placing of a bomb in the U.S. Information Centre in Baghdad.** Such a statement brings to mind another fictitious accusation from which the Jewish people have suffered for centuries - that *Matzot*, the unleavened bread eaten by the Jews at Passover, is made with the blood of Christians. The Israeli Press, on which Shibliak bases his statement, is the Israeli weekly yellow press, *Ha-Olam Ha-Zeh*. No self-respecting member of Israeli society has ever bothered to sue this paper for libel. A journalist, Baruch Nadel, who made a similar statement was actually brought to Court and the judgement of the Court was that he had made a false, baseless statement, which he was forced to withdraw.

What does your Journal do? Without checking the actual facts and without hesitation, you repeat and print this libellous statement.

2. On your first page, under the heading of *Jews in China* you print a notice which refers to the Jews of Iraq: "A huge exhibition about the Jews of Iraq is scheduled for 1988 at the Diaspora Museum (*Bet Hatefusoth*).

"Surprisingly, this venue was chosen

in preference to the Traditional Culture Centre of Iraqi Jews at Or Yehuda, which failed in its bid to hold the exhibition on its premises."

Here again you have strayed more than somewhat from the actual true facts which are: The Diaspora Museum approached our Centre with the proposal that we participate with them in an exhibition on Babylonian Jewry. Our agreement was conditional on that the exhibition take place after the official opening of our Museum, which is to take place during *Succoth* 1987. We cannot participate in an exhibition right now as all our energies and activities are geared for the opening of our Museum.

For your information, we are presenting twelve sections on the life of the Jews in Babylon, beginning with the first exile in 701 B.C. and including the mass immigration to Israel in the years 1950-1951. One of the sections is the reconstruction of part of the Great Synagogue of Baghdad in the name of the late Menashe Khalastchi, the funds for which have been donated by the Khalastchi family. The cornerstone-laying ceremony for this reconstruction took place on 23 November 1986 in the presence of 150 Israeli dignitaries and members of the international Iraqi Jewish communities.

Other sections of the Museum cover the various aspects of the history and life of the Jewish community of Iraq and include the two Babylonian Exiles, areas of Jewish settlement in Iraq, educational, organisational, medical and religious institutions of the Jewish community in Iraq as well as a section on Zionist activities and the mass immigration to Israel.

All this involves hard and dedicated work which is carried out by a group of dedicated volunteers who ask for no recognition but only for the clay and the straw in order to make the bricks required for the execution of their task.

I deeply regret that instead of lending a helping hand and supporting our monumental project, the only one of its kind in the world and which is being constructed in Israel - the home of 80% of the descendants of the Iraqi Jewish community - you see fit to throw stones in derision of our efforts.

I hope and trust that this letter will be printed in its entirety in the next edition of your Journal.

*Scribe:* The review by Charles Glass of Abbas Shibliak's book was a direct quotation from *The Spectator* of 6 September 1986 and does not reflect our own views. Who threw the bombs in 1951 remains unknown.

Regarding the huge exhibition on the Jews of Iraq at *Beth Hatefusoth*,

this is scheduled for 1988. If the Or Yehuda Museum is opening in October 1987 there would be plenty of time to organise the exhibition six, nine or even twelve months later. To allow it to go elsewhere is incomprehensible. The fact is that Or Yehuda has been trying to open during *Succoth* for the last several years. Is the problem just financial or is Or Yehuda too far away from a main population centre, and therefore inaccessible to a large number of people? This can be the reason why the exhibition could not be held there ●

**From Mrs Flora Feuchtwanger,  
Jerusalem, sister of the late Rabbi  
Solomon Sassoon**

Many, many thanks for the "Scribe" which my friends and I really enjoy ●

I wish to congratulate you and your colleagues for producing such an interesting Review. We now live in Jerusalem and are very happy to be here. ●

**Jerusalem Sassoon N. Cohen**

Many thanks for sending us *The Scribe* which is being read and enjoyed not only by us but also by our Baghdadian friends here. Congratulations for this endeavour ●

**Melbourne Ken and Helen Bekhor**

## WOJAC Conference Postponed

AMBASSADOR Shaoul Ramati sent the following telegram regarding the postponement of the Third International Conference of WOJAC which was to be held in Washington D.C. in March:

"Unexpected developments compelled postponement Washington Conference stop both Primeminister and Foreign Minister reaffirm support holding Conference soon as feasible stop hope your participation unaffected will inform new date and regret inconvenience caused."

We understand that members of the U.S. Administration and Congressmen who were going to take part in the Conference shied away because of the Irangate crisis. There was also a mix-up in the hotel booking ●

"Turning Back the Pages" by Esmond David Ezra, published by Brookside Press, London, 718 pp., £18, in two Volumes.

Volume I traces the history of the Jews in Calcutta and Volume II gives a genealogy of some of the prominent families of Calcutta ●

# THE CRUCI-FICTION

by Ahmed Deedat

Islamic Centre, Durban, South Africa

Abstracted from his book as expressly permitted

IN A RECENT BOOK, Michael H Hart, an American historical researcher, gives the names of the 100 most influential men in history. Amazingly, he puts Muhammed first, Paul second and Jesus third.\* Every knowledgeable Christian concedes that the real founder of Christianity is Paul and not Jesus.

In fact, any Moslem disapproval of Christian dogma could be traced to the utterances of Paul. As against the teachings of Jesus that salvation only comes through the keeping of the Commandments (Matthew 19 : 16-17) Paul nails the Law and the Commandments to the cross (Colossians 2 : 14), and claims that salvation can only be obtained through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

**"If Christ be not risen from the dead, then our Gospel is vain and your faith is also vain".** (1 Corinthians 15 : 14).

According to Paul, there is nothing that Christianity can offer mankind, other than the blood and gore of Jesus. If Jesus did NOT die, and he was NOT resurrected from the dead, then there can be NO salvation in Christianity. The death of Jesus on the cross is the centre of all Christian theology.

**ALL CHRISTIAN STATEMENTS ABOUT GOD, ABOUT CREATION, ABOUT SIN AND DEATH HAVE THEIR FOCAL POINT IN THE CRUCIFIED JESUS. ALL CHRISTIAN STATEMENTS ABOUT HISTORY, ABOUT THE CHURCH, ABOUT FAITH AND SANCTIFICATION, ABOUT THE FUTURE AND ABOUT HOPE STEM FROM THE CRUCIFIED JESUS. In a nutshell, NO CRUCIFIXION! - NO CHRISTIANITY!**

A thousand sects and denominations of Christianity are vying with one another to redeem the "heathen" from hell-fire. However, in this battle no Christian priest can teach the Muslim something about hygiene; nor can they teach us about hospitality. Nor about ethics or morality; for we are the most moral people - (as a whole); we don't drink, we don't gamble, we don't date; and we take pleasure in being a charitable people. Despite our shortcomings, no group of people can "show a candle" to us in brotherhood, in piety or in sobriety.

But what are we to say to the Christian claim that unless we accept the redeeming blood of Jesus we do not have salvation? Nothing better than the shattering reply of the Quran,

*"wama qataluhu; wama salabuhu; walakin shubbiha lahum". "But they killed him not; nor crucified him; but so it appeared to them".*

The Christian world has been unjustly persecuting and hounding and killing our Jewish cousins for nearly two thousand years for a crime they did not commit. By absolving the Jew of a crime he did not commit, we are also taking the wind out of the hot-gos-pellers' and the Bible-thumpers' sail. In the battle for the hearts and minds of mankind, "crucifixion" is the only card the Christian holds. Free him from his infatuation and you will have freed the world from missionary aggression and harassment.

However, the dogma of 2000 years standing, upon which hangs the salvation of 1200 million Christians, should not be summarily dismissed, especially as the Christians do not believe in the statements of the Quran. So, let us investigate for evidence in the Christians' own Bible ...

Jesus had failed to heed the warning of the Jewish authorities to curb the over-exuberance of his disciples (Luke 19 : 39). The Jewish leaders feared Roman reprisals and decided to hand him over to the Roman Governor and abandon him to his fate.

They reasoned "It is expedient for one man to die for the nation and the whole nation perish not." (John 11 : 50). Moreover, the Torah ordained that false prophets had to be put to death (Deuteronomy 18 : 20). If they succeeded in killing any would-be messiah, it would be a sure proof of his imposture; for God would not allow His truly "annointed one" to be killed.†

If Muhammed was the "greatest man that ever lived" - Lamartine in his *History of the Turks* - then it can be claimed with justification that Jesus was the "most unfortunate of all religious leaders".

The events of "Good Friday" and after show that Jesus did not die on the cross. Contrary to common belief, he was not nailed to the cross but bound, if at all, like the other two. Because of the approaching Sabbath he was on the cross for only three hours, from noon to 3 p.m. - not long enough for a man to die. When Joseph of Arimathea together with a sympathetic Roman centurion went to Pilate to claim the body, "Pilate marvelled if he were already dead". (Mark 15: 44). Jesus was not buried but put in a burial vault

belonging to the rich Joseph of Arimathea. On the following Sunday Mary Magdalene went to visit the tomb and was amazed to find that someone had already removed the stone, the tomb empty and the shroud left inside. Jesus was not far away. He called her and said, "I am not yet ascended unto my Father." (John 20 : 17). That very day, on the way to Emmaus, Jesus joins two of his disciples. On reaching their destination, he joins them for a meal. "And they went and told it unto the residue (of his disciples) who did not believe them". (Mark 16 : 13).

Back in Jerusalem, Jesus "appeared unto the eleven (disciples) as they sat eating". (Mark 16 : 14). After the due greetings of "shalom", Jesus calms the disciples' fear for taking him to be a ghost. "Behold my hands and feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit has no flesh and bones, as you see me have ... And he showed them his hands and his feet." (Luke 24 : 39-40). However, "doubting" Thomas was not with the disciples when Jesus came and when they told him they saw their master alive he did not believe. Eight days later Jesus finds Thomas and tells him "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing". (John 20 : 27).

The foregoing is the result of my years of study and research from which it is clear that Jesus did not die on the cross.

## Commentary by N.E.D.:

If this scenario is acceptable then one can go a step further and suppose that the events of "Good Friday" were a put-up plan, unknown even to the disciples. Judas was chosen for the "betrayal" because he was the most trusted. He accepted because he believed something supernatural was going to happen. When he heard that Jesus "died" on the cross, he hanged himself.

Having survived the cross, Jesus must have left the country, leaving behind him a mysterious legend. He possibly met Paul in Damascus and then went to far-away India. There he died and was buried in Kashmir where, some say, his grave still exists.

The genius of Paul was to create a new theology around the events of the "crucifixion" and turn the failed mission of Jesus into a redeeming doctrine

for mankind.‡ Resurrection, like the bullion of the gold standard, does not have to be there, as long as people believe in it. But the truth must prevail in the end, for the universe is built on Truth.

Shorn of its metaphysical fiction, Christianity becomes little different from liberal Judaism, which is what it was intended to be in the first place. St Paul's additions were meant as a selling point which seems to have worked, and made Christianity the most successful religion in history. But the importance of both Christianity and Islam is not in their variation from Judaism but because they both contain the essence of Judaism – namely, belief in the One God of Israel. So while the Jews carried out their duty to the Kingdom of God by building a fence round the Torah and withstanding assault from every side and in every generation, the Christians and the Moslems handled the lucrative “export” trade. In fact, we are all in the same business but under different labels.

If Christianity and Islam have to shed their myths there is also room for reform in Judaism. Compare the complicated observances of Judaism with the simplicity of Islam where a Moslem has to affirm “No God but Allah” only once *in his lifetime*, and the Christians' complete dependence on Jesus. Jeremiah promises that gradually the will of God will become “engraved” on our hearts and in the process the trappings of religion become expendable.

We Jews must not ignore our Christian and Moslem brethren but together let us march forward to welcome the expected Messiah who will establish God's Kingdom on earth, in Peace, Justice and Love.

\* Moses, of course, should head the list; the other religious leaders only followed in his footsteps. We are living in what we might call the Mosaic Age.

† A Jew was once cornered in a Baghdad alley by a Moslem who asked him, “Who is greater – Moses or Muhammed?” The Jew was afraid to say “Moses” but could not deny his faith and say “Muhammed”. So he gave the diplomatic answer, “Hadha wain, hadha wain?” which means, “How can you compare the two?” The Moslem had to be satisfied with this answer, as he could not suggest that there could be any doubt as to its meaning! N.E.D.

‡ By demonstrating that Jesus did not in fact die on the cross, the author indirectly infers that Jesus was a true messenger of God, as stated in the Quran. – N.E.D.

‡ Two Arabs once hit on an idea to earn easy money. They got a dead sheep and buried it and built a shrine over it. People were told this was the shrine of a holy saint. Pilgrims started to visit from far and wide and the two partners became rich. One day they had an argu-

ment and one of the partners told his friend, “I swear by this holy saint that I am telling the truth”. His partner replied, “Which holy saint? Did we not bury the dead sheep together?” ☉

## Spot an Ancestor

A FURTHER SELECTION from the Register of military taxpayers of the Baghdad Community of 1892.

Heskel Ezra Abul Tutun  
Yacoub Dawid Yona Alu  
Musa Aharon Eskeji  
Yisshaq ibn Aziza Abul Sabun  
Menahem Yisshaq El Iny  
Reuben Abraham El Iny  
Dawid Eliahu Dawid El Beg  
Nessim Yosef Istanbulli  
Reuben Hay Afnas  
Shaul Abraham Yosef Afnas  
Eliahu Hakham Abraham  
Yosef Abed Hakham Abraham  
Abraham Abed Hakham Abraham  
Reuben Abed Hakham Abraham  
Asher Yona Bahari  
Sasson Yona Bahari  
Nessim Saleh Chitayat  
Shmuel Shlomo Chitayat  
Abdel Nabi Yosef Chitayat  
Yehuda Shmuel Chitayat  
Aharon Moshi Chitayat  
Elisha Reuben Chitayat  
Heskel Shmuel Chitayat  
Shalom Shuaa Jiji  
Mordechai Heskel Jiji  
Saleh Moshi Jiji  
Sasson Moshi Yisshaq Hayim  
Aharon Dawid Yisshaq Hayim  
Eliahu Moshi Yisshaq Hayim  
Ezra Moshi Yisshaq Hayim  
Rahamim Yisshaq Hayim Sayegh  
Yisshaq Hayim Moshi Yisshaq Hayim  
Abdulla Dahoud Yisshaq Hayim  
Yosef Shuaa Hayim  
Shlomo Shuaa Hayim  
Shuaa Dawid Shuaa Hayim  
Shaul Reuben Shlomo Hayim  
Mrad Reuben Hayim  
Abdulla Reuben Hayim  
Yamen Heskel Dawid Hayim  
Saleh Mikhael Hayim  
Reuben Yosef Hayya  
Abraham Yosef Hayya  
Rahamim Yosef Abraham Hayek  
Yosef Rahamim Hayek  
Menahem Rahamim Yosef Hayek  
Eliahu Dahoud Rfael Habsha  
Moshi Dawid Rfael Habsha  
Abdulla Heskel Hengali  
Heskel Eliyya Habba  
Heskel Mordechai Hekkek  
Yosef Dawid Hekkek  
Khedhour Eliahu Abdulla Hekkek  
Mordechai Heskel Hekkek  
Hayim Dawid Hekkek Darzi  
Shaul Heskel Hekkek  
Selman Meir Eliyya Hekkek  
Yosef Nessim Heskellou  
Menashi Heskel Hbayba  
Dawid Rfael Hekhma  
Heskel Muallem Hayim  
Shlomo Daniel Heffana  
Rahamim Saleh Hejjama  
Yehuda Nessim Reuben bit Elhalabi  
Eliahu Nessim ibn bit Elhalabi ☉

## Cookery Corner

A VARIATION OF PATCHA

by Alice

Take 2 breasts of spring lamb with the fat and bones already removed by the butcher. Sew the 2 pieces of meat together, leaving an opening for stuffing.

Stuffing ingredients: 1 cup of rice, soaked; ½ lb finely cut meat, but not minced; 2 tomatoes, cut with the skin; 1 tablespoon tomato paste; ½ teaspoon mixed spices.

Mix the above ingredients and stuff the meat pocket loosely, allowing for the expansion of the rice. Boil the stuffed ribs once and throw away the water.

In a pan put 1 small chopped onion, 2 small tomatoes cut with their skin, 1 carrot, 1 celery stick, 1 teaspoon tomato paste, put the stuffed ribs on top and cover with water, adding a little salt. Simmer on low fire till the water disappears and it browns nicely. It takes about 4 hours or more. Add more water if not cooked enough. Serve with mango pickle.

Remove the thread before serving ☉

## Reagan Scorns 3379

US PRESIDENT Reagan sent the following letter to the participants in a recent symposium on UN Resolution 3379, which equates Zionism with racism:

“My warm welcome goes to everyone meeting just a few blocks down the street in a forum sponsored by the American Section of the International Association of Jewish Lawyers to study the unremitting campaign in the United Nations to discredit Israel.

“Eleven years ago, the United States Delegate to the United Nations rose to denounce that body's ‘Zionism is Racism’ resolution. I am proud of that moment in history, and proud that all three Presidents of the United States who have held office since then have stood firmly by that denunciation.

“With Americans, this is a nonpartisan issue. Republicans and Democrats have been united, and will remain united, in our commitment to Israel and in our conviction that Israel has the right to exist in peace and security.

“God bless you all.” ☉

The less you need the richer you are ☉

Robert Dangoor

In the Gulf War Iraq has the day – Iran has the night ☉



*Alan and Joyce Rose and friends.*

Alan Rose is the Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Jewish Congress and is internationally recognised for his dedication to the cause of human rights, both at home and abroad. He was recently awarded the Order of Canada.

Alan is the grandson of Yahya (York) Gubbay of Baghdad who emigrated to Calcutta in 1840.

*Right: Being decorated by Mme Jeanne Sauvé, Governor-General of Canada.*

## God and the Holocaust

FOR FORTY YEARS the Jewish people were stunned by the enormity of the Holocaust and only in recent years have they been able to try and probe its meaning and fathom the depth of its implications. We keep asking, Why did it happen? How could it happen?

An ultra-orthodox view is that since God is the Creator of all things, He also created the Holocaust. The real issue, then, is to understand the nature of the sins for which the Holocaust was Divine punishment. Others take the view that the Jewish concept of Divine providence, which has ruled supreme and unchallenged for nearly 4000 years, is itself a major casualty of the Holocaust. God did not intervene to save His people.

Both these extreme views are not correct. The truth is that the Jewish people, having accepted the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, suffer not only for their sins but also suffer for God the wickedness of this world. We chose the role of the Suffering Son rather than that of the Conquering Hero. That is one of our sins.

The Almighty has not abandoned us. He continues to guide our overall destiny, which is to lead mankind into the Messianic Age.

But God must have known our frailty and limitations, why did he choose us? The answer is, apparently, that no other nation wanted the job! ●

## Hung Parliament

AT THE RECEPTION given by Prime Minister Shimon Peres at Claridges during his visit to London last year, Mrs Thatcher gladly accepted the invitation to visit Israel and said that she was looking forward to seeing Israeli democracy at work. She pointed out, however, that she was not interested in copying two features of Israel's political system, a coalition government and proportional representation.

But now that Mrs Thatcher is trying to decide on the opportune moment to launch a new general election, the indications are that the result will be a hung parliament. In which case, she or her successor may well have to form a coalition government with the SDP/Liberal Alliance, who will no doubt extract a promise for reforming the electoral system towards a more representative parliament that will put an end to the two-party system, which in many respects is even worse than the one-party system.

The British electorate is tired of seeing one parliament spending most of its life span undoing the work of the previous one, with Tories and Labour reversing the work of each other.

In 1987 the British electorate may well give the order to tone down extreme views. What the British people want to tell the diehard extreme Right and extreme Left is, "A plague on both your houses; we want a broad government of the centre that can solve the urgent problems of the nation — unemployment, housing, health, education, crime and drugs" ●

## Kosher Shechita

NAIM DANGOOR is sponsoring a *Contemporary Affairs* report on Shechita by Roger Charlton and Ronald Kaye of the Glasgow College of Technology with an introduction by Sir David Price M.P., a former minister, who writes:

"This report describes the current 'state of play' in the continuing debate about the rights and wrongs of religious slaughter.

As the authors of the report point out, opposition to Jewish and Muslim methods of animal slaughter is not new. However, the contemporary debate has two new elements in it.

First, there are the new style militant campaigners for 'animal rights', who believe that the end justifies the means and are therefore all too ready to act beyond the law. Secondly, there are the militant racists who are equally ready to use any means to achieve their ends.

These two elements produce a new and disturbing dimension to the old debate, which could take it outside the rules of British political debate.

At the same time, even the most implacable opponents of religious slaughter must recognise that our Jewish and Muslim fellow citizens are particularly sensitive about criticisms of their traditional rights to practice religious slaughter. They feel strongly that attempts to reduce such rights are not only an attack upon their religion, but also an attempt to divide them from the remainder of British society" ●