

The Jews of Iraq between 1920 and 1970

Selections from the paper by Simha Horesh Part 5

The Six-Day War

In June 1967 when the Six-Day War broke out between Israel and the Arabs, the Jews numbered some 3000 in Iraq. As the situation between Israel and Egypt had grown more tense, attention in Iraq was drawn away from the pressing internal problems to the impending threat of a war in the Middle East. The government was entirely unprepared for any measure of active participation in the war. Nevertheless, it was subjected to strong pressures by the nationalists and consequently a small force was sent to take part in the war effort against Israel. On 5 June, as soon as the news of the war reached Baghdad, emergency measures were taken; President Abdul Rahman Aref, who was also prime minister, was given Cabinet authority to legislate by decree, and a ban was announced on demonstrations and gatherings throughout Iraq. The news in the first two days of the war in Baghdad spoke of spectacular victories for the Arab armies and the nearing end of Israel. On 9 June when the truth of the situation had finally dawned on the Iraqi public, a vicious campaign was unleashed against the Jews starting in mosques, then in newspapers and finally with the government's mass arrests of Jews.

With the defeat in the war, the old problems of the government came back with added sharpness. The political situation became 'precarious' as opposition to the government grew. The anti-Jewish campaign in the mass media was obviously with the government's blessing as a means of easing some of the pressure. In July, Taher Yahya was appointed prime minister; he was also acting minister of interior and although he was reported to have been an able administrator, he was unpopular because of his alleged corruption. The government programme announced on 10 July 1967, was calculated to placate the opposition through promises to solve disputed issues, but the government was too weak to enforce it. In January 1968, six ministers resigned and were replaced; the opposition began to get organised and in March and April, meetings were held by personalities representing all shades of opinion in Iraq and a memorandum was submitted to Aref on 16 April embodying all their demands. The government did not take any concrete action with a view to satisfy the opposition and on 17 July 1968, when the ferment reached a peak, a coup d'état was carried out.

To the Jews, the news of the war had been ominous. Their sympathies lay with Israel, but they were terrified at the prospect of what awaited them. As the incitement campaign mounted against them, they felt increasingly helpless and they cowered and took to their homes. They again became the fifth column in Iraq: a call by the minister of interior to the public to inform the police of any fifth column activity they notice sent chills of fear through the Jews. (After all, who else could the

fifth column be?) A good number of people obliged, and it was estimated that some 200 letters were sent – some without signature – to the Security forces informing about Jewish 'suspects' who were none other than victims of personal grudges or jealousies. Jews at the time were in no position to engage in any sort of activity at all, let alone subversive activity. A wave of searches and arrests followed and the number of Jewish detainees rose. The minister of interior was authorised according to emergency measures to intern people indefinitely if he believed that this was necessary for the safety of the country and Jews were kept in detention on the strength of this provision. A series of other measures were also taken against the Jews: Jewish pharmacies were closed; Jews were expelled from their jobs, from universities and from clubs they belonged to; the land registry office was again closed to them; limitations were put on their movement inside Iraq and on the amount of money they could draw from their bank accounts and their telephones were cut. In short, they were economically strangled, persecuted and terrorised.

The 17 July coup was carried out by a group of young officers holding key positions and a group of retired Ba'athist officers with army connections. Except for their opposition to the regime, there was no common ideology for the coalition behind the coup; however, they needed one another for its success and once they were in control, the Ba'ath part of the coalition outmanoeuvred the young officers, ousted them and on 30 July 1968 took control of the government. Contrary to the hastily drawn first proclamations of previous coups, the proclamations of the new regime were carefully worded and had a whole government programme embodied in them. Prominent in them was the recurring theme about spies and spy rings and the previous government's neglect to put an end to their activity. The government immediately embarked on measures for the liquidation of its opponents, genuine or alleged.

The truth was that the Ba'ath party was out to establish itself in power and everything else took second place. A lot of explanations were given for the Iraqi government's account on the spy menace, these mostly centered on the regime's unpopularity and its weakness – for by the end of 1968 the regime was reportedly 'on the worst of terms with almost every organised section of Iraqi society'. There was also the effort of the regime to rally the support of the populace by the threat of imminent danger to divert attention from the unsatisfactory conditions inside Iraq, for none of the existing problems had been solved.

Already in September 1968 news of the uncovering of a spy ring in Basrah that included some Jews were reported; in October, seventeen Jews, allegedly 'Zionist spies', were said to have been flown from Basrah to a military base in Baghdad and in November, more arrests

were made, this time in Baghdad. The idea of a Jew engaging in espionage activity was in itself absurd in the conditions prevailing at the time. Nevertheless, with the storm whipped up by the government about the 'fifth column' which had virtually become responsible for the Arab defeat in the June 1967 war, the Iraqi public was prepared for the climax. A revolutionary court was established in December to try the spy rings, in fulfilment of the promise given by President Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr in his address to the funeral procession of Iraqi soldiers killed in an Israeli air raid on their base in Jordan that 'not a single spy ring would survive on Iraqi soil'.

The first major trial was of a group accused of spying for Israel and death sentences were passed and carried out in January 1969 on fourteen of the accused, of whom nine were Jews. (Ezra Naji Zilkha; Charles Raphael Horesh; Fuad Gabbay; Heskell Gurji Namerdi; Sabah Hayim Dayan; Dawud Ghali; Naim Khedhouril Hilali; Heskell Saleh Heskell; Dawud Heskell Barukh Dellal).

The uproar in world opinion following the executions probably stopped the regime from the systematic annihilation of the Jewish community, for more Jews had in the meantime been arrested and it was reported that more spy trials were being prepared for them. The government, it seemed, was not altogether insensitive to world opinion and the defiant attitude of the government spokesmen in the first days following the executions when they declared that Iraq will continue to exterminate spies gave way to a defensive attitude and the foreign media were allowed to come to Baghdad and interview the Chief Rabbi, Sasson Kadoori (the same rabbi of the 1940's), and some Jews regarding their condition. There was no problem to get the desired answers: the Rabbi's loyalty to the government was beyond reproach; besides, his son was still in detention as a 'suspected spy'. In addition to all this, every reporter interviewing Jews was accompanied by a few security men. The Iraqi Foreign Minister stated in February 1969 that Jews detained since the June 1967 war had been set free (and indeed they were). In March, it was announced that the Minister of Interior had ordered the easing of some restrictions imposed on Jews during the Aref regime. In May 1969, the Jews were invited to apply for passports and the lifting of restrictions on their property dealings was announced. However, nothing materialised – not the passports, nor the free dealings.

During 1969 and 1970, 'spies' were brought to the Revolutionary Court and condemned en masse. They were claimed to be working for an assortment of alleged enemies of Iraq: Israel, the United States (and the CIA), Iran, the Kurds, opponents of the regime in Iraq and outside of it. Hundreds of people were executed, some publicly, others after show trials and yet more without even bothering about the formality of a trial. In the general frenzy, all

the opponents of the government were liquidated. In March 1970, an agreement was reached between the government and the Kurds. It was a spectacular achievement. In the struggle between the civilian group within the Ba'ath party and the army, it decided the issue, and the civilians emerged supreme. By the end of 1970, the Ba'ath party was firmly in control in Iraq, the system of government had been fixed, the army purged and the Kurdish front quiet; no opposition was left to speak of.

To the Jews the agreement with the Kurds opened new horizons. With the somewhat more lax conditions, they were permitted to travel to the north of Iraq, a place famous for its summer resorts which had been blocked all through the conflict between the government and the Kurds. As news of the first two families who stole the border arrived and the authorities took no punitive action, hordes of Jews started leaving to the north of Iraq. They left everything behind, their homes, their cars and all their property. They could not subject themselves to suspicion by selling anything and the danger of being caught on the way was too great to take anything of value that might hint their intention. The exodus continued into 1971 and only then, the government started granting passports to the Jews, but selectively. By the middle of 1972, the number of Jews remaining stood at around 400 in all of Iraq.

Conclusion

The Jews, 'one of the chief minorities in Iraq of 1900', were thus reduced to insignificance. They have almost been eliminated from Iraq entirely. The Jews had lived in Iraq for 2500 years. The different regimes and political upheavals of the 20th century, that the Jews had no part or influence on, contributed to their complete estrangement. When the State of Iraq came into being, they were worried over the repercussions it might have on their positions. They were entirely without interest in the national or patriotic aspects of the upheaval; they wanted no part in it. They stood aside, passive and watchful and completely void of ambition. This became their attitude all along, so that they never became a real part of it all. The rise of nationalism in itself pushed them further back, so that any prospect of communication with the national flow was rendered even more difficult. The result of it all was that they seemed like a foreign body that Iraq had better be without.

Zionism itself had no appeal to them before the 1941 events. Only when they felt that the ground was shaking under their feet did they turn to it for safety. They were not in any way anti-Iraqi and no Iraqi Jew ever took part in any subversive activity against Iraq. When they carried arms and established their underground organisations it was for self-defence. When wars broke between Israel and the Arabs, their sympathies lay with Israel. They had been alienated by the Arabs and Israel was the hope of Jews everywhere (not that any of the Iraqi Jews took any sort of action in that direction). All through the dark days of the late 1960's and early 1970's, Israel was the only flicker of light to the Iraqi Jews. Knowing that someone cared about

BOOKS

Operation Babylon by Shlomo Hillel

Collins Publishers, London 1988. £15.

Whodunnit? by N.E.D.

The publication of the English version of Mr Hillel's story of the Jewish exodus from Iraq, capably translated by Ina Friedman, has aroused worldwide interest, and the book was favourably reviewed in hundreds of journals and periodicals. It has also elicited comments from other people who were involved in that momentous operation.

Mr Ronnie Barnett has given interviews to the *Jerusalem Post*, *Jewish Chronicle* and other newspapers claiming that he masterminded the airlift of 120,000 Iraqi Jews, and that from 1945 to 1953 he was personally responsible for bringing nearly half a million Jewish immigrants from the Middle East to Israel. He had a meeting with President Truman who soon afterwards began to exert pressure on Iraq to allow the Jews to emigrate. This confirms my own assessment, when reviewing the Hebrew version of Mr Hillel's book two years ago, that the Jewish exodus became possible mainly because of American pressure on Iraq.

Now Mr Mordechai Ben-Porat has written to *The Scribe* to state that he was the one who was responsible for this operation and that its heroic story has not yet been published. He is at present working on it ●

Review by Drew Middleton from the New York Times

Here is a book that tells an exciting and dramatic story and has the added advantage of being true. Shlomo Hillel recounts how about 125,000 Jews were rescued from Iraq and moved to Israel.

That fact in itself suffices to set the pulse moving. But when the time is considered, *Operation Babylon* seems almost miracul-

them and was working on their behalf kept their spirits from breaking.

A lot of similarity can be seen in the process of liquidation of the Jewish community in the 1960's to the one in the 1940's: the mounting anti-Jewish trend, the economic strangulation, the war, the arrests, the wholesale terrorization, the show trials and the executions, and the ensuing Jewish exodus. That Iraq had all the requirements in the book of a 'liberated, progressive, young republic', that the regime in Iraq and all its components had changed so radically made no difference whatsoever to the government's attitude to the Jewish minority. One is invariably reminded of a French saying, "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose" ●

ous. For it was carried out just before and during the establishment of the State of Israel, when the fate of Jews in Iraq and in every Arab country was parlous indeed.

Their rescue required not only men of bravery but also men of ingenuity and guile. The author and his companions were such men.

I was particularly struck by the author's account of the corruption among the police and border guards of Iraq and other Arab countries. Anyone who has travelled extensively in the Middle East knows that, with a few exceptions, officials can be bought.

With the establishment of Israeli independence, the job became more difficult. The initial trips by truck and transport plane from Iraq to Israel had to be discontinued as the Arab armies gathered for their assault on the new state of Israel.

The author, who was born in Iraq, returned there many times in a number of guises. His task there was to alert Jews to the dangers ahead and to prepare them for the long and dangerous trip to Israel. Increasingly the prime question was how could the Jews get out of Iraq. The Government there, inflamed by the failure of the Iraqi forces to conquer the Jews, daily became more vengeful.

Even if the Jews were able to leave Iraq, how could they reach Israel? The territory between the two countries was filled with Arab armies and hostile people. Israel, itself, was in no position or thought it was in no position, to accept thousands of refugees.

Mr Hillel and his colleagues found a solution in the position of Iran, which was under the comparatively liberal, by today's standards, rule of the Pahlavi family. The Iranians did not object to Iran's becoming a transit point for Jews escaping from Iraq to Israel.

All the flights were exciting but none more so than the first flight out of Baghdad direct to Israel at the onset of the operation when the frightened children who made up the cargo lay on the floor of the plane until it left the ground.

During his adventures, which would have broken a man less imbued with the importance of his cause, Mr Hillel came across some odd characters who would be at home in many adventure novels. These included French mercenary pilots, British and American diplomats trying to protect what they conceived to be their nations' national interests, various American and other soldiers of fortune and some unsavory Arabs.

"Operation Babylon" deserves high praise. First, as a continuously exciting adventure story that takes place in a historical setting that for better or worse has made the Middle East as we know it today. Second, it is history told in the first person with none of the blemishes left out. Did the Israelis flinch from admitting a large number of refugees from Iraq. Yes they did. Mr Hillel says so and quotes the people who told him.

Finally, this is an utterly revealing picture of a man who gave up a quiet life on a kibbutz and a chance to marry to serve an ideal. There aren't many like him in the world. In fact, there aren't many books like this ●

I received the June issue of *The Scribe* and was thrilled to read it from cover to cover.

Recently I was asked to review Hillel's book *Operation Babylon* for the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Enclosed is a copy of the review and you are welcome to publish it. (It appears under Books - Ed.)

Also, some weeks ago I delivered a lecture on Islamic Fundamentalism and Ramifications for Israel, at a Seminar organised by the United Israel Appeal in Melbourne. (Copies of this paper will be sent to readers on request - Ed.)

University of
Western Australia (Prof.) Rony Gabbay

Congratulations on your Editorial of June 1988 "The Right Solution". "You hit the nail on the head". Your Editorial is the ideal solution for the present problem on the West Bank and Gaza. You confirm certain facts, concerning which I had no definite confirmation, e.g. that Abdullah wanted to call Transjordan Palestine. Another fact which is sometimes forgotten is that the Romans did not forcibly exile the entire Jewish population. Jews have lived in Tiberias and Safed since Joshua's campaign, i.e. continuous occupation since about 1200 B.C.E. I salute Babylonian Jewry, the "fountain and origin" of our Judaism (Monotheism) from Abram (Abraham) of Ur 1900 B.C.E.

Cottingham,
East Yorkshire Dr L I Hardy

I am an Ashkenazi who was privileged to marry into the family of Shaul Shuker and I have become enchanted by the richness of Iraqi Jewish culture.

To cite one example, I was recently invited to spend an evening in the company of Mr Moshe Hakham who fascinated me with his description of preparations for Pesach in Baghdad and how they began many months in advance, with the making of wine, silan, matzot, the pickling of vegetables and so on.

It occurred to me during the seder (which I always love to spend at 'beif' Shuker) that the warmth of the chanting, the delightful songs and your use of those very species with the very same names as mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud 2000 years ago attests to the fact that your tradition is the genuine article. Your standing among the ranks of world Jewry is something unique, for no other group of Jews can boast such an unbroken and largely undisturbed history of vibrant Jewish living since the exile.

Therefore, it seems to me a matter of the greatest importance, for the sake of future generations, that religious life in all its facets (which after all was what preserved the community in Iraq) is documented by those who lived and practised it.

I believe it would be a great mitzva for one or more philanthropic individuals to sponsor articles by such knowledgeable gentlemen as Mr Hakham covering the observance of festivals and Shabbat, Brit mila, wedding celebrations (and of course the "Henni"), synagogue customs, business ethics, charitable activities and so on, for the purpose of combining them into a

single work for publication before this valuable information is lost forever.

London NW4 Samuel Lyons

I have recently come across a copy of your *Scribe* whilst visiting a friend of mine and I was mesmerised and enthralled by its contents, reading about events and people whose names were familiar to me, but from whom I was separated from the period of the Great Escape - when all of us Iraqi Jews have fled to different parts of the world to gain our freedom. I am therefore asking you if you will kindly add my name to those already privileged to be on your mailing list.

I commend you highly on such a wonderful publication and I will look forward to the pleasure I will derive of being a fortunate recipient.

New York, USA Mrs Juliette Elias

I have just come across the April 1988 (No.26) issue of "The Scribe". I was delighted to read it. I found it to be a most fascinating and informative publication.

My wife (nee Helene Zilkha) and I are Baghdadians - and all news and information about our people wherever they may be, are of great interest to us. I would therefore consider it a big favour if we could be included in your mailing list. Is it possible?

More than that, now that I have read the fascinating article (No.4) of Simha Horesh, I am tempted to ask you if it is at all possible to let me have the three back issues which contained parts 1,2 and 3.

New York David Simon

Many thanks for your valuable present the book "Ade Za-hab Al Tora" by your grandfather the late great Rabbi Ezra Dangoor.

This book reminded me when my late father (member of Bet Din at that time) used to take me with him to felicitate Chief Rabbi Ezra Dangoor on the Holidays in the twenties and also remind me when your late grandfather used to conduct prayers on Friday evenings with a voice that can be heard in all parts of the great synagogue of Meer Elias without loud speaker. All the congregations know the time of prayer when he looks at his watch hanging at his breast pocket.

My congratulations to you for the trouble you spent to publish this important book and your endeavour to enlighten and uncover the richness and beauty of the Babylonian Jewry's Heritage.

London N2 Shaool Hakham Sassoon

Could you please be kind enough to send the previous issues of your fine journal entitled "The Scribe", as well as a list of publications of religious books available for purchase.

Magen David Sephardic Congregation
Bethesda
Maryland
USA Rabbi Hayyim Kassorla

Please be so kind as to put me on the mailing list of "The Scribe". I've only read one edition but found it most interesting. If

you have any back numbers I'd be delighted to receive them.

London NW11 Rev R E Rosten

Saudi Jews

(From JC May 6)

The existence of crypto-Jews in Saudi Arabia has been discussed and documented by, among others, the late President Ben-Zvi, and Ambassador Eliahu Elath.

President Ben-Zvi, in his book "The Exiled and the Redeemed" (1957), cited several recent reports of the fair-skinned people of Khaibar, descendants of forcible converts to Islam. Many retained Hebrew names, resisted inter-marriage and were known by other tribes as "Yahud Khaibar".

There seems to be similarities between these people and the Saudi family who recently requested asylum in Israel. For such people to reclaim the faith and nationhood of their forefathers after all these centuries would be an extraordinary episode in the story of Jewish ingathering.

London Maurice Samuelson

The news that a Saudi Arabian declared himself a Jew and wanted to emigrate to Israel, as well as rumours that there are thousands of secret Jews at Yathrib, Khaybar and Najran remind me of an occasion in Baghdad towards the end of 1964 after our identity cards were renewed with another.

While passing by Meir Tweg Synagogue I saw at the door a bedouin with platted hair standing there with a government employee beside him, with whom I had previous acquaintance.

I asked the government employee about that bedouin and was told that he was among some Jews brought from the frontier with Saudi Arabia in order to supply them with identity cards.

Weeks later I met the same employee and enquired about the bedouins. He replied that the government decided to dispense with the idea, they being nomads and carry all their belongings with them.

London Shawky Dallal

Medical Services

In 1884 (sixty years before the British NHS) Iraqi Jews established a community clinic in order to give free medical service to needy members, which included a pharmacy for supplying medicine free of charge.

In 1887 the committee managing the service was composed of:

Heskel Hayim Azouri (chairman)
Saleh Chitayat
Efrayem Abdulla Yosef
Reuben Yosef Elia Shaul
Dawid Heskel Shem-Tob
Heskel Hayim Nathaniel
Moshe Yehuda Hakham Yishag
Shlomo Reuben Nawi
Shalom Agha Elazar Halewi.

COOKERY CORNER

by Alice Shashou

Kubbat Halab –

can be used as mazza or main course.

4 cups rice

2 onions, finely chopped

1½ lbs. coarsely minced chuck steak

About 5 eggs

2 bunches chopped parsley

Salt, pepper and cinnamon

The Paste:

Wash the rice and soak with a pinch of salt for 1 hour.

Cook till all the liquid disappears.

Let it cool completely.

Pass it in the mincer.

Add the slightly beaten yellow of eggs and some pepper and mix well.

You have the paste.

The Stuffing:

Fry the onions in about 2 tablespoons of mazola oil.

Salt the minced meat and add to the fried onions; add pepper and bay leaf and stir till it is nicely cooked.

Remove the pan from the fire, add the chopped parsley and cinnamon to taste. Mix well.

Some like to add mixed spices or curry powder.

Let it cool completely.

Moisten your hands with a little water. Take a lump of the paste the size of an egg. Flatten it and fill it with 1 tablespoon of the meat filling and close into an oblong kubba.

Beat the white of eggs. Add black pepper and dip the kubbas in it.

You can freeze it.

Fry until golden on all sides.

Serve hot.

Mushroom Rice

2 cups Basmati rice

1 cup vermicelli

2½ cups water

Tomato paste, tomato juice

About 1 lb. mushrooms

Salt to taste

1 chicken cube

Wash the rice and soak for 2 hours with a pinch of salt.

Warm a little mazola oil in the bottom of a non-stick pan. Add the vermicelli and brown gently.

Wash the mushrooms, peel and cut into thin slices. Soak in a bowl of cold water and about ½ teaspoon of lemon juice.

Cook the mushrooms till all water disappears.

Now mix the water and tomato paste and tomato juice to make 2½ cups in all. Add salt and chicken cube and add to the pan.

Drain the rice and add to the boiling water. Cover the pan and cook until all the water has been absorbed and the rice is nearly cooked.

Add the cooked mushrooms.

Put a kitchen towel over the pan, under the lid, and simmer till ready and a golden crust is formed.

Turn the pan over the serving dish when you serve.

Happy eating.

Variation: You can add slightly cooked petits pois to the rice instead of the mushrooms.

Baked Salmon

1 Salmon of about 6-7 lbs

Juice of half a lemon

1 lemon cut in thin slices

1 bunch of small cut parsley

8 oz. butter cut in thin slices

¼ cup water

Salt, pepper to taste

Marinate the fish inside and outside. Place it with all the marinade in a large piece of silver foil. Wrap up and seal the edges of the foil firmly. Put the parcel in a tray with 1 cup of water.

Bake in a hot preheated oven 200C = 400F = Gas mark 6 for 30 minutes. Increase it to 220C = 425F = Gas mark 7 for another half hour. Unwrap and place under the grill for a few minutes and let it brown nicely. Transfer to a plate. Garnish. Serve immediately. ●

Thoughts on the Amida

It is said that "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of". Indeed, prayer is the means of communion between Man and his Maker and Jewish prayer is the spiritual continuation of the Bible.

The Amida recited in a whisper and standing (hence the name) or *Shmoneh Esrei* (18 benedictions) constitutes, together with the Shema, the central feature of the morning and evening services after the reading of the Sefer Torah on suitable occasions.

It consists of prayers of praise, of petition and thanksgiving.

In the first paragraph of the Amida the individual worshipper is, in one breath, so to speak, linked with the Patriarchs of the Jewish people. The phrase, God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob (instead of just Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), is because the Almighty revealed Himself to each of them in a different way. While Abraham was the pioneer, and Jacob the progenitor of the 12 tribes, Isaac exemplified the family man thus also representing the majority of men in society.

Another benediction concerns the building of Jerusalem. Thus three times a day the observant Jew prays for the restoration of Zion and the Divine Presence. In the concluding paragraph we pray that the Almighty would open our hearts to the Torah and its tremendous significance ●

P.S.G.

BRIDGE

Two Clubs

(The 2-club convention)

by bridge builder

The 2-club convention is essentially a slam enquiry. When a player opens two clubs this is the message he sends to his partner:

"Dear Partner, I have good news for you. I have a very strong hand, with 23 points and over. I can almost make game on my own, but I want to find out if we have slam between us. My bid is a convention and has nothing to do with clubs. YOU MUST NOT PASS.

"With 0-7 points bid 2-diamonds, even if you have no diamonds. This is the negative response. With 8 or 9 points bid 2 – no trumps; with 10 or 11 points bid 3 – no trumps.

"To give a positive response to the slam enquiry you must have a shaded 3 tricks concentrated in one suit, even if you have only 4 cards of that suit – say, AKJx. The positive response is 2-spades, 2-hearts, 3-diamonds or 3-clubs, as the case may be. I shall then decide if we have game or slam.

"In any case, whatever your response, you must not stop bidding before we reach game. The only time you can pass before we reach game is when you respond 2-diamonds and I go 2-no trumps. You can pass if you cannot offer 1 trick in no trump play – i.e. 3 points."

All the above *parasha* is contained in the opening bid of 2-clubs.

Even if responder has 8 spade cards but only 8 or 9 points he must call 2-no trumps. Then, whatever opener bids, he goes to 4-spades and leaves it to opener to take it from there.

After 2-diamonds from responder – the caller, if he has 23, 24 points calls 2-no trumps; 25, 26 points – 3-no trumps.

The 2-club bid is the strongest forcing bid in bridge, and can be used with any number of high points – 23 and over. There was a time when a balanced hand with 25-27 points opened 3-no trumps but this is now out of fashion, and 2-clubs is preferred.

An opponent can sometimes interfere with the bidding by competing with 2 of a suit – even at the risk of being doubled. This sometimes stops the other side from reaching their maximum or best contract. ●

Arabic Poetry

Modern Arabic Poetry, 1800-1970, the Development of its Form and Themes under the Influence of Western Literature, was written by Prof. Shmuel Moreh in English and was translated by two Arab scholars, Dr. Shafi al-Sayyid of Cairo University and Dr. Sa'd Maslul of the International Institute for Languages in Khartoum, the Sudan. The Book was published by the Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi publishing house in Cairo.

A Saudi scholar has written a book in response which seeks to prove that the source for all modern Arabic poetry can be found in classical Arabic poetry ●



Mazzaltov – At the Lawee-Peress wedding in Montreal...

Grace and Eric

Sixty years ago most of our community lived within one square mile of old Baghdad: Everything was within walking distance: synagogues, schools, businesses, relatives and friends. The community crier (called *Abul Aidha*) used to deliver the gold-dusted invitations to all the guests and, at the wedding ceremony, hand out pretty nosegays (*shadda waghd*) to everyone present.

Wedding parties were held in the parents' homes and the cook had the added duty of escorting ladies back to their residences in the light of a paraffin lantern.

Now, those of us who did not emigrate to Israel are scattered far and wide in Europe, America and Canada. Fast jets take us to our friends' *simchas* at the drop of an invitation. (Someone jokingly replied – "Thanks for the invitation, where are the tickets?")

We hope that these ties will strengthen and not weaken over the coming years ●

American Journey

I always worried about flying to America. For whereas the outward flight takes only two hours by the clock, the return flight takes 11 hours, and door to door the journey takes some 15 hours by the clock, and has to take place overnight, to avoid starting or finishing at an unsocial hour. It is thus a problem for those who can't get enough sleep on the plane. The ensuing jet lag takes a few days to correct, "to enable our souls to catch up with our bodies," as the old African tribesmen used to put it.

On the outward flight last month we could only get "smoking" seats. Edward and his wife came regularly to puff their cigarettes in our small, smoke-filled, compartment and then return to their "non-smoking" seats. I suggested that we should swap seats. "You must be joking," he replied, "we couldn't stand the smoke!"

In Montreal and New York I was glad to see that our lovely communities try to stay together and keep their identity. In Iraq we all lived together in a communal life. Now that we are scattered all over the world only Judaism will protect our children. Sabbath observance, synagogue attendance and *kashruth* should be encouraged. The problem of *kashruth* and meat and milk can be conveniently and satisfactorily overcome by serving fish.

A wife must not compete with her husband but complement him and

acknowledge him as head of the family. The modern call for total equality has gone too far and is alien to our culture.

Every community must acknowledge and follow a leader. At this stage of our history go for the spontaneous leader – the Moses amongst us who comes forward with the intention of serving the community. It is only when matters run regularly that we can afford the luxury of an elected leader. In our Babylonian tradition honorary communal offices were held for life. An annual election of president is a recipe for disaster!

During my travels I noticed how quickly children born in a new country – Iran, Israel, America, acquire typically national features.

Everywhere, the Jews and non-Jews that we met sympathised with the Palestinians. This propaganda gain is due to a fallacy. Israel's conflict is not with Palestinians but with Arabs as a whole – firstly, because the Arab states waged wars on Israel and thereby prevented an early peaceful accommodation between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, and secondly, because most of the Jews in Israel came from Arab countries. Any just settlement must involve all the Arab states. The process of exchange of populations which brought a million persecuted Jews from Arab countries to Israel has to be completed by the transfer of Palestinian Arabs to neighbouring countries.

Moreover, a Middle East peace set-

tlement must provide that Arab states shall open their doors to Jews who want to live and work in Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Hejaz, etc. In this way Israelis who seek opportunities in Europe and America will be able to apply their talents in Arab countries.

Babylonian Jewry in the Diaspora, scattered everywhere in large and small cities, needs an overall leadership to maintain our ancient traditions. The Exilarch Foundation through the medium of *The Scribe* tries to carry out a measure of this duty. I was glad to find that our Journal was appreciated by its many readers ●

A most interesting Conference was held in New Jersey in May. This was aimed at securing unity between the four main trends of American Judaism – Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist and Reform. This Conference was inspired by an article written by an Orthodox American Rabbi, Itzhak Greenberg, entitled "Will There Be One Jewish People by the Year 2000?" It sought to promote dialogue and contact between representatives of the different trends. The main issue centred on differing attitudes to marriage, divorce and conversion. I was one of a delegation of five British Jews from London, as it hoped to foster unity among the different trends of British Jewry.

This Conference, organised by the Centre for Learning and Leadership (CLAL) serves the vitally important process of promoting dialogue in a worthwhile attempt to bridge differences and overcome isolationist tendencies.

P.S.G.