

# The SCRIBE

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WISHING ALL OUR READERS A JOYOUS PURIM

### People of Israel, Listen to me!

The "demographic problem" can be solved by land taxation  
The "demographic problem" can *only* be solved by land taxation

The Land of Israel covers both sides of the River Jordan; and the Palestine mandate, awarded to Britain in 1920, covered this territory and required the mandatory to facilitate the close settlement of Jews in the whole area. But in 1921, eastern Palestine was lopped off, which has become the present kingdom of Jordan, covering 76% of old Palestine. This is regarded by many people as *de facto* partitioning of Palestine between Arabs and Jews. But impediments were placed in the way of Jewish settlement even in the remaining 24% and it was only after two bloody wars that the Jews ended up with their rightful share of the territory.

The Arabs having rejected all partition plans, these cannot be revived any more.

We keep saying JORDAN IS PALESTINE, but Israel does not annex the West Bank and Gaza for fear of the faster increase of the Arab population that would dilute the Jewish character of the State. So today Israel is faced with the dilemma of not wanting to cede the Territories and not being able to annex them. The resultant inaction has subjected the government to pressure from within and without, and has encouraged the PLO in its belligerence and in starting and maintaining the *intifada*.

Having failed to defeat Israel in war, the Arabs now threaten to displace the Jews from within by cloning more children: over 50 per cent of Arabs in the Territories are under the age of 15. Is this the logic of democracy?

When Lebanon was created, Christians outnumbered Moslems. The Christians, having made Lebanon the Switzerland of the Middle East, are now being massacred and forced to hand over their country to the Syrians because they were outbred by the Moslems.

Is this the justice of democracy?

Is this the equity of one-man, one-vote?

The Lebanese Christians were com-

placent because they were greedy for the petro-dollars that the Saudis and Kuwaitis brought in to buy up property. They woke up to the danger when it was too late.

The Israelis, too, were complacent, by offering employment and fat wages to the Arabs that made them entrenched in the country and attracted others from far and wide.

Israel must not listen to those who say, "Let us trade land for peace". For, giving land away will not bring peace, but war and destruction. What is happening in Lebanon today is a foretaste of what could happen in Israel if she starts on the downward road of appeasement. History will repeat itself if the lesson is not learned.

THE LAND OF ISRAEL FOR THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL contains in it the answer to Israel's dilemma. Keeping the land in Jewish hands can only be achieved by heavy taxation. It is a commandment embodied in the Jubilee system of the Torah that requires that land should always revert to the Community – the State.

While raising smaller families, Jewish parents say – we want quality not quantity. But quality can only prevail if it taxes quantity out of the land. Quality can afford to pay the high taxes that quantity cannot pay.

Land taxation has several purposes. Firstly, it ensures the maximum return to the nation from the use of the land; secondly, it enables the use of these funds to abolish other forms of taxation, including income tax. Thirdly, it enables the government to stop *yeridah* and the brain-drain by giving higher rewards to those who deserve them.

*Yeridah* was a Jewish problem from the early days of our nation. Even before we entered the Promised Land, some Israelites were clamouring to go back to Egypt, where life was easy and food plentiful. The fall of Judea to the Romans was made possible by the continuous emigration that was taking place from before.

Present emigration is due to better economic prospects in America and Europe. Land taxation can provide the funds to keep scientists, engineers and others in the country, by giving them better incentives.

Hitler got rid of his Jews by genocide; the Arabs did it by a reign of terror. We have to deal with the Arabs in a civilized way.

But the formula of land taxation is not prescribed just to drive the Arabs out of our land. The problem is universal; and the Jews have always been in the vanguard of the human experience – exemplars to the rest of mankind and epitomizers of the human condition.

In a world of diminishing resources and limited space, should those who procreate irresponsibly be rewarded, and are those who breed like rabbits going to inherit the earth? (One excludes the large Hassidic families who are merely trying to close the Jewish demographic gap).

While China thought that its population growth was under control, a recent census showed an increase of 100 millions! Are third world countries going to conquer the world by sheer numbers?

If peace is to be preserved into the 21st century and the new millenium, then the problem of "north/south" demographic disparity has to be solved other than by a certain military confrontation.

Green parties want to see free movement of people across frontiers anywhere in the world. This is a recipe for disaster. Land taxation can be the fountain for national dividends that will put up economic frontiers in the place of political frontiers.

### Israel and the Diaspora

Does the Diaspora have the right to give advice on Israeli affairs. Does the Diaspora have a right to exist at all?

Ever since the Babylonian Exile in 586 B.C.E. the Diaspora became and still remains the centre of gravity of the Jewish people. At all times since then the Jewish State was dependent on the diplomatic, financial and moral support of the Diaspora.

Until Israel achieves peace, security and self-sufficiency, she will rightly remain the concern and business of the Diaspora.

## A Wise Man among Fools

Translated from *Al-Hayat* the Beirut Arabic daily printed in London  
Contributed by David N. Khalastchy

*You have to make peace – not with your friends, but with your enemies.* Ezer Weizman

Israel is the product of three men:  
– A dreamer called Chaim Weizmann;  
– A statesman called David Ben Gurion;  
and  
– A terrorist called Menachem Begin.

Ezer Weizman is a bee in the Israeli hornet's nest. He has in every regime a honeycomb and a bunch of onions.

He listened to the advice of his uncle Chaim Weizmann and started his career as an airman with the English.

Then he disagreed with his uncle and became a terrorist in Begin's organisation.

And it took him forty years to turn from the right to the left, to join the Labour party that was founded by Ben Gurion.

Israeli democracy is a row of soldiers in civilian dress.

So when the soldiers retire they work in politics.

Israeli political wars are like video wars – mere acting.

They differ from the wars of Arab politics in that the Arabs take politics seriously: the slain are really slain and the wounded are wounded, and blood runs like water.

The Arab politician is a tragedian – he doesn't laugh, doesn't smile and doesn't love.

But in the Israeli democracy game there are shouts and screams, pulling of hair and biting of fingers . . . but afterwards, kissing of beards.

There are fireworks but without killed and wounded, and without loss of blood and life.

The Israeli politician is an actor in a comedy: he falls and rises.

He laughs and cries and screams, and entertains the audience.

He disappears and returns in a new play.

And when Ezer Weizman moved from the stage of war to the stage of politics he helped in bringing his leader, Begin, to power in 1977 and dragging him firmly to Camp David.

And he persuaded him to make peace with Egypt and withdraw from Sinai.

And Begin rewarded him with a bowl of honey by making him minister of defence.

And when he quarrelled with him he gave him a bunch of onions and dismissed him from the cabinet.

In the life of every politician a moment comes when his conscience is awakened.

Ezer Weizman built up the Israeli air force to ensure Israeli superiority in the air. And planned her victory in 1967.

Then he had a complete political about turn.

His son was killed in the 1973 war and his conscience woke up!

He realised that war may bring victory to Israel.

But it won't bring peace and security.

And he discovered that all the victories cannot equal one moment of grief in the heart of a bereaved mother or a mourning father.

Ezer Weizman – the minister who resigned from the government in 1970 because it accepted UN resolution 242.

He is the same minister Ezer Weizman who resigned from the government in 1980 because Begin dithered over negotiating with the Palestinians.

He is the same minister Ezer Weizman who now presses the government to negotiate with the PLO.

Israeli opinion polls admit that 93 per cent of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza support the PLO. And no liberation movement in the world enjoys the popularity of the PLO among its people.

But in the Palestinian question, Yitzhaq Shamir has the head of a frog made of reinforced concrete.

Shamir wants to negotiate with the shadows of Palestinians.

And the Likud considers every Palestinian guilty until he is proved innocent of contact with the PLO.

And every Israeli innocent until he is proved in contact with the Palestinians.

And the Labour party is an organised hypocrisy:

Its defence minister uses the army to put down the *intifada*.

Its police minister uses bullets to put down the peace demonstrators.

And the party leader is a giraffe that ran away from the foreign ministry to bury its head in the files of the finance ministry.

Only Ezer Weizman is sane among fools! Weizman, minister of science, in a government of sorcerers and charlatans.

A peace dove among parties of falcons and crows.

In the Israeli melodrama is a cartoon published sometime ago in *Yedioth Ahronoth* in which Shamir covers his ears, Shimon Peres his mouth and Yitzhaq Rabin his eyes.

The problem of the PLO is that it wants to negotiate with a government that neither hears, nor sees nor speaks.

And the problem of the Palestinians is that half the Israelis are for negotiations and all of them are afraid of peace.

And the problem of Weizman is that he says publicly what the Israelis say privately; and his strength is that half his party is with him in secret.

And his weakness is that all his party is against him in public.

And his shame is that he is like a wasp: no one trusts him, for he keeps moving aimlessly between right and left.

And his fault is that he is like the bee that wants to make honey from onions.

In the forest of politics, how difficult it is to be sane among fools.

And how difficult it is to drink from the river of folly in order not to hear, nor see, nor speak.

And Ezer Weizman's fault is that he neither wants to drink and give relief to others, nor to remain silent and obtain rest for himself!

*Scribe:* A wise man among fools?

Or, as others believe, a fool among wise men?

A wit once said that war is a continuation of diplomacy by other means. The Arabs, having failed to defeat Israel in several bloody and protracted wars, and savage acts of terrorism, now regard diplomacy as a continuation of their war against Israel "by other means."

The Middle East conflict is not a communal struggle between Israelis and Palestinians. It is a regional conflict between Israel and the neighbouring Arab countries. Thus, Israel is not the oppressor but the oppressed; not the besieger but the besieged; not the bully but the bullied.

This regional conflict calls for a regional solution. In the past, the Jews were willing to accept any peaceful arrangement, but the Arabs wanted all. In the circumstances, the only acceptable settlement now is one that gives Israel the country west of the river, being the least the Jews are entitled to as their rightful share of the region.

The neighbouring Arab countries must also accept the principle of population exchange and take over the Arab refugees, just as Israel took over the Jewish refugees from Arab lands.

## Let them have Jordan!

"We have nothing to discuss with the PLO", says Transport Minister Moshe Katzav, who is closely associated with Prime Minister Shamir's political line that rejects any dialogue with the PLO. "Not only because the PLO is a terror organisation; not only because of their covenant that talks about the destruction of Israel; not only because it is an unelected leadership, and actually a corrupt leadership; but mainly because they are interested in one thing: a Palestinian state in Judea and Samaria; and we are unconditionally opposed to this as a danger to Israel's existence."

Katzav goes further than Shamir in warning that if there is strong international pressure on Israel to set up a Palestinian state in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, then the Hashemite dynasty in Jordan would come to an end.

Katzav believes that Palestinian control of Jordan would present less of a threat to Israel's security and survival.

## In Defence of God

### Master of the Universe – BBC2

This title was irreverently given to the life story of Stephen Hawking, Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge University and author of the best-seller *A Brief History of Time*. He is world famous for his work on black holes and is closer than anyone to solving the ultimate mystery of how the Universe began.

For the past 25 years Hawking has suffered from motor-neurone disease, which confines him to a wheelchair and forces him to use a machine for his voice. It takes him four minutes to compose a sentence and a whole day to write a 10-page lecture; but his classes are the best attended in his department.

Hawking is described as the greatest mathematician and theoretical physicist since Einstein. The difference is that Einstein believed in God, whereas Hawking tries to prove that the Universe does not require a Creator; it is self-sufficient under the laws of physics. But who made these laws?

There was a time when the Jews were alone in recognising God. When Alexander the Great conquered the world in 333 BCE, he passed through Judah and became acquainted with Judaism. He wrote to his tutor Aristotle asking him what he thought of the Jewish story of creation. "What creation?" replied Aristotle. "The world has always been there!" Hawking is the latest of a long line of ill-informed philosophers who want to do away with the idea of a Creator.

The story is told of a heathen king who asked a rabbi to prove to him the existence of God. The rabbi went home and wrote a beautiful poem on a piece of paper on which he splashed a little ink. At his next audience he showed the poem to the king who asked him, "Who wrote this beautiful poem?" "No one" answered the rabbi. "A cat jumped on my desk and spilled the ink-stand and this was the result." "I can't believe this," said the king. "Someone must have written it!"

The rabbi exclaimed, "If you believe this poem needed someone to compose it, how much more so is the case of our marvellous and complex world?"

Creating a universe out of nothing is not a difficult task. But if God can do it, why can't we? The answer is that God is not subject to any laws, and we are. If we can free ourselves of all the laws of physics, then it should be easy for us to perform works of creation and make them subject to any set of laws we choose to apply.

### Third International Conference of the Jewish Media

Jerusalem, January 1990

by Percy Gourgey

"Our generation shall be judged by how successfully we absorb Jewish immigrants to Israel," declared Mr. Shlomo Hillel, Chairman of the Keren Hayesod, in a remarkable speech to the Conference. Mr.

Hillel recalled the waves of immigration to Israel of Jews from Arab lands, and his role in the aliya of Iraqi Jews at the express request of Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion.

"The greatest challenge today is the absorption of Soviet Jews, of whom 100,000 are expected to arrive in 1990," declared Mr. Hillel. He concluded by appealing to Diaspora Jewry to be equal partners with Israel in this historic task.

Other speakers at the week's conference included President Herzog, Prime Minister Shamir, Finance Minister Shimon Peres, Foreign Minister Arens, Jewish Agency Chairman Dinitz. Notable among the 175 participants were Soviet Jewish journalists led by Dr. Michael Chlenow.

### The Torah and International Relations

by Percy Gourgey

In view of the rise of militant Islamic fundamentalism characterised by terrorism, war against neighbours and others, and astronomical sums being spent on acquiring weapons of mass destruction, one cannot help but contrast this approach with that of Judaism, in the ordering of the affairs of mankind.

"Wise men promote peace in the world" said a great sage, Rabbi Eleazar in the name of Rabbi Chanina, (Talmud Babli, *Berachot 64a*). As the Talmud further points out: "In God's eyes the man stands high who makes peace between father and children, between masters and servants, between neighbour and neighbour. *But he stands highest who establishes peace between the nations.*"

The main purpose of international diplomacy and forging of sound relations between nations is to achieve a durable peace in which their interests in the economic, cultural and social spheres can be safely pursued. Our sages believed that the influence of the Torah in all spheres of life brings man nearer to his Creator, the Creator of the Universe, and is thus beneficial in every way. The way to peace is the honourable settlement of disputes and differences through negotiation in a spirit of compromise. Essential to this is an attitude of moderation in our dealings with others (*meuth derekh erez – Avot, 6, vi*).

While there is the concept of a just war (*Rambam, Hilkoth Melachim*), every effort must be made for a settlement by the offer of peace and friendship to Israel's Arab neighbours as clearly enunciated in her Declaration of Independence. But it would appear that in every generation there arises an Amalek, a Pharaoh, a Haman or a Hitler, who would seek to destroy the Jewish people or, in our day, the Jewish State. Every effort must therefore be made to ensure Israel's security.

In the wider sphere, particularly in relations between the super-powers, the US and the Soviet Union, utmost efforts are being made to prevent an outbreak of hostilities through the negotiation of arms control agreements affecting nuclear, conventional, space and biochemical weapons. As a young naval officer in World War II and a war correspondent in other conflicts (including the Yom Kippur War), I can

testify to the general view that escalation of the fighting could grow beyond control. Hence the doctrine of deterrence and the achievement of multilateral and balanced disarmament are the twin approaches which should be adopted by governments towards maintenance of peace.

The Torah's affirmation of the democratic process (i.e. power-sharing and burden-sharing), is illustrated by Moses' remark when he was told that Eldad and Medad were also prophesying, together with 70 elders: "Would that *all* the people of the Lord would be prophets" (Num. XI. 29) – a far cry from the fierce exclusivity and monopoly of authority claimed by leaders of other religious (and political) faiths.

Marxism is wholly unacceptable, predicated as it is on the overthrow of established society and the dictatorship of the proletariat. In 1955, Prime Minister Nehru of India described Marxism as outdated. Isaiah developed a theory of history that spanned the whole length of time, indicating that the Idea of One God is the most revolutionary of doctrines to have been conceived by man; the far-reaching implications of which he has not yet fully grasped in organising society. In his vision, Isaiah declared: "And it shall come to pass that in the end of days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established at the top of mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore . . . For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

The influence of Torah ideals in the affairs of mankind is invaluable for the maintenance of peace and freedom.

### Free the drugs

Over \$100 billion of drugs money is transferred by computer every year from America to numbered accounts in Switzerland and other tax havens. Attempts by governments around the world to curb the drug traffic have failed as, at best, only 10 per cent of the shipments is being intercepted.

The net result of police interference is to push up drug prices on the street, lining the pockets of the drug barons, and forcing drug addicts to resort to crime to finance their addiction. The lucrative profits encourage drug merchants to push their products in schools and playgrounds.

Money is power; and the concentration of immense wealth in the hands of a few drug touts, the likes of Noriega, is not only unjust, not only immoral, but also a threat to world peace.

Moreover, corrupt law enforcement officers often sell the drugs they catch themselves, and CIA agents have used the drug traffic to finance other activities. The Lockerbie Pan Am disaster is a case in point, where the CIA mistakenly allowed the bags through, thinking they only contained drugs!

FREE THE DRUGS! Let the trade lose its glitter, and let those who want to kill themselves make their own decisions.

N.E.D.



*The Scribe* is getting high marks from its readers all over the world. But an article like Nazzah does not deserve the space allocated to it. One should sometimes ignore criticism and not respond to it. "Take it from whom it comes".

لَوْ كَلَّ كَلْبٌ عَوَا أَلْمَنَةَ هَجْرًا  
لَأَصْبَحَ الصَّخْرُ مَثَقَالًا بَدِينًا  
وَإِذَا أَنْتَ كَذَّبْتَنِي مِنْ نَاقِصٍ  
فَهِيَ الشَّرَاكَةُ لِي بِأَنِّي كَامِلٌ

Montreal Maurice S. Peress

A fortnight before we got the January issue I had a telephone call from a respected lady, one of your ardent and regular readers, expressing her worry at not receiving *The Scribe*. And then *The Scribe* came! The lady called again to pass on the good news to me.

Regarding your nice, informative article - Nazzah, Nazzah! My word, you are grand! You are excellent, for remembering every little detail! You are adorable, splendid! I must admit that I read the item three times. I enjoyed every single word of it. Today, I am a writer, and I have to my credit books and articles about the life of Iraqi Jews, but this episode skipped my memory.

Many thanks again and again  
Tel Aviv Emil Murad

### Calcutta Jews

I read with interest Norman Track's project outlined in the January 1990 edition and I was particularly interested in the reference to the Jews of Calcutta, from which my considerable family emanated.

I have written to Esmond Ezra and Percy Gourgey giving them some details, but the most illuminating work so far on the subject has come from Mrs. Lydia Collins

Atrincham, Cheshire J.C. Dwek

I enjoyed reading the January issue immensely since questions affecting Babylonian Jewry, of which I am a part, have been very much in my mind since the great aliya of the fifties.

Of particular interest was the article on Calcutta Jewry by Norman Track. General Jack Jacob, who was mentioned in it, and I, were together in boarding school in a small Himalayan hill-station near Darjeeling. Alone of his family, Jack remained in India after independence in 1948 and went on, as Norman Track relates, to a distinguished career in the Indian Army. Despite near misses, my path which brought me to Australia and a career in surveying and mapping in 1948, did not cross his again.

On another topic, I would welcome the views of your readers as to the permissibility and propriety in the Baghdadi *minhag* for women to be invited to read from the Torah in synagogue. I know this is an optional practice among Conservative Jews in the U.S. and quite common among those inclining to the practices of Reform congregations. However, I had not heard of any precedent among Orthodox congregations,

that is, until reading Stanley Jackson's book *The Sassoons*, where on page 143 he writes of Flora Sassoon, as follows: "Flora was honoured as much for her piety and scholarship as her name. She was given the rare privilege of reading from the Torah in the synagogue [The Great Synagogue, Baghdad]. No woman had for centuries been allowed to leave the curtained gallery during service. Flora read from the very Scrolls dedicated long ago by the Sheikh Sason."

Quite recently, at the suggestion of a learned friend, I read in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Megillah, as follows:

"Our Rabbis taught: All are qualified to be among the seven (who read) even a minor and a woman, only the Sages said that a woman should not read in the Torah out of respect for the congregation."

I am aware that Baghdadi *minhag* permits minors to read from the Torah, but wonder what the position is regarding women, especially in view of the recent disturbances as the Kotel Hamaaravi involving women who wished to read from Torah scrolls

Lane Cove, Australia Hugh Rassaby

For the first time I had the opportunity to read a complete issue of *The Scribe* - No. 38 - which a friend of mine lent me. I congratulate you for the excellent work you have done. What you have accomplished is admirable indeed! Whether we are Sephardic, Babylonian, Turkish, Yerushalmis or whatever is of little relevance. What matters is that we were of recent memory - say 80/100 years - in the same place, living the life of pre-middle-ages, and are now dispersed literally all over the earth. Wherever we landed, some of us managed to make a creditable mark. Our adaptability, our native intelligence served us well.

In writing about the Jews of Calcutta, Norman Track did not mention one of the most prominent, if not the most prominent, living ex-Calcutta/Baghdadian Jew: Judge Abraham David Sofaer. He is the son of David and Mozelle Sofaer, born in Bombay, but both of his parents are from Calcutta. I have known them when I was in Bombay - 1941-46. They came to the USA in 1946 and are presently in California. Their son Abraham was pre-teen then. After a hitch in the US Army, law school, he was appointed US Federal Judge and presided over the trial of Sharon vs *Time Magazine*.

I enclose a cheque for \$100 towards publishing costs of *The Scribe*.

I trust your project for compiling a world-wide list of Iraqi-origin Jews is progressing well

Harrison, N.Y., U.S.A. Sassoon Peress

I have read with particular attention Dr. Norman Track's article on the Jews of Calcutta in your issue of January 1990, as I am the author of one of the four books he mentions as having been written on the subject by members of the community. There are also other publications about the Jews of Calcutta, but Dr. Track does not refer to them.

I have met Dr. Track in London and in Calcutta and was impressed by his erudition and his interest in the Jewish community of

Calcutta. I fear, however, that he is mistaken in several of the statements in his article.

I do not accept his assertion that the books he has cited do not deal with the religious and secular lives of the Baghdadi Jews in Calcutta. In fact, all the books do, though not all in the same detail. Taken together, they throw much light on these matters. Nor are these books entirely silent on whether these practices have survived in the contemporary communities of Calcutta Jews abroad - at least so far as London is concerned, as two of the books do have something to say about the community in London.

Dr. Track is wrong in saying that the Jewish population of Calcutta in 1850 was 1,500, as its strength at that time was only about 500. Nor did the number of Jews in Calcutta ever reach his figure of 4,500 as the maximum size of the community was about 3,800, a total attained in the early 1940s; and this includes the Jewish refugees who fled from Burma to Calcutta when that country was invaded by the Japanese.

Only one of the three synagogues he mentions as having been established during the 1880s was actually established in that decade, namely Maghen David; the other two, Neveh Shalome and Beth El, had been founded much earlier, Neveh Shalome in the 1820s and Beth El in the 1850s.

Dr. Track's statement that in Calcutta only men were usually permitted to attend circumcisions is also incorrect, as Jewish women attended them freely as well. I know this from what I saw at the many circumcisions I attended in Calcutta, but I have also checked with several former members of both sexes of the community now in London and they agree with me. Indeed, we are at a loss to understand how Dr. Track came by his information.

Dr. Track says that none of the publications about the Calcutta Jews have systematically explored such matters as circumcision, *muftir*, *barmiswah*, engagement, wedding, funeral, superstition and food. I don't know exactly what Dr. Track means by "systematically," but the books he mentions have either chapters or sections dealing with these subjects and providing much information about them, besides describing other customs as well - except that only two of these books deal with the question of diet. I should add that a fuller account of the food eaten by the Jews of Calcutta is to be found in Copeland Marks' book *The Varied Kitchens of India*, published in New York in 1986.

So far as concerns superstition, Dr. Track says that it appears that it plays an important role in the daily lives of the Calcutta Jews. Far from this merely appearing to be so, it has always emphatically been the case with most of the community. And many of the superstitions have already been described in the books he has mentioned. Furthermore, an illuminating account of the customs, usages, superstitions and proverbs of the Jews of Baghdad appears in David S. Sassoon's book *A History of the Jews in Baghdad* (1949), which also contains a section on the Jews of Calcutta

London

Esmond D. Ezra

## Religious tolerance

*Manna* is the Journal of the Sternberg Centre for Judaism. The Editorial in its Autumn Issue 25 discussed Christian-Jewish relations, pointing out that liberal Christians are beginning to renounce the old view that God's covenant with the Jews has been superseded and to view Judaism as a valid path of salvation.

Jews, for their part, tend to adopt a patronising attitude towards Christianity and believe that it is all based upon a misunderstanding of the nature of the life of Jesus the Jew.

Such a facile dismissal of one of the greatest and most powerful phenomena in the history of mankind simply will not do. The Editor points out that if Christians seek to make theological space for the continuing truth of Judaism, Jews have to make a reciprocal response.

I wrote the following letter to the Editor which has appeared in Issue 26:

### Judaism can stand competition

"I was very interested to read your excellent editorial in the No.25 issue and would like to make the following comments in support:

1) Judaism, as the mother religion, should recognise Christianity and Islam without waiting for their recognition of Judaism as a continuing truth. Christianity and Islam are welcome developments in the field of religion and should be given every support by the parent religion. These two religions emerged as a result of our failure or inability to spread monotheism. We subsequently failed to appreciate their value and importance as 'other ways' to approach God. The story of Jonah tells it all. Jonah warned and the people of Nineveh repented. God accepted their approach to Him and they were spared. Jonah couldn't understand, and he made himself miserable, as we have been miserable for 2,000 years.

2) While our recognition of Islam needs no reservations, with Christianity it is different. Our recognition should be subject to their worshipping the One God and not a trinity.

3) In recognising the validity of other religions, we need not fear their competition. Judaism has solid values that will stand up to any challenge.

4) The hostility among the three major faiths arose when Christians and Moslems attempted to convert the Jews and each other. Recognition can only be valid if attempts at conversion are renounced. The trouble started because both Christianity and Islam appeared as fulfilments of Judaism. Some Jews rightly did not accept that claim.

5) By acknowledging that they are not 'the only way', the three religions admit that there can be other ways also. We should encourage new approaches to God".

London SW7 Naim E. Dangoor

My letter added that, in fact, Monotheism did not start with Abraham but thousands of years earlier. It began at the time of the historical Adam - discoverer of wild wheat and, by definition, father of civilization. This tradition continued in various parts of the Middle East, eventually in Salem (Jerusalem) where Abraham met Melchizedek. ●

## A Trip to Russia

by Elias Dangoor

A few years ago I would never have dreamt of going to Russia for a holiday. I went lately with Thomson Travel for a week, split between Leningrad and Moscow.

In Leningrad we visited the Winter Palace and the Pushkin Palace. Both were built in the 17th and 18th centuries. Each has one thousand rooms, mostly large or very large. Each room has paintings, statues, gold trimmings, painted ceiling, wood tiled floor of beautiful colours and designs, crystal chandeliers and majestic furniture.

The multi-colour, onion-top churches are everywhere to see and admire. The one at the Kremlin is the largest and, when Napoleon invaded Moscow, he gave orders upon his departure for this church to be burnt. That order was mysteriously lost!

They took us to folklore shows in Leningrad and in the Kremlin. Also to the Kirov Ballet and Moscow Circus. We saw the massive building of the KGB, but we felt free to go anywhere, the atmosphere was relaxed, and we believed that we were not followed.

Just before our arrival, the rouble was devalued for the tourist ten-fold, from one to ten roubles to the pound, to encourage tourism and fight the black market. Therefore, whatever we could buy in Russian currency cost us only ten per cent. Unfortunately, there was nothing much we could buy out of the duty-free shops where they only take foreign currencies.

All the restaurants we saw were either self service or with a set menu. The food is edible but nothing special. The water is bad in both cities - even the bottled. A meal cost us 40p, beer 10p, Coca Cola 10p.

The shops sell standard quality everywhere. You normally queue three times: to view, to pay and to collect. Our cost for a pair of shoes would have been £3, a vest 20p, a coat £10, a suit £7. Even so, we were not tempted to buy much, either by quality or design.

The black-market in foreign currency is thriving. They offer 15 roubles to the pound, and goods for sterling are far cheaper than the shops. One of us bought two tins of caviar for £5, when in the duty-free shops the cost is £22 each. Later we discovered that they were cheap sardines which cost 3p each.

Another one wanted to change £10 for 150 roubles. The black-marketeer counted 15 roubles in his hand, exchanged it for the £10 and disappeared in the crowd. When our friend tried to count the money again, he found it to be 15 roubles only. Another trickster's trick!

Only the buildings of before 1917 are worth seeing. The underground stations are impressive, with chandeliers and marble. Any journey costs them 5p, and us ½p.

It is not a holiday of sun, beach and relaxation. The weather was very cold and dull. The people serious and glum, although very helpful. We hardly saw a Russian smiling, let alone laughing! But there is a lot to see, to admire and to learn. ●

## COOKERY CORNER

by Alice Shashou

### Sambusak bel tawa (freezable)

It used to be served for Purim. Now it is served for nearly any occasion.

#### The dough:

1½lbs self raising flour  
1 tablespoon mazola oil  
Salt to taste  
The liquid from the boiled chick-peas

#### The filling:

2 breasts of chicken  
1½lbs chick-peas, soaked overnight and cooked until tender  
2 tablespoons cumin  
Paprika (optional)  
1 teaspoon curry powder

#### Method:

Mix together the flour, salt, mazola oil and the liquid from the boiled chick-peas and make a nice dough.

#### Prepare the filling:

Cook the chicken until tender. Shred very fine. Cook the chick-peas and skin them (optional) and grind coarsely.

Fry the minced onions until golden.

Now mix shredded chicken, chick-peas, onions and seasonings. Cool.

Cut the dough into balls and roll them with your hands, then open into small circles with a rolling pin.

Fill with 1 tablespoon of the filling, bring the edges together and close tightly.

Heat oil in a frying pan and fry the *Sambusak* on both sides until golden.

Drain on kitchen paper and serve hot.

You can fry and freeze. Reheat in oven when needed.

You can substitute lentils instead of chicken. ●

### Hadji bada can be used as a Purim and Passover sweet

(*Aji badem* = bitter almonds) Turkish

#### Ingredients:

1lb almonds  
Extra almonds or pistachios for decoration  
¾lb caster sugar or little less than 1lb  
1 teaspoon finely ground cardamom  
About 1 tablespoon rose water  
4 egg whites lightly beaten

#### Method:

Blanch the almonds, dry and grind finely. Mix the ground almonds with the sugar and cardamom. Add the rose water and the slightly beaten white of egg. Mix well. You have a nice and soft dough. Let it rest for 10-15 minutes.

Make small lumps of dough the size of a walnut. Wet your hands with rose water, roll and arrange on a bakewell sheet, spacing them. Decorate with half an almond or pistachio, pressing lightly.

Place tray in preheated 350°oven or 180°C for about 8 minutes. Decrease to 300° oven or 150°C until golden.

Remove from oven; detach from bakewell sheet.

When cold, store in a tin in the refrigerator or freezer. ●

## Zalabia or Zengoula can be used as a Purim sweet

### Ingredients:

1lb plain flour  
¼oz dried yeast  
1 teaspoon sugar  
A pinch of salt  
1 pint luke-warm water

### Method:

Sift the flour into a large and warm mixing bowl.

Mix yeast, sugar and a little of the water and leave covered in a warm place until frothy. Add the remaining water to the yeast mixture, beat all in a blender until smooth and slightly thicker than a pancake batter.

Cover with a cloth and leave in a warm place to rise for about 1 hour.

Beat again vigorously: let it rest and rise again. Repeat once more.

Heat oil in a saucepan until very hot, then reduce heat. Fill a funnel or plastic ketchup dispenser with the batter and squeeze it into the hot oil in circles and make any design you like. They will rise quickly to the surface. Turn them over.

When they are crisp and golden, remove them gently with a fork and drain them from the oil. Dip into the syrup. Take out. Arrange on a platter for serving.

### Syrup for Zalabia:

4 cups sugar  
2 cups water  
About 2 or 2½ tablespoons lemon juice  
2 tablespoons rose water

Combine sugar and water and boil for few minutes. Add the lemon juice and let it simmer until it coats the back of a spoon.

Add rose water and boil for a minute. Use it when cold.

## Iraqi Urug Patata or Potato Chops

4lbs King Edward potatoes or any potatoes that do not disintegrate easily.

About 2 eggs

Salt, pepper, curry and spices to taste

About 1½lbs coarsely ground chuck steak

3 chopped onions

3 cups chopped parsley

3 tablespoons fine bread-crumbs for the shell

### The Shell:

Wash and boil the potatoes with the peel in slightly salted water until cooked. Do not overcook. Drain and mash while still hot.

When cold, add the slightly beaten eggs, salt, pepper and bread crumbs.

Knead until well blended to make a firm dough.

### The Filling:

Sauté the onions in oil until golden. Add minced meat, pepper and salt. Fry, breaking well with a fork until meat changes colour and all water evaporates. Put pan aside, add chopped parsley, mixed spices, cardamom, or curry or cinnamon and mix well. Let it cool.

Moisten your hands with cold water. Take lumps of the mashed potato mixture the size of a small egg. Flatten on your

palm and stuff with one tablespoon of the filling. Close and pat into ball shape. Dip into slightly beaten eggs, then roll in bread crumbs and flatten them. Place on a plate or tray and refrigerate for 20 minutes or more. (You may freeze at this point).

Heat oil, which should cover the *Urug*. Put a few at a time, not touching. Turn them over very gently only when well fried and golden. Fry the other side and with a spatula place on kitchen towel to soak up the excess oil.

Serve hot. Garnish with parsley.

Potato chops can be frozen. Fry from frozen. Do not defrost.

## Tips

by Alice Shashou

Raw mushrooms added to salads are a useful source of fibre, protein and B vitamins.

We kill ourselves with work and the party lasts a few hours only.

Do not salt steaks before grilling. This causes juices to run; but meat can be peppered.

To add flavour to roast beef, rub it with dry mustard before cooking.

When the Italians first invented the pizza it was a lump of dough smothered in oil and sprinkled with a few anchovies and olives. It took 1,000 years, cheese, tomatoes, mushrooms and herbs to transfer it into the pizza we eat today. This year the newest is aubergine pizza which is really delicious.

Do not keep food warm for too long after it is cooked. It loses vitamins.

Never leave milk out of the fridge when it is not in use, as light can destroy Vitamin B2.

Wash vegetables in salt water. It cleans them much quicker and better.

No lumps will form when mixing butter and flour.

Green tomatoes will ripen best in a dark warm place when placed with a red tomato.

To clean the inside of a fridge, use 1 tablespoon of bicarbonate of soda with a bowlful of hot water to get rid of the smell. If it still lingers, put a cut lemon inside.

Keep the freezer full. The frozen food helps keep the interior cold.

Stock cubes contain a lot of salt. If you use them in your recipe, taste first before adding more seasoning.

Too much salt in the food can raise blood pressure.

Table salt is refined and should not be used in cooking. Cooking salt is purer and stronger.

When your hand smells of onions, wash with dry mustard.

Garlic has wonderful powers. Has been cited as a cure for fever, snake bite and worms. You can even thread it in the "shasha" when a baby is born.

There was no chocolate until 1847. It was only a drink. Then Mr. Cadbury made chocolate to eat.

The difference between green and black olives is simply that the black ones are fully ripened. Green olives are picked in September. Black olives remain on the tree until December.

## Susan's Crème Brulée by V.M.

**Ingredients:** (this recipe can be halved using a smaller pyrex dish)

12 egg yolks  
8oz caster sugar  
2 pints single cream  
Vanilla essence

### Caramel:

8oz caster sugar  
5-6 tablespoons cold water  
Preheat oven *regulo* 2 Gas (275F), electric 275-300F = 135-150C  
Bain Marie (double boiler)

### Method:

Butter a large pyrex dish 12" × 10" × 2" (depth).

Separate whites and egg yolks.

Cream egg yolks and vanilla essence and sugar until thick and creamy.

Bring cream gently to the boil in a non-stick saucepan, stirring all the time (for double boiler).

Pour cream onto egg yolks mixture stirring gently all the time.

Sieve combined mixture into pyrex dish.

Place pyrex into the *bain marie* (i.e. a large tin with warm water) so mixture will not curdle. Remove custard from *bain marie* and leave it to cool.

Bake for 1hr 20min.

Leave in fridge overnight to set.

### Caramel:

Bring sugar and water to boil but do not stir.

Rotate pan from side to side until the caramel is a dark golden brown in colour.

Pour caramel **immediately** over custard evenly.

When cool, return *brulée* to the fridge until ready to serve.

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# Babylonian Jewish Heritage

A talk by Professor Frederick Ezekiel

My talk on the Babylonian Jewish heritage on November 29 was quite a success. The talk was sponsored by the Institute for Jewish Studies which is made up of a joint effort by the two synagogues in Lexington, Mass. – Temple Emunah which is Conservative and Temple Isaiah which is Reform. I was the President of Temple Emunah between 1972 and 1974. Mr. Ronald Saleh Levy is currently the President. The attendance was about 120 people, which is twice the average for similar talks. The lecture outline was as follows:

Pre-Exile; Prophets and Scribes; Talmud; Babylonian Jewish Life; Exilarchs and Geonim; Islam Era; Mongols; Turks; World War I; World War II; 1950 Exodus; Some aspects of life in Baghdad.

In the introduction I explained that Babylonian Jews have made significant contributions to Judaism which may not be generally known. "Three years ago I saw a copy of *The Scribe* (named after Ezra) and all of a sudden I began to relate to it. I realised that I do not have to be called Sephardic – I am a Babylonian Jew! I also remembered the time, some 40 years ago, when the father of a Jewish girl friend (in whom I was very interested) told her not to go out with me because I was Sephardic. Otherwise, I probably would have married that girl. Can you imagine what reaction I would have received if I had said I was Babylonian?!"

"Although I am a Mechanical Engineer by training, I was inspired by *The Scribe* to research my past and read books dealing with the subject. I discovered that the achievements of Babylonian Jewry are the following:

1. Establishing the first major diaspora.
2. Establishing the idea of a synagogue.
3. Elimination of sacrifices.
4. Introduction of new prayers and maybe first Siddur.
5. Preserving Judaism in Judea.
6. Producing the Babylonian Talmud.
7. Developing experience in trades and financial skills.
8. Establishment of Jewish self-government within other hosts.
9. Supremacy of education and knowledge in Jewish life.
10. Establishing cultural and religious democracy.
11. Carrying the responsibility for worldwide Jewish authority for many centuries.
12. Introduction of Judeo-Arabic culture in Muslim Spain.
13. Maintaining one traditional form of Judaism throughout the ages.
14. Demonstration of endurance, adaptability, resilience, creativity, etc.
15. Development of a Jewish community life, charitable organisations and public institutions taken over, modified and continued by Jews of the West.
16. Preservation of family purity.
17. Unification of Jewish people in diverse lands.
18. Inspiration of hope – the days of the Messiah."

During the talk I played a portion of an audio tape sung by my cousin Pearl Sofaer, who is the sister of the famous Judge Abraham Sofaer. The part I replayed was Psalm 137 – "By the Rivers of Babylon,"

which was very effective at the moment I was discussing the arrival of the Jews in Babylon. Pearl Sofaer's is a professionally released tape entitled *Gems of Sephardic Liturgy*.

I believe that the audience (which included Mrs. Levy, Ronald's mother) was very pleased to hear my talk and we may have more extensive coverage of the subject next year, depending on the demand●



Left to right: Dr. Ovadia Rechtman, first president of Temple Emunah; Ronald Levy, current president; Rabbi Bernard Elsenman; Prof. Frederick Ezekiel●

## Babylonian Jewish Chronology

	570	Birth of Muhammed
	633-641	Muslims conquer Mesopotamia with Jewish help
BCE 1850	650	Age of Geonim begins
	763	Baghdad becomes capital of the Caliphate
1650-1500	767	Karaite schism in Baghdad led by Anan Ben David
c. 1300	786-809	Hurun Al-Rashid, Caliph
1225-1020	928-942	Saadia, Gaon of Sura, translates Bible into Arabic and redacts first standard prayerbook
1020-733	960	Moses Ben Hanokh arrives in Cordoba from Babylon
733	968-998	Sherira, Gaon of Pumbeditha
731	1038	Presumed end of Gaonic Age
	1258	Baghdad captured by Mongols under Hulago
721	1291	Assassination of Sa'ad El-Dawla
598	1336	End of Mongol Rule of Mesopotamia
587	1534	Ottoman Sultan, Sulaiman Al-Qanuni enters Baghdad; Turkish rule begins
	1828	David Sassoon emigrates to India
586	1864	Alliance Israelite opens first modern school in Baghdad
593	1917	Baghdad falls to British forces
538	1921	Iraqi Jews ask British High Commissioner to grant Jews British citizenship; Faisal proclaimed King of Iraq
458	1932	Iraq gains independence and is admitted to the League of Nations
445-433	1934	First official anti-Jewish measures
331	1941	Military coup by Rashid 'Ali Al-Gaylani; Farhud (anti-Jewish rioting and pillage); 170-180 Jews killed
331-126	1948	State of Israel proclaimed
126-227	1950	Law permitting Jews to leave Iraq provided they surrender their Iraqi nationality
120	1950-1951	107,603 Jews airlifted to Israel●
220-500		
227		
375-427		
474-499		
500-600		