

# The SCRIBE

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### FIFTY YEARS ON

## The Month of Rashid Ali

Exactly 50 years ago, in April 1941, another dictator – Rashid Ali, came to power in Iraq, and the king, the regent and the government fled the country. Rashid Ali's adventure was even more fantastic than that of Saddam Hussein. Just as Saddam was pushed by Arafat to extremes, Rashid Ali was spurred on by ex-mufti of Jerusalem Amin Hussein and four army colonels known as the Golden Square. He sided with Nazi Germany at a time when neighbouring Syria was already in Vichy hands.

General Wavell, C.-in-C. Middle East, pleaded that he had no forces to spare for Iraq and counselled the British government to start negotiations with Rashid Ali. But Churchill was adamant. He stressed that there would be no negotiations, and the removal of Rashid Ali and his colleagues was the only solution. Although outnumbered ten to one, the British forces in the end defeated the Iraqi army which surrendered unconditionally on 31 May. Air supremacy was decisive even then.

The real battle for Iraq was fought on the island of Crete which the Germans intended to use as a stepping stone for the Levant. By destroying Germany's sole airborne division in Crete, Britain prevented Hitler from reaching Iraq, which would have enabled him to encircle Russia and Egypt, occupy the Persian oil fields, cut the Allies supply route through the Persian Gulf and stretch a hand towards Japan.

Throughout the month of May the Jews were subjected to harassment and arrests but the defeat of Rashid Ali was for them a pyrrhic victory. For while the Regent and British officers were playing Bridge at the British embassy in Baghdad, the night of 1 June 1941 (*Shavuot*) marked the beginning of a massive pogrom in which 200 Jews were killed, hundreds wounded and thousands of homes and shops looted. In order to allow the mob to let off steam, the authorities declined to permit the police to deal with the rioters.

That *farhud* was the trigger for the mass emigration of our ancient community nine years later, and now dispersed all over the world●

There was an old man from Kuwait,  
Who said, "There's someone I really hate,  
He's a man called Saddam,  
Oh! What a terrible man!  
I wish he was out of date!"●  
London

Joe Shaya

## Iraq's recurring threat

In January 1943 the *New York Herald-Tribune* published an article by an Iraqi defending the Arab nationalist policies of Nuri Said and pointing out that "the Iraqis have their eyes on the Holy Land". The following is a summary of an unpublished letter to the editor of 7th February 1943, by a Canadian writer, which has just come to light and which is remarkably prophetic of recent events in the Middle East:

It is true, as the article says, that Iraq has oil and pipelines and is the bridge linking Europe with Asia. But it took a stiff and bloody campaign by British troops to keep Iraq's facilities from being handed over to Germany by the Iraqis themselves. There is little cause for optimism. After reading the article, we cannot be sure that even under Nuri Pasha, Iraq will not play us a trick one day by plunging Iraq and some neighbouring territories into a bloodbath worse than that of 1941, when Rashid Ali called to his aid the Nazi Luftwaffe.

The article informs us that the real motive behind Iraq's declaration of war on the Axis is "to secure a seat at the peace conference when the war is won". The Iraq Government wants to have a say at the peace conference in the affairs of Palestine. "It is the Jewish issue of the Palestinian homeland that rankles in the heart of all Arabs".

The real problem since the country was torn from the Turkish Empire was to whip peasants, nomads and camel-breeders into some semblance of nationhood. Most often the promise of loot and plunder was used to prick and elevate the national faith.

Several times the bedouins were roused to a *jihad* against the British liberators – the stranger in our midst being always and everywhere the most obvious and useful stepping stone for the primitive chauvinist spirit – but the British struck back and hard. Then came the Assyrian massacre and the flame of Arab national passion flared high for one ghastly moment, only to peter out when all the Assyrians were dead.

Nuri's first action after declaring war on the Axis was to refuse a transit visa to 700 Jewish orphans, victims of the Axis, on their way to Palestine from Poland, despite the pleas of the State Department and humanitarian societies. They shall not pass, said our champion of the Four Freedoms, as if he was facing fearful odds at some Verdun or Stalingrad! Iraq's proposed march to a place in the sun is to be accomplished over the backs of the Jewish people who have been our allies from the first hour in the struggle against the Axis and in every forward-looking cause.

Why does the United Nations, after winning a military victory in Iraq, permit that vanquished country to use its surrender as an instrument to extort from us acquiescence in the basic tenets of the Hitler philosophy? Rashid Ali and the ex-mufti of Jerusalem, the instigators of Iraq's pro-Hitler rising of 1941, are fugitives. But Nuri Pasha carries on their policy! Can such thing be? Why then did we fight in Iraq in the first place? Do we not care what the peace is like after winning the battles? Is all well again the moment the pipelines are reasonably safe?

We learn from the article that Iraq is ready to take up "the role of leader in the emancipation of the Arabs from the yoke of foreign domination". Iraq the leader of the pan-Arab movement? What will they think of that idea in Mecca, in Egypt, Syria and Morocco?

How is the idea of an Arab federation to be translated into action? The answer must be: the Jews.

Ten half-empty Arab empires, stretching from Gibraltar to Hadhramaut are to be bound together by Iraq through one co-ordinating policy: wresting from the hands of the Jewish people the pitifully insignificant strip of coastline on the Mediterranean which the Jews by solemn international agreement call their National Home. Are the most persecuted people on earth to be deprived of their last hope of refuge by the proprietors of millions of square miles of the most fertile land on earth? Is that the new era to which we are marching and for the advent of which American and Englishmen are shedding their blood?

The Arabs of Palestine, from whom the Jews have taken nothing but their poverty and diseases, are to be liberated from association with a people who have been their benefactors. In attainment of that grandiose object, Iraq hopes to secure the collaboration of an all-embracing pan-Arab movement.

Is Jewish Palestine really the thing that rankles in the heart of all Arabs, or have certain functionaries who have been trying to hamstring, sabotage and frustrate the building of the Jewish National Home in Palestine at last found in Nuri Pasha the tool to destroy by violence what could not be stayed by a policy of niggling dishonesties and provocative inconsistencies, but what was perhaps the most worthwhile thing to have come out of the First World War?●

The above article was sent to *The Scribe* by Mr. Y. Meer of Montreal●

## Some of the martyrs who were killed in the Farhud of May 1941

Abraham Dahoud  
Abraham Heskell Hlali  
Abraham Yehaq Habsha  
Abraham Moshi Leytim  
Aharon Ezra Heddad  
Baruch Bettat  
Heyawi Menashi Seti  
Haim Shemoun  
Hnini Shemoun Haim Shemoun  
Heskell Abraham Twena  
Yacob Eliahou Iny  
Yacob David Musafi  
Yacob Nuri Yehaq Habsha  
Yehaq Salem Asher  
Yehaq Yusef Dangoor  
Yehaq Meir Abraham Khlef  
Kehela Heskell Horesh  
Her daughter  
Her grand-daughter  
Meir Shoua Shuker  
Moshe Qerr

Moshe Shemoun Haim Shemoun  
Matuq Khalifa  
Nahum Yoseph Qazzaz  
Naim Dabora  
Salim Sion Dangoor  
Salman Heskell Jangana  
Abdallah Qeshqush  
Ezra Abraham Shlomo Dawid  
Ezra Yoseph  
His wife  
Emam Meni (Shamash)  
Saleh Abraham Aslan  
Saleh Eliahou Dahan  
Saleh Mashaal  
Eliahou Shina  
Shmuel David Cohen  
Shemoun Abraham Sweri  
Shemoun Haim Shemoun  
Sasson Jema'a Saat  
Abraham Eliahou Ajmi  
Aharon Abraham Kashi

Eliahou Mezzala  
Eliahou Sion Yahya  
Eliahou Sion Kheyyat  
Esther Mdallal  
Ephraim Abraham Attar  
Bedour Shoua  
Bertha Sion  
Gourji Salman  
Habiba Ezra Korin  
Yehoshoua Abdu  
Heskell Menashi Meslawi  
Heskell Selman Muallem  
Yacob Nessim Khebbaza  
Yacob Shemoun Abul Nura  
Khdhoury Shoua  
Latifa Yacob  
Muzli Hagouli  
Moshe Janabi  
Mesouda bint Abul Pacha  
Menahem . . .  
Mettana Saleh Nejjar  
Nessim Yamen Salman Attar  
Naima Merdukh  
Salman Dabby

Salman Eliahou Barukh  
Samra Yeheskel  
Abed Eliahou Kadouchi  
Abed Ezra Aspir  
Abudi Ezra Aspir  
Ezra Abraham Mezzala  
Ezra Abraham Shina  
Ezra Eliahou Joori  
Ezra Mashiah El Ajmi  
Farha Saleh  
Farha Menahem Shamash  
Farid Sasson  
Salha Abraham  
Salha Ephraim  
Salha Yousef  
Rajina Menashe Dabby  
Rima Dahoud Tutunchi  
Rima Menashe Dabby  
Rosa Moshe Nahum  
Rahamim Eliahou Dabby  
Rahamim Eliahou Hami  
Shaul Yehaq Pasha  
Semha Eliahou Naqqar  
Sasson Shemoun●



R. Sulman Jangana



Shmuel David Cohen



Abraham Habsha



Amam Mani-Shamash



Nuri Jacob Habsha



Abraham and Yacob Habsha with  
their father and sister



Salim Sion Dangoor



Ezra Abraham Shlomo David



Jacob Eliahou Iny



Matuq Khalifa



Saleh Abraham Aslan



Isaac Salem Asher



Saleh Elia Dahan



Menashe Khalastchi with his father, Ezra

## The murder of Menashe Khalastchi

by Ezzat Muallem

Towards the end of the last century, the Khalastchi family became well-known in the commercial and the agricultural world of Iraq. They became famous for their honesty and straight dealing, solidity, forethought and initiative, and courage in planning and developing progressive ideas in both fields.

Their father, Ezra, settled in Shamiyah in the year 1871. His son Eliahu became the backbone of the development of trade and agriculture in the mid Euphrates district. He introduced new and modern methods in agriculture which at the time was in a very backward state. He initiated the trading with well-known British firms which, through his influence, became very much interested in that particular part of Iraq.

Eliahu had two brothers, Nissim (1894-1973) and Menashe (1898-1941). Menashe, a very well educated man having completed his schooling in Baghdad, because of his knowledge of English, French, Turkish and Arabic, was appointed in 1918 as assistant to the British Governor of the District. But, in the year 1920, due to the Iraqi revolution against the British Occupation, he resigned his job and joined his father and two brothers. His interests did not stop at this. He took over building constructions. Among other things he was the contractor of the enlargement of the Hindiya Barrage. In trade and commerce he became a partner of Salim Shamash of Baghdad as well as of Sasson Mualim Eliahu, establishing a trading company which became known to firms all over the world. They specialised in exporting grains

and other agricultural produce of the area, as well as imports of machineries and other European products.

Menashe, in his short but very active career, was attacked twice by armed murderers. The first time was in May 1916. He was inspecting grain stores with his friend and partner Reuben Battat when an Arab shot them, fatally wounding the latter. Menashe, however, managed to run away and was saved.

The second attack was on 22 May 1941. Menashe, on returning from his grain store, was attacked and shot dead by an armed negro. He was buried at Hilla. After the murder it was found out that the reason was the quarrel between the tribe of Alhamadiyah and Albaliash. The head of the second tribe planned the murder, because Eliahu, the brother of Menashe, sided with his enemy the Alhamadiyah tribe.

The murderer was at last caught and sentenced to life imprisonment. After a short while he died in prison. The real culprits, however, were never punished.

Menashe was a victim of the troubled situation in Iraq at the time●

from *Dispersion & Liberation*  
by Abraham Twena

## The situation at Meir Eliyahu Hospital during May 1941

On May 6, 1941, the British Air Force battle planes flew over Baghdad skies. They had not intended to bombard targets or to cause harm but rather to demonstrate muscle and thus secure the desired psychological effect on the Iraqi population. That

same day hoodlums were ready at the gate of the hospital of Meir Eliyahu with the intention of wrecking it. They approached the hospital on the pretext that two British pilots were hiding inside; another pretext was that a British citizen entered the hospital to signal and direct the British Bombers in their air assault. Apparently the hoodlums had intended to point to the late Dr. Max Kropach as a target.

The attackers broke into the hospital from both its gates. They carried various items of weaponry. They entered the various departments and shot indiscriminately in all directions. Within a minute the hospital turned into a battlefield. Shrieks were heard all over the building. The patients searched for a hiding place. The hospital staff did not know where to go. The accountant of the hospital, Menashe, was hit hard on the head and was seriously injured. Later, teacher Joseph Cohen, dressed in army uniform, entered the hospital. The Chief Nurse, Mrs. Renée Kropach, revealed a daring initiative. She organised the nurses in anticipation of a cover and saving operation. She approached the hoodlums directly and asked them to come inside to examine whether any English people were around.

In the meantime, Mr. Cohen, who took advantage of his uniform, informed the Chief Nurse to call the head of the community. Unfortunately the lines were not serviceable and the contact was prevented. She therefore had to leave the hospital, dressed in the *Abaya* (a Moslem cloak used by women) and thus was able to contact the head of the Community.

The tumult was intensified and the hoodlums were in every department. They sowed destruction everywhere. They looted, burned furniture, hit patients and destroyed whatever they saw fit but nobody dared face them. They did not spare weak patients. They displayed a savage thirst for Jewish blood. They also seized the doctors and the administrative director of the hospital, the late Anwar Khtaina. It was also learned that the Pharmacist Matuq Khalifa was shot dead. The Jewish identity of Joseph Cohen, disguised under cover of the military uniform, became known and the hoodlums sought to kill him. However, his luck prevailed and he managed to escape before they got to him. He took refuge in the truck which carried ice to the hospital and ran away.

After realising what was happening, the Head of the Community and its notables approached the Police Superintendent, Husam Al Din Juma, and called for help. He sent a reduced police force and upon arrival at the hospital they managed to arrest a few.

The gates of the hospital were locked. Several shocked patients sought to go to their homes despite their weakness. The hospital staff were released from their arrest. The hospital was paralysed.

Government elements sought to transfer the auspices of the hospital to the Red Crescent. However, the community people acted to foil this attempt. They reopened the hospital right after the upheaval and the injured were duly treated●

from *Dispersion & Liberation*  
by Abraham Twena

## Double Tragedy

On 20 February Dr. Irene Sala and Mrs. Victoria Nissim were killed in Chile when their plane skidded on landing and fell into the sea. They were on their way to join an Antarctica cruise. It is surprising that 20 passengers in the club class lost their lives while 45 other passengers and the entire crew of seven managed to escape.

At the memorial prayers for Irene and Victoria, the Lauderdale Synagogue was filled to overflowing when the Anglo-Jewish community demonstrated their attachment to the departed and their condolences to members of their families.



Irene Sala (née Levi) was born in Baghdad in 1929 and married Davide Sala in 1950. A brilliant scientist, successful businesswoman and renowned philanthropist, she was at the peak of her career. She was a rising star in the field of archaeology and presented a controversial paper to a conference in Liege questioning the use of the flint and its reputed central role in prehistoric times.

After leaving Baghdad in 1951 she became a successful businesswoman and operated with her husband an oil exploration company in Iran and Italy. Their business dividends have been overwhelmingly diverted into endless charitable projects in Britain, Israel and elsewhere.

The jewel in Irene Sala's crown was the conception, finding and establishment of the Jewish Heritage section at the Israeli National Museum in Jerusalem which documents the life of the world's Jewish communities over 2,000 years.

**Saul Zadka**

300 friends attended a memorial gathering on 21 March at the Grosvenor House Ballroom. Daughters Monica and Joyce spoke, as well as Lord Jakobovits, Mat Haruni, Tel Aviv Mayor Shlomo Lahat and Communal Rabbi Dr. Abraham Levy.

Victoria Nissim, born in Baghdad in 1912, was the daughter of the late Chief Rabbi Sasson Khedourie, president of the Jewish community of Baghdad.

She studied at the Laura Kadourie School for Girls and perfected the Arabic, French, English and Hebrew languages. She worked in charitable and social organisations, especially in the Society for the Blind and the distribution of milk to needy school children.

She went to England in 1948 and then settled in Israel in 1952. Visiting the USA as a campaigner for Israel and for Keren Hayesod Appeal, she took the opportunity to study psychology. On returning to Israel, she held various posts and was for many years head of the social works in the State prisons until she retired in 1970 as Lieutenant Colonel.

She travelled in many countries and visited India, China, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, Alaska and the American continent.

She was buried in Tel Aviv on 16 February. Her funeral was attended by more than a thousand mourners. A telegram of condolence was received from Itzhak Shamir, Prime Minister of Israel.

**S.H. Sassoon**

Sincere condolences to members of both families●

Now that the Gulf War is over I hope that Mr. Dangoor will find a way of impressing the powers that be to listen to people like himself to find a permanent solution politically to the whole of the Middle East. I am very impressed with his knowledge of the history and problems of the area●

**Perth, Australia**

**Sunny Moses**

As a Jew from an Arab country who has had the opportunity to consider the cases of Jews and Kurds in my books – *Babylon in the Underground* and *My friends, the Kurds* – I feel I have a birthright claim on my country of origin, on Iraq's frozen billions. We may still have our share of the cake!●

**Tel Aviv**

**Emil Murad**

## On our mailing list

Maurice Sheena, London  
Mr. & Mrs. Edward Battat, London  
E. Shahrabani, London  
J. Gradel, Salford  
Ezra Dangoor, London  
Ellis Cohen, Cornwall  
Mrs. Haya Pesker, London  
Mrs. Linda Hakim, Stanmore  
Mrs. Joyce Hakim, London  
Ms. Sara Manasseh, Middlesex  
N. Battat, Harrow  
Nissim Benjamin, Wembley  
Miss Gila Tweg, Worthing  
Mrs. Valentine Shabi, London  
Julian Sofaer, London  
M. Sulman, London  
J.E. Levy, London  
Dr. & Mrs. D. Lewis, London  
Mrs. M. Horesh, London  
J.J. Basrawy, London  
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Alexander & Karin Juran, London  
Joseph Rasouly, Wembley  
N.W. Dalah, Stanmore  
M. Hillel, Manchester  
Mrs. Trixie Levi, Wembley  
Miss Traci Miller, Dallas, Texas  
D. Reuben, London  
A. Sheena, Bushey Heath  
Shawky Dallal, London  
Jack Rahameem, London  
Mrs. Suheila Tweg, London  
A. Korine, London  
N. Battat, Kenton  
C. Carmona, London  
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S. Hakim, Montreal  
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Judge Dan Gubbay, Givatayim, Israel  
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Yasmin Shahrabani, London●

I received your last three copies of *The Scribe* and really enjoyed them very much. I read them from cover to cover.

Congratulations on doing such a great job, including the recipes . . . Keep up the good work●

**New York**

**Mrs. Lilian Mosher**

With the death in February of Mr. Albert Manasseh at the age of 83, the Bombay Jewish community lost a distinguished leader who served it in various roles for nearly 60 years. He had held the offices of President of the Sir Jacob Sassoon Council of Trustees, President of the Bombay Jewish Association and President of the Bombay Zionist Association. In 1935 he founded Habonim in Bombay and other cities in India and was *Manhig* of the movement for many years. I was in the first group of six young boys to start the movement. Mr. Manasseh was strictly observant and, immersing himself in the study of Torah and Talmud, was also fully conversant with all aspects of Minhag Babel which was the form of service of all synagogues in India. His late father was born in Baghdad, and he himself spoke fluent Arabic and knew Hebrew well.

A member of the renowned Sassoon family, he also represented for some years the Bombay Jewish community on the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

His son Rabbi Yacob Manasseh co-founded four years ago Midrash Ben Ish Hai in New York.

Percy Gourgey

Dear Mr. Dangoor,

Thank you so much for your letter of condolences over the passing of my father, the crown of my head, Albert ('Abdallah) Manasseh, o.b.m.

As you so accurately mentioned, he was a "symbol of the strength and continuity of our Babylonian culture," and his passing is a loss to his family and to all Israel.

The combination of his *humility* and *great learning* of so many varied aspects of the Torah is hard to find in our time. We were blessed that in his last years he spent considerable amounts of time – at my urging – committing some of this knowledge to paper. We hope, with the help of Heaven, to make these available in due course, in book form.

In addition, many people have come forward from all parts of the world, to pay tribute and to say how my father, 'Alaw Hashalom, has "saved their lives," which he did with tireless and unselfish dedication in his position as the head of the Babylonian communities and Sassoon Trusts in Bombay and Poona – and which he continued to do long after we left for England.

We feel, therefore, that it would be a fitting tribute to compile a selection of these seemingly unlimited personal and humane stories and make them available to our people.

To this end, may I request that through your good offices you make the contents of my letter known to your readers, many of whom will have had personal experiences of my father, which they may wish to share with us as a tribute.

They may send them either to me or to our family home in London.

6 Cheyne Walk or at Midrash Ben Ish Hai  
London NW4 3QJ PO Box 1062  
Forest Hill, New York  
New York Rabbi Yacob Manasseh

In September 1989, our friend Latif Hoory sent us a number of articles in Arabic written by his brother, Moshe Hoory, which appeared in the official organ of Rakah – the Israeli communist party – of which Moshe Hoory is a member.

The articles recount the history of communism in Iraq and the attraction it had for young people and especially for Jewish youth. At a demonstration in Baghdad in 1946, the police opened fire, which killed Shaul Tweg. Again in 1948 Jewish communists were prominent in the *Waikha* uprising, as a result of which Nuri Said executed several communists, among them Yehuda Saddiq and Sasson Dallal.

The involvement of Iraqi Jews in communism was a reaction to the pogrom of 1941, as an escape from persecution and racial discrimination. But in the end, Zionism triumphed, as evidenced by the mass emigration of the community to Israel 40 years ago. However, communists in Israel are still working to ameliorate the lot of non-Ashkenazi Jews. The Rakah party has 6 members in the Knesset.

Jewish involvement in Russian communism follows the same pattern. To escape Tsarist persecution the Jews joined the revolutionary movement in droves. It has been claimed that of the 50 original top leaders of Communist Russia, 43 were Jews such as:

Trotsky (Bronstein)  
Steklov (Nachamkess)  
Martov (Tsederbaum)  
Kamenev (Rosenfeld)  
Bogdanov (Silberstein)  
Gorev (Goldman)  
Ganetzky (Furstenberg)  
Meshkovsky (Goldberg)  
Riazonov (Goldenbach)  
Piatnitzky (Levin)  
Abramovitch (Rein)  
Zverzditch (Fonstein)  
Radek (Sobelson)  
Litvinov (Finkenstein)  
Maklakovsky (Rosenbloom)  
Lapinsky (Levenson)  
Vabrov (Nathansson)  
Lebedieva (Simson)  
Kamensky (Hoffman)  
Naout (Ginsburg)  
Izgov (Goldman)  
Vladimirov (Feldman)  
Larin (Lourie)

But in the end it was the Russian communists who slowly got rid of their Jewish leaders. Stalin organised the banishment of Trotsky who had established the Red Army on firm foundations; Stalin arranged the murder of Trotsky in 1942 who was killed by an Iraqi servant. Soviet anti-Semitism has exceeded Tsarist persecutions and right wing Pamyat is accusing the Jews of starting the Russian Revolution and murdering the Tsar and his family.

Two seemingly unrelated events took place in November 1917 – the Balfour Declaration and the Bolsheviks' seizure of power in Russia. Now Russian Jews are leaving for Israel by their millions. Again, for the Jews of Russia, as for Iraqi Jews, Zionism has triumphed over communism in the end.

Since Moshe Hoory wrote his articles two years ago, we have seen the demise of communism as a viable philosophy or way of life. For communism is not the ultimate utopia it is made out to be but is the disease of a faulty capitalist system. Mankind must now discover a middle way between free enterprise and a fair distribution of the natural wealth among people and nations.

Another fallacy of Mr. Hoory's, which is shared by many Sephardim such as the late Elic Eliachar, is that the Jews lived in security and happiness under Arab and Moslem rule, to the extent that Jews should again live under Arab hegemony in Palestine instead of having a separate Jewish state. This attitude explains the Arab-Jewish mixture in the Rakah communist party.

First, there may have been periods in the past when Jews lived in peace among Moslems but these were usually cancelled by recurring outbursts of persecution and forced conversion. Our safety among the Moslems can only be judged by the worst governors. At best, Jews were tolerated as second class *dhimmis*. They are never greeted with "Salam Alekum" – peace be with you, and the highest compliment an Arab can offer his Jewish friend is to tell him, "You are a nice fellow, but what a pity you are a Jew!"

انت خوش انسان بس  
هيف عليك انت يهودي

Second, the Arabs refused to accept Jewish immigration into the Middle East. That is why Zionists had to struggle for an independent state.

Third, Hoory cites Jews who rose to high positions in Moslem states, such as Saad al-Dawla in 13th century Iraq and Sasson Heskeli in modern Iraq. These were usually *plus royalistes quo le roi*. Sir Sasson was a capable minister and an outstanding statesman who served his country well. But what did our community get out of it, and what did the government do to reward him?

I happen to be a resident in Ramat Gan, Israel – a favourite target of Saddam's Scud missiles. One of these fell less than 300 yards from my home, destroying some 150 houses and inflicting numerous civilian casualties. Within an hour from the all-clear after the first attack, while I was still in the grips of shock and fright, my phone rang. As it turned out, it was a friend of mine, a gentle woman living in France, who offered us refuge in her modest two-bedroom apartment there for the duration of the war. Overwhelmed with emotion, I promised to consider her offer, although we had no intention of leaving Israel to escape the missiles. A few days afterwards I received a letter from her with the same invitation, urging us to come.

A few weeks later came a letter from one of my brothers abroad, explaining how small were the odds of being hit by a missile: one to a million or so, and generally advising patience. With such friends, who needs relatives?!

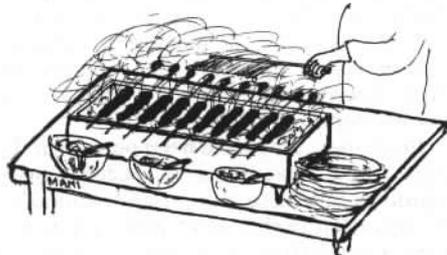
Ramat Gan

Mrs. Esther Mercado

## £1 for the aroma

The Iraqi Club has decided to charge £1 for the smell of its food. On evenings when there is dinner, members present who don't want to have dinner have to pay £1 for not having dinner – in fact for enjoying the aroma of the cooking!

This goes beyond the famous judgement of Jeha in a similar situation. Baghdad abounds in street corner open-air kebab stands where a quick meal can be had for about 20p, consisting of a *laffa* (sandwich) of one round *tannour* bread, two sticks of shish kebab, with plenty of parsley, salad and pickles.



One *kebabchi* noticed that every lunch-time a well-to-do but miserly local resident used to come and stop near the stand and eat his own loaf of bread while enjoying the delicious aroma of the charcoal grill. The dry climate of Baghdad made smell more pronounced and carried it a long distance. That is why cynical Western travellers in the twenties used to call Baghdad the city of a thousand and one smells.

The *kebabchi* decided one day that he was being cheated and asked his miserly neighbour for payment. When this was refused he took his neighbour to court.

The judge happened to be Jeha, around whom many humorous and witty anecdotes are told all over the Middle East. Jeha (also known as Gaha or Mulla Nasreddin) asked the *kebabchi* if the defendant had eaten any of his food. "No, your honour", answered the *kebabchi*, "But he does enjoy every day the lovely aroma of my grilled meats".

Jeha thought for a while then ruled that some form of payment had to be made to the *kebabchi*. He asked the defendant to take out his purse of coins (no banknotes in those days) and jingle it in the ears of the *kebabchi*. "There!", said Jeha, "The sound of this man's money is ample payment for the smell of your shish kebab"●

On occasion when I am given a copy of *The Scribe* to read, I thoroughly enjoy its contents, particularly Iraqi-Jewish history. To my knowledge, *The Scribe* is the only publication that prints on a regular basis about the Jews of Mesopotamia who have contributed so much to culture and tradition. In the United States, Russian and Eastern European Jewry get the predominant press, and hardly anything is mentioned about the Jews of the Middle East (outside of Israel).

I was born in Baghdad and came to the US in 1953. My parents, who are retired and live most of the year in Florida, also enjoy *The Scribe*. My mother, Helen, particularly likes Alice Shashou's cooking recipes●

Fair Lawn, New Jersey Joseph L. Meer

## LETTERS



I consider *The Scribe* one of the three best journals on Sephardic subjects outside of Israel and France. I read it thoroughly and learn a great deal from it. I would like to congratulate

The Exilarch's Foundation for the quality and content of the journal. I would like to ask permission to publish in our quarterly magazine *Hamercaz* your article entitled "Israel and the Diaspora" (No. 45) – (Granted – Ed.)

The Sephardic Educational Center has established a World Headquarters for Sephardim in the Old City of Jerusalem and has started a World Sephardic Movement and World Sephardic Youth Movement, having branches in many countries around the world. In Los Angeles it is composed of 1,100 young people, and every Monday night a lecture series is carried out in Kahal Joseph (Iraqi-Indian) attended by some 200 people up to age 35.

The SEC sends yearly a teacher from Jerusalem to India, where we have invested \$300,000. In Jerusalem we have summer programmes for young people from around the world, ages 15-25.

We would love to have a group of responsible Sephardim in London to start a branch of the SEC.

Do you consider Babylonian Jews Sephardim? If they are not Sephardim, what are they?●

Los Angeles J.A. Nessim M.D.

*Scribe*: Babylonian Jews did not come from Spain, as evidenced by the fact that there are no Ladino words whatsoever in our vocabulary. They are mainly descendants of the first Exile and subsequent migrations from Israel and elsewhere. In 1743 Chief Rabbi Sadqa was brought in from Aleppo, together with some 50 families, some of whom may have originated in Spain. It was Sadqa who established the Sephardi minhag in Iraq, which itself originated in Babylon. (See *Scribe* No. 47 "Host and Hostage")●

I married into an Iraqi family and was introduced to *The Scribe* by my mother-in-law, Alice Shashou. I look forward to receiving *The Scribe* every time it is published. I enjoy reading the various articles especially when they tell me about our history. I also follow Alice Shashou's Cookery Corner as I love Iraqi cooking. Please continue to send me *The Scribe* at my new address●

Antibes, France Mrs. Nathalie Shashou

## Palestinian Hutzpa

Palestinian Arabs cheered when the Scuds hit Israel, and called on Saddam to send poison gas. But when they realised it might hit them, too, they demanded that Israel provide them with gas masks. Voices were raised criticising Israel for not supplying the masks fast enough.

Now they are wearing their Israeli gas masks in demonstrations against Israel, as we thought they would do●

When I remember how the Balfour Declaration was dishonoured, how Britain violated the Mandate with a stroke, creating an Arab state east of the river Jordan, and how an infamous "White Paper" finally left millions of Jews to be murdered by Nazis, I am bound to say it makes a lot of sense to recognise the remaining 23% of that old mandated territory as the ancestral home of the Jew, which owes as much to the foibles of men as do the mountains of my home.

*The Scribe* makes superb reading and I congratulate you on every aspect of its publication●

Rev. Gruffydd Thomas

Reflections at the Western Wall

## The Flame

by Gruffydd Thomas

Dedicated "To Golda, whom I never knew". (Golda was my friend's aunt, who took her babe-in-arms into the Death Camps and never returned).

That flame,  
It burns forever  
And shall consume the candle of the years.  
The spirit trembles when that flame glows red;  
Open the door and hear the dead,  
As withered leaves are blown across the floor  
And Rachel weeps behind a blood stained door.

The flame  
Divides forever  
Between the darkness and a darker night.  
There is no refuge from the reckoning flame  
For crime that went beyond a name,  
With no regard for innocence and tears –  
Not even to the socket of the years.

That flame  
Consumes forever.  
Shall they who plunged the dagger to the hilt  
Be offered absolution for the guilt  
Of shedding blood that had no fault?  
There is a place fed by another flame  
Where guilt and retribution are the same.

O Flame  
That glows forever,  
Tell all Mankind the truth Guilt would ignore;  
Shoes that would have danced in Jerusalem  
Lie in a heap in Yad vaShem,  
And Rachel's child who skipped along that floor  
Has never played with sand on Israel's shore.

O Flame,  
Avenge! Divide and glow throughout the years  
Till Jacob's Star before the dawn appears●

We were given a copy of *The Scribe* at a meeting of the Sephardic "Shearith Israel" Synagogue in New York City. Although our ancestry (my husband's and mine) is maternally Sephardic and Bukharian, our families (both in Israel and the US) are married to Iraqi Jews. In fact, the copy of *The Scribe* that I just finished reading, I am mailing forthwith to my cousin-in-law Ezra Rahamim in Ohio. Here in New York we also are close friends with the Habib family (Nuri, Eliahu, Jamil) who will also be overjoyed to read *The Scribe*.

Therefore, would you please put me on your mailing list so I can continue to read and also supply friends and family with your wonderful publication●

New York Elvera Herbstman

We acknowledge with thanks receipt of a voluntary and generous contribution from Mrs. Lilian Mosher, New York●

I am having trouble with your cookery "Tips" (January 91 No. 46) and my husband. After cleaning our patent shoes with vaseline, the taste was not very nice when I fried them in butter and oil. My husband says that I should have soaked the soles overnight, as they were rather chewy.

Before I married him, I was very slim, and he told me that a slim girl could not get married in Iraq as the girls went by the *avoirdupois*, and the father had to provide a hefty dowry or else give the prospective a concubine as a make-weight, like Laban did with his girls. Afterwards he said that the custom was dying out, unfortunately.

My husband has always accused me of trapping him, and when I reminded him that he kept chasing me, he had the cheek to say "Who heard of the mousetrap running after the mouse?"

Recently, he has begun to tell me that I am a very lucky woman to be married to a stamp collector, as the older I get the more valuable I appear to him, but that he thinks mint copies are nicer than fine used. I don't know if he means that as a compliment.

I am interested in the books about Judaism that you mention. Please tell me the address of a good bookshop in England where I can order them.

Best wishes for the Festivals. May the Jews always know feasts of victory and redemption●

Ramat Gan

Patricia Ruth Saltoun

**PS by husband** – Don't believe all that my (Irish) wife says. It reminds me of the man who dashed into a psychiatrist's office: "Doctor!!! my wife says I am crazy because I like *kubbah burghul*. I want you to examine me and say I am not crazy."

"What is crazy about liking *kubbah burghul*? I love them myself."

"Wonderful!! Then you must come and see my collection. I have my wardrobe and seven suitcases full of them!"●

*Scribe*: Try the Bookshop, Woburn House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 0EZ.

**P.S.** Soje leather *does* require soaking before use. No need to fry●

I was surprised to find that, in the March edition (No. 47) ("Some Arabs have to go") you quote the Psalm "By the Rivers of Babylon . . ." as containing a reference to "Arabs," as the phrase is not mentioned in the English version of Psalm 137. Furthermore, biblical maps of the region clearly distinguish between "Mesopotamia," "Babylonia" and "Arabia."

I do enjoy reading *The Scribe* and "Our aims in the Gulf War" is particularly interesting. The main reason why the Arabs increased more than the Jews under the Mandate was the virtual ban on Jewish immigration operated by the British authorities from the early 30s until 1948, although the borders were wide open for uncontrolled Arab migration from neighbouring countries, particularly from the Hauran region of Syria●

Wembley Park, Middlesex Ruth Willers

*Scribe*: The Psalm does not refer to "Arabs" as such, but the Hebrew word "Arabim" which means "willow trees" may have been a subconscious reference to the infiltrators and looters from Arabia who joined in at the destruction of the first and second Temples●



**Mrs. Renee Dangoor addressing a briefing meeting on the Jews of Shanghai in October at the Ta'ali centre in London. She repeated the talk on 11 April at St. John's Wood Synagogue, London NW8 to a large audience●**

We were pleased when a friend recommended *The Scribe* to us and would like to be put on the mailing list. My husband moved to Britain from Israel 3½ years ago. His parents and many of the friends he misses in Israel are Iraqi. It is especially nice for him to have some contact with the Iraqi-Jewish community. I am also very interested in the recipes. We look forward to reading your magazine greatly●

Aylesbury, Bucks Mrs. Rebecca Rasooly

Tina and I thoroughly enjoy reading your *Scribe*. I only wish your intelligent editorials could reach the eyes and ears of world leaders. They are full of sound good common sense and very worthwhile advice●

London

Robert Rietty

Great publication!●

New York

Nathan Low

## Which problem?

An elderly patient complained to his doctor, "I don't know what is happening to me. My memory is gone completely; people tell me something, and as soon as they've finished speaking, I forget what they've said."

The doctor thought for a moment and then asked, "Tell me, when did the problem start?"

"What problem?" asked the patient.

This anecdote comes to mind in the search for lasting peace in the Middle East after Saddam's defeat. Instead of recognising Israel's model restraint under the unprovoked Scud attacks, no sooner had the war come to an end than the politicians and the media started hammering her to solve the "Middle East problem". America finds it urgently necessary to reward tottering Arab regimes for having defended them from certain extinction at Saddam's hands.

Those leaders trying to corner Israel appear to have short memories, and tend to forget the other problems of the region. What about Lebanon, the Kurds, PLO terrorism, Western hostages, Moslem fundamentalism, poverty amid regional plenty, endemic Arab-world instability?

Which problem?!●

## The Jews and Iraq

Iraqi Jews have an unfinished business with the government of Iraq. The wrongs done to our ancient and well-established community were not less than those done to Kuwait – terror and murder, torture and imprisonment, confiscation of property and expulsion. Iraqi Jewry must be party to any final settlement with Iraq.

We are informed by Mr. Leon Tamman that Prime Minister Shamir has given the green light to WOJAC (World Organisation of Jews from Arab Countries) to take legal steps to attach Iraqi assets now frozen in USA, UK and Europe. Once attached, these assets cannot be released until the case of the Jews from Arab lands is heard and decided in court.

Giving an opinion on Jewish claims against Iraq, Professor Yoram Dinstein of Tel Aviv, a specialist in international law, hopes and trusts that the Gulf War will be terminated in a formal treaty, which will impose on Iraq the obligation to pay reparations. It is essential to ensure that the Claims Tribunal which will be established under the treaty will have jurisdiction to consider all claims against Iraq by nationals of the Allied countries, and not merely those originating from the invasion of Kuwait. It is clear that such procedure would exclude Iraqi Jews in Israel and those who are still stateless.

The Exilarch's Foundation, in fact, believes that the **present status of ex-Iraqi Jews should not be the test**. We must go back to the original sin – namely, the denationalisation of Iraqi Jews, which was an illegal act under international law. It may be argued by Iraq that Jews who left in 1950/51 themselves renounced their nationality. But that was a condition for allowing them to leave the country, to escape persecution.

Therefore, the peace treaty should rescind all denationalisation of Iraqis and the subsequent sequestration of their property. That will cover non-Jews too and will not exclude Iraqi Jews in Israel. The Claims Tribunal should be empowered to negotiate with a delegation of Iraqi Jews adequate compensation on the lines of German reparations after the Second World War●

