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The SCRIBE

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Claims of Jews from Arab countries

by Percy Gourgey

The conference of the Executive of the World Organisation of Jews from Arab Countries (WOJAC) held on 16 December 1993 in Tel Aviv has drawn attention again to the claims of Jewish refugees from Arab lands: individual claims and a claim for a share in the wealth in their countries of origin.

While Iraq is not in the current peace process, she must be brought in at a future date in order to make claims for compensation possible.

The recently formed World Jewish Restitution Organisation (WJRO) which aims to make claims on countries of Eastern Europe following the collapse of their communist regimes, can be used as a model for activating the claims of Jews from Arab lands. WJRO consists of 8 Jewish organisations whose co-Chairman is Rabbi Israel Singer, Secretary-General of the World Jewish Congress.

At the Madrid Middle East Peace Conference of 1991, it was emphasised that U.N. Resolution 242 clearly refers to both Jewish and Arab refugees.

A meeting in London at Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs, was addressed in December 1993 by three distinguished Israeli lawyers, present for a lawyers' conference in London. Their speeches concerned the legal implications of the 13 September accord between Israel and the PLO signed in Washington.

In the ensuing discussion, I raised the matter of claims for compensation for Jewish refugees. Mrs Ruth Lapidot, Professor of Law at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, confirmed that refugees included Jewish and other refugees. Mr Haim Zadok, former Israeli Minister of Justice (Labour), stated that this matter was to be considered in the context of "an exchange of populations" between Arabs and Jews.

Mr Dan Merridor M.K., former Israeli Minister of Justice (Likud), said the subject was like "a sword of Damocles" hanging over Israel's head in the long term.

It seemed to me that this is not necessarily the case if the position of Jewish refugees from Arab lands is considered. After all, they left these lands because of the adverse policies adopted towards them by Arab governments. Just because the Jewish refugees from Arab countries did not engage in acts of terror or violence to draw attention to their plight, it does not mean that their just case must go by default.

Role of WOJAC in Jewish claims

The WOJAC Conference in December was remarkable less by what was discussed, than by what was not said.

Zalman Shoval, the former Israeli Ambassador to the United States, who was a featured speaker at the WOJAC Conference and an early participant in the Israel-Arab peace process, believes that several Arab countries do recognise the legitimacy of Jewish claims to compensation.

The simplest solution, he suggests, would be to reach an agreement whereby the rival Israeli-Palestinian claims simply cancel each other out. "Israel would agree to cancel the Jewish claims," he believes, "if the Palestinians would give up their compensation demands."

The cat is out of the bag and clearly this is the direction we fear in which the compensation negotiations will be steered. This is tragic because Jewish claims would be ten times more than Palestinian claims.

At a Press Conference, WOJAC Chairman Leon Tamman and World Executive Chairman Shlomo Toussia-Cohen, stressed that Jewish claims for communal property in Arab lands would amount to \$2.5 billion. They pointed out that this should be used to repay Israel for its huge investment in absorbing Jewish refugees.

"That sounds reasonable with respect to the communal claims," responds Mordechai Ben Porat, WOJAC's founder, "But just as was the case with reparations from Germany, individual Jews should still be able to press their own claims."

At the Conference speaker after speaker pointed out that the Jewish claims on land and wealth of their countries of origin, in proportion to their numbers in 1948, constituted 2% of the total population. This would give us over 100,000 sq.km. and as this figure was thought to be too high, the whole approach was dropped.

WOJAC and the government of Israel must organise and obtain from all Arab countries global sums to cover communal and individual claims, and then distribute some of this money to individuals who lost their properties in their countries of origin.

Naim Dangoor adds: To its credit WOJAC has drawn the attention of the Israeli government that "any renunciation or exchange of Jewish property in Arab countries for Arab property (in Israel) will make the State of Israel responsible for that property (Jewish property confiscated by Arab governments)".

In that situation, the irony would be that it would become the role of the Israeli government to whittle down, minimise, resist and evade our claims against our countries of origin.

Scribe: We received the following fax letter from WOJAC:

"We wish to clarify our position as follows.

a) According to international law, the State of Israel is authorised to claim compensation only on behalf of Jewish claimants from Arab countries who are Israeli citizens. The claims of Jews living in other countries can be handled by their respective governments, or by any other body empowered by those governments.

b) One of WOJAC's aims is to raise and win worldwide recognition of the legitimate rights of Jews from Arab countries and their claims against their countries of origin, as a political and moral issue, to be included in the present peace negotiations with the Arab countries and the Palestinian Arabs. However, WOJAC will not be competent to deal with the collection and distribution of claims."

WOJAC has now modified its tune by saying that Israel is entitled to the compensation of Israeli Jews only. What about the other Jews?

This World Organisation which wants to join the peace talks, must achieve in the peace treaties the climate and the formula whereby individual Jews can claim directly from their countries of origin, by WOJAC agreeing global compensation figures with every Arab country that can then be a pool for individual claims.

WOJAC's suggestion that claims should be made through the governments of their residence is a joke. It brings to mind a well known Baghdadi anecdote: An enterprising businessman once announced in all synagogues that he invented a mosquito powder and promised to give the directions the following week. When everyone had bought a packet he announced how to use the powder:

a) Catch the mosquito.

b) Put a little powder in its mouth, the mosquito is guaranteed to die.

On granting us citizenship, the British and other governments have made it clear that they will not protect us or our interests in our countries of origin.

I would like you to know that your publication is unique in every sense. It continues - more than ever - to give my wife and me an endless amount of pleasure to read it, which we do from cover to cover. We are always impatiently waiting to receive the next issue.

Thank you very much for being instrumental in giving so much pleasure to the multitude of people of Iraqi origin who are fortunate to be on your mailing list. May God bless you.

New York

David Simon

EZEKIEL

PATRON PROPHET OF BABYLONIAN JEWRY

The following is an abridged translation of a whole-page, 4000-word article from Paris, by the Iraqi writer **Jalil Atiyya**, that recently appeared in the Arabic daily *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* published in London, about the prophet Ezekiel and his shrine in Kifil.

The prophet Ezekiel is mentioned in the Koran as "Dhul-Kifil" - it is said that he acquired this name because he warranted (Kafala) - the return of the Jews to their country from their exile. The Mosque of Nukhaila is close to the shrine. The sanctity of this shrine is not confined to the Jews - the Moslems have always visited it for his favours, as mentioned in the Koran.

Two prophets were among the Jewish captives in Babylon - Ezekiel and Daniel.

Ezekiel, which means "God strengthens", was one of the major Prophets of the Bible. He was of a priestly family and was exiled in his youth with King Yehoyakhin in 597 BCE, eight years after Daniel. He became a spiritual leader of the exiles, exhorting them to keep the Torah's commandments.

In the first stage of his ministry he forecast the ruin of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple which had provided the collective atonement of the whole Jewish nation. Ezekiel began to preach the importance of personal responsibility and individual redemption and that God would reward everyone according to his own deeds.

In the second stage of his ministry, after the destruction of the Temple in 586 BCE, Ezekiel changes his tune and becomes the prophet of hope, prophesying that God would return the Jews, purified, back to their land, Israel. Ezekiel's ministry lasted for over 22 years. He lived in Tel-Abib on the River Chebar in Babylon and died there.

The Iraqi historian Mohammed Said Turaihi has researched extensively Ezekiel's history and wrote a book called *The Prophet Dhul-Kifil*.

Dhul-Kifil in Islamic Sources

Islamic literature contains many stories, anecdotes and legends on this Prophet, many of them beyond belief. It is said that he told his people "Even if you die, God will resurrect you."

It is also said that he converted a certain King to the belief in God, after he gave him a written guarantee (*kafala*) that he will enter Paradise, hence his name "Dhul Kifil".

Al-Qurtubi relates that Ibn-Omar heard more than once that the Prophet Mohammed said that Dhul Kifil was an Israelite (prophet).

Kifil in the Books of Travellers

The Travels of Benjamin of Tudela 1165-1173 gives the following description of the Shrine and the visits of the Jews to it:

"The Shrine of Ezekiel the Prophet, of blessed memory, by the River Euphrates, is fronted by 60 turrets and between each turret there is an alcove, and in the centre is the Ark of the Synagogue, and at the back is the Sepulchre of Ezekiel.

It is surmounted by a large cupola and it is a very handsome structure. It was built of old by King Jeconiah (who was brought into exile by Nebuchadnezzar and the 35,000 captives). They built it when Ewil Merodach released them from prison. This

place is by the River Chebar on one side and by the River Euphrates on the other, and the names of Jeconiah and those that accompanied him engraved on the wall: Jeconiah on the top and Ezekiel at the bottom. This place is held sacred by the Jews who make pilgrimages to it from the beginning of the New Year until the Day of Atonement. The Jews have great rejoicings on these occasions.

Thither also comes the Exilarch and the Head of the Academies from Baghdad. The camp of the pilgrims occupies a space of about two miles and Arab traders come there as well.

And on the Day of Atonement they bring forth a Torah Scroll on parchment said to be written by Ezekiel himself, and they read from it. A lamp burns day and night over the Sepulchre, the light thereof has been kept burning from the day that he lighted it himself. An adjoining house belonging to the sanctuary is filled with books, some of them from the time of the First Temple. And he that has no sons consecrates his books to this library.

The Synagogue of Ezekiel owns property, lands and villages, which belonged to King Jeconiah, and when Mohammed (the Caliph Al-Moqtafi) came, they confirmed all the rights to the Synagogue of Ezekiel. Devout Moslems also come hither (on their way to the pilgrimage in Mecca) to pray. So great is their love for Ezekiel the Prophet that they call it "Dar Meliha" (The Dwelling of Beauty)."

About 20 years after Benjamin, Ezekiel's Shrine was visited by Petahiah of Regensburg, Germany, who describes it as the most beautiful building in existence. Its internal walls are covered in gold and the grave is covered by a Sepulchre six feet high of cedar wood inlaid with gold. Above is a golden dome with crystal ornaments from which hangs 30 oil lamps that light the place day and night. Ezekiel's Shrine is looked after by some 200 caretakers who are supported from the offerings that are received from everywhere. Any surplus money is used for Yeshiva students, widows and to marry orphan girls.

In 1765 Karsten Neibuhr paid a visit, who writes: "I travelled from Ali's Shrine to Najaf to Kifil, about 4½ hours to the north, which is still visited by hundreds of Jews. But this prophet has no treasures of silver and gold and precious stones. The tomb of Ezekiel and the nearby Mosque and a few simple dwellings, are all surrounded by a 30-foot strong wall, having a circumference of 250 double paces. The wall was first built at the expense of a Jew called Suleiman who lived in Kufa. The wall is

maintained by the Jews themselves. Nearby is the grave of Baruch, Ezekiel's tutor and Jeremiah's secretary and scribe. Ali came to this locality where he made a famous speech."

The Shrine of Ezekiel and the nearby Mosque of Nukhaila were both renovated by the Ilkhan Sultan Ulgaitu (r.1304-1313), grandson of Hulagu, the Mongol conqueror of Baghdad in 1258. Ulgaitu's structures have survived to this day. He later converted to Islam.

The tower of Ezekiel's Shrine consists of a base 4 metres high, from which rises a conical structure 20 metres high. Inside there is a helical staircase leading to the top. The tower is decorated on the outside with beautiful geometrical designs. In recent years maintenance work was carried out and some Koranic verses were added on the outside.

In 1326, a few years after Sultan Ulgaitu's restoration of the Shrine, the traveller Ibn Battuta passed by this area but did not visit the town, claiming that its people were rejects. Last century, a group of local Moslems incensed at the alterations and renovations carried out by the Jews, applied to the authorities to declare the Shrine a Mosque because of the minaret and other installations. But the officer who came to investigate reported that there was no minaret!

On appeal to the Sultan Abdul Hamid a delegation was sent to settle the dispute, but it came only as far as Baghdad. After heavy bribes were paid by the Jews to the members of the delegation, they endorsed the earlier report and denied that the Shrine included any Islamic items and even denied the existence of a minaret, supported by photographs of the building.

"Like the minaret of Kifil" has remained a joke among Iraqis, even today, to illustrate how wrong can prevail over a just cause.

Comments by Naim Dangoor:

It appears that the so-called minaret was put up during Sultan Ulgaitu's restoration of Kifil 700 years ago, as a mark of respect for the Prophet. It was never used for calling Moslems to prayer.

In 1860 some ignorant local Moslems hit on the idea of claiming the Shrine to be a Mosque by virtue of the "minaret", intending to forbid the Jews from visiting their Shrine. There is a general principle in law that one may not benefit from the result of one's illegal action. Ezekiel's Shrine was a Jewish holy place for 1800 years, before the so-called minaret was put up. The Istanbul authorities sent a delegation to investigate

the claim and heard evidence from Rabbi Sasson Smouha, Menahem Daniel and Yosef Rahamim (Jack's great-grandfather). The decision was that the structure was not a minaret. That decision was unanimously endorsed on Appeal.

By similar claim Moslems managed to take over ancient Jewish holy places, most notably the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, and called them their own. While we thank our Moslem brethren for looking after our Shrines, rather than destroying them, they have to realise that theirs is only a holding operation and that their tenure of our holy places is only temporary. Eventually, they will have to hand them over to their original rightful owners. We, on the other hand, would keep them open to all believers.

David N. Khalastchy sent a letter to the Arabic newspaper giving all the facts, which was published, but the photograph was not shown.

It seems the canard of Kifil is still alive 130 years on, and that, like the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the minaret lie will not lie down.

A recent visitor to Kifil saw not only Koranic Arabic writings on the wall inside the Shrine, but also a large photograph of Ali.

When Caliph Ali came over to Iraq he was welcomed at Anbar (Pallughta) by over 90,000 Jews. He established his capital at Kufa just across the river from Metha Mehasia, administrative capital of Jewish Babylonia. Ali was well-versed in Hebrew and in the Jewish Scriptures. It is widely believed that the Shiite schism in support of Ali was formulated by a Jew - Abdulla ibn Saba.

*Ezekiel had looked around him and did not like what he saw of Babylonian civilisation. He was convinced that the superior culture of Judaism cannot be submerged by an inferior culture. Thus he preached the national resurrection of the Jewish people. In those days Babylonian Jewry, few as we were, shaped the future destiny of mankind.

Ezekiel's prophecies and utterings mark the start of Judaism as we know it today, and thus also of Christianity and Islam.

*The Koran echoes Ezekiel's doctrines of resurrection and after-life, which may have sounded alien to the Arabians. When people asked Mohammed "Are you saying that after we die we are going to be brought to life again?". He gave them the marvellous answer "You were dead (that is, non-existent) and God brought you to life. He will cause you to die, and with one blow of the heavenly trumpet (Soor, shofar) can bring you back to life. Can't you see how with one rain-shower God makes the desert bloom and brings it to life?"

The Koran also repeatedly praises those who have to migrate because of their faith. It cites Abraham's departure from Ur, the Israelite Exodus from Egypt, and the Jewish Exile to Babylonia. It is believed that Mohammed's *Hijra* from Mecca to Medina was meant to follow these earlier migrations. Loyalty to faith takes precedence over patriotism. Jewish dispersion throughout the ages must be seen and appreciated accordingly.

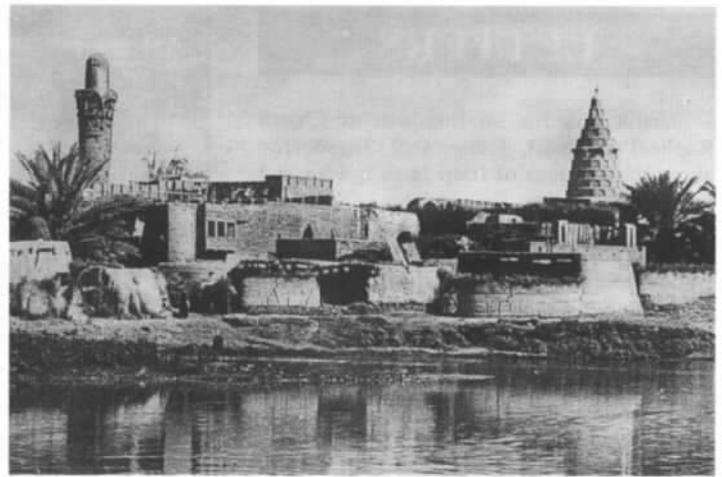
The Koran gives an interesting twist on our biblical stories such as Moses first asking Pharaoh to believe in the One True God, and when Pharaoh refused, Moses told him "Let My People Go". This reported encounter gives credence to the theory that Moses was in fact Pharaoh Akhnaton who tried to introduce Montheism to Egypt, but failed, or one of his heirs. In fact, the Koran asserts that God had sent a messenger to every generation advising them to believe in the one true God, viz Noah, Abraham, Lot, Moses, Jonah, Issa, and that God's retribution followed when people refused to listen - the Flood, Sodom, the Ten Plagues, etc.

Mohammed's contemporaries scoffed his warnings, saying, "Do you want us to give up the faith of our fathers for these alien primeval legends." It was then that Mohammed declared his own mission, "God has now sent you a Koran in your own Arabic language. Mohammed has been so far Allah's most successful missionary. Well done Mohammed!"

Ezekiel was greatly venerated and honoured by Babylonian Jewry as their own Prophet and the Prophet of the Exile. His was a popular boy's name.

When the Moslems conquered Iraq they destroyed all temples belonging to other religions, but Ezekiel passed the test.

*Habaquq also ours"



A "Hoory" postcard picture of Kifil, showing on the right the shrine of Ezekiel with its unusual tower and on the left the Mosque of Nukhaila with its proper minaret.

Just as the Christians took over our Bible calling it their own, the Arabs' habit of appropriating our holy sites is matched by their inclination to take over our holy men. A Jew and a Moslem were comparing their Prophets. The Jew offered Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Moslem said "These are ours, as well as Ishmael". The Jew said, "What about Moses and Aaron, David and Solomon?" The Moslem replied, "These too are ours; they are all mentioned in the Koran." The patient Jew then cited Ezekiel and Ezra. The Moslem insisted, "They are ours: we call them Dhul Kifil and Uzair." The frustrated Jew then said, "What about Habaquq?" The Moslem thought for a while and replied, "I will go and find out." Late at night he came back, banging on the door of the Jew, and shouted, "Khoja, Khoja, Habaquq also is ours!"

*A 19th century traveller told Baghdadi Jews "I admire you for having been able to live among these people and survive."

*Islam may have been prompted by the rising influence of the Babylonian Talmud, which was completed in 499 C.E. Its validity was challenged by outlying Jewish communities, especially in Arabia and Afghanistan.

The Moslem legend that the Prophet Ezekiel used to issue written permits authorising believers to enter Paradise, was perhaps the model for the Popes' practice of selling land in Paradise to their Catholic faithful for a lucrative price.

One enterprising Jew hit on a novel idea. He asked the Pope to sell to him the whole of Hell. Thinking that Hell had no commercial value, the Pope agreed to dispose of it for a nominal price. The Jew then announced that the Pope can no longer threaten people with Hell as he held the title deed. The Pope's business was ruined! He later had to negotiate with the Jew to re-acquire Hell for 100 times the price paid by the Jew!

*Ezekiel's vision of the Valley of Dry Bones may have been inspired by the Zoroastrian burial mounds of the region. Internment was frowned upon as polluting mother earth, and bodies were left in the open to be picked off by vultures, leaving a heap of dry bones.

In modern times the pilgrimage to Kifil has been made, not during Rosh Hashana and Kippur, but during the warm season of Shavuoth which is called by Babylonian Jewry *Id-el-Ziagha* (The Feast of Pilgrimage), when this and other Shrines were visited.

The journey to Kifil, which now takes 2 hours by car, was made on foot and took a whole week! The multitude of pilgrims started at dawn every day and arrived at the next stop by mid-morning, where they rested and picnicked and slept in the open till next morning. They chanted and sang religious hymns and popular songs as they marched.

One of the stops was Iskendriyi, which was the site of the capital of the world empire of Alexander the Great, who died there of malaria in 323 BCE, being only 33 years old. His funeral took 2 years to prepare, and the massive golden cortege was drawn by 64 oxen and taken from Babylon to Egypt and finally deposited in the City of Alexandria.

The Jews of Hillah (mean Babylon) are thought to be the unmixed descendants of the original Jewish Exiles brought over by Nebuchadnezzar 2500 years earlier●

Thank you for sending me, at Chaim Raphael's request, 3 copies of *The Scribe* about the fortunes of Iraqi Jews in Iran and the booklet on the *Secret Jews of Meshed*. Most interesting. Shaul Bakhsh, now a professor in the USA, was one such Jew whom I knew and much admired during my years in Teheran.

Little has been written, as far as I know, about the Jews of Iran as opposed to those who came in the 20th century from Iraq. In my two books *The English amongst the Persians* and *The Persians amongst the English*, I write briefly about British efforts during the 19th century to protect them. If you know of any book or articles about them I should be grateful for your advice.

I was a contemporary of Somerset de Chair at Oxford, but did not know him well: we were both members of the cavalry squadron of the OTC and rode together. Strange to find his name appearing in *The Scribe*.

Aylesbury Sir Denis Wright
Scribe: Sir Denis Wright was British Ambassador to Teheran from 1963-1971 and a very good friend of the late Shah●

Dear Naim,

Isn't it a shame that the Israeli government still does not speak on behalf of the seized assets of Jews from Arab countries; does not speak about reparations from the Arab countries; does not discuss with the Arabs in the peace talks the rights of the Jews from Arab countries. You are right: WOJAC Congress was timid in demanding that. I was there. Although I do not think that WOJAC is a tool of the Israeli government. WOJAC's Israeli leaders, on the other hand, want to keep on good terms with the Foreign Minister, the Prime Minister, etc., and therefore they would never want to rock the boat. Even my demand that the Arab governments rescind the Arab League resolution preventing Arab governments from giving citizenship to Palestinian Arabs residing in their countries, was only accepted timidly as a resolution by WOJAC Congress, demanding from the Arab governments to give citizenship to the Palestinian Arab refugees residing in their countries without mentioning the Arab League resolution.

I admire you for writing boldly in *The Scribe*. I think this should be brought up more often for the public to hear, that we demand compensation from the Arab countries for lost properties and assets which the Arabs confiscated●

WOJAC, Prof Heskell Haddad, MD
New York President

I am pleased to inform you that I am the son of David Sasson, who was Headmaster of the Alliance School in Baghdad in the years 1924-1936, and that my mother, Rachel Sasson, was the Headmistress of the Laura Kadoorie school for girls.

I was at the Alliance School between the years 1933-1936 and in the same class as Edouard Dangoor and Maurice Shashoua●
Brussels Henry Sasson



The Temple Mount

The First and Second Temples each lasted around 500 years and ended in total destruction and decimation of the population. The Rabbis took the view that there was something wrong there, and to avoid further tragedies, decreed not to attempt to rebuild the Temple and restore the Kingdom until the advent of the Messiah.

Thus in 362 CE the Roman Emperor Julian wrote to Babylonian Jewry offering to rebuild the Temple at his own expense if we would only let him through to attack Persia, but we rejected his offer. Babylonian Jewry occupied a strategic role in the defence of the Persian Empire. In 614 Jerusalem was captured by the Persian-Jewish alliance. Instead of rebuilding their country, the Jews engaged in destroying churches and attacking Christians. The Persians then gave the latter control of the province.

In 627 the Jews helped the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius to recapture Jerusalem from the Persians but, soon, he too turned against the Jews.

It was then that in 638 the Arabs came to conquer the region with Jewish financial and military help. When the Caliph Omar entered Jerusalem, he offered the Temple Mount to the Jews that they may rebuild their shrine. But they refused. Thereupon, Omar proceeded to clear the site which the Romans, and later the Christians, had turned into a rubbish heap. He went down on his knees to start clearing the rubble and strewed coins all over to encourage others to join in. Omar then built a temporary structure over the Rock, reputed to be the sacrificial point of the Temple and the site of Abraham's attempt to sacrifice Isaac. In fairness to the Arabs, it must be noted that they waited 50 years before building the Dome of the Rock or the Mosque of Omar which still stands, having lasted over 1300 years. However, the Arabs only have a temporary lease on the site, and will have to hand it back to its original owners when the time comes.

Lasting peace will come to Israel when the whole region comes under the control of all the peoples of the region. It is to be noted that the Al Aqsa Mosque, from which Moslems believe Mohammed went on a journey to Heaven, is some distance away from this site●

Lateef Nissan

I knew Lateef Nissan as a fellow student in Rahail Shahmoon School in the 1930's. I would appreciate and be grateful for any information that can enable me to contact him or learn of his whereabouts●

32 Westmoreland Place Julian Sofaer
London SW1V 4AE

Dear Mr Dangoor,

I am a "full blooded" Ashkenazi with very little knowledge of Sephardi history. The few snippets which I managed to glean whilst sitting next to you were most interesting. All this was reinforced when I read through *The Scribe* which I found quite fascinating.

I would like to add a more spiritual note. After reading *The Scribe* I was inspired by the eternity and survival of the Jewish people. We come from such totally different cultural backgrounds (the "Life and times of Salim E Dangoor" was so revealing) and by all laws of nature and history we should long ago have blended and assimilated into our host countries.

Yet here we are, Sephardi and Ashkenazi, sitting next to each other at a function, discussing our common heritage and both fully cognizant of the fact that we are one people and have a common destiny. Miraculous!●
Gateshead Rabbi J Grunfeld

I always admire your journal and its articles which are so impressive and which I used to read over and over.

Allow me to draw your attention to the fact that the last issues of *The Scribe* contained too much of Baghdadi proverbs in Arabic with its English version. Should this continue, I am afraid that no one will be interested in the book written by Mr Moshe Hakham who considers preparing an English version of proverbs, as this appears in the issue of September 1993●

Tel Aviv Samra Latifa

Even though I was not born in Iraq and I belong to the new generation born and raised as an Israeli, the Baghdadian memories, heritage, language and cookery still dominate my parents home, and will probably escort and guide me forever.

I have been receiving *The Scribe* for several years and I find it a fascinating window to this world long gone that is still breathing through your pages●

Ha'aretz Guy Bechor
Tel Aviv Middle East Editor

I am writing on the subject of the article written by Mrs Victoria Rabbie and the related picture that appeared in *The Scribe* issue of September 1993.

In the picture appear the late Haron Horesh, my father-in-law, and Elyiahou Meir and Daoud Charpaya, who are brothers and sons of Isaac Kadourie, cousin of Sir Eliczer Kadourie. Daoud and Elyiahou are uncles of my wife Clara.

Mrs Rabie mentioned the given name Charpaya but did not elaborate. It is because of this surname and the story behind it that I am writing. Daoud Khedouri (Charpaya) was at one time attending to some business affairs in Khoramshahr (Mohammara) during the very hot summer months when people usually sleep the nights on the roofs of their houses. Under the circumstances the beds were draped with muslin or other thin material to avoid the bugs and mosquitoes and so was Daoud's. A whiff of strong wind struck Daoud's bed, set it sailing along the roof, plunging Daoud and his bed down to the ground floor. Normally roofs would be accommodated with railings to prevent unexpected hazards, unfortunately Daoud's had no such arrangements. About three meters from the ground Daoud, seeing what was coming to him, decided in order to prevent injury, to jump, ending up with a broken leg.

As for the poisoning of Sheikh Khazaal I have at the time heard it being said that this was prearranged by higher authority, and about the deportation notices that the Iranian government served the Iraqis, it was known that at the time the Shah was visiting the United States, the media subjected him to some questioning on the matter. The Shah asserted that his was a democratic government and he immediately rescinded the orders.

I enjoyed the most peaceful years of my young life during the period between 1935 when I went to Iran at the age of twenty four and 1950 when I left for Israel during the weeks of the deportation notices. Reza Shah and his son Mohammed Reza Shah were very good to their country and treated their subjects very well.

Montreal S S Nathaniel

My sincerest gratitude to you for yet another copy of *The Scribe*. It is a blessing I am very far from taking for granted.

Upon reading Meer S Basri's review of the life and times of General Allenby, I remembered a photograph of the Kaiser, where he was carried into Yirushalayim in a carriage, not on horseback, for which it was necessary to knock down part of the Jaffa Gate. Of course Allenby did the right thing by dismantling, but what a pity he also belonged to "The Cairo School".

Swansea Grylford Thomas

You have done a magnificent job of keeping the flame alive for those of us Babylonian Jews who are spread to the four corners of the globe. My American wife and Americanised children enjoy your magazine very much and can better understand our culture through your well crafted articles. Keep up the good work.

Framingham, USA Prof. Sammy Shina

Recognising Mohammed

After having seen the shocking caption "Now that we have recognised Arafat - should we not recognise Mohammed?" I thought that this was irony. Then I read Mr Dangoor's article and I understood that this was in dead earnest. As a consequence, please remove me from your mailing list.

Hebron Elyakim Ha'etzni
former Member of the Knesset
(TEHIYA)

How can we recognise Mohammed when Islam is so hostile to Judaism?

While we have been patiently waiting for the coming of the Messiah, the Koran bluntly states that the Messiah will not appear until all Jews have been eliminated from the face of the earth, even to the very last one who may be hiding behind a rock or a tree!

London A.E.D.

Scribe: While Israel vowed never to negotiate with the PLO, Rabin has recognised Arafat even without the amendment of the PLO covenant that calls for the total destruction of Israel. Peace is made between enemies.

We have hitherto had no opportunity to endorse Islam's pure monotheism, which follows closely the teachings of Moses and the Torah, and now is the time to do so. It will be to our credit and our advantage. The Koran's injunction against the Jews can easily be explained away as referring to those who do not consider Islam as a valid religion for its followers.

The following anecdote may be appropriate:

Eastern Kings used to make themselves accessible to their subjects, wanting to hear their requests and their grievances.

One day as the King was walking to his palace with his entourage, a poor man approached him and started to pour scorn and abuse on the monarch. Whereupon, the King ordered his vizier to have the man arrested and his tongue cut off. But the wise vizier found out the man's problems, gave him some money and sent him away.

The following week as the King was passing, the same man came to him, kissed his hand and thanked and praised him. The astonished King turned to his vizier and said, "Did I not order you to cut this man's tongue? How come he is still talking?" "Yes Sire", replied the vizier, "I did cut his old tongue, and I put a new tongue in its place!"

Are we in Paradise?

The Koran defines Paradise as gardens with rivers flowing with clear water, rivers of milk that doesn't change its taste, rivers of delicious wines and fruit juices, rivers of purified honey and fruit trees of all kinds.

At any supermarket you can get all these things and more. Sparkling and still bottled waters from famous spas, pasteurised and long-life milk, creams and yoghurts, wines and exotic juices of every description, at least 20 brands of purified honey and fruits of all seasons.

Are we living in paradise and we don't know it?

To dream of a better place to be in is to show ingratitude to our creator and to criticise His wonderful creative effort.

Israeli Cultural Minister Shulamit Aloni has asked Egypt for information on the principles of Islam, with a view to include them in the curricula of all schools in Israel.

FROM THE KORAN AL-AHQAF (THE SANDHILLS): 12-16

And before it (the Koran), the Book of Moses was revealed, a guide and a blessing. This is a Book confirming it, in the Arabic tongue, to warn the evil-doers and be as good news for the doers of good.

Surely, those that say, Our Lord is Allah, then they follow the right path, no evil shall befall them, nor will they grieve.

These are the dwellers of Paradise, abiding therein, a reward for their deeds.

We have enjoined man to show kindness to his parents. In pain his mother bears him, and in pain she brings him into the world. He is borne and weaned in thirty months. When he attains the peak of his strength and reaches forty years, let him say, Inspire me, Lord, to give thanks for Thy favour which Thou hast bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may do good which pleases Thee, and let me fare well in my offspring. To Thee I turn and to Thee I surrender myself.

Of these We shall accept the best of their deeds, and whose misdeeds we shall overlook. They shall be dwellers of Paradise, as they were promised in truth.

(Carefully translated from Arabic)

My father, Salim Djedda, passed away in March 1993. Of Baghdadian origin he had a large family who are scattered all over the world, but mostly concentrated in New York, where my sister and I were born. I am now living in a small country in the Pyrenees mountains called Andorra. While in Geneva visiting my family, the Hakkaks, two years ago, I was introduced to your magazine. Having lost my father, I do not want to lose touch with the Iraqi community - and, of course, all the wonderful recipes, so important to our culture. I would be most grateful to receive your journal.

Monna Djedda

Edifici Areny, Bloc E, 3oB
Ariñsal, Principat d'Andorra (via France)

The terms offered by the PLO in the peace negotiations are detrimental to Israel, in that the Intafada will not be stopped and that there will be a heavier burden on the Israeli Defence Forces to protect Israel's security under the proposed conditions.

Ramat Hasharon Benjamin Aryeh
(formerly Emil Chwela)
former Adviser to the Prime
Minister on Arab Affairs and
Sr Reserve Officer in the IDF

We, your subscribers, are lucky to have an organisation like yours who has dedicated yourselves to our enlightenment. You make us feel like the great big family we already are.

Buenos Aires Dorothy Shasha



Rishon Le Sion Rabbi Eliyahou Bakshi-Doron, David Elias, Leon Tamman, and Israel's Ambassador Moshe Raviv.



Left to right: Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks, Mr Mikhail Gorbachev, Mr Sidney Corob CBE (Chairman of British Technion Society), Mrs Raisa Gorbachev and Interpreter.

At his inauguration, the Reshion Le Sion puts on a new gown so that he can recite the *shehehiyanu* thanksgiving blessing over the gown, intending also that it covers his election to this high office. When Israel was established in 1948, many Jews in Baghdad wanted to recite the *shehehiyanu* blessing but were told that it wasn't permissible. However, they were advised to buy a new handkerchief and recite the blessing with the intention that it also covers the State of Israel. Can a handkerchief be more worthy of a blessing than the Jewish State for which we had waited 2000 years? ●

A FUTURE DISRAELI?



Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind pleased with his anecdote which he told at the Dinner at the Langham Hilton following the Reception at St James's Palace:

WHO WERE ADAM AND EVE?

Three men were speculating about what could have been the nationality of Adam and Eve.

The Jew said they were Jews, because the wife dutifully offered her husband the food at her disposal, which was an apple.

The Frenchman said they were French - a young couple having a picnic in their garden in the nude.

The Russian said, "You are both wrong. Two poor people with nothing to wear and little to eat, and yet they were made to believe they were in Paradise. They were certainly Russian!" ●



Baroness Thatcher chats with Mr Gorbachev through the Interpreter.

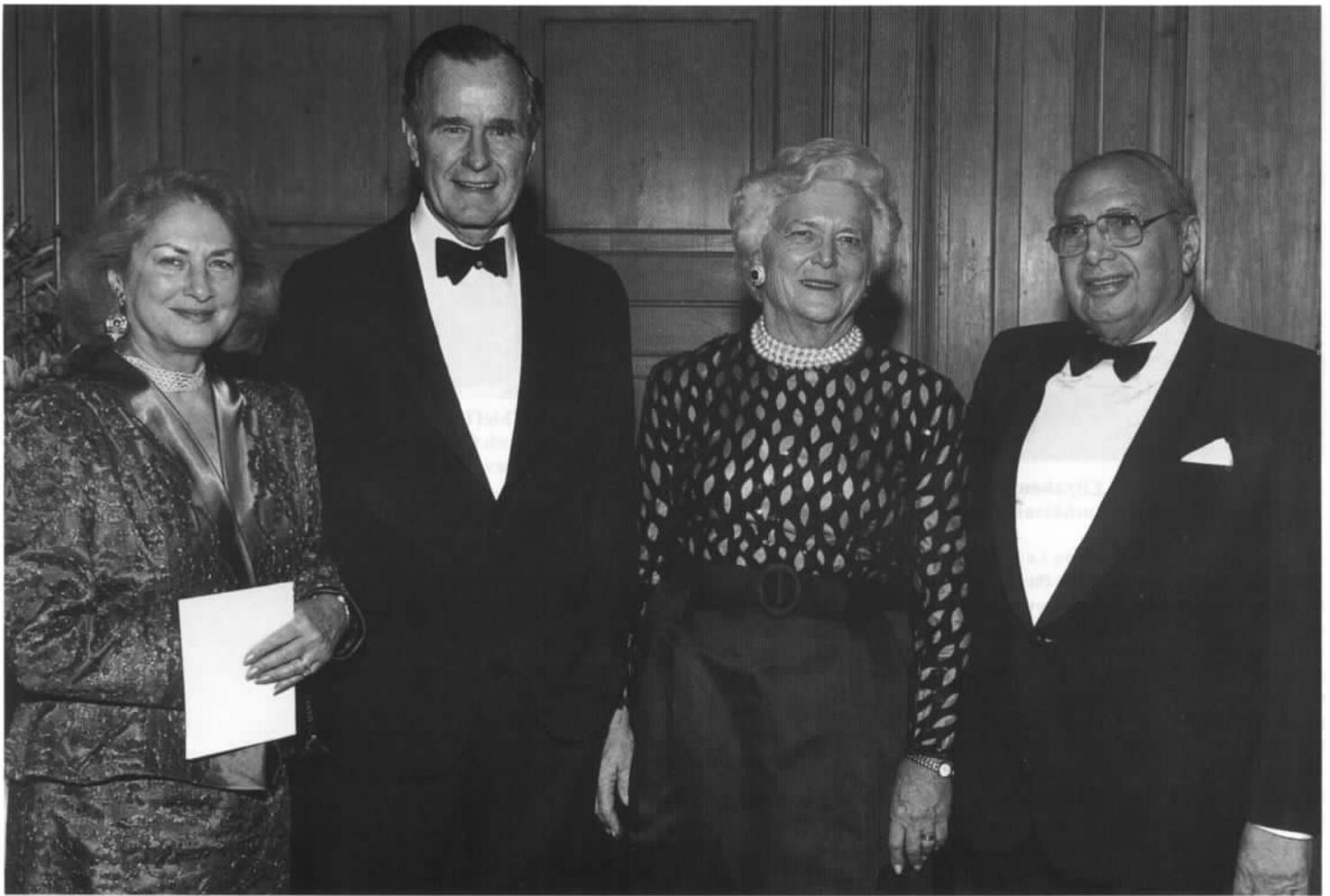


February 1994 at the JIA Gala Luncheon at the Dorchester Hotel. Left to right: Lucy Douek, Sarah Fedida, Mrs Jihan Sadat (Guest Speaker), Nancy Tawil, Renée Dangoor.

"A man's fidelity is like water in a sieve - A Syrian proverb" ●
Montreal

Ulga

I have arrived at the age where anything I learn about my parents' background is fascinating, and your journal is full of that kind of information ●
Chicago Florence Ovdia (nee Reuben)



President and Mrs Bush flanked by Renée and Naim Dangoor. Photo by Sidney Harris

Before the Dinner a private meeting was arranged for me with President Bush. After congratulating him for the honorary knighthood which was bestowed on him by the Queen that morning, I asked him if he had to kneel to receive the honour. He assured me that he did not have to do so.

President Bush gave two reasons why Operation Desert Storm was not continued to get rid of Saddam Hussein. One was that the Arab allies might back out, the other was the fear that American servicemen would be taken as hostages. The real reason was, in fact, that the fall of Saddam would have created a vacuum tempting Iran to invade Iraq●

A Language for Europe

While there has been much talk and negotiations about a single currency, no mention has been made on the more prestigious issue of choosing a common language for a united Europe. For, while the ECU is a new creation, a common language cannot be Esperanto but will evolve from the national languages of the Continent.

There is no doubt that English will attain that high and coveted position.

And while Britain is accused of dithering on a full commitment to a united Europe, the English language is assured to win the plum prize as a medium of official communication.

English will have done it again. For when America was deciding on a language, the rivals were French and German. English was chosen as a compromise. When Bismarck was asked what was the greatest event of modern history, he replied that it was the fact that America chose to speak English.

After World War II, English replaced French as the language of international diplomacy and it so happened that when I drew President de Gaulle's attention to this he appointed a year later M. Georges Pompidou as protector of the French language. Pompidou banned the use of English scientific terms in universities and discour-

aged the use of "Franglais" in the media. French, beautiful as it is, suffers from a difficult grammar and cannot have a comeback unless it abolishes its sex discrimination and its difficult conjugation. English too could benefit from an overhaul of archaic spellings and mouth-filling words. As Bernard Shaw once pointed out *ghoti* can be pronounced as "fish" - *gh* as in *enough*; *o* as in *women* and *ti* as in *nation*!

In the meantime, English continues to gain converts: it is the official language of India, the only medium of communication among the various Chinese ethnic groups and the paramount business language of the world.

Just as the Jews put their stamp on world religions, revised English could one day become the secondary or even the first language of the whole human race.

Some years ago I made the following compromise suggestion which appeared in the *Financial Times* and the *International Herald Tribune*:

Write in English
Speak in French
Shout in German
Sing in Italian
Make love in Spanish, and
finally, curse in Russian●

N.E.D.

Thank you for sending me *The Scribe*, which I enjoy reading very much. It is through this publication that I have gained valuable information about some of my ancestors and also about the lifestyle of my parents in Iraq. It is such a rich heritage.

For many years I have been researching my family tree (with some help from *The Scribe*), which I have recently completed. I am, however, looking for information about the family "Beit, Zilkah", and would appreciate any one of your readers who could provide me with this●

Dolly (Dayan) Shadler
11 Hardy Street, Dove Heights
Sydney, N.S.W. 2030, Australia

May I ask for information regarding the Solomon family in Rangoon. My father was Abraham Sofaer (the actor) and my grandmother was Ramah Solomon, daughter of Ezekriel Solomon of E.Z. Solomon & Sons in Dalhousie Street. One of the "Sons" was Sassoon Solomon who lived at 18 Halpin Road. His brother, Ezra, lived at 1 Flytche Road.

I am putting together a family tree and would welcome any information regarding either the Solomons or the Sofaers●

603 1-2 Victoria Avenue Ruth Sofaer
Venice, California 90291, USA

Crime and punishment

Justice must be done, and must be seen to be done!

a Lamentation by Naim Dangoor

Vladimir Zhirinovsky may well be a power-hungry opportunist who wants to exploit Russia's economic problems to win the presidency in the 1996 election. But Russia has genuine and valid grievances against her former enemies.

Let Germany and Japan tremble

In the post-war period the world became divided into two camps in justified dread of each other. The West and the Soviet Union both spent vast sums on atomic weaponry. After 40 years of cold war confrontation, the Soviets blinked first. The world could breathe a sigh of relief.

After the thaw of the Cold War, Russia has every right to want to settle old scores with Germany, the treacherous aggressor that invaded Russia without cause and wreaked havoc and slaughter.

During the Cold War Germany and Japan made hay under Nato's nuclear umbrella and although they lost the war, they virtually won the peace, and became the two wealthiest nations in the world benefiting from post-war rehabilitation and being free of arms expenditure.

Germany was well on the way to dominate a united Europe, and Japan - the Pacific region. Russia now has the right to challenge both and extract from them the compensation she deserves.

Zhirinovsky may well appear to be a madman, but being the son of a Jewish lawyer, he can't be that stupid, Yeltsin is well advised to take a plank from his platform and extract adequate reparation, for Russia from her former enemies.

The Jewish parallel

Jews, too, have an unfinished business with Germany for her systematic and barbaric slaughter, aided and abetted by occupied Europe, of one-third of our people - six million men, women and children, for no other reason than that they were Jews.

Punishment must fit the crime

Mainly because of the Cold War, Germany escaped proper punishment for her crimes. This has emboldened German revisionists to claim that, in fact, there was no Holocaust. A recent book on the massacre of 1.5 million Armenians in 1915 naively states that it is difficult to make an objective confirmation of such claims, especially as Turkey has denied that there ever was a massacre. It is not difficult to imagine that in one or two generations the same view could be taken of the Jewish Holocaust. There was no punishment that fits the enormity of the crime. Germany is responsible for its neo-Nazis. An activist minority can do damage while the silent majority is indifferent.

The real Holocaust

Because there was no proper punishment to counter the deed, it has remained for us who have escaped terror to publicise Hitler's extermination of European Jewry, by erecting monuments and holding seminars of *Remembrance for the Future*. The real Holocaust then is the trauma that the Final Solution has left on our minds.

Enter Zhirinovsky

Vladimir Zhirinovsky, Zionist-turned-Russian nationalist, must realise deep down that he combines in himself both Russian and Jewish grievances. Maybe that is what fuels his intense feelings and extremist utterances. He is well advised to make his objectives Justice and Peace.

I wish I wasn't born into this murderous age - the enormity of the Holocaust increases with the passage of time.

Power to your hand, Zhirinovsky. As you brandish an atom bomb at Berlin, remember to keep one for the old Jewish quarter of Warsaw, in a country that boasts antisemitism even without its 3 million Jews. Another one for Rome, the fountain of religious hypocrisy.

Central Europe, with its endemic right wing extremists, has proved itself to be the cesspool of human civilisation.

Let the atomic threat overhang Central Europe until there is a proper redress and a change of heart, and until the fear of God can be impressed on its people.

Attitude to the Arabs

In spite of the money he receives from Saddam, Zhirinovsky has no love for the Arabs. Of them he says that they should live in tents and mudhouses, and that they should travel on donkeys and camels!

The Hebron massacre

Which one? In 1929 my grandfather, Chief Rabbi Hakham Ezra Dangoor, wept when we read to him the news that 69 Rabbis and Yeshiva scholars who had been living in Hebron for generations, were murdered in cold blood by their Arab neighbours.

While all acts of terrorism should be condemned, terrorists would do well to remember (and be reminded) that they are not the only people who have access to a machine gun. Their antagonists can sometimes give them a dose of their own medicine.

Terrorism or Democracy

Democracy has proved to be no match for terrorism. Those who preach "Let us kill Jews" or who deny the Holocaust or who say that Hitler was right, should be lined up against the wall and shot before they had a chance to carry out their wicked intentions. Theirs is a declaration of war and has to be responded to as such.

But democracy is entangled in its false concept of free speech and freedom fighters. What kind of freedom fighters are those who enter an Istanbul synagogue and spray the worshippers with bullets, or hold innocent children hostage for their impossible demands?

Terrorism must be nipped in the bud by counter terrorism. Only then will the rule of law prevail and peace be established.

Percy Gorgey writes:

Zhirinovsky has to be taken seriously, because in 1996 there will be elections for the Russian Presidency. If Yeltsin does not stand, as he has hinted, or the economy does not considerably improve, as is possible, Zhirinovsky might gain power. In such

an event, his attitude towards Germany, which he has gone to the lengths of threatening to blast with nuclear bombs, will pose a real threat.

From an objective point of view, Germany has done little or nothing to aid or compensate Russia materially. From a Russian point of view, she has not been sufficiently punished for the terrifying crimes she has committed against Russia. Zhirinovsky wants to strike the fear of the devil into the hearts of Germany and her wartime ally Japan. Germany still needs to pay adequate compensation to Israel and Jews for the atrocities of the Nazi Holocaust.

In the Cold War, while Germany and Japan prospered under the shelter of the United States' nuclear umbrella, Russia in the Soviet Union had to bear the heavy burden of rearmament. It is time for Germany and Japan to share the wealth she has gained through avoiding heavy military expenditure. Neo-nazism is rearing its ugly head in Germany and this must be viewed with alarm, as it should be remembered that Hitler's Nazi party started after the First World War with just eight members.

Antisemitism is rife in Central and Eastern Europe. Poland has few Jews today but there is a worrying degree of antisemitism among ordinary people.

The lessons of the Holocaust have not been fully learnt, and war criminals are escaping justice. If they had been prosecuted more vigorously, perhaps the genocide practised by Pol Pot in Cambodia, Idi Amin in Uganda, and to a certain extent by Saddam Hussein in Iraq against the Kurds, might never have occurred.

The enormity of the Holocaust increases with the passage of time. Its after effects are deeply felt. It is because the perpetrators of the Holocaust have escaped justice that those who deny it ever took place, gain added encouragement.

In Britain there is concern at the delay in bringing to courts Nazi war criminals, despite the adoption of the War Crimes Act two years ago.

It is to be hoped that Russian nationalism could be developed along constructive lines.

Over the last 9 years I have dedicated myself as a researcher of Judaic Studies and History, writing and lecturing on Eastern Science subjects in Seminars, courses to military cadets, institutes, Temples and other sites.

I was born in Baghdad. Lectured regularly at universities in Israel on subjects of the Middle East and especially on the Babylonian Jews.

New York David Simon Shimony

My father in Israel, Mr Meyer Yehooda Nissan, is a great admirer of the work you are doing in publishing this magazine. Please keep up the good work.

London N3 Dalia Aboody

I heard from my late father Yehouda Saleh Shlomo David that his uncle Meir Elias was married to a very beautiful woman. One day when she was alone at home, one of her servants came to the room and asked her to make sex with him. As she refused, he killed her with a knife. Meir Elias then married Simha Rouben Elia Shaul (Bertha Fattal's aunt).

He then built the Meir Elias Hospital and in 1910 he made a big ceremony for the opening of the hospital and invited all the guests from the government, including the Walli (Governor). Although he had a private carriage, he went walking all the way with the guests in the hottest weather of the summer. He caught sunstroke and that was the cause of his death. His large home was turned into the Meir Elias Synagogue, which my late father looked after for many years until he left for Palestine in 1942●

Ramat Hasharon Marguerite Zebaida

My husband, Abraham S Dellal, and I (under the name of Florine) are both Iraqi Jews, born in Baghdad, and married there. In 1945 we left Baghdad for Teheran, where we both stayed and built a family of 3 children. In 1965/66 we emigrated to Israel and settled in Ramat Gan.

My husband is related to the many Dellals of Iraq who are mainly in London, also in the United States, Canada, Israel, etc. He is the *first* cousin of Dr Victor M Dellal of London; of the late Sulman A Dellal (father of Jack Dellal of London); of Victoria Rabbi/Rabipour, maiden name Dellal, of London - the fathers of all the above mentioned are brothers.

When we sometimes get a chance to get a hold of *The Scribe*, care of some friends, both my husband and I get real excited over it, especially when it mentions Iraqi Jews, sometimes with their pictures too, as it interests us a lot to get to hear about them. Thus we do share our excitement over the journal●

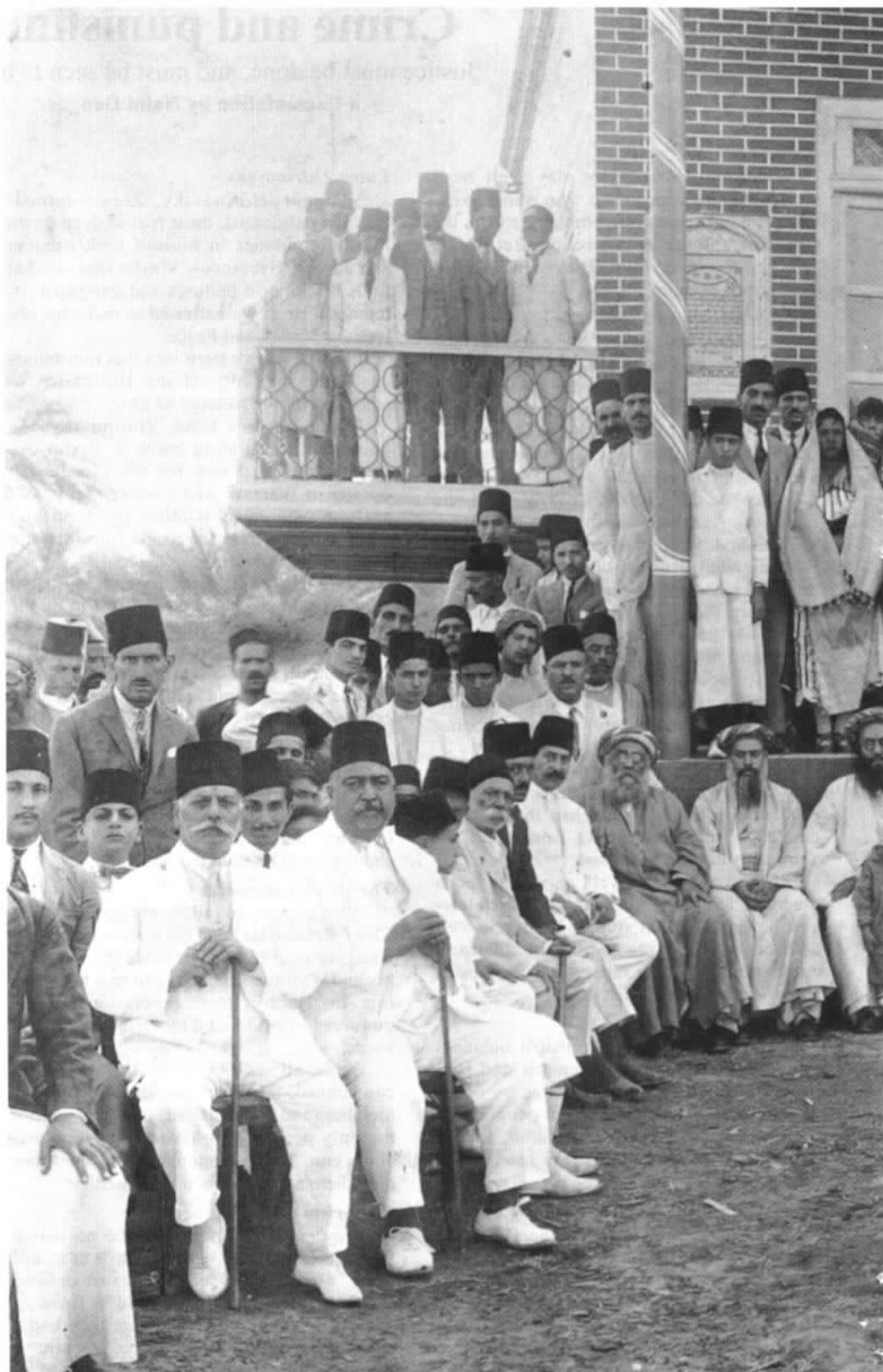
Ramat Gan Florine Dellal (Sadouni)

I recently attended an Alliance Israelite meeting and was given a magazine published by them in New York. I read an article in it by Jacques Attali, former President of the European Bank for Reconstruction & Development. He touched on the PLO-Israel agreement and I was interested to find that he comes to the same conclusions that Mr Dangoor advocated about the Middle East solution. He writes:

"There is, therefore, a great deal to be gained through peace and co-operation. A gradual reduction of Middle Eastern to world levels of military spending could free up to 50 billion dollars per annum for investment in human and physical capital. Collaboration in areas of mutual interest, such as water management, health, telecommunications, transportation, agriculture, energy, tourism, will benefit all the countries of the region, and will make it possible to put the region's complementary resources to good use. The availability of labour could thus better complement the capital, and technical and professional know-how that exists. The creation of a free trade area is also a long term goal. Ultimately, such economic co-operation will pave the way to political co-operation, and will be the best guarantor for peace●

Montreal

Yusef Meer



1925 – Chief Rabbi Hakham Ezra Dangoor inaugurates a new wing at the Meir Elias Jewish Synagogue. Seated in the foreground are Chief Rabbi Meir Gabriel, Abraham Nuham. To his left – Senator Menahem Daniel, Menashi Abraham.

I find *The Scribe* very interesting and informative. I look forward to receiving every copy, which I read avidly. I pass it on to friends who are for the first time learning what happened in the Middle East in years past and what is still happening in the Middle East today. I, too, am learning about history that I knew nothing about having grown up in Japan.

I read *The Scribe* to my husband Ezra Battat who is blind and he enjoys hearing names of people he knew or heard of when he was living in Baghdad till the age of 19●

Melbourne

Helen Battat

I am privileged to receive your publication and I cherish every article and anecdote, especially the Arabic ones. However, I believe that there is an error in the December 1993 issue, "El aaquil min ghamza wel hmagh min gamza". The word "Gamza" means to JUMP ...If you want the proper word for "a kick in the ass..." it is "Rafsa".

Montreal

Steve Acre (Akerib)

Khabbaza

Scribe The original proverb as given by Salim Khabbaza mentioned "Rafsa", but Gamza or Ghafsa? It depends on where you lived in Baghdad●



h Hospital, Baghdad. To his right – his Law Court: Rabbi Sasson Khedhour (with his son Meir), Rabbi Raphael Isaac Hayim, Rabbi m Gurji (who built the wing), Rabbi Yosef Shraim of Israel. Standing – Sasson Murad, Saleh Shlomo and many other notables.

Thank you very much for the Moullem/Hakham Saleh Family Tree. It is beautifully done by Lydia Collins. A cousin of Salim Saleh Moullem who lives in Great Neck, New York, prepared a family tree a few years ago. He took a great deal of trouble and wrote to each member of the family for information and then collated it in book form and we are supposed to keep each his/her copy up to date. I do not know if you know about it.

New York

Aziza Mowlem

Scribe: Yes, but the authentic family tree starts only with Joseph Hakham Saleh●

I do not know how I originally became the recipient of *The Scribe* - or through whom - but I must tell you that I greatly enjoy it. As well as being interesting it also acts as a teaching journal on another branch of Jewry.

Interestingly we have through this publication made contact with the Sulemans of Scarborough, whom my husband knew originally through business, without knowing their affiliation.

I particularly like the recipes●

Leeds

Esme Cohen

Jewish Carpets

I write to enquire if any of your readers have any information about Jewish carpets which they might wish to share with me.

I am preparing a catalogue of my collection of rugs - all of which have Jewish symbols or Hebrew or Yiddish writing - and would be most grateful for any source material (papers, photographs, stories), on such rugs and their weavers●

The Ridgeway,

Anton Felton

Mill Hill, London NW7 1QX

The Baghdadian Jews of India

by Rachel and Sara Manasseh ©

The term Baghdadi Jews used to refer to in general to Jews from Iraq - formerly Mesopotamia and Babylonia. It may sometimes also refer to Jews from other parts of the Middle East.

Before the arrival of the Arabic-speaking Jews in India, two major Jewish communities had been living in India for some centuries, - the Bene Israel community along the Konkan coast of Western India, and the Cochin Jews of South India. Each has a rich and distinct history, though not the subject of this article. In addition, there were also Sephardi Jews, (again as distinct from the Arabic-speaking Jews), who came to India when Portugal conquered a part of India at the beginning of the sixteenth century. At that time India was divided between various Maharajahs (Princes) and the Moghul Empire.

Under the Moghul Empire in India (1526-1707), Jews came to India to trade from Persia, Afghanistan and Kurdistan. In 1572 the Moghul Emperor Akbar also conquered Surat, a Western port about 175 miles north of Bombay. Akbar's representatives began trading with other parts of India, and Surat soon became a great trading centre, attracting first the Portuguese, followed by the English, Italians, Germans, Persians, Baghdadis and Basrawis. Gradually England obtained a strong footing in Surat, and under the British East India Company controlled the business and finances of Surat. During the eighteenth century, the British gradually took over the whole of India, under the rule of the British East India Company.

From 1745, Jews from Baghdad started coming to Surat to trade. They stayed for a few years and, after earning substantial business profits, returned to Baghdad. Some Jews remained in Surat, and so the first place in India in which Jewish immigrants from Mesopotamia and Syria founded a Jewish community was Surat - the most important port in India and a great commercial centre.

Early settlers. In 1767 Ya'aqob Yis-haq Dawid came from Baghdad to Surat, and in time the Baghdadian Jews built a synagogue especially for their use, and bought a plot for a burial ground. Ya'aqob Yis-haq Dawid died in Surat and was buried there, his son and grandson moving on to Bombay. In 1790, Shalom Cohen, came to Surat from Aleppo, via Baghdad and Basra. In 1792 Shalom Cohen became leader and spokesman of the Arabic-speaking Jews in Surat. He and his descendants were to lay the foundations of the Jewish community in Calcutta, which was the capital of India.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the Jewish community began moving from Surat to Bombay and Calcutta. Later, a

community was established in Poona, near Bombay. The Synagogue in Surat ultimately fell into disrepair, but the burial ground existed. The first Baghdadi Jew who settled in Bombay was Sliman Ya'aqob Sliman early in the nineteenth century, who dominated the early settlers. Another was Ya'aqob Semah Nissim, also from Baghdad. Both men were wealthy, and benefactors of institutions in Baghdad.



Last photograph of David Sassoon.

The sea journey to Calcutta via Bombay, the first port of call after Surat, was long and tedious, taking four months or more in an English sailing vessel. There were then no railways. The Baghdadi Jewish settlers were preceded by Shalom Cohen, mentioned above, who arrived in Calcutta in 1798 with his *shohet* and cook from Surat, via Bombay, Cochin and Madras. He is often referred to as the "father of the community" in Calcutta. Both he and his son-in-law, Moshe Duek HaCohen, also from Aleppo, kept detailed diaries in the Jewish-Arabic dialect, written in the traditional Eastern Jewish "Rashi" script. Moshe Duek HaCohen is considered to be the real founder of the Calcutta Jewish community - he maintained a house of worship and was devoted to the service of the community.

By 1810 the Arabic-speaking settlers had developed a rich and varied trade between India and the Middle East, dealing in cotton, mirrors, gold leaf, copper, coral, spices, almonds, coffee and indigo.

The Baghdad immigration to India intensified in the 1820s following the misrule and persecution by Daud Pasha, Governor and Wali of Baghdad. Members of the Ezra and Judah families settled in Calcutta, where they were to play an important part in the community's development. Many settlers and visitors learned in Jewish Halakha and Torah came, among them Hesqel Reuben Menashe, from the Zbeida family, lived and traded in Calcutta from 1825-1835, then returned to Baghdad. He and his father Reuben Menashe had donated the major amount for the Hurbah synagogue in Jerusalem, and the family endowed the Beith Zilkha in Rabbinical College in Baghdad.

Meantime, the persecution and extortions of Daud Pasha in Baghdad became increas-

ingly severe. Sasson ben Saleh, of an honourable and wealthy family, had officiated as Nasi, leader of the Jewish community, for 38 years, and as *Saraf Bashi* (chief banker) at the same time. He retired, a target of the Pasha's intrigues and extortions. His son David, then 36 years old, himself a merchant and banker, was thrown in prison in 1826, and released after a heavy bribe. He escaped to Bushire across the Persian Gulf, and was followed later by his father, and by his wife, and his two sons (by his first marriage). By a strange twist of fate these traumatic events were to lead to the firm establishment of the Baghdadi Jewish community in Bombay.

David Sassoon. After his father's death in Bushire, David decided to leave for India where, under British rule, there was freedom of worship and expanding opportunities for trade. He arrived in Bombay in 1832 with his family, and made his home there. In Bombay, he established a Bank and his firm David Sassoon and Company, (adopting his father's name Sasson as his family name), - a name which was to be a light in the story of the Jews in many lands, when, in time, branches would be opened in China, Japan and Hongkong, and later, after his death, in England. He was helped by his eight sons - Albert Abdallah and Elias (Eliyahu) by his first wife who had died in Baghdad, and his six sons born in India from his second wife, whom he had married in Baghdad. Each of his offices was in the charge of one of his sons, and staffed by young Jewish Baghdadians.



Farha, second wife of David Sassoon.

David Sassoon began trading in cotton, cloth and jute, and foreseeing the growth of shipping, constructed the first dock in Bombay, the Sassoon Dock. His integrity and mastery of languages - he spoke Arabic, 'Amrani, (the Jewish-Arabic dialect), Persian, Turkish and Hindustani - won the confidence of merchants of all communities - Hindus, Muslims, Parsees and Europeans, and the respect of the British Government officials. In public as in private life, David Sassoon retained his Baghdadian style of dress at all times, as did his family. His

sons later took to Western garb, so that both styles of dress were seen side by side. 'Amrani was the language spoken; daily prayers were conducted at home and in the office; and the Baghdad Jewish cuisine was maintained.

The early Baghdadian settlers, both in Bombay and Calcutta, combined keen business acumen with the religious traditions of Baghdad, commercial interests with the study and observance of the Torah. Their upright and honourable way of life was the key to their personal success as well as to their concern for their community, and their extensive general philanthropic activity.

With his growing influence and prosperity, David Sassoon provided the Jewish communities of Bombay and Poona with the basis of community religious life. He built fine synagogues - the Maghen David Synagogue in Byculla in 1861, where the family first lived, and the Ohel David Synagogue, a landmark in Poona, in 1863. Later, his grandson, Jacob, built the Keneseth Eliahoo Synagogue in the Bombay Fort area in 1884, in memory of his father. Religious leaders, Hakhamim, came from Baghdad here as in Calcutta. *Nosah Baghdad* (the mode of prayer) was followed, and contacts maintained with the Baghdad Beth Din.

David Sassoon laid the foundations of vast family fortunes in the Indian Empire. He gave away large sums for institutions, both in Bombay and Baghdad as well as for the general public. Among his philanthropies, besides the synagogues and burial grounds, were the Sassoon General Hospital in Poona; in Bombay, the free Jewish school - the David Sassoon Benevolent Institution - later expanded to a high school by his grandson Jacob, and renamed the Sir Jacob Sassoon Free High School; the Sassoon Mechanics Institute in Bombay, now renamed the David Sassoon Library and Reading Room, besides many others.

He assisted in the publication of religious and spiritual books and a weekly Jewish-Arabic periodical was published in Bombay from 1855 to 1866 called the *Hebrew Gazette* in English, and in 'Amrani "*Talab el Kher le Qomo*" (in Hebrew *Doresh Tob le Amo*, i.e. "*Seeks the Welfare of His People*").

David Sassoon's coming to India was indeed a blessing to the Jews of Bombay and the many who came from Baghdad and elsewhere in his wake. He died in Poona in 1864 and is buried in the grounds of his Synagogue there, "Ohel David". On the occasion of the Sassoon Centenary celebrations in Poona (connected with the Sassoon General Hospital) in 1968, the President of India, Zakir Hussein, paid a visit to the mausoleum of David Sassoon and the Synagogue●

To be continued

I have been receiving *The Scribe* for 4 years. My husband and I enjoy it a lot.

In your last issue No.60 I read the letter from William (Billy) Terzi. My late sister Irene (Levy) Sala and I grew up in the Zawra Club. Billy's family were also members. The last time I met Billy was in Israel in 1953 at his mother's house.

Thanks to your publication, you resurrected happy memories●

Montreal Liliane Levy Shamash



The above picture was taken on the occasion of the visit to Baghdad, in 1878 of Aharon Gubbay (sitting in the centre), grandson-in-law of David Sassoon. To his right is Hakham Yosef Hayim (1835-1909) of Ben Ish Hai fame, and to his left is Yosef Gurji, Baghdad community leader and uncle of David Sassoon. Standing, on the right, is the *shohet* and on the left is the manservant, both of whom Mr Gubbay brought with him from India. Between them stand Rabbi Yeheskel and Rabbi Moshe, brothers of Hakham Yosef Hayim. In front are other members of the Hakham family and Mr Gubbay's private secretary. Aharon Hai ben Moshe ben Mordechai Gubbay, A.M. Gubbay - nicknamed Buddha Sahib, born 1832, was married in 1856 to Rachel (1842-1913) daughter of Sir Albert Abdullah Sassoon, eldest son of David Sassoon.

Yosef-Ezra Abraham David Shua Gubbay Gurji (1809-1894), also known as Signor Gurji and Abu Moshi, was the brother of Amam (d.1821) who was the wife of Sheikh Sassoon (Baghdad 1750-1830 Bushire) father of David Sassoon (Baghdad 1792-1864 Poona)●

I was impressed by reading recently *Scribe* No.60, December 1993, passed to me by some of my former Iraqi friends in Montreal. I was born in Baghdad and emigrated to Canada 30 years ago with my family. My great grandfather was the well known merchant "Hagabir Joseph Gourdji", who was the maternal uncle to the famous David Sassoon of India and England, one of whose sons Ezra Joseph Gourdji was married to Simha, daughter of Hakham Joseph Haim●
Montreal Isaac Sulman Gourdji

I enclose an old family photograph above belonging to my late mother-in-law Habiba Aboody (nee Gourgey). The picture is of her maternal and paternal grandparents, Hacham Yoseph Hayeem, the famous Kabbalist, and Yosef Gourgey, famous philanthropist and Jewish leader of Baghdad.

This photograph was published in an issue of *India & Israel* sometime in the early fifties by Mr Pollock, who was in charge of the journal and also the acting Consel for Israel at that time●

Bombay

Eva Aboody

مصر تكرم العراق في نبوغ شبابه



"Egypt honours Iraq in the excelling of its youth".

I enclose a picture which appeared in Egyptian newspapers in June 1936, showing the late Naim Cohen, who had graduated in Engineering at the University of Cairo. He was the first government-sponsored Iraqi student to graduate at an Egyptian university.

His son, Shlomo Cohen, is currently an engineer in Tel Aviv working with my brother David in property and construction.

We all appreciate your public work●

London

Moshi Khadhourie

Iraqi Jewish Notables

Yet another book has appeared from the prolific pen of Meer S. Basri. *Eminent Jewish Men of Modern Iraq* Vol.2 (in Arabic), has been published in Jerusalem, edited by Prof. Shmuel Moreh and Dr Nissim Qazzaz. The first volume appeared ten years ago.

The new volume contains chapters on Iraqi Jews in the Army and Police, Jewish legends and biographies of Senators Menahem and Ezra Daniel, Sasson Heskail the Minister of Finance. Also biographies and notes on the following personalities:

Rabbis Joseph Haim, Sasson Smouha, Abraham Hillel, Ezra Dangoor, Sasson Khedhour, Abraham Aslan, etc.

Among other eminent men, advocates, businessmen, writers and poets, members of parliament, journalists, whose biographies appear in this volume, we may cite Yehouda Zelouf, Saleh Kahtan, Abraham and Joseph Elkabir, Salim Ishaq, Khedhour and Ezra Meir Lawee, Dr Murad Mikhael, Dr Jack Shabi and many others.

Another section relates to eminent Jews of Iraqi origin who flourished in India and the Far East, England, the U.S. and other countries. Among them we note Sir Elly and Lord Kedourie, Joseph Smouha, Mme. Françoise Giroud, Prof. Abraham Yahouda, Sir David Ezra, Elic Kedourie and Davide Sala. The famous English poet Siegfried Sassoon and his poetry are discussed.

Other books by Meer Basri, published in Baghdad, London, Jerusalem and Beirut, include the following:

Essays on Iraqi Economy (with a glossary of economic terms in Arabic, French and English).

Men and Shadows (short stories).
Intellectual Awakening in Modern Iraq.
Eminent Politicians of Modern Iraq.
Eminent Kurds
Life's Journey from the Banks of the Tigris to the Valley of the Thames.
Songs of Love and Eternity (poetry).
History of Modern Iraqi Literature (under press in Beirut).

Some of these books may be obtained from Arabic libraries in London and from the Association for Jewish Academics from Iraq, C/o Prof. Shmuel Moreh, Asian & African Studies, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Mount Scopus, Jerusalem 91905, Israel.

An Empire of their Own How the Jews Invented Hollywood

by Neil Gabler.

W.H. Allen, London 1989.

A group biography of the Jewish immigrants who founded and came to dominate the American film industry. Adolph Zucker, Karl Laymore, Louis B. Mayer, the Warner Brothers, Harry Cohen. This is a spellbinding social history of Hollywood. In the process they created a new country - an empire of their own, and colonized the American imagination to such an extent that the country came to be largely defined by its movies. It is the story of the people who gave America to the world.



1912 - Baghdad. The Basri Family.

Left to right: Gourjiye, Father Shaul, Meer (on his lap), Muzli, Mother Farha (nee Dangoor), Khatoun.

In front: Josephine and Saleh.

Note the ladies' modest dress - long sleeves and high collars.

The Russian Jewish immigrants came to Hollywood to create an aristocracy of their own. The American dream is a Jewish invention.

The American film industry was founded, and for 30 years was operated by Russian and other Jewish immigrants.

Jewish writers, lawyers, doctors and financiers and producers served the industry. Hollywood was described as a Jewish holiday, a gentile tragedy.

Karl Laymore - Universal Pictures.
 Adolph Zuker (Hungarian) - Paramount.
 William Fox (another Hungarian) - Fox Film Corporation.
 Louis B. Mayer - Metro Goldwyn Mayer.
 Benjamin Warner - his sons formed Warner Brothers.
 Harry Cohen - Columbia Pictures.

When Professor Albert Einstein, creator of the Theory of Relativity, visited Hollywood, Jack Warner took him around his studios and said to him, "I, too, have my theory of Relatives - don't hire them!"

For God, Country & Coca-Cola by Mark Pendergrast

Published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London. 600 pp. £20.

Reviewed by Naim Dangoor

When the Coca-Cola Export team came to Baghdad in 1949, to find a suitable bottler for their drink, they first contacted, in typical fashion, the Prime Minister Tawfiq Suwaidi, who declined the franchise. He later joked to friends, "They told me we had to believe in Coca-Cola! I told them that people had difficulty believing even in God. How can we believe in Coca-Cola?"

In the end the choice fell on the partnership of the late Ahmed Safwat Alawa and myself. By the time I returned to Baghdad from America I found that the retail price was already decided to be 20 fils (2p = 5 cents) and a small Dixie bottling machine was ordered. I thought the price was too

high and I managed to bring it down to 14 fils, which happened to be the lowest in the world. We had difficulty catching up with the huge demand that followed. It was a strange feeling that, as the Jews of Iraq were leaving *en masse* to Israel, I on the other hand was embarking on a major business adventure.

The success of Coca-Cola is based on advertising and marketing. We were required to give the retailer a mark-up of an unheard of 40 per cent (= 4 fils) leaving only 10 fils for the rest of the operation. I later learned that successive governments refused to change that price.

In 1968 Coca-Cola had to choose between Israel and the lucrative Arab market. Unable to cancel the Israeli franchise because of threatened American Jewish boycott, Coca-Cola finally lost the Arab business to its competitor Pepsi-Cola.

It was a sad sign of the rising despotism in Iraq, that Abdul Wahed Zaki, who became the owner of the five bottling plants in Iraq, was tortured to death in prison and his assets confiscated when he tried to defy the Arab boycott office. Saddam Hasein had just come to power.

On my recent visit to Israel I was given a copy of Foreign Minister Shimon Peres's new book *The New Middle East*, which has been published in Hebrew and English.

In this book Mr Peres spells out his vision of the Middle East after the conclusion of peace between Israel and her Arab neighbours. I was amazed to note on every page the similarity of his views and hopes with those repeatedly expressed by Naim Dangoor in *The Scribe* and elsewhere, that there must be close regional cooperation in the fields of defence, water, mineral resources, tourism and trade, that will ensure internal stability and external security for the whole area. The interests of all the nationalities of the region to be recognised and satisfied.

London

Shaul H Sassoon

VICTORIA

Hebrew bestseller of the year (now in its 11th reprinting) by Baghdad-born Sami Mikhael. Reviewed by Naim Dangoor.

The first chapter of this novel was rendered into English by Hillel Halkin of The Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature and appeared in its entirety in a recent issue of the *Jerusalem Post* supplement. It is a masterpiece even in translation.

Victoria is basically a love story recounting the loyalty and devotion of the heroine to her wayward and philandering husband, Raphael, who was suffering from tuberculosis.

The novel is woven around the life of the author's family living in the squalor of an overcrowded courtyard in a Baghdad slum, with alleged incest, philio rape, adultery, wife and child abuse as grim facts of life on the open-plan rooftop summer sleeping quarters.

Victoria personifies his mother who kept telling her son "Write a book about me." From an early age he stored in his mind what he heard and saw all around him, to give us a vivid and gripping story.

The book begins with Victoria standing on the side walk of the crowded Baghdad bridge, contemplating the rushing waters of the Tigris. In a depressed mood and worried over Raphael's health, who had just left for Beirut and the Lebanese mountains for recuperation, she toys with the idea of throwing herself in the river. But the jostling crowd kept bringing her back to reality and she abandoned her plan.

Sami's mastery of his pen is evident in his graphic description of the traffic across the narrow, one-lane bridge. As soon as the green flags appeared on the bridge tower, the honking cars moved forward, stampeding the panicky horse pulling wagons and carriages, forcing their coachmen to descend and grab their bridles, while running alongside them. Victoria heard the hoof beats, the slapping bare feet, and the pants of the wagon drivers, saw the rearing heads of the horses and the white foam running from the muzzles, and as the traffic knifed its way through the crowd, Victoria could barely keep from being sucked into the maelstrom.

At a Press interview the author said:

"I have to say that the reality of this world is tens, perhaps hundreds of times worse than I describe it in this book."

"When the Iraqi immigrants to this country were struggling to establish themselves, it would have been impossible to write this kind of novel. Only now, when the Iraqi community in this country has achieved such remarkable heights in business, in the professions, in academia, can I write about these chapters in our past."

"Writers were my true childhood heroes."

"I had adopted a communist ideology from a very young age."

"I learned the craft of writing by reading voraciously."

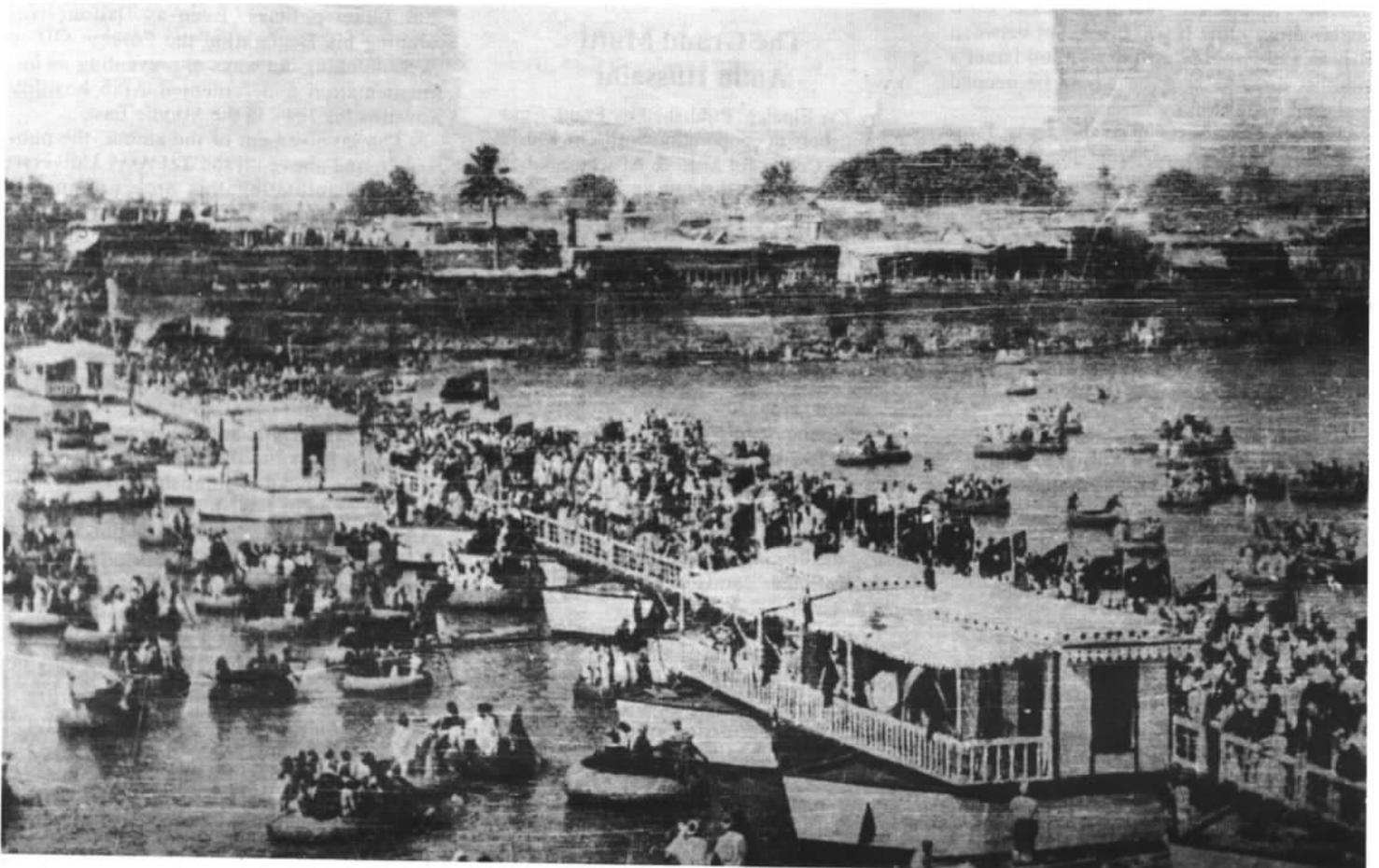
In the wake of the Cold War, the Iraqi government began to wage a campaign against the communists, and Sami escaped to Iran with the hope of immigrating to the Soviet Union.

A Parsee restaurant waiter told me "You're a Jew. Why do you want to live in the Soviet Union?"

"The truth is I never believed that I would ever manage to write successfully in Hebrew. I thought that I was a lost cause. Even now, after several novels, I still am very much aware of the fact that I was not born with this language."

Amid all the descriptions of sexual brutality, squalor and human wretchedness, Sami gives his readers some laughs.

"When you write a book and send it out into the world, it is no longer your property. It's like planting a garden. You cannot force people to do what you want in the garden. One will make love, another will play, another will sit in the corner and dream, another will decide to pee on the flowers, another will eat a sandwich. It's everyone's right to do what they want in the garden. This is what reading is about."●



The "Old" Bridge at Baghdad - opening scene of the best-selling novel VICTORIA. The above picture was taken in 1902 at the opening of the bridge.

Note the round *guffas* everywhere. Just like Noah's Ark, their frames are covered on the outside with bitumen. They have survived, however, even though it is said that they were already obsolete at the time of Noah●

From the author of the novel VICTORIA

Through one of the issues of *The Scribe* I became aware that one of my family, Mjellid, was Chief Rabbi in Baghdad. And using imagination as is done by writers I brought this in to explain the wish of the mother of the family to return to the glory of the past when the situation in Baghdad under Ottoman rule at the beginning of the century became very difficult. In truth I have never gone into the distant roots of my family and the whole book VICTORIA is based on memories and assumptions and not on any historical study. Perhaps it is because of this reason that it achieved the outstanding success which surprised me.

I do not know if you yourself realise to what extent *The Scribe* (which is practically your creation) has become respected amongst Iraqi Jews. With its high standards, its clear and interesting language, its wide interests, it fills a vacuum that the Baghdadi community has felt for tens of years. Thus I am a regular reader of this paper, and I appreciate your efforts to continue to publish it despite all the difficulties.

My book is now in its 10th reprinting, and is in the process of being translated to English by the best translator in Israel - Hillel Halkin. It will be published in England and in eight other European countries●
Haifa Sami Mikhael

BAD-MOUTHING BABYLON

I refer to "Back to Baghdad," (September 15) by Wendy Zierler.

I am mighty shocked and astounded by what I read about families living in courtyards. I was born in Baghdad only four years after Sami Mikhael. While I agree with certain facts, I totally condemn and disagree with his description of primitive sexuality, brothers raping their sisters, fathers keeping their daughters as love consorts, etc. I despise what is said about this Babylonian community. This is wonderful stuff for a best-seller, but it's not true. I lived in Baghdad long enough to judge.

I have no doubt that Mr. Sami Mikhael is a great writer, but I wouldn't allow such accusations and allegations concerning a decent people who make up a highly educated and respectable Jewish community in Babylon●
Tel Aviv Emil Murad

I want to compliment you on *The Scribe*. It is really a better and better publication, informing the people who are originally from Iraq.

My wife and I like reading it very much when we receive the newest copies and we see so many names we know - some of them related to us and some descending from old Iraqi families●
Zurich Abdulla K Zilkha

We can't tell you how impressed we are with that simple and most interesting journal of yours. We have come across two of these journals and we can't tell you how much pleasure and satisfaction we had. That goes for my children too, who have much thirst for more knowledge about our Iraqi heritage, especially the December issue, after which we keep getting phone calls telling us how much my son David Ezra Zilkha looks like his grandfather Gourgi Zilkha, who in that picture was also 15 years old.

This is one of the reasons I am writing to you to show you that your journal is a real treasure to us and to all the other Iraqis. Keep up the good work and we will help you with more information and stories.

Please we would like to get all the old issues at any cost●
Roslyn, N. Y. Dorise Audi Zilkha

Go to bed on an egg!

Syrians were known to be thrifty or, perhaps, just plain economical. A whole family can dine on one boiled egg - each according to their needs.

The mother hands the egg to her daughter saying, "The yellow for you, the white for your brother, and leave a little for your father" (who comes in late). The mother is satisfied making herself a drink with the boiled water. (Told by the late Haron Khazma)●



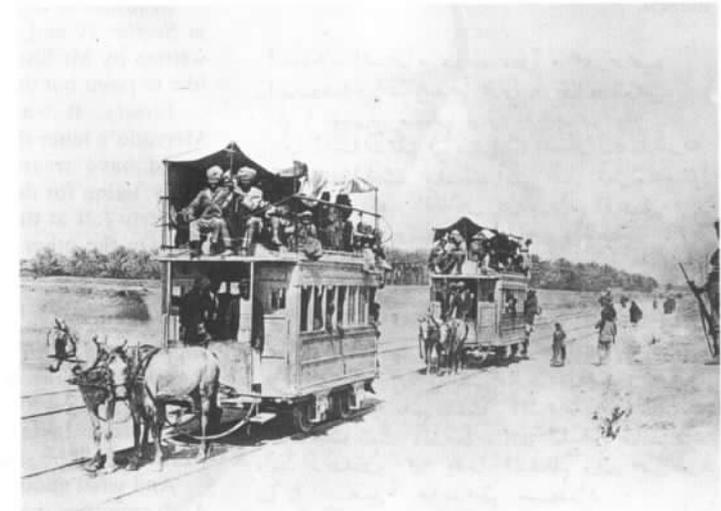
The Nairn trans-desert transport
This service linking Baghdad and Damascus was established in the twenties by two New Zealander brothers●



1956 - By the Rivers of Babylon. The new generation contemplates the future. In the background - the new Bridge●



The old "Old" bridge●



The Kadhmain Express
1917 - Indian troops on the 2-horsepower tramway linking Baghdad and Kadhmain with its Shiite shrines and golden minarets●



At a glittering gala benefit held at New York's Waldorf-Astoria Hotel on November 17th, Mrs Yvonne Hillel Cohen was honoured by ISEF - The International Sephardic Education Foundation - and accepted ISEF's "Woman of the Year" award from its President Nina A. Weiner (see above photograph), for her work to improve education for disadvantaged Israeli youth. Many of these youngsters cannot even afford the basic textbooks they need for school. Moved by their plight, Mrs Cohen founded the ISEF Book Fund, to provide essential schoolbooks to children from needy families all over Israel. The Book Fund's motto is: "Give a Book - Plant a Seed".

Yvonne and her husband, Barry Cohen, have been steadfast supporters of ISEF's educational work in Israel for over a decade. ISEF was founded in 1977 to help narrow the social, economic and ethnic gaps that persist in Israeli society, by raising up a new generation of educated leaders and role

models. In 16 years, the organisation has awarded over 7000 university scholarships to gifted young Israelis from disadvantaged homes. In return for their scholarships, ISEF students volunteer as teachers, mentors and role models in over a dozen educational enrichment programmes in Israel's poverty-area schools. These programmes help thousands of disadvantaged Israeli children to escape the cycle of poor education and poverty.

Today, ISEF's thousands of successful university graduates serve Israeli society as leaders in government and in business, and as physicians, attorneys, architects, engineers, scientists, psychologists, and educators. Their personal success and their ongoing commitment to bettering Israel's education system are a gratifying testament to ISEF's achievements.

**1114 Avenue of the Americas, 45th floor
New York 10036-7798**

**Nina A Weiner
President**

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- Mr E Hougie, Scotland
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- Mrs J Camhi, Atlanta
- Mrs Gloria Levi, Las Vegas
- Mr & Mrs V Lane, Perth
- Mr C Sassoon, New York
- Mr R Simon, La Jolla, Calif.

This is an appeal to her sons by a mother, who reads their letters in *The Scribe* but never receives any letters from them herself.

ابنائى الاعزاء على برحمتى وهبوا لى
 اولادى استعدوا بحبى وتمام حلويف
 لم اسمع منكم حتى اخبرونى
 عن رسالتكم فى نشرات السكرايه تكتبون
 وصيداك علمت انكم طير تفتشعون!
 لم يبق لى الكثير من دولتم العمر
 دايما يى ضايقت بين المرين واليعتر
 انتم دايما وايلا تحبى قلبى وذكرايت
 وارجد من الله ان يجمع لكم دعدايت
 كم تمنيت ان تكونوا قدوة للتاهرين
 وان تحفظوا وتعطفوا على الباشير
 وان يجعلوا من بيتكم مأوى للعنايعين
 وان يقرب بكم المنهل الاعلى بين العجلايين
 اذا شائت القدر اللى نلتقى شاذكروين
 واذا رحلت عن هذا العالم فلتامرؤونى
 نانا سيدة مادمت سبطاء
 وشكرا على كل شئ يا ابنائى الاعزاء

• ه. ل.

Mi shebberakh ma yeghabbi frakl - (An old Baghdadi saying) ●

In response to the letter by Mrs Mercado in *Scribe* 59 and in *Scribe* 60, and to that written by Mr Shamoon of Manila, I would like to point out the following.

Firstly, it was clearly stated in Mrs Mercado's letter that the Israeli government could have treated the Iraqi aliya more fairly, using for this purpose the money and property left at the time by the fleeing Arabs. On the other hand, the Israeli government was not "penniless" as Mr Shamoon maintains.

Secondly, Mr Shamoon's eagerness to support and justify the attitude of the then Israeli government seems strange in the light of his own decision to settle in the Philippines instead of Israel. After all, words should be supported by deeds.

And what about the claims by Jews from Arab countries that have yet to be met? Perhaps someone living in a distant land could explain this? ●

Tel Aviv

A Nissim



I enclose the wedding picture (above) of my late father Shaul Levy and my late mother Aziza Mathalon who married in Baghdad in 1875 (119 years ago) ●

Toronto

Naim Levy

We acknowledge words of appreciation received from:

Mr S Lawi, Geneva
 Mrs M Baroukh, Paris
 Mrs F Feuchtwanger, Jerusalem
 Advocate M Nissan, Ramat Gan
 Mrs R Nessim, Haifa
 Prof. Y Stillman, New York
 Mr A Isaacs, Milan
 Mr P Saddik, Australia
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 Mr F Carrady, Australia
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 Mrs D Lavie, Tel Aviv
 Mr R Mukamal, Whiteville, USA
 Mrs R Cernea, Bethesda, USA
 Mr E Dabora, Storrs, USA
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 Mr F Ashe Lincoln QC, London
 Mr N Saleh, Cheshire
 Mr B C Musikant, London
 Mr A Chitayat, London
 Mr N Tawfik, Westmount, Canada
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 Mr S Hakim, Montreal
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 Mr & Mrs C Carmona, London
 Mr R Heskell, Hitchin, Herts
 Mr E Nabarro, London
 Mr E Lavipour, London
 Mr M Menashy, London
 Mr & Mrs F Sassoon, London
 Ms M Goldberg, London
 Mrs A Kehela, Stanmore
 Mr T Abraham, London
 Mrs D Birshan, London
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 Mr M Akairib, Montreal
 Mrs M Solomon, Montreal
 Mr & Mrs D Dwek, Zurich
 Dr D Frank, Oxford
 Mr J Shamash, London
 Mrs N Iny, New York
 Mr & Mrs A Sofaer, Washington
 Mr S Shayek, New York
 Mr E Isaac, Kiryat Atta
 Mr & Mrs N Cohen, Australia●



Shaul Shemtob was attached as a guide to the Arabic Legion of Transjordan in the occupation of Baghdad in May 1941.

Shemtob was awarded a British passport with the new name Saul Reading, and lived in England.

I enclose a photograph of him in 1931 with Hebrew teachers Meir Shlank, Zeev Neyderman and others●

Tel Aviv Dr Shaul Shayik

Lest we forget



Above, the trial of the innocent Jews

25 years ago, in January 1969, the Baath regime of Iraq hanged 11 innocent Jews in Baghdad and Basrah to launch a reign of terror that was followed by the 10-year war with Iran, the invasion of Kuwait and the ostracization of Iraq by the world community. The nation that had 30 million date palm trees and a 20 billion dollar annual oil revenue, is now reduced to penury with not enough to eat, and with one million of its citizens in exile all over the world.

When constitutional guarantees are overridden, the Jew is the first to suffer. As soon as the Jew is crushed, then others soon get the same treatment.

Those who danced and sang around the Jewish corpses in Tahrir Square 25 years ago, are now selling their kidneys to feed their families, and Iraqi girls are walking the streets of Baghdad and Amman to satisfy their hunger●

Judaism and Free Will

I read with interest your article on the above subject in the September 1993 issue of *The Scribe* and the letter from Anwar H. Koukou in the December 1993 issue, in which he quotes from the book *Path of Kabbalah* by Dr David Sheinkin in which he says "logically a free will and divine knowledge cannot co-exist. No answer has ever been advanced that is logically satisfactory." In your article in September 1993 you state that Islam has no problem with this question stating that "God gave us free will and is not interested in our thoughts."

Judaism admits it has no answer and Islam's answer does not seem adequate. However, there is a third explanation, and that is of Hindu philosophy which states the following:

"Man definitely has free will but it operates within God's natural laws which are predetermined.

It appears that God's natural law of Cause and Effect "as you sow so shall you reap", sets out the pattern of the life we have to live and within this outline we operate our free will. It's as though we are given a tapestry with the outline already predetermined, but we can colour in this tapestry by the exercise of our free will. In other words, we can turn it into a beautiful one or into a disastrous tapestry. The choice is ours to make."

Perhaps other readers may like to comment?

Perth, Australia Sunny Moses

Scribe: Free Will under Judaism can be explained as the difference between our thoughts and our actions●

Abraham Halima

One of the most prominent members of Babylonian Jewry in Israel is Judge Abraham Halima.

Born 1919 in Hilla and finished his secondary education with merit. He then graduated from Law school and practiced law for 10 years. He emigrated to Israel in 1951. In Israel he worked as a labourer and studied in the evenings and graduated as a lawyer. In 1960 he became a judge and by 1984 was one of the senior judges in the Israeli High Court. He reached the age of 70 in 1989 and retired. In 1991 he was head of the thirteenth election committee for the Knesset. In appreciation for his work he was awarded a very high law society honour that has only ever been awarded to three individuals previously.

Regrettably, his wife Saida (née Yadou) recently passed away. She was a charitable and helpful person and will be greatly remembered by her many friends●

I was interested to read an editorial in the *Jerusalem Post* dated 21 December 1993, which said:

"The PLO has already made it clear that it intends to continue the exploitation of the refugees by making their 'right to return' a central demand in the peace negotiations. It is a demand which even the most dedicated doves in Israel reject. A 'return' of the displaced and their offspring would spell the end of Israel.

"The WOJAC conference performed an important service by reminding the world that the refugee problem is not one-sided. There were 800,000 Jews who left the Arab countries in 1948, leaving behind billions of dollars of property. Some 600,000 of them came to Israel."●

London N2

J J Basrawy

COOKERY CORNER

Caramelized Almonds

Ingredients:

2 cups almonds (unsalted) split in the length and roasted in the oven.

1 cup caster sugar

A few pistachios, coarsely ground

Silver foil

Method:

Dissolve sugar in a pan and add the roasted almonds while still hot. Stir to mix sugar and almonds. Leave pan near the heat in order not to get cold. Take spoonfuls of the almond mixture and toss on to silver foil. Sprinkle with the pistachios while still hot●

Cheese puff pastry

Ingredients:

1 small vegetarian puff pastry (13oz)

12oz cheddar cheese

12oz gouda cheese

5 eggs

Sesame seeds

1 egg white

Method:

Divide the pastry into 2 portions. Roll out half the pastry thinly to line an 8-inch flan dish. Do not stretch the pastry. Prick all over.

Grate the cheeses. Beat the eggs slightly and mix in the cheese. Pour this mixture over the pastry.

Cover with the second thinly-rolled portion of the pastry. Paint all over the egg white and scatter with sesame seeds. Bake in preheated oven 180°C-350°F for 1 hour or until a rich golden brown●

Cheese triangles or Burag Bel Jeben

Ingredients:

14oz (400g) filo pastry

6oz (150g) melted butter

9oz (225g) Cheshire cheese, grated

9oz (225g) Cheddar cheese, grated

5 eggs, beaten

1 egg beaten, to brush top of the Burag

Cumin powder (optional)

1¼ cup parsley, finely chopped

Sesame seeds

Caraway seeds

Method:

Mix together cheese, eggs, parsley, salt, pepper and cumin powder if using.

Cut the sheets of filo pastry to six rectangular strips 3" long. Brush the strips with melted butter on one side only. Place one dessert spoon of the filling near one end. Fold the corner over the filling and you get a triangle. Keep on folding until you use the rest of the strip. Tuck in any remaining pastry. Do not cut.

Place the cheese triangles on a bakewell sheet on a tray or on a slightly oiled baking tray. Brush the cheese triangles with melted butter and beaten eggs and sprinkle with sesame and caraway seeds.

Place the tray in a preheated 350°F (180°C) oven for about 10-15 minutes or until golden.

Serve immediately.

Note: Cheese triangles can be frozen before baking. Can also be rolled in thin cigars●

Tips

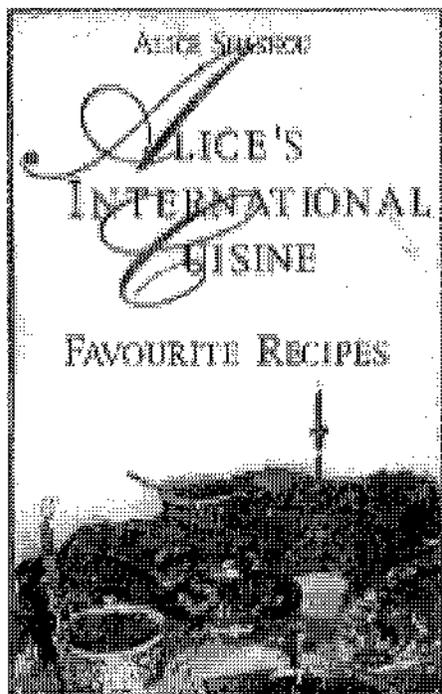
When possible, cook first and add salt later.

Potatoes are low in calories because they contain almost no fat. It contains fibre especially if eaten with the skin.

Never take vitamins on an empty stomach. It must combine in enzymes in food to work.

Never cut all fats out of your diet in order to be slim. It won't work.

If a cake is a little over-baked, scrape the burnt part with a grater. ONLY WHEN IT IS COLD●



Alice Shashou's new cookery book has been a runaway success, and orders are pouring in from all parts of the world.

The book is obtainable from the Author: Alice Shashou, Flat 43 Abbey Lodge, Park Road, London NW8 7RL

Price U.K. £20 + £3 p.&.p.

Overseas U.S.\$30 + \$7 p.&.p●

The recipe for *Turkish Rice Ich Pilaf* in your December issue No.60, was not adapted to the Jewish table. Instead of butter, one should use *parve* (non-dairy) kosher cooking fat or oil.

I also wanted to mention that the liver must be roasted on an open fire to make it kosher before using.

London NW11 Mozelle Gubbay

Scribe: Similar comments were received from Dr Doreen Shaoul of London, Mrs N Iny of Little Neck, New York, and other Readers.

We regret the oversight in not changing "butter" in the original Turkish recipe to "margarine". However, not all margarine is kosher.

We do not have to state kosher margarine, kosher meat or kosher poultry. All these and the liver need proper koshering.

We rely on our Readers, where necessary, to adapt the recipes which are sometimes taken from foreign books, to conform to the Dietary Laws●

I wish to express my thanks for all the encouragements you have given me in writing the recipes for *The Scribe* and which I eventually included in my book of International Cuisine.

Also, for the publicity you have given for this book and the great flow of orders I am receiving as a result of the leaflets you have sent out with the last issue.

I also wish to say that your great efforts in writing and distributing *The Scribe* is invaluable in keeping our community worldwide together and is greatly appreciated●

London NW8

Alice Shashou

Jonah and the State of Israel

God ordered Jonah to warn Nineveh. He couldn't be bothered. Wanted to run away. Took a boat to Spain. God was following his every move.

Boat encountered a storm. Jonah was thrown overboard, swallowed by the whale who spewed him back on land. This time Jonah obeyed God's renewed command and went to Nineveh to warn them to mend their evil ways. They repented and God reprieved them.

As it is written in the Book of Ezekiel 33:11 which is read in the closing service of Yom Kippur, "As I live, Saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his evil way, and live..."

But Jonah the simple character, could not understand why God did not destroy Nineveh. His pride was hurt. God explained to him by a parable of the gourd...

We read the story of Jonah every Kippur without realising its significance. Jonah represents the Jewish people who, collectively, are as much simpletons as Jonah. We were entrusted to propagate the knowledge of God to all mankind. We were content to live as the chosen people, surrounded by heathen nations. Babylon was the whale that swallowed the kingdom of Judah which seventy years later was spewed back by Cyrus. We were given a second chance. But we made no effort to convert the world. This time we were swallowed by Rome but before we were to be given another chance, we had to suffer for 2000 years to hammer the lesson home.

A judge wanting to punish a culprit good humouredly gave him the choice of three punishments. ½ kilo of salt, 50 lashes of the whip, 500 dinars. The stupid culprit chose the salt, but after eating a little he couldn't continue. He then opted for whip lashes. But after 10 lashes he couldn't endure the pain. In the end he agreed to pay the penalty having suffered all the other punishments.

In the past 2000 years we tasted all kinds of suffering, culminating in the Holocaust. Are we again to ignore our new opportunity?

Mashiyah, come out of your hiding and save the world and Israel!

Note: A Victorian English lady was asked if she believed that the whale swallowed Jonah. She retorted, "If the Bible had said that Jonah swallowed the whale, I would still believe it."●

N.E.D.