



# My Life and Times Part III

by Salim Dangoor  
And here is another story.....

Even today, after more than sixty years, I can still imagine the pain I felt after the beating I got on that Rosh Hashanah Eve in Baghdad, in 1937, shortly after my return from studying in London. I had helped my father in his publishing work, and made friends with all the clients. Some were teachers publishing school books, others were army officers of high rank, printing military books. My aim was to be on friendly terms with all of them, not as strict and business like as my father was.....

It was Thursday. I had tea alone at the Semiramis Hotel, looking forward to the usual family celebration for Rosh Hashanah that evening.

Coming out of the hotel after my tea, a soldier saluted me, called me by my name and said that he is to drive me to Taha Pasha (one of the clients) for some discussion. When I wondered how he could find me at the hotel, he said it was a lucky strike, since you were neither at the office nor at home. (Little did I guess that I had been followed). It occurred to me to go to the toilet beforehand, and told the soldier to wait for me. This probably saved my life later on.

I came out of the hotel and the soldier saluted again, opened the door of his army car for me to get in. The soldier drove without saying a word, towards Battaween, where Iraqi Moslems rarely lived. When I wondered about that, he said that the meeting was with other people also.

He parked the car near a big house with a garden, followed me up the few stairs and rang the bell. The door was opened by another soldier. I hardly stepped in, when two strong men took me by my arms, dragged me to a corner of the house, tied my hands and feet, taped my mouth and pushed me on the floor. The hall where I was lying was big, without any furniture, and after a while "the leader" came, his face covered and gave instructions to start beating me. The two people used cane, and they were hitting hard on my back without saying a word. I simply could not imagine what was happening and why.....

After some ten minutes the leader came out again. I was in a trance half fainting. He said that if I wanted to save my life I should write a letter to my father to pay a very large sum of money. He untaped my mouth and I started appealing to him, telling him that my father was probably in the synagogue, and anyway he never carried such a big amount with him. But to no avail - "Otherwise you will be killed, cut into pieces and thrown in the Tigris. Like the other Jewish boys that disappeared lately without a trace," (which was true).

But in my case it is quite another story. I got the courage to say, "I am not as stupid as you thought, so, I returned to the hotel, phoned my brother, gave him the number of the car with a description of the driver. There is no doubt that if I do not return home this evening my father would do the impossible to find what happened to me, and in no time you will all be arrested". It looked as if they believed me. They all withdrew inside a room, and I could hear that they were shouting at the driver, beating him and yelling that he had strict instructions not to let me contact or meet anybody. After a while, the leader untied me, with his face still covered, and started to "negotiate". They offered me tea and said, "that I seem to be a nice and clever fellow. But if you want to return home tonight,

you have to sign some blank papers that we can fill in ourselves if anything comes out of this incident." They made me swear that I keep my mouth shut, otherwise they would liquidate my father and sisters.... Of course I promised and kept my mouth shut all these years.

Another soldier drove me near our house and I could hardly walk the last ten metres to the door. It was late, and I rang the bell and my father came himself to open. He was angry and furious "Didn't you know it is Rosh Hashana tonight? Where have you been?" I did not answer and hurried upstairs, undressed, and fell on my bed in great pain.

Immediately afterwards, Nana, my mother came upstairs and sat on the bedside. "Why do you make your father angry on a night like this?" But before I could answer, she saw my bleeding back: "Salim, speak. What happened? Shall we get a doctor or call the police?" I kept quiet and begged her to leave me alone. But now I can tell the story for the first time, hoping that all my kidnappers are dead and buried.

In Iraq, we always felt like Iraqis. We dressed like the majority, changed our headgear from Fez to Sidara; our children were mostly given Arabic names: Muwafak, Mounir, Samir; not anymore Sion, Heskell or Eliahoo. We only thought of the good and greatness of Iraq. But fortunately or unfortunately every now and then something happened to remind us that we are "betting on the wrong horse".

Anyway for me that was a sign as good as any and decided to leave my beloved Baghdad and left suddenly to Beirut by Naim Transport, and I still remember that the trip to Beirut cost me three and a half Dinars (pounds). My parents discovered my departure, and followed me to Beirut to see that I do not travel further to Europe. I stayed in Beirut almost four years, studying at the American University and working by exporting goods to my father, until France surrendered and I had to leave before the Germans arrived.

**Side Story:** Shortly after my return to Baghdad, there was the Farhood of June 1941. We lived just outside the city, on Abou Nouass Street next to the Alwiya Club. Every day, the driver used to come early in the morning to drive my father to the city. Then one day, the driver came earlier than usual and begged us that nobody should leave the house. "They are killing Jews in the city. They are stopping buses, pulling down the Jews and murdering them on the spot; there are looters everywhere breaking into shops and houses...."

As a precaution, we sent mother and my two sisters to the house of our nearby neighbour, Safwat Pasha, the father of my brother Naim's partner. Then we locked up all doors and windows and went up to the second floor, waiting for the worst. In no time a group of youths surrounded the back entrance and we could hear them discussing how to break in. We could recognize the voice of our gardener Ibrahim. (As if the riots were anticipated or planned, one of my army friends Fouad Ali, had given me his revolver, saying casually that I might need it!) It was rumoured at the time that all Jewish shops were marked. I wanted to fire a few shots and disperse the gang, but my father wisely said that we should keep quiet and see. The absence of panic from our side probably saved us. All of a sudden we heard one of the gang saying, "come let us go away from here...." And to this day we do not know why they went away! It

may have dawned on them that my brother Naim, who was an officer in the Iraq Army was at home.

About half an hour afterwards we could hear and see from our balcony, a number of soldiers in their jeep. They stopped near our house and behind them came the car of the Governor (Mutassarif) of Baghdad, Khaled Pasha al Zahawi. He came down from his car and rang our bell and asked if all is well and wanted a glass of cold water. We immediately invited him in and gave him and his soldiers cold drinks. That day I was dressed in my riding boots and a khaki shirt and looked like an officer. Near me was Naim dressed as the real officer he was then, and we asked Khaled Pasha if he knew how are things near Haiderkhana where father's office was. He said that the office was on fire. He added that despite his repeated appeals to the British and Iraqi authorities for permission to fire at the rioters, they refused to give their permission.

**Let Naim continue the story:**

I dialled the office telephone number and found that the line was disconnected. I told Salim to bring the car out from the garage in order to go and investigate what was going on. We followed Zahawi's car towards Rashid street, and when we came to Bab-el-Sheikh Street, Zahawi sent a policeman asking why we were following him as he was turning to go to the notorious district of Bab-el-Sheikh which was where the trouble started. We said we were continuing down to Haiderkhana to go to our father's office. There were hardly any cars in the streets but it was full of looters carrying parcels of valuable goods taken from the Jewish shops. The soldiers among them gave a salute as our car drove by. When we arrived at the office, we found that the fire brigade had left the door opened and looters were everywhere inside. Salim and I fired a few shots and they all ran out through the back door which we secured, but we could do nothing about the front door. However, a soldier was passing by and I ordered him to guard the entrance until my return. In a nearby coffee shop, we heard one Moslem telling another "these are the Dangoor boys"; we then decided to turn back and return home. It is noteworthy that when things returned to normal, the next day we went to the office and found the soldier still there!

**Salim continues:**

When we returned home that day, my father was very upset and angry that we took such risks. And how right he was when we think of it now. I went immediately to the house of my aunt in the neighbourhood and told them that all is well and quiet. They were barricaded with their small children, Maurice, Muwafak, Mounir and Yafdes. They were happy and relieved.

**Side Story:** General Khaled al Zahawi, the Governor of Baghdad, was newly appointed to the post and he was a real gentleman. He had two brothers, one was a High Court Judge and the other a famous lawyer and writer. Their uncle was the famous poet and philosopher Jamil Sidqi al Zahawi. Their mother was Jewish, it was one of the very few intermarriages.

It appears that in 1885, the young daughter of a good Jewish family was promised by her parents to an elderly man in marriage. As a result, she ran away with a Moslem friend who took her to the Grand Mufti of Baghdad, Mohammed Faidhi al Zahawi, to convert her to Islam. In accordance with current procedure, the Jewish community was alerted and was given seven days to talk the girl out of her plan, but she refused to change her mind. One of the Mufti's ten sons, then managed to persuade the girl to marry him instead of her poor boyfriend.

General Khaled Pasha al Zahawi was one of their children●



It is always a pleasure to receive and read *The Scribe* and I think you will be remembered for generations as the person who has brought forward a publication which rejuvenated the pride of the Babylonian Jewry. May G-d bless you and keep you.

I am enclosing a photograph of the boy scouts of the Israelite Alliance School in Basrah. It was photographed either in 1923 or 1924. My late father Tawfik Kattan (Eliaho Kattan in Israel) was the English teacher and the Scout Master. He is the person with medals standing behind and between the two seated civilians. As you see on the top sign, the school was established in 1903 and was called the Israelite School. My father told me that his scouts welcomed King Faisal I in his first visit to Basrah. This was confirmed by the late Salim Perry (Perei) who lived in Los Angeles and had the original of the enclosed picture. He is the left front drummer. My father passed away in 1972. My brother Kenneth has been a Professor at the School of Medicine, University of Cincinnati since 1967. I think he is the only person named Kenneth at birth and registered by that name in Iraq●

Abraham Kattan, Ph.D.

### Nobel Peace Prize

The 1995 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Jewish Professor Joseph Rotblat. He was born in Poland 84 years ago and lost his wife in the Holocaust. He escaped to Britain where he worked on nuclear fission. He became involved in the development of the first atom bomb at Los Alamos when he feared that the Germans were going to produce a nuclear bomb.

He withdrew from the project, however, when he realised that Germany was not in a position to produce the bomb. Thereafter, he devoted himself to nuclear disarmament, together with Albert Einstein and Bertrand Russell, and founded the Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs, which shared the Nobel Prize with him.

It is noteworthy that over the years nearly 20 per cent of Nobel prizes were awarded to Jews, which shows the importance of the Jewish people in world affairs and human progress. While India claims a permanent seat in the Security Council merely because it has 950 million mouths to feed, it is more appropriate that the Jewish people are more deserving of such an honour●

### Kosher Worries

Moses received the Torah at Sinai, and passed it on to Joshua, and Joshua to the Elders, and the Elders to the Men of the Great Assembly and thence to the Rabbis who would debate for days whether a displaced bone would render a chicken unfit for consumption.

But, at the end of the day, we are in the hands of the *Shomer* (the Kashrut inspector), when we go to a Kosher butcher or a Kosher restaurant, if the *Shomer* is corrupt, we may be getting any kind of meat. A number of such worrying instances have happened recently●

### PALESTINE DEMOGRAPHY

In 1881 there were 200,000 Arabs and 60,000 Jews. Since then, and despite the massive waves of Jewish Aliyah (and in fact because of it) the number of Palestinians increased more than the Jews●

### About the Scribe

Our Journal which was started in 1971 first appeared in 8 pages, six times a year. There was a subscription fee of £1 a year. Our subscription list was about 150 people. After an interruption of a number of years, publishing was resumed in 1983; the 50th issue appeared in September 1991. Thereafter the size of our publication started to increase and now the *Scribe* appears twice a year in 40 to 48 pages including many readers' letters and several historic community photographs.

Our mailing list is now over 2,800 in all parts of the world, and, as we are informed by subscribers, that each copy is sometimes read by six or more persons. The *Scribe* is sent free of charge to all our subscribers and we accept no commercial advertising. The cost of printing is now nearly £4,000 per issue and the postage comes to another £3,000. It takes some 5 weeks from sending the copy to the printers to the time it is collected by the Post Office. After a short break we start preparing new articles and receive readers' letters over a period of 3 months●

Naim Dangoor is now helped by his sister Mrs. Eileen Khalastchy as Assistant Editor●

# USURY

## The lending of money at interest

Israel must follow the economics of the Torah

by Naim Dangoor

Of all the civilizations and cultures of the Ancient World, and of all religions of antiquity, no one – not anyone save the Torah of Moses, all alone, identified, condemned and banned usury – which is the charging of interest on borrowed money – not only exorbitant interest, but interest of any kind.

If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shall thou lay upon him usury (Exodus 22:25).

Unto a stranger (foreigner) thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother (fellow countryman) thou shalt not lend upon usury; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the Land whither thou goest to possess it (Deut. 23:20).

Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle.....? He who does not put his money out to usury (Psalm 15:5).

The enormity of the problem can be illustrated like this: If Moses had deposited only one *shekel* at a bank, at only one percent per annum, thus taking 70 years to double to two shekels, it would by now have doubled 46 times to become today over 50 million million shekels, enough to make every Jew a multi-millionaire. Such sustained growth was obscured in the Ancient World by the continuous political and military upheavals. But in Egypt the problem of usury may have become apparent to Moses for at his time there had been a stable regime in the Valley of the Nile for over 1000 years. Any "monopoly" game such as money lending could ruin future generations. Moses could see how the grain-market monopoly of his "uncle" Joseph, *plus royaliste que le roi*, more pharaonic than pharaoh, had reduced to slavery all the inhabitants of Egypt, including his fellow Hebrews!

Ever since the time of Moses not one person has understood the deep economic significance of usury and the importance of its ban. Moses himself, while condemning usury and banning it as immoral, did not explain the reason nor offer a remedy to the problem. Christianity and Islam copied the ban on usury and enforced it rigorously during the Middle Ages.

Paradoxically, it fell to the Jews to become the money lenders of both the Christian and the Muslim worlds, because the rabbis conveniently, but wrongly, ruled that a Jew can lend money and charge interest to a non-Jew. In fact the Torah permits a Jew to charge interest on a foreigner and not on a non-Jew who may be living in the same economic area.

I can now give a true explanation to the problem. The trouble is with the monetary system. When the merchants of Mecca asked Mohammed "Why are we allowed to make profit on the sale of goods, but are not allowed to charge interest on money?" All that Mohammed could offer in reply was that God allowed profit on goods but forbade interest on money. Therein is a clue to the puzzle. Money is not a commodity it is simply a convenience. Reform the monetary system and then there is no need to ban usury.

In any society, a monetary medium is necessary for the exchange of goods and services.

There was always a need for people to honour money to transact their business. The solution is to make money issued by the consumer and not by the money lender or the central bank. In other words, let us privatise money, and the problem will greatly disappear. For extra needs, interest would be permitted.

With the introduction of paper money the problem became more acute, but at the same time has made a satisfactory solution more possible.

Islamic banking offers a solution by attempting to cure the malady by suppressing the symptoms. This won't do, and it has failed. The real solution lies in making money at the free disposal of those who legitimately need to use it and thus greatly avoid the need for borrowing itself. In a small village people may be able to conduct their daily life without the need to use money.

But in a larger community, money becomes essential, the principal economic function of the State should be to provide people with this essential medium of exchange free of charge, financed by land value taxation which restricts land ownership to a jubilee of 50 years. Citizens should be given grants at birth, on leaving school, on getting married, on starting a business, on buying a house and on retiring.

We have witnessed Communism fail, and succumb to capitalism. Soon capitalism itself will be found wanting, and mankind will have to turn to the economics of the Torah of Moses for an answer.

Above all, the economics of Moses will be necessary to ensure the survival of Israel, as a Jewish State.

It was decreed with that in mind.

If we plant in a new town a whole community of bakers, tailors, butchers, grocers and all kinds of consumers, but all without any cash – how will they be able to conduct their daily life? The easy and practical answer would be by issuing IOU's (I owe you) to each other. These promissory notes would then circulate around and become the accepted medium of exchange. This then is the essence of money, especially paper money, a series of promissory notes issued by the people to each other and not a note issued by the bank on the central bank or the money lender that the consumer will have to buy before he can use it.

In such a regime there is no interest to pay on the essential function of money.

Note: The Torah allows a Jew to charge interest on lending to a "*nokhri*" which is properly translated as a "foreigner" and not as a "stranger" who is a resident alien living in the same economic area, a fellow-countryman, in fact the Torah also states that if we follow its commandments in this respect we would achieve prosperity and will be able to lend money to foreign countries and will not need to borrow from them – a precept which Israel would do well to follow.

This is the full meaning of Isaac's blessing

to Jacob may the nations serve you (Genesis 17:29). That is, if you follow a sound economic policy, and thus become international creditors, foreign countries will manufacture their goods and send them for you to enjoy (imports) without you having to match with your exports.

We lost Israel 1900 years ago because the stranger had already penetrated our life by allowing him to acquire land. Now, so soon after its rebirth, Israel is again slipping through our fingers.

There is more to religion than prayer and fasting. The economics of Moses are not only meant to ensure Israel's continued survival as a Jewish State, by creating economic frontiers instead of political frontiers, but they also become the sure foundations of world prosperity and world peace.

If you lend money to a friend, you must be prepared to lose either the money or your friend ●

### Lending in Jewish Law from Ethics of Business

by Jerusalem Chief Justice  
Rabbi Ezra Basri

The Torah commands us to lend money (without interest) to the poor of Israel. Doing so is preferable to giving charity. In order of precedence, both loans and charity should be given to one's own poor relations before others and to the poor of one's city before those of another.

Though lending money is a positive commandment, a blessing is not recited before giving a loan. The fulfilment of the *Mitzvah* is not in the hands of the lender alone. He is dependent on the borrower who may refuse his offer. Hence, since there is a measure of doubt whether the loan will be accepted, no blessing is recited.

A person who takes interest violates one of the most serious sins of the Torah. The borrower, the scribe, the witnesses, and the guarantor as well as the lender, all violate Torah law by taking part in a transaction involving interest. Interest is forbidden regardless of whether the borrower is rich or poor.

A farmer selling produce to be delivered in a month's time, may accept a lower price for the goods than their present market value. However, he is forbidden to explicitly state that he accepts this price for the goods because he is receiving payment prior to delivery nor may he drastically reduce the price of the goods, thereby revealing an obvious intent to borrow with interest ●



1927 – Rabbi Uzziel and his entourage of Palestine visiting Chief Rabbi Hakham Ezra Dangoor of Baghdad and his Court. Sitting left to right: Khadhouri Sasson, Community Secretary; Dr. Cohen, secretary to Rabbi Uzziel; Chief Rabbi Hakham Ezra Dangoor; Rabbi Uzziel; Ab Beth Din Hakham Sasson Khedhour; Rabbi Dr. Pichman (Maimon); Head of the Zionist organisation. Standing: Security man; community advocate Yusuf Elias; Menashi Abraham Gurji; Eliahou Iny; Dr Anwar Iny.

Chief Rabbi Dangoor took Rabbi Uzziel and his entourage to the Royal Palace and introduced them to King Feisal. Rabbi Uzziel's visit was in connection with offering him the position of Baghdad Chief Rabbi, following the intended retirement of Rabbi Dangoor. Rabbi Uzziel declined the offer in view of prevailing conditions within the community ●

## The Canaanites spoke Hebrew

by Naim Dangoor

The Arabic section of the London Spectrum Radio recently put on an hour-long programme to oppose the "Jerusalem 3000" celebrations currently being held in Israel and Diaspora, to mark the capture of the Holy City by King David.

The guest speaker was Jaafar Hadi Hasan, an Iraqi writer who had obtained his doctorate from Manchester University in Jewish History and Hebrew studies. He started by doubting even the existence of King David and that there was no archaeological evidence of such an event. He added that even some Jewish sects deny the authenticity of the Bible and regard its narratives as myths. In this connection, he cited the book that has appeared in America (*The Sacred Chain*, a history of the Jews by Norman F Cantor).

Listeners phoned in to support his postulations, claiming that the Palestinian Arabs, as well as the Syrians and the Lebanese, were the direct descendants of the Canaanites, who, they said, were Arabs. The Jews were outsiders and complete strangers to the region.

I was half asleep as I listened to this false propaganda, and when I woke up, I telephoned the radio station and spoke to Dr Jaafar. I directly asked him what language did the Canaanites speak? Was it Arabic, or did they perhaps speak Hebrew? Dr Jaafar readily ad-

mitted that the Canaanites spoke Hebrew. "But what evidence," he asked, "was there that the children of Israel who came to conquer Canaan spoke the same language?" The clear evidence, I said, is that the children of Israel spoke the language in which the Torah was given at Sinai three months after the Exodus, which was Hebrew. "Ah," replied Dr Jaafar, "If you have any evidence that the Torah was given in Hebrew, I would be very interested to look at it." "If not in Hebrew," I said in amazement, "then was the Torah given in Greek or Egyptian language and who translated it to Hebrew, and when?"

"That is the point," countered Dr Jaafar. "We just don't know. All we know is that the Torah as we have it today was first recorded in Babylon in the Fifth Century B.C.E."

It would be interesting and illuminating if this argument could be carried further, and I wonder on whom is the onus of proof – on me, or on Dr Jaafar?

I remain convinced of course that the Israelites of the Exodus were migrant labourers from Canaan, that they spoke Hebrew and that the Torah was given at Sinai in Hebrew. However, one fact was established – that the Canaanites did not speak Arabic.

Verily, it was the Arabs who were in fact outsiders and strangers to the Fertile Crescent ●

## Alenu

Often I notice that during Alenu at the end of the service, some people bow their head when we say "*Shehem mishtahavim*" which, of course, refers to the heathens worshipping their vain idols.

We should bow our head at the following "*ve anachnu mishtahavim*".

My brother, Abdullah, recently reminded me that, when 9 years old, I noticed the same mistake happening in Baghdad. I brought this to the attention of my late grandfather, who was Chief Rabbi, and, as a result, he made an announcement at the Great Synagogue of Baghdad, that we should bow our head, not at the first but at the second "*mishtahavim*" as it would be a sacrilege and a blasphemy to do otherwise. Now, 70 years on, the problem is still with us, *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. Perhaps an announcement in the Bulletin would be useful.

It is time, I think, to restore the second half of this prayer which was removed in Europe by the order of a German Kaiser many years ago, but was still recited in Baghdad and some other places.

A similar but even more widespread mistake happens when the Hazan says "*Barekhu*". Most people prematurely bow at that point, which is not an offence in itself, but then they lift their head before we say "*Baruch Ha'Shem*" which is the correct moment when our head should be bowed down ●

# “Peace and conflict in the Middle East”

EXTRACTS FROM A SPEECH DELIVERED BY MOSHE KAHTAN  
ON 15/11/1995 TO THE LE'CHAIM SOCIETY, OXFORD

Peace, undoubtedly is everybody's dream but what is relevant is what kind of peace. But first what kind of conflict?

Those who, today, refer to Hebron as “Arab Hebron” should take note how this town which can be described as the cradle of Judaism became “Arab”. By massacring man, woman and child and expelling the rest, Hebron has assumed the title of an Arab town.

From 1922 the year of the first partition of Palestine the Jewish presence was excluded from the Eastern part. As to the part lying to the west of the Jordan river the British authorities proceeded with a policy of allowing unrestricted entry for Arabs coming from Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, Turkey, Sudan, Bosnia etc whilst at the same time subjected Jewish entry to all sorts of restrictions, quotas, white papers, green papers, peel paper and at times closure.

What was known as the “Palestinian Jewish Brigade” was fighting alongside the British forces and conducting operations in North Africa, the Middle East and beyond whilst the Palestinian Arab leadership personified by the Mufti Amin Al Hussein as the guest of Hitler in Berlin putting the last touches for implementing the final solution of the Jews in the Middle East when the Third Reich marched into the region.

One of the many myths that have been extensively developed is that Israel was created in the Middle East to accommodate a foreign element imported from Europe i.e., to make up for the injustice, which incidentally, is claimed by many revisionists today not to have happened at all.

The injustice meted by Europeans to the Jews. Nothing can be more misleading. Jewish presence in this area goes back to the dawn of civilisation. It certainly goes back much further than the relatively recent Arab conquest of the land and therefore Jews are there by right and this is a fact which cannot be ignored even if it suits certain political objectives for some.

I would like to come back to what happened in the Arab countries after Israel gained her independence in 1948. The Jewish populations under Arab rule in the Middle East were subjected to new waves of persecutions which began the process of ethnic cleansing of a people whose roots go back 2500 years in the land and this was only done because they were Jews.

Today the once flourishing Jewish communities in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Egypt and the rest of North Africa have become practically non-existing and the land *Judenrein*..... up to one million people were made refugees and offered a one way journey out, abandoning their homes, their lands and their possessions. If real peace is being sought shouldn't all the facts be dealt with? Should justice be meted only to the side which committed the aggression whilst the victim is denied all rights, recognition and redress?

Until recently, Israel has been for many, many Jews, not only a dream come true but that of a hope that took over 2000 years to fulfil.

When in June 1992 a new government was elected to power it was only fair to give it a chance to try its own perceived way of bringing about peace with the Arabs. It was elected on a certain platform in which it declared what will

be the do's and the don'ts of its policy, and promises were made for peace to be achieved before a year was out!! There and then it should have been realised by many if not all that there was a big flaw in that promise and, to our cost, we are coming to realise by the day, that what they promised has nothing and could have nothing in common with reality and reality is a very important part of the equation, nor indeed, with what they proceeded to do.

It now transpires that Israel's Government is inclined to go the Arab route in autocracy to try and fabricate a so-called peace, I say so-called because what is being done today with the PLO is simply a misrepresentation of the meaning of the word. It all amounts to a series of individual decisions made by a number of people in contradiction to what they promised before being elected, based on illusions they describe as vision, engulfed in deception and secrecy, wrapped in a veil of contradicting the reality of what they are doing and its consequences, acting in the name of a people who they no longer represent, whose trust, one might say, they have betrayed and clinging to power through repressive measures against any opposition by relying on a majority derived from parties who have made quite clear where their loyalties lie and these are certainly neither with the State nor with its people. It is wrong for the present Government to pretend that Jews outside Israel should mind their own business. Jews all over the world are exposed to the consequences of its policies, embracing the perpetrators of terror and claiming that by giving them or rather giving in to them, peace is on the way is not telling the truth.

Real peace will only come when the desire for it is genuinely reciprocal and not because one side is getting a fee. It will come when there is justice for all and an equitable outcome reflecting the responsibility and the consequences of past acts and deeds. The Arab countries must not only enjoy the benefits of a settlement, they must also share in carrying the burden of it. They have started a process of a population exchange by getting rid of all the Jews in their countries. Now they should, as a minimum, help in the resettlement of their kith and kin, using the massive land resources and the financial ones.

Today the chief of the most notorious terrorist organisation is treated as a world statesman and awarded the by now very devalued Nobel Prize for peace, a peace that he cannot even establish with his own people let alone with others. How come Hitler did not get it, where did he go wrong? A world community applauding an Israeli Government which considers Jewish presence an obstacle to peace and is working towards the eventual eviction of its citizens from where they have set up homes but calls any eviction of Arabs “Ethnic Cleansing” thereby dancing to Arafat's tune. An Israeli Government signing Agreements of the gravest importance and which have tremendously serious implications with the utmost indecent haste, without even settling their details with a man who dishonoured every single agreement he made – and there is quite a number of them.

An Israeli Government only too ready and willing to satisfy false claims by Arabs on Israel whilst sweeping the Jewish claims on

Arabs under the carpet and ignoring their existence, presumably not to upset the Arabs.

Negotiations have been and are being conducted well outside the framework which formed the basis of the Madrid Conference and which hardly bear any relationship to what it was all about. This is not only dishonest but potentially spells disaster for Israel.

What is being done now can hardly lead to peace. It will more likely lead to a major disaster. Peace cannot happen as a result of a one-sided intention whilst the other side merely pretends as long as it is on the receiving end.

On the other hand we must not relent in our efforts to achieve real peace. But it will not be by camouflaging facts:

Peace with Jordan, was good and it had the blessing of the majority of the Israeli people as was reflected in the Knesset vote and that is the way it should be. The process with the PLO is by all definitions bizarre and is nothing more than a kind of appeasement which had always led to disasters when practised and does not have the support of a large segment of the public who are worried, and with good reason, about where it will take the country to.

As I watched on television last November bidding farewell to one of its heroes that many loved, others respected, some supported, others disagreed with, yet as I watched all those people, world leaders many of them such as Prince Charles, President Mubarak, King Hussein there for the first time participating with all the others on this solemn occasion, I could not help but wonder: O Lord God of Israel, must we always be recognised and appreciated in death? Where were they all in life and why O why did it take them so long? ●

Our Iraqi friend living in Riyadh is interested to receive copies of the last three issues of *The Scribe* in which appear interesting and historic photographs of Iraq. I shall be grateful if you can send these issues to me so that I can pass it on to him. With many thanks. Your brother.

**Riyadh, Saudi Arabia Adnan al-Rashid**

*Scribe*: Dr Adnan al-Rashid was born in Baghdad in 1934. He worked as a journalist until 1957. After studying the French language in Paris for one year, he read German literature at Leipzig University from 1958-1965. Thereafter he entered Hanover University where he obtained his doctorate in German literature. He returned to Baghdad to teach German at the Baghdad University. In 1979 he moved to Saudi Arabia where he is teaching German at King Saud University. In a recent issue of the *Al-Hayat* Arabic paper, which appears in London, he wrote an impressive article in defence of the Jews of Iraq, criticising their treatment by successive Iraqi administrations. He writes, “While Iraqi Governments built prisons and detention centres, the Jews of Iraq built schools, hospitals and community centres. While the Moslems of Baghdad refused to build an orphanage in 1935, the Jewish benefactor, Senator Menahem Daniel, took on himself the total cost of building an orphanage for the Moslem community on a site measuring 15,000 square metres, which produced many who became doctors, engineers and army officers.”

He wrote in the same article of his experience in the Farhood of 1941 as a boy of seven. He was standing outside his home when a threatening mob approached brandishing daggers and other weapons. “When they came near me they said he is good looking so he must be Jewish and attempted to kill me until I was rescued by a neighbour.” ●

## The Holocaust and the Atom Bomb

Whenever I read of a national disaster which a number of people met their death, I ask myself how it compares with the Holocaust. Thus, when a recent earthquake killed 200 people, I worked out that it would take 30,000, yes thirty thousand such earthquakes to equal the Holocaust. Everytime I go to the Royal Albert Hall, next door, which seats 6000, I realize that that number of Jews were led to the gas ovens every day of the Final Solution, Jan '42-April '45.

The recent discovery of a mass grave of 3000 in war-torn Bosnia has shocked the world. Yet Holocaust is equivalent to 2000 of such mass killings.

Much fuss was made over the Hiroshima bomb which killed 30,000. Yet it would take 200, yes two hundred such atom bombs to kill the 6 million of the Holocaust.

The atom bomb was exclusively a Jewish device, planned, designed and produced by Jewish scientists and later chaired by Bernard Baruch. The pity is that it wasn't ready in time to drop on Hitler's head and his fellow Huns. You wicked Huns – you ought to be destroyed. "Worthy is he who will repay you in your coin. Worthy is he who will dash your babes against the rock."

Berlin in the year 2000, ready for inauguration, population 6 million.

Israel has 200 atom bombs which Shimon Peres has promised to get rid of as soon as lasting peace is established in the Middle East. These 200 bombs can really be put to good use by dropping them over..... No, it can't be done.

### How to treat the Holocaust

We must only measure the Holocaust by the way it affects us. If we succumb to it, if we accept its punishment, if we only mourn its memory and wither under its heavy weight, then the perpetrators of the Final Solution would have achieved their objective. We can, on the other hand, transcend that cataclysm in our history, by restoring our strength by replenishing our numbers, by replacing the lost 6 millions. Israel's Jewish population would have become by now some 8 million. In the last 50 years, there were, instead, 2 million abortions. As a result, we lost the demography race with the Arabs, and had to surrender Judea, Samaria and Gaza. It is not too late to reverse the process. The choice is with us, and not with our enemies!●

N.D.

### Islamic Terror

Islamic fundamentalists must be careful what they do in the name of Islam.

For if Islam means the murder of innocent people, then there are many Islamic targets that could provide a terrible response to Hamas and Jihad atrocities.

The silence of Moslem lay and religious leaders of the terrorist activities can only be interpreted as a sign of approval.

Many Arab editors have applauded the latest suicide outrage. They should be given a taste of their own medicine●



The Royal Albert Hall in London, filled to its capacity by 6,000 Jewish mourners (whom God preserve) at the Rabin Memorial Service last November. This number of Jews were sent to the Gas ovens EVERY DAY of the Final Solution 1942-1945.

## Relative Values

### The real strength of the Jewish people

by Naim Dangoor

تَعِينَا أَنَا قَلِيلٌ عَدِيدِنَا  
فَقَلَّتْ لِي إِنِّي الْكَلَامُ قَلِيلٌ

India which has a population of 930 million has recently applied to have a permanent seat on the Security Council. But should a country that merely has so many mouths to feed be entitled to a place of privilege in the United Nations? The Arabs also continue to intimidate Israel that they number 250 millions. Is that an asset or a liability?

A Chinese and an Israeli were travelling next to each other on a plane. The Chinese asked the Israeli, "How big is your nation, we hear and read such a lot about you?" Shy to say 5 million, the Israeli said 50 million. "Exactly", said the Chinese, such a small country and yet you are always in the news. We are 1200 million".

"1200 million"? retorted the Israeli, "and yet we hear very little about you!"

Jews suffer from one inferiority complex – namely, the inferiority of numbers.

At the beginning of the Current Era Jews constituted 10 percent of the populations both of the Roman and of the Persian empires. But, as a result of the Roman-Jewish war of 66-70, the destruction of the Temple, which cost the lives of 2 million Jews, the scattering of the Remnant far and wide, the voluntary and forced conversions first to Christianity and later to Islam, the savage persecutions of our two daughter religions, the Crusades, the Mogul invasions of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, our numbers were decimated. By the year 1500 there were only 1.5 million Jews left of whom one million were Sephardim.

But as a result of the general population explosion that followed the Industrial Revolution two hundred years ago, as well of Jewish emancipation, our numbers increased rapidly, and that by 1930 there were 16 million Jews out of a world population of 2000 million – 15 million Ashkenazim and still only one million Sephardim.

Since then, as a result of the savage Holocaust, the marriages out of the Faith now running at over 50 percent, our numbers are now only 12 million out of a world population of over 5000 million – a mere drop in the ocean – 0.24 percent against 0.8 percent 70 years ago.

Such a disparity no doubt has its psychological effect both on the Jew and the non-Jew. Because we are not backed by numbers, even a person like De Gaulle, by no means an enemy, characterised the Jews as pushy and domineering.

But Jewish influence in the world, ancient and modern, goes far beyond our meagre numbers; in religion, literature, science, cinema, politics, philosophy, finance, music, art, medicine, 20 percent of Nobel prize winners have been Jews. The three outstanding personalities of modern times were Jews – Marx, Einstein and Freud.

In the modern world, where political philosophy is based purely on crude numbers, the Jews are bound to be losers. As we enter a new millenium it would be more equitable to change our political thinking so that the Jewish people and the Chinese people will get equal evaluation and the voting within particular countries to reflect a person's individual contribution to his society.

Before a permanent seat on the Security Council is allocated to the war criminals of Germany and Japan, or to India and the Arabs, it should be offered to the Jewish People, who would have sobering and stabilising influence on the destiny of mankind●

I find *The Scribe* to be "the best journal ever"●  
London Mr & Mrs Amron



## Keren Hayesod in Baghdad

Dr. Shlomo Hillel, World Chairman of Keren Hayesod has sent us the following letter sent from the Chief Rabbinate of Baghdad to Keren Hayesod in London in December 1923.

This document was recently discovered in the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem. It shows the close attachment of the Baghdad Community to charitable causes in the Holy Land.

From: Chief Rabbi [A.C.T.G.] Baghdad  
To: Dr. Feiwel,  
The Directorate of the Keren Hayesod, London  
Dear Sir,

With reference to your request to exercise influence upon the members of the K.H. Committee with a view to collecting the outstanding funds pledged to the K.H. and to remit the proceeds collected, we beg to state that no such exertion is ever necessary, as the Committee are wholeheartedly devoted to the cause of the K.H., doing their best to win many new contributors including those who have hitherto not participated, and to enhance the standard of the Keren Hayesod in this country, so as to become most helpful in the reconstruction of our Holy Land. Who could dare to stand aloof from such a great and holy enterprise? We entertain every hope and feel confident that in virtue of this great work, which implies both the task of settling the position in Palestine, and that of providing a living for the many destitute brethren who are engaged in this reconstruction, God will send us the true Saviour who will bring us back to His House within our life-time as early as He may please, Amen and Shalom●

(signed) **Ezra Ruben Dangoor**  
Chief Rabbi (A.C.T.G.)  
Baghdad

I am the grand daughter of Joseph Elias Gabbay, deceased in Iraq in 1927, daughter of Eliahu Gabbay, currently living in San Francisco, and niece of Shlomo Gabbay, recently deceased in London.

In the interest of furthering my knowledge of my heritage and learning more about Babylonian Jewry I should like to take out a subscription to your magazine. I should also like to know if there are any back issues which might contain articles about my grandfather, who was a barrister in Baghdad and Aide-de-Camp to King Feisal from 1920 to 1927.

New York **Anne Gabbay Apostolatos**

*Scribe Reply:* We were interested in the information contained in your letter regarding your grandfather. His full name was Joseph Elias Murad Gubbay. He was born in 1877 and studied law in Istanbul, graduating in 1905. On his return, he was appointed Director of Posts and Telegraphs in Fao near Basra. In 1908 he was appointed Investigating Magistrate in Basra and then in Mosul in 1913. After travelling in Turkey, Syria and Egypt he returned to start his own law practice. In 1924 he was elected to represent Baghdad at the Constitution for the State of Iraq headed by King Feisal. He died in 1927. However, we have no knowledge of his being Aide-de-Camp to the King. If you have any information on this point please let us know. By coincidence (or perhaps by telepathy) your letter arrived the same day that we received a photograph from Keren Hayesod in Jerusalem, in which your grandfather appears (as above, 1st on the right).



1923 – Keren Hayesod emissary in Baghdad

From right: Joseph Elias Murad Gabbay; Eliahu Yehezkel Menahem Iny; Menashe Abraham Gurji; Shaul David; Hakham Bashi Moshe Haim; Dr. Ariel Ben-Zion (Keren Hayesod emissary from London); Sion Shlomo Aboudi; Abraham Haim Reuben Somekh; Binyamin Moshe; Binyamin Eliahu.

(Picture taken at Alliance Girls' School building). The picture appeared on the first page of Scribe No. 24 but the above caption is more complete and accurate●

### The list of Baghdad Contributors 1923

Names	Rupees	Names	Rupees
Dahood Salman Dahan	20	Shamoun Meir David	20
Aharon Shaool Aboo Dahan	10	Shaool Saleh Shelomo Eliahoo David	160
Morza Dahan	20	Sion David	30
Nessim Selman Dahan	20	Yacoub Shaool David	20
Ezra Heskell Dalah	20	Yehuda Saleh Shelomo David	120
Gourgey Saleh Dalah	20	Yehuda Saleh Shelomo David	60
Jacob Saleh Dalah	25	Abdullah Hakham Dangoor	60
Shaool Kouhi Dalah	15	Sasson Heskell Doori	5
Sion Hakham Dangoor	20	Heskell David Doori	60
Sion Hakham Dangoor	50	Eliahoo Heskell Denouss	400
Sion Nissim Dangoor	20	Ezra Aboodi Darwish	200
Sion Meir Dangoor	20	Sulman Reuben & Joseph Moshi Ekairib	10
Nissim Salim Dangoor & Zekharia Dangoor	30	Abraham Nessim Ekka	40
Looloo bint Ezra Daoud	20	Isaac Haji Ezra Haroon El Sayigh	40
Meir Sion Jacob Darzi	40	Hakham Heskell Ezra Elia	6
Abraham Ezra Eliahoo Hakham David	150	Ezra Salman Elia	10
Eliahoo Isaac Saleh Shlomo David	240	Meir Jacob Elias	80
Barookh Heskell Haim David	30	Selim Abraham Eliahoo	50
Eliahoo Hakham David	10	Shaoul Abraham Elisha	15
Ezra Saleh Eliahoo Shlomo David	60	Ezra Salman Elsayegh	10
Yoseph David & Brother	25	Houbi Yehooda Hakham	600
Hakham Moshi Haim David	15	Joori Nissim Ezair	25
Isaac Ezra Shelomo	30	Joori Nissim Ezair	75
Hakham Moshi Haim Shelomo David	15	Yahya Jacob Ezair	300
Jacob Besalel David	100	Yehooda Jacob Ezair	150
		Abraham Abdul Ezer	10
		Heskell Haim Ezoori●	200

In this nuclear age, persuasion seems to be the only practical weapon left to us; the alternative is universal annihilation.

**Frey Stark**

*Scribe:* The gap between the Hydrogen bomb and the Atom bomb is even greater than the gap between the Atom bomb and an ordinary bomb●

I refer to the photograph of the Alliance School Boy Scouts appearing on page 22 of your last issue. The year in fact was 1935 and not 1925. I appear in the second row standing, sixth from the left, and my brother Henry, in the first row standing, fourth from left. Our father M. Sasson is the first in the first row●

**London**

**Albert Sasson**

## More on Circumcision

by Kurt Fleischmann

To the average person the ceremony of circumcision is closely linked to the Jews. At least in the West.

Nothing, however, is further from the truth. Circumcision has been practiced at one time or another by most peoples, except the Mongols, the ancestors of today's Hungarians and Finns. British Royals and some aristocrats are known to have used the late Dr Snowman, who was also a *Mohel*.

How old is the ceremony of circumcision? And how wide-spread? Well, there is a painting, said to be 5000 years old, located in Saggara, in Egypt, depicting a priest, with a knife in one hand, holding between his thumb and first finger of his other hand, the penis of a baby. And circumcision can be traced even further back. Every male is born with a foreskin which is removed by circumcision.

All male Jews are supposed to submit to this ceremony when they are eight days old.

Jewish circumcision began with that of Abraham, being our Patriarch's covenant with Jehova. Nowadays the ceremony initiates Jewish males into the Jewish people, and must be performed by a *Mohel* who, although well trained, may, but need not be a medical doctor, which is, where controversy starts.

Thus Dr. Morris Sifman of the Initiation Society, which trains and supplies *Mohelim*, had this to say: "The Torah tells us to do it (circumcision in the traditional manner) since there is no proof it is harmful." He added, however: "If it can be proved that the practice were detrimental to health, we may think again." He added that some doctors think on the contrary that it is useful.

When asked what Halacha had to say, if anything, on whether circumcision must be performed the traditional way, he said: "Halachically there is probably no objection to performing circumcision only by doctors at the hospital. The reason he gave was that in his opinion, traditional circumcision is less painful for the child – no matter what doctors say, as well as safer in young babies. During the traditional Jewish circumcision the baby cries, yet the baby cries as violently if it is anaesthetised. So it is questionable which procedure is really more painful, the actual *Brit* or the injection.

Dr. Sifman gave Halacha as the reason why he supported the traditional *Brit*. An attitude which may not satisfy all Jews or others. Fortunately, there are quite a number of other reasons for circumcision; reasons which may have been in the minds of our sages – e.g. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. Circumcised males may find it easier to keep the penis clean.

Jewish men and women, too, are less often afflicted by cancer. This is shown by the fact that, in India, Moslems, who circumcise, suffer less often from cancer of the penis than their Hindu neighbours, who don't.

No rabbi, I had spoken to, nor Dr. Sifman, thought that Halacha forbade anaesthesia. This would give parents a choice.

### Naim Dangoor adds:

Circumcision – the long and the short of it. The foreskin was a natural protection for the tip of the male organ in man and in beast. When people began to wear clothes, that protection was no longer necessary and the foreskin became redundant. The hygienic advantages of removing it became compelling.

The verdict, therefore, is that man should be circumcised (the earlier the better) and that



## Jews must learn to swim!

As the fleeing Israelites reached the seashore and found they could not get to the other side, Moses pleaded with God, saying "We are unable to get across the waters. Pharaoh and his army are hot on our trail and will catch up with us any moment now. What shall I do?"

And the Lord said to Moses, "I am parting the Red Sea this time, but in future, Jews must learn to swim!"

In Baghdad, Jewish boys and girls were taught to swim in the Tigris at an early age. There were two instructors, Dahud El-Sebbah and his brother Selman. During the summer months, when the level of the river was low, the water clear, and the current usually rushing as a tiger was weak, pupils would meet at the waterfront to be taught the crawl, the breast stroke, the back stroke and diving.

Initially, three or four pieces of balsa-like lightweight wood from the base of the palm tree branches, called "Karab" are tied around the waist to buoy up the swimmer. These are gradually shed, one by one, as progress is made and, after a few weeks, the pupil would attempt to swim across the river (a distance of some 250 metres) without Karab; and finally to swim there and back fully clothed●

The above picture sent by Albert Sasson taken in 1935 shows a group of boys and girls in the river with their instructor... left to right: Faraj Gourji; Naim Obadia; Salim Mahlab; Albert Sasson; Akram Sheberou; Elias Dabby.

animals should remain uncircumcised.

However, the operation has acquired some religious significance as evidenced by the fact that circumcised adults who convert to Judaism are still required to undergo a symbolic letting of a drop of blood.

The debate on circumcision can be divided into two aspects.

- 1) Its hygienic value.
- 2) The way it is carried out. Opponents to the practice tend to confuse the issue by saying that because it may be painful, therefore it should be abolished. However, if circumcision has hygienic merits, it should be retained and carried out under acceptable conditions.

Some rabbis are saying privately that there is nothing in the Halacha (Jewish Law) against carrying out circumcision under local anaesthetic, either by injection or cream. Let us have this ruling officially, in writing. Because I suspect that at the Brit, which is entering into a covenant with God, both parties have to be awake.

Thus, there is an unfortunate parallel between circumcision and Shechita in that, in both cases, the "victims" have to be fully conscious; that is why while the Moslems have accepted pre-stunning of the animals, Jews cannot accept that. It is notable that the baby is given a drop of wine to calm it, after the circumcision has been carried out and not before. In Arabia boys are usually circumcised when they reach puberty at the age of thirteen, the age at which Ismael was circumcised by

Abraham and may have been the original age of circumcision. Circumcised boys are not allowed to enter the ladies' quarters. The Arabic word for circumcision (*Khatan*) corresponds to the Hebrew word for bridegroom (*Hatan*).

In America, 60-80 percent of the male babies are circumcised at birth, whereas in Europe only about five percent are circumcised. This may be a cynical measure of civilisation against aggressiveness, which is borne out by the genocide committed by the Europeans during the Second World War.

We may wonder why Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus on 25th December and not at the start of the Christian Year. The explanation is, that the 1st of January was originally reserved for his circumcision which Jews consider a more important event than the birth.

At a recent dinner of the Board of Deputies, President Tabachnick told the audience that Shechita and circumcision are safe from suppression by government legislation which indicates the sporadic attempts to interfere in our ancient traditions.

The January issue of the *Reader's Digest*, U.S. edition, lists the following arguments in favour of circumcision:

– The warm, moist area underneath the foreskin can provide an ideal breeding ground for bacteria, leading to infections, which can cause pain, inflammation and ulcerated tissue. They can be treated with antibiotics, but they may recur.



Picture taken in Kirkuk 5.3.1936

Left to right: 1 – David Meir; Elias Dabby; Maurice Bekhor; Albert Iny; Akram Sheberou; Faraj Gourji; son of Abdul Ahad; Mr. Abdul Ahad; Mr Charabi; Latif Dabby; Anwar Menashi.



Picture taken at Baghdad

Left to right: 2 – Naim Obadia; Albert Sasson; Elias Dabby; Akram Sheberou.

– During circumcision, babies react to both the restraint and the pain. In some cases doctors perform circumcision using local anaesthesia, with two tiny injections at the base of the penis. Others use an anaesthetic cream.

– A massive 1992 study, found very little difference in sexual satisfaction as reported by circumcised and uncircumcised men.

– Aids-ravaged Africa and elsewhere among gay people, three times more HIV infection occurs among the uncircumcised. Other venereal diseases are likewise more common among the uncircumcised.

– In 1986 Dr. Thomas Wiswell of Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia studied the records of more than 200,000 male infants born in U.S. Army hospitals worldwide. He found that uncircumcised boys were ten times more likely to be hospitalised for urinary tract infections than their circumcised contemporaries. Dr Wiswell, who opposed circumcision before, now takes the view that circumcision protects against U.T.I.'s, penile cancer, foreskin infections and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. You get multiple benefits from one simple procedure with little risk●

I was your school-mate in Shamash School in Baghdad. I was in the same class, together with the late Naim S Basri with whom I entered the London Matriculation Examination in 1934, when you must have been already in England.

One cannot fail to admire the strong will and dedication which you have manifested in issuing *The Scribe*, especially the Editorials which are of high value.

The blame for antisemitism can be laid on the Christian Church. Any person would surely become antisemitic if he is taught from childhood that Jesus was hanged on the Cross by the Jews. Naturally this was done to eliminate any competition by the Jews and to gain superiority in the international field for the Christian Church.

Now that Christianity has about one billion followers, we hope that they shift to a more liberal policy by allowing the Jews to live freely in a humanitarian world. We hope so●

Montreal

Sami Chitayat

## The Essence of Judaism

I recently had an interesting dialogue with an overseas visitor, and from one subject to another, the conversation moved to the mystery of the universe and the nature of God.....

Visitor – What is your definition of God?

N.D. – First and foremost, God is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe.

Visitor – Is God a person or a spirit? According to our Creed, God is not corporeal.

N.D. – God can be anything He likes; not merely a spirit as some believe. If we attempt to define Him, we shall limit Him.

Visitor – I believe God is within us and is not outside us.

N.D. – Contrary to the Ancient Greeks and other nations, Judaism is committed to believing in an Omnipotent God who created, out of nothing, Matter, Space and Time. When Alexander the Great, who conquered the known world in 333 BCE at the age of 30, visited Israel and met the Jewish High Priest and got acquainted with Jewish beliefs, he wrote to his tutor, Aristotle, asking him what he thought of the Jewish story of Creation? Aristotle replied: "There is no creation; the world has always been there, and since there is no creation, there is no creator!"

Some oriental religions still harbour the same doctrine.

Visitor – I agree with Aristotle.

N.D. – The universe is subject to and runs according to many precise and exact laws. Who made those laws, such as the law of gravity and the law of relativity?

Visitor – The scientists.

N.D. – The scientists?!?!

Visitor – Yes the scientists. The law of gravity was made by Newton. The law of relativity was made by Einstein.

N.D. – Who made the moral laws to which the world is also subject?

Visitor – Moses was a very clever person. He made all the laws of the Torah which we call the Torah of Moses.

**Naim Dangoor adds:** If the visitor, a learned and devout Jew can think on these lines – who can blame the atheists and the unbelievers of the rising generations? Perhaps monotheism in general and Judaism in particular, lack the proper public relations agents to sell it to the masses.

A recent BBC programme claimed that Zoro

Aster introduced monotheism 200 years before Moses. In fact, Zoro Aster taught the existence of 2 gods – one of good and one of evil; this is not monotheism. Judaism which goes beyond Moses to Abraham and even earlier, firmly believes in the unity of God who created both good and evil. "I created good and I created evil; I am the only God and there is none other beside me". Islam develops this idea further by saying "all the good you receive is from Allah, and all the bad is from your own self".

We also believe that we are subject to an Omnipotent, merciful and compassionate God, and that the world is subject to a moral code in which the Torah attempts to instruct us.

Zoro Astreans, also known as Parsees, do not accept any converts whatsoever to their "religion". That tradition goes back to the time when every nation had its own religion, and so, there would be no possibility of accepting foreigners into the national religion. Ignorance or biased historians such as H.G. Wells or Arnold Toynbee often assert that Jehovah, too, was merely a tribal God. This in fact is not true. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was a universal God, but when the people of Israel became a nation, they had to conform to the current international practice by saying that Jehovah was the God of Israel and reigns over the land of Israel. To claim that Jehovah also reigned in Egypt and Assyria would have been tantamount to a declaration of war. Later prophets gradually broke away from that limitation.

It is interesting to note that Parsees now number only 120 thousand worldwide which is only one percent of the number of Jews of 12 million. This, in turn, is likewise only one percent of the total number of Moslems of 1.2 billion. The decline of Parsee-ism is due to its rigidity, which Judaism should endeavour to avoid.

The story of Creation has been confirmed by science and the Big Bang. When the astronauts landed on the moon and had God's eye view of our planet, they thought the most appropriate lines to recite in wonder and amazement were the opening words of Genesis..... In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.....

Another proof of the existence of God is that He is fulfilling his promise to Abraham that in him all the nations of the world shall be blessed●

# CUSTOMS & LIFE IN BAGHDAD

by Eileen Khalastchy

**School:** After a long summer holiday of almost 4 months, we used to look forward to going back to school, immediately after Succoth. In the 1930's studies used to be in two sessions, morning and afternoon and in between, 2 hours break. Those who lived near the school, used to go home for lunch, but those who lived far, either took sandwiches with them or food was sent to them with the servant in a *safar tass*.

Those who lived far would come by car part of the way and continue on foot through the narrow alley-ways to school. In winter, roads used to be muddy with puddles of rain water that were difficult to cross. Often porters used to carry people on their back to continue their journey.

The Alliance Girls' School with 1400 pupils, was a very large building with an open courtyard with classrooms all around it on the ground and first floor (see centre pages in Scribe 62). A tuck shop used to sell such things as *semmoun and amba* (bread rolls filled with mango pickles), *cherag and bouz* (buns and ice-cream), *summaq and za'atar* (sumac and thyme).

In the morning each class had to arrange in a row of 2's in the courtyard and we used to sing the National Anthem in front of the Iraqi Flag; then the teachers led us to our classes.

The classrooms were not heated. In winter it used to be freezing cold. Before classes we had to jump up and down to warm ourselves. For fun we used to take sugar cigarettes and pretended that we were smoking because of the vapour that came out of our mouths from the cold weather. It was difficult to write during the first lesson, as our fingers were stiff from cold. We survived, and kept a good memory of our school days. Some used to get *khelt* (chilblains) from the cold weather, either on their feet which made putting on shoes very difficult or some got it on their fingers which was itchy and painful and looked very ugly.

On the way to school, we used to buy *kheghait*, a yellow substance in blocks extracted from reed that grew in marshes near Amara.

**Weddings:** The girl had no opinion in getting married. The match-maker would suggest a number of boys and the family would eventually choose a suitable groom after making the necessary enquiries. Then they start negotiating the dowry and arrangements made for the engagement. Engagements were mainly held on Saturday evenings. No fuss and no dinners were served, but just turkish delights and sugared almonds. The next day the groom's family send a large tray of turkish delights and sugared almonds covered with *zdab* (rue) and *gold leaves*. Both families sent plates of sweets to relatives and friends; one plate turkish delight and one sugared almond on top of the other and wrapped with a nice cloth. They immediately empty the plates leaving some of the sweets for the maid and give her a gratuity to be shared by the servants.

During the engagement period, the girl was not allowed to go out alone with her fiance; so either her sister or brother would accompany her as chaperon.

At festivals, the groom used to send his bride a present of jewellery. After the wedding, her family sent her on Purim home-made sweets with a suitable present.



**Wax Candle for henna party**

Before the wedding, the groom's family call a *neddaf* to fluff the cotton wool with *titi pampa* to make up mattresses, quilts and satin bedspreads, as it wasn't possible to get ready made.

Mothers usually start to prepare things for the girl's trousseau at an early age, such as embroidered nighties, embroidered sheets, and other embroidered items with *tel* (gold thread).

Wedding invitations used to be distributed by hand, by a man who knew everybody, called *abu-el-aidha*.

In the invitation they used to write the *subhiya* (presents) after the wedding ceremony. They used to give mostly 2 or more gold coins.

The bride's parents made her trousseau which was shown to relatives who visited after the wedding and the comments could be heard either of approval or not good enough. The first Shabbath after the wedding is called *sabt-el-neswan* (the women's Shabbath) because only women visited to congratulate the bride. Lots of women went incognito wearing *abayas* and covering their faces who were all welcomed. Also to the wedding lots of uninvited women used to go incognito.

Before the *henni* night, the groom's parents sent *el hamla*, a big tray full of turkish delights and sugared almonds, henna powder, 2 large wax candles and a piece of jewellery to the bride.



**Earthenware jars with filtered water holder "naquta"**

We thoroughly enjoy, together with the rest of our family, your Journal and what it includes. Knowing about our roots, family heritage, it makes us proud of who we are and where we come from. We have family all over the world who enjoy the *Scribe* and through it keep in touch.

Israel

Shlomo & Hilda Mizrahi

Most newly-weds used to live with the groom's parents. Sometimes 2 or 3 married brothers lived at the same house with their parents and having small children.

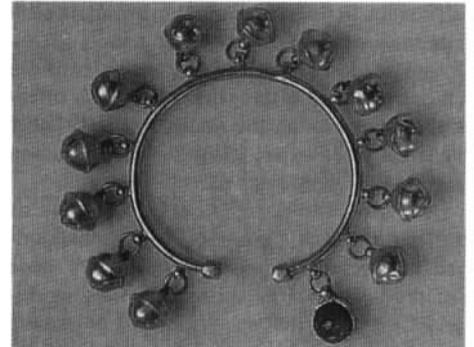
The new bride had to wait 40 days before she was allowed to go to a wedding or to visit someone who gave birth, because they thought *tenkabes* (kabsa means rivalry) and then she may not be able to have children.

At weddings held at the Alliance School, until late 30's, they used to have *masiqat-elsara'ae* (brass band) and choir.

The bride used to wear after the wedding thick gold bracelets at her ankles *hejel*; and *dhafayer* (gold tassels) platted into her hair.

**Baby:** When the bride was expecting for the first time, by the time she entered her 8th month, they invited near relatives women one morning to cut the trousseau for the baby as everything was sewn at home. Also the mattress, quilt and bed cover. Even nappies were made at home. Now-a-days things are so much easier and everything can be obtained ready made. A wooden cot *jellala khashab* was used for the baby in which they rock him to sleep. It was usually put in the *nim* in summer.

The mother to be, if she craves for a certain food mostly coffee or pickles, that food should be provided, otherwise if she scratches at that moment, the baby might get a birth-mark *shahwa* on the baby's skin of that particular food.



After giving birth the mother *nefsa* stayed indoors for 40 days to avoid *kabsa* (rivalry). Some babies are born with a thin layer of skin covering their faces called *bergu'e* which is meant as a good omen to the child and to the father, which was made into a lucky amulet.

When the child was inoculated for the first time against *jadghi* (small pox), when it took *ye'ammel*, the parents put in baby's mouth a tiny piece of *kaimagh* (clotted cream) to cool the *jadghi* and also they sent *kaimagh* to relatives. When the baby had measles, a red sheet was put in front of the bed to bring down the redness.

For the first hair-cut of a baby boy, money was thrown on his head and was given to the poor.

The babies wore *jneejel* (bracelets with tiny bells) at their ankles, so when the baby crawled they could hear where he was.

Lucky talisman with Hebrew inscription was put in baby's cot with a safety pin or on his clothes.

**Communications:** Before the telephone, the way of communications was by sending the maid to convey messages, as the houses were not far from each other. There was no newspapers, but when there was an important news, someone passed the alley-ways and called *agence* and conveyed the news' items.

**Shopping:** Men used to do the shopping. Before the fridges, they shopped day by day, meat, chickens, fish and vegetables. Before the cars, the well off master of the house, on his way to



**Hawan**

work, took with him the cook very early to carry the shopping back. The chickens' feathers used to be plucked at home, singed cleaned and salted. After removing unwanted sinews, the meat was koshered. Now-a-days everything comes from the butcher ready to be cooked. Likewise, fish used to be scaled and gutted at home.

There was no food processors but brass mortars *hawans* were used instead, to make *kubba* and different other things that needed processing. At Jewish quarters, the pounding of the *hawans* on Fridays sounded like an orchestra. Meat was minced by hand using two knives. A deep wooden mortar *jawan* was used for husking cereals *yehabbesh*.

The milkman used to bring the cow to the house to be milked on the premises. Until late 50's, that was the case; then the Government started the pasteurised milk. Goats' milk, being cooling, was squeezed straight into the person's mouth for anyone who had rash or other ailments that needed cooling.

Hardly anyone ate outside the home. Men came home for lunch or had their meal sent to them in *safartass* (an aluminium food container with 2 or 3 compartments).

**Transport:** Means of transport was by horse carriage *arabana*.



**Jawan**

**Visits between families and friends:** The custom was to visit family and friends from time to time or when there was a special occasion, such as engagement, wedding or birth; and visits were returned back. On Shabbath, visitors came unannounced. Some families used to keep a weekly day at home, opened to family and friends without making prior appointment *qeboul*. Men used to spend their evenings in local coffee shops where they had plain tea or black arabic coffee. They also played backgammon.

**From evil eye (envy):** There is a popular belief of evil eye. So some people carry gallnut *afsa* or wear a turquoise stone as a guard. The number 5, supposed to be from evil eye. Some people say *be-ain-el-adu* (in the eye of the foe) when they mention No. 5. Sometimes it is said on purpose to ward off the evil eye.

**Houses:** The walls used to be thick to insulate against heat and cold. Roads were narrow for the same purpose.



**Typical front door**

Hand fans of woven straw were used, sometimes dipped in water to give a cool breeze. Also with a ceiling fan called *panka* oscillated by a little boy while the others had their siesta in the *nim* (semi basement). A flue *bkhari* connecting the *nim* to the roof where the flue faced north (*gharbi*), give natural cool ventilation to the *nim*. At night we used to sleep on the flat roof and gaze at the millions of the bright stars illuminating the sky. On the roof, beds were screened *kalla* all round for privacy.

Some houses had artesian wells *bir tebila* which were used for swim *mikvah*.

Some of the windows had metal cages *qafass* to look out into the road.

Before the advent of running water, they used to have turkish bath and a boiler that heated the water and the floor at the same time. Occasionally, people went to a public bath for professional treatment. The old houses had heavy doors with studs on the front. The doors open on a long corridor *daghbuna* before getting to the courtyard. The door was opened sometimes from the 1st floor by means of a cord, first shouting *mani?* (who is it) and the caller shouts back *ana* (it is me).

Front door locks were heavy and the key weighed up to a pound (see illustration).



**Our front door key in Baghdad  
Actual size**

*continued on next page*

In Baghdad we had four distinct seasons, winter clothes and Persian carpets were stored from winter to winter.

Before running water was installed in the homes, a water porter *saqqa* used to deliver the water in an animal skin *qeghbi* which was emptied into a large earthenware urn *heb* which dripped filtered water into a *naquta* for drinking. The *saqqa* used to mark his deliveries with a piece of charcoal with lines on the wall that were similar to Roman numerals and were called *shekhut el saqqa*. This expression used to describe bad handwriting.

Various herbs were used for the treatment of minor ailments.

Tomato juice was left in the sun in large trays to thicken into tomato paste for use out of season.

Washer woman used to come once a week to do the washing and ironing.

The community used exclusively sesame seed oil *seghaj* for cooking requirements, now acknowledged to be healthier than other oils. In contrast, non Jews used animal products such as purified butter (ghee) or lard.

**The river life:** Around April the Tigris used to rise and sometimes overflowed and inundated low buildings. In summer the water level fell exposing small islands *jazra* in the middle. Many people used to spend the summer season there, sleeping in tents and coming to town by rowing boats. They used to have *chalghi* and *masguf* fish. It used to be very safe. Good old days! As we lived on the river side, we could hear the singing and music till late at night.

In the *jazra* as well as on the beach, gardeners used to plant *lubia* (black eyed beans) and *ta'aruzi* (wild cucumber) to sell. We used to go down to pick and buy. They used to tell us, "pick and eat as much as you like free of charge but just pay for what you take home".



Qeghbi

**Seasonal fruits and vegetables:** The main seasonal fruits and vegetables were as follows:

Iraq was famous for having 150 varieties of dates and produced 80% of the world's crops. They ripened in late summer. White mulberry and red mulberry (early summer), many varieties of melons and water melons. End of summer we had the famous long white grapes *days-el-anz*.

Main summer vegetables were aubergine, marrow and *bamia* (okra) which was threaded and dried away from the sun for use off season. In winter we had all kinds of citrus fruits, sweet lemons, pomegranates; as vegetables we had beetroots, pumpkins, turnips, broad beans, peas.

Many varieties of dried fruits and fresh fruits were imported from Persia.

*Kemi* (truffle) is an underground fungus with rich flavour, shaped like small potatoes, found in wheat and barley fields after a thunderstorm. It comes in two varieties white and black.

In the late sixties America sent a consignment of wheat for seed and were told that it was purposely poisoned so that it is not used for human or animal consumption. But the ignorant farmers fed some of it to their sheep and even used it themselves for bread. As a result many people died and sheep meat became dangerous that winter. It so happened that there was a plentiful truffle season, and truffles were used in the place of meat.

**Feasts:** Between Rosh Hodesh Ellul to Yom Kippur Eve, Jews recited Selihot daily before dawn. The Shamash used to pass Jewish houses, arousing the worshippers for the prayers.

On Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur all men dressed in white suits.

On Kippur eve at noon, people used to go to Synagogue to receive a few lashes with a leather thong to expiate their sins *Hattara*.

After fasting meal, the father blesses each child who kisses the parents' hands and ask for forgiveness *mehila*. Children under age used to fast gradually *som-el-daghaj*.

Around Shavuot *Id-el-zeyagha*, groups of families used to go on pilgrimage to the Shrines of Prophet Ezekiel, Ezra the Scribe and other Holy places.

At the end of Pesach when bread is allowed, we buy fenugreek *helba* or other green branches and whisk it lightly on each other's head and shoulders and say *santak khadhra* which means a green year ahead with good luck.

When someone is called up to the Sefer, any younger brother, son, nephew or son-in-law stand up till the final blessing. On his return, the person called up says on his way to his seat "*Kullechem Berukhim*" (May you all be blessed): and members of the congregation respond "*Hazaq-u-Barukh*" (be strong and blessed).

Prayer Books according to the Baghdad (Babylonian *Minhag*) are published by "Mansour" and "Baqual" in Jerusalem●

## USEFUL TIPS FOR MINOR AILMENTS:

1. Ward Mawi (blue flower) for fever.
2. Noumi Basra (ground lime) for diarrhoea.
3. The boiled quince seed soothes coughing.
4. The water from boiled chick peas soothes the cough and clears the voice.
5. The water from boiled turnips for sore throat.
6. To suck a clove is very good for sore throat.
7. Boiled orange peel or orange blossom water for indigestion.
8. Boiled Ward Banafsha (violet flower) for rash. It can be ground and mixed with sugar, and made into patties and dried, then used when needed.

### Tip:

- When pouring water in a hot water bottle, to avoid spilling on your hand, pour it through a funnel and so it will be safe.
- Segmented oranges or clementines can be frozen and used instead of ice for drinks. It gives nice taste●

May *The Scribe* continue forever●  
New York William Mouallem

## Jacob's Cunning Unravalled After 3500 Years In Genetics Lecture by Professor Robert Winston by David A. Dangoor BSc.

In Jewish demonology, Laban has an important place. The Haggadah states that while Pharaoh only sought to destroy the males of our nation, Laban tried to uproot the whole. Yet by patience and an apparent intuitive feel for genetics, Jacob outwitted Laban.

Jacob wanted to marry Rachel, and Laban persuaded him to work free for seven years for this. But on the wedding night, Laban switched Rachel for her sister Leah, and forced Jacob into another seven years of free labour for Rachel.

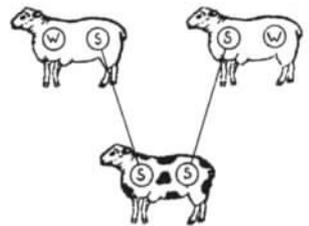
At the end of the fourteen years, Jacob agreed to continue working for Laban, but asked as wages all the speckled sheep born of Laban's flock. Sensing another opportunity to trick Jacob, Laban agreed, and then removed all the speckled sheep from his flock, for his sons to tend "three days journey away." He assumed that you need at least one speckled sheep to get a speckled lamb.

Though now left with an all white flock, Jacob did not protest. His close observation in 14 years of tending Laban's flock had made him realise that matters were not that simple.

During a lecture on genetics arranged by the Commonwealth Jewish Council at the Royal Society of Medicine, the world renowned fertility specialist Professor Lord Robert Winston explained the Biblical reference to Jacob's trick.

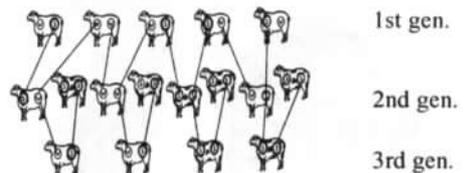
Put simply, each sheep has two genes for coat colour. The white is dominant and the speckled is recessive, which means it will not show itself in the presence of the dominant white gene. So if a sheep has two white genes it will be a white sheep. If it has one white and one speckled gene, it will also be a white sheep. A speckled sheep must have only speckled genes.

Jacob was left with only white sheep, but he must have realised that even two white sheep could have a speckled lamb.



So when the first generation bred, it produced some speckled sheep.

In the second generation, Jacob will only have allowed breeding which involved at least one speckled sheep (preventing all-white matings). That would have bred out all the sheep having two white genes.



1st generation all sheep are white  
2nd generation speckles reappear  
3rd generation: a speckled gene in all sheep  
From then on Jacob's policy of separating his speckled sheep (mentioned in the Bible) ensured his flock only produced speckled sheep, and so never diminished. Also by continuing to allow Laban's white sheep only to mate with a speckled sheep ensured that Laban's flock continued to produce more speckled sheep to further increase Jacob's own flock.



The above pictures were taken by me in 1937 at the Laura Kadourie Club, Baghdad.

1. On the tennis court left to right: Rachel Zebeida; Madeleine Khalastchy (Gurji); Susan Khalastchy (Kattan); Violet Zebeida.

2. Left to right: David Khalastchy; David Korine; Rachel Zebeida; Violet Zebeida; Elias Peress; Victor Zebeida; Susan Khalastchy (Kattan)● David Korine

Jacob's story about setting speckled reeds before the sheep's eyes when they mated was just a cover story to ensure he did not give the game away.

Eventually, Laban's sons complained that Jacob's flock has become greater than their father's. Jacob has to leave, but by then he has turned the tables on Laban's trickery.

Those who, like me, could not comprehend the story of Jacob's sheep in Genesis Chapter 30 now have their answer from Professor Winston●

! תורת משה אמת

Dear Mr Dangoor,

For a number of years I heard of your name and read your articles with great admiration. Your leadership, opinions on religious and political subjects are truly invaluable.

On behalf of the Iraqi Community of Montreal, I say thank you●

**Dr Sabah Bekhor**  
President of the  
Iraqi Community in Montreal

The Iraqi Jews were probably the oldest Jewish community in the diaspora. A lot of us are related and it has been always said that we are like a "Remmana" (pomegranate).

When the Jews left Iraq, it was like this family was dispersed all over the world. As family we are anxious to know how are our members doing. The *Scribe* has been a good response to that need. With stories, pictures and anecdotes from the past. For those of us who were unborn or too young to remember, it describes to us the way of life of the time. For those who are older, it brings us back memories. Some good and some bad.

We admire your enthusiasm, generosity and tireless efforts in producing the *Scribe*. It is no small task●

Montreal

Claire M. Chitayat

### Letter to Mr Yehuda Avner.

Ever since you left London in 1988, we have been following your news and movements – first to Israel, then to Australia, and now back in Israel at the Prime Minister's office, where your knowledge and vast experience can be very useful and decisive.

We in the Diaspora follow the news of the peace process with our fingers crossed (to borrow an expression). Taken to its logical conclusion peace in the Middle East could produce immense benefits to the region as a whole and to Israel in particular; if botched, it can prove to be a belly flop.

My own hobby horse for the last 30 years has been that peace is not enough – a kind of federation or confederation is needed not to be dominated by the Arabs, but working for the benefit of all the various nationalities of the region, especially the Kurds, the Shias, the Maronites and others. In such a federation Israel can play a vital role.

Why were the Jews exiled to Babylon of all places? In my estimation, it was to demonstrate that the Middle East is one unit, and that no part of it can have lasting security by itself. We must keep this truth before our eyes throughout the peace process.

In negotiations with the Arabs and especially with the Palestinians, the rights of Jews from Arab countries can be a powerful trump card in Israel's hands. When I mentioned this to Mr Rabin at the Prime Minister's office some 20 years ago, his terse reply was, "Are you suggesting that Ashkenazim have inferior rights in Israel?" I had no such thoughts in my mind.

When General Ehud Barak was in London a year ago, when Palestinians were clamouring for the return to Israel proper of their 1948 refugees, I suggested to him that Israel can argue the exchange of refugees – 800,000 Palestinian Arabs against 800,000 Jews from Arab countries. His reply was that the Palestinian negotiators do not recognise that the Jews from Arab countries were refugees. This is not

surprising as Peres, when Foreign Minister, said in the Knesset on several occasions that Israel does not consider the Jews who came from Arab countries as refugees, but as olim. Now that he is Prime Minister he must harbour the same idea. This is amazing and incomprehensible!

The truth is that Jews left the Arab countries as refugees, and may have arrived in Israel as olim. There was definitely a push and a pull. Without the harassment, the discrimination, the persecution, the torture, only 30-40% of the Jews would have left Iraq. In the event, 100% of the community eventually left their habitat of 2500 years.

At the time of Koresh 2500 years ago, there were the same number of Jews in Babylonia, some 120,000. When Koresh permitted the return to Jerusalem, only 40,000 went back. Eighty thousand remained in the Land of the Rivers to prosper and become the centre of world Jewry for nearly 2000 years.

Moreover, Arab governments and especially Iraq, confiscated Jewish property and made them leave destitute. Our claim goes beyond these stolen assets. Jews of Arab countries have a claim to a share of the wealth and even of the immense land area of the region. We must remind the Arabs of this, but above all, we must not forget it ourselves. That is why the "land for peace" formula, where Israel has to give land to the Arabs, appears so ludicrous.

I have taken the liberty of writing to you at length, in the hope that you may find my comments of interest.

Now that Israel is reborn, we must realise the events that took place in the last 2000 years. Three billion people now acknowledge and worship the God of Israel, we must make use of this bonanza by acknowledging the followers of Jesus and Mohammed.

Renee and I and members of our Community send you and Mrs Avner our best regards and best wishes for 1996●

N.D.

# WINSTON S. CHURCHILL

*Never Despair*

*Biography of Winston Churchill 1945-1965*

by Sir Martin Gilbert

1438 pp William Heinemann Ltd. London

Reviewed by Naim Dangoor

My late father taught me to judge great men by the mistakes they made during their careers. Not by their achievements, but by their mistakes.

Although Winston S. Churchill faced German treachery and aggression alone, from May 1940 to June 1941, (but modestly told the British people "You were the lions; I only gave the roar"), his career was full of mistakes. In 1915, at the beginning of the Great War, he bungled the Dardanelles campaign which was meant to capture Constantinople and to force the Ottoman Empire out of the war. Churchill had to abandon the operation just at the point, it turned out later, when the Turks were about to surrender.

As a result, Britain had to turn to the Arabs, and through T. E. Lawrence, Churchill's friend, offer them more than they deserved or were entitled to. The Middle East mess has been with us ever since.

In 1921, at the Cairo Conference, Churchill selected Feisal to be King of Iraq which was by no means an entirely Arab country. The Arab administration was not fit to govern this ancient and important domain, the result being the massacre of the Assyrians, the denial of autonomy to the millions of Kurds, the ethnic cleansing of the ancient and important Jewish Community, the persecution and expulsion of the Shias, the 8-year war with Iran, the Kuwait adventure and the Gulf War, and Saddam's reign of terror, poverty and deprivation in the land of wealth and plenty. At that same Cairo Conference of 1921, Churchill as Colonial Secretary, hived off two-thirds of Palestine promised to the Jews by the Balfour Declaration and the League of Nations Mandate, and gave it to Emir Abdulla (just like that). Thereafter, successive anti-Zionist Palestine administrations claim that the country was too small to accommodate more Jews. (Palestine total population then was one million; now it is six million and prosperous). With the doors of immigration closed in their face, the Jews of Europe were led to the gas chambers.

In 1936, Churchill supported and sided with the pro-German, pro-Hitler Prince of Wales in his attempt to stay on the throne. As a student, at the time, at London University, I was tormented by the ease with which Hitler was allowed to re-arm Germany. In the early days, Hitler could have been knocked down with a feather! But Churchill and Co. were obsessed by the threat of the Soviet Union and fear of a Communist world revolution. Britain, safe behind the English Channel, could afford to let Nazi Germany confront the Soviet Union. Quipped one cockney, "This 'ere channel is

worth a guinea a pint". A petrol filled pipe-line under the ocean (PLUTO) was ready to be ignited and burn any armada attempting to invade.

For Britain, it was a calculated risk. The nightmare of every general is having to wage war on two fronts at the same time. The British military wisdom was that since Britain was a formidable fortress, Hitler would have to turn against Russia first. (Churchill, Stalin and Hitler were each dreaming that the other two would do the fighting. Hitler had to lose in the end as his wish was impossible).

As Stalin and Hitler came to grips in June 1941, war material from the Allies flowed to Russia through the Persian Gulf. But Russia's plea for a second front fell on deaf ears. Promised for 1942 the Normandy landing did not take place till June 1944.

In his book published in 1946, Elliot Roosevelt accused Churchill of delaying the invasion of Europe by two years, as was suspected by observers at the time. The purpose of such delay must have been to give Germany more time a) to bleed the Soviet Union, and weaken itself, as was apparent after 1942, and b) to liquidate European Jewry. This was my own premonition before the war, and the sad reality, at the end of it.

Churchill calls WWII the Unnecessary War, but it certainly accomplished those two objectives. From January 1942 and for 1000 days an average of 6000 Jews were sent to the gas ovens every day without anyone raising an eyebrow.

Churchill did not give up his fear and hatred of Communist Russia, and turned a blind eye to the goings on in the extermination camps which was regarded as a useful drain on Germany's war effort.

Moreover, the British Foreign Office and oil interest were glad to see the elimination of European Jewry as potential communists and/or as potential Zionists who would threaten British interests in the Middle East. In 1943, while Churchill was in power, Freya Stark was sent to America to lecture, in defence of British policy in Palestine and of the 1939 White Paper that closed the door to Jewish immigration to Palestine, claiming that Britain had fulfilled its obligation to the Jewish people of establishing a National Home for them in Palestine.

In 1946 Churchill visited the International Red Cross in Zurich and had high praise for their founders and its work during the war, especially sending parcels to German prisoners of war. But while the Red Cross knew of the Holocaust, it decided not to utter a word of protest. There was a general conspiracy to see Europe's Jewry eliminated by the Vatican, the countries of Europe, the Arabs and above all the British Foreign Office.

Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin, who looked like a thug and acted like a thug, continued in the vein of Hitler's anti-Jewish policy.

Britain wanted to hold on to mandated Palestine for the defence of the Suez Canal and did not care about their promise and for the reason of being there – namely, to establish a National Home for the Jews in accordance with the terms of the mandate.

One hundred thousand British soldiers were stationed in tiny Palestine compared to 20,000 in the whole of India.

Upon the establishment of the State of Israel in May 1948, the Arab Legion of Jordan that attacked the old city of Jerusalem had 40 British military advisers and for 9 months thereafter

the British Labour Government refused to recognise the Jewish State even *de-facto*.

In 1951 Bevin made a treaty with Jordan and the Foreign Office wanted war with Israel to help Jordan.

The British Foreign Ministry prevented Churchill from paying a private visit to President Wiseman in Israel.

In the post-war years, Churchill continued his crusade against Soviet Russia and agreed for the need to rehabilitate and even re-arm Germany.

Although Churchill prided himself as a Zionist and a friend of the Jews, this was not reflected in British policy in Palestine. At the Potsdam Conference, Churchill never mentioned the Holocaust and was in a great hurry to free German army war criminals, and ensure that Germany, which Roosevelt and Churchill had decided at the Quebec Conference to turn into an agricultural country, should soon regain her industrial potential and become prosperous protected by the Allied occupying powers. As a result, come the year 2000 we don't know whether we shall have a European Germany or a German Europe!

De Gaulle said that in reviving Germany, a United Europe will become nothing less than an enlarged Germany.

It is said that in a good biography the subject should be allowed to express his views. But in "Never Despair" 90% of the material is from Churchill's speeches and writings, and only 10% of the book is in Sir Martin Gilbert's hand.

**Side story:** After the war, Churchill stayed for long stretches in the South of France, and especially at Monte Carlo. The Hotel de Paris there charged him only £5 per night full board. In 1948, I was staying at that Hotel with my partner, when all of a sudden we were unable to obtain fresh orange juice. We were told that Churchill and his party had arrived and requisitioned all the oranges available! ●

## DUST IN THE LION'S PAW

by Freya Stark

Freya Stark was a wartime British spy engaged – not in gathering secret information, but in disseminating false propaganda on behalf of British interests in the Middle East. Her main targets were Jews in general and Zionism in particular.

In her memoirs she states that in Britain the Civil Service always prevails over the Minister of the day. Thus it was that in 1943, during the premiership of Churchill who was an ardent Zionist, Freya Stark was sent to America to lecture against Zionism and in favour of Arab rights in Palestine. When once she lost the argument with a Jewish audience, she writes, "I wished I could have a mini pogrom of my own!"

The odd man out in the Middle East are not the Jews, but the British. So please leave the region well alone so that Jews and Arabs and a myriad of other nationalities can organise their lives in peace to their common advantage.

In Chapter 6 of the book, Freya Stark gives an interesting account of the brief regime of Rashid Ali of April and May 1941, but makes little reference to the pogrom that followed on 1/2 June.

Other books by the author: *Beyond Euphrates* (reviewed in Scribe No: 64); *East is West* autobiography 1939-1946; *A Tower in the Wall* ●

# Freya Stark in Iraq and Kuwait

Freya Stark picture album called *Freya Stark in Iraq and Kuwait*, published in 1994 by Garnet Publishing Ltd., 8 Southern Court, South Street, Reading RG1 4QS, UK Tel: 01734 597 847, by courtesy of Ezekiel Nathaniel who lent us the copy presented to him by Bernard Berenson the art historian who is closely associated with Freya Stark.

On her death in 1993 at the age of 100, Freya Stark left her collection of 50,000 photographs to St Anthony's College Middle East Centre at Oxford University. The majority of the negatives have never been printed, and only a fraction of the photographs were published during her lifetime.

Malise Ruthven is a writer and journalist. As a godson of Freya Stark, his personal friendship with her illuminates these photographs, and he is the only person to have explored the collection thoroughly. He was responsible for bringing the collection to England, convincing Dame Freya of the value of her legacy and personally bringing the albums, rolls of films and boxes of contact sheets from Italy to Oxford●



**Jewish refugee at the British Embassy garden in Baghdad during the Month of Rashid Ali. Photograph by Freya Stark May 1941**

Received from Carol Basri of New York "*Ruby of Cochin*" – An Indian Jewish Woman Remembers. By Ruby Daniel and Barbara C. Johnson. Published by The Jewish Publication Society Philadelphia and Jerusalem through a gift from Elizabeth and Sidney Corob of London.

*Ruby of Cochin* is the first book written by a Jewish woman from Cochin. It is a rich description of Jewish life on the South West coast of India, spanning many centuries. The book contains translations of Jewish women's songs from Malayalam, the language of the Cochin Jews●

## Life in the Middle East

After living nearly fifty years in the U.S., I decided to write an autobiography which depicts life as I remember it in Baghdad, and other parts of the Middle East. The purpose of the book "*My Life in the Middle East*", covering some 163 pages including family genealogies of Sofer, Hakham H'esqail, Rabbi Abdallah Somekh, Sadq'ah Hussein of Aleppo, was to give my children and grandchildren an idea of what life was like in that region during the thirties and forties. I printed some forty copies of this book and found most readers to be very interested in it. The readers who had lived in Baghdad read it non-stop and wrote me enthusiastic letters, stressing their enjoyment of the book.

I have chosen to reinforce certain concepts and expressions by including the Arabic and Hebrew equivalents, using a special computer program which allows typing in English, Arabic and Hebrew, simultaneously. I have purposely used Arabic spelling to ensure pronunciation of Arabic words as practised in the Jewish community of Baghdad rather than the way the words are spelled in Literary Arabic.

It is the story of my somewhat uneventful life during a highly eventful period of the Twentieth Century.

The book highlights the fact that, the values of the Jews of Iraq were influenced by three dominant cultures. First and foremost was the Jewish religion, culture and traditions. The Jews lived as a semi-autonomous group in Baghdad. They observed the Jewish Halachic laws in their everyday life.

Overlain on the Jewish values were Islamic values, especially in practices that related to the role of women in society, the separation of the sexes. The head of a large Jewish family behaved much like a tribal chieftain.

The third set of system values, which had a marked influence on Iraqi Jewry of the 1930's, was the European Bourgeoisie. French Bourgeoisie surfaced through the teachings of the Alliance Schools, and British Bourgeoisie seeped in through contacts with the British occupiers and, later, British government diplomats, industrialists, and petroleum prospectors, producers and marketeers. Iraqi Jews felt perfectly at home in all three spheres of influence.

One of the incidents related in the book is that of my father's great grandfather, Eliahu Sofer, who was stolen from his crib at the age of one. The thief had hoped to trade him for a handsome ransom, but ran into a policeman and abandoned the child in a garbage can on a side street off a busy market. The child was discovered by a kind man, who realized the child must be Jewish from a necklace he wore, with the word Shaddai inscribed on a gold pendant in the shape of a hand. The child was taken to the head of the Jewish Community who, in turn, returned the child to his distraught parents. The key to the story was that baby Eliahu was an only child, and had he not survived this incident, none of his prolific progeny, several thousand strong, would be living today.

Baby Eliahu grew up to sire nine children, one of whom was Ya'q'oob Sofer, my father's grandfather.

Copies can be obtained from the undersigned at U.S. \$15.00 for the U.S.A. and U.S. \$20.00 for elsewhere including postage●

**5303 143rd Ave., SE Dr. George A. Sofer  
Bellevue Wa., 98006  
U.S.A.**

## Wilfrid Israel German Jewry's Secret Ambassador

by Naomi Shepherd.

In June 1943, an unarmed civilian plane flying from Lisbon to Bristol was, contrary to the Geneva Convention, shot down by the German Luftwaffe over the Bay of Biscay.

At the time, 53 years ago, we were only told that on the plane was a famous Hollywood film star, Leslie Howard, who was Jewish, who had appeared in such classics as: *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Pimpernel Smith* and *Gone With the Wind*.

On the same plane, however, was Wilfrid Israel, hero of the book under review. Born in 1899, he was a member of a prominent German merchant family (he also carried a British passport) who, as soon as Hitler came to power in 1933, devoted his energy to the saving of German Jews from Nazi persecution by helping them to emigrate.

He allowed top Nazi leaders to shop at his famous department store in Berlin free of charge.

With Germany's invasion of Poland in September 1939, Wilfrid left Germany for good, but continued to monitor rescue work from London.

German Jews were frequently blamed for their massive loyalty to the homeland, and blindness to the threat of Nazism. The Holocaust cast its monstrous shadow in both directions: obscuring both the options open to the Jews of Germany in the 1930's, and the fact that the decision to massacre European Jewry was taken only when the policy of expulsion was exhausted.

American and British Jewry were reluctant to ask for more German refugees for fear it would stoke antisemitic feeling; Zionists were only interested in rescuing Jews who could be directed to Palestine; and the Allies were content to let Hitler busy himself with exterminating the Jews, for the sake of diverting his war effort.

In 1944 the Luftwaffe Squadron Leader who had shot down the air-plane was arrested by the British army, but it was decided not to prosecute him. At the time of the incident, Churchill was due to return from North Africa to Britain, and Germany was trying hard to kill him on the way. Both Britain and Germany considered that attempt as legitimate, and not contrary to the Geneva Convention.

The Holocaust destroyed one-third of world Jewry. But we have triumphed in the end. Hitler is dead, and we have survived, and there is nothing we can do about those who perished. If we drown ourselves in mourning for the six million, then the Holocaust would affect the entire Jewish people.

Let us shake off our sorrow, rejuvenate our communities, replenish our numbers, and look forward with optimism and confidence●

N.D.

### Books received:

*The Hebrew Amulet; Biblical – Medical – General* by Prof. Eli Davis & Dr David A. Frenkel. Dr Abraham Ben-Jacob also contributed some material.

Limited edition published by the Institute for Jewish Studies, Jerusalem 1995●

# The Armenian Massacre of 1915

United States Official Documents on the Armenian Genocide

Volume One: The Lower Euphrates; Volume Two: The Peripheries

Editor: Ara Sarafian Watertown, MA: Armenian Review

Condensed from a review in the *Times Literary Supplement* by D. Cameron Watt,  
Professor of International History in the University of London

The publication of a new collection of documents on the sufferings of the Armenian population of the Ottoman dominions during the First World War is clearly intended as a further move in the campaign of revenge conducted since the early 1980s by the descendants of the surviving Armenians against the present Turkish state. These volumes, the first two of five, are devoted to reprinting reports from the American Consulates in Turkey, and the American Embassies in Constantinople and Teheran for the years 1915-16 covering the mass deportation of the Armenian populations of Ottoman Asia Minor, under the pretence of military necessity in the face of advancing tsarist troops. These unfortunates were moved in conditions of considerable lawlessness and grossly inadequate preparations for their feeding and housing through Syria to the desert regions in the east of that province. Those survivors of the forced marches who had not been massacred either by their guards or the more fanatical or brigandly of the Muslims through whose territories their marches took them, mostly died of heat, disease, thirst and hunger.

The documents are a maddening mixture of hearsay, speculation and first-hand evidence. They are informed throughout by the indignation of the Protestant American officials and their missionary informants at the persecution of middle-class European Christians by the "savage" uncivilized Muslims. They leave no doubt as to the reality and scale of the events they describe. There is a good deal of repetition, and the editing is inspired more by the indignation of the Armenian editor than any professional skill.

The appearance of this publication does raise questions as to its motivation, given that the Ottoman state perished in the years 1918-20 and that the present Turkish republic did not exist at the time of the events. The titles of these volumes raise much wider issues with their attempt to invoke the spectre of the Holocaust and the United Nations Resolutions against Genocide as the essential part of the editors' campaign.

On the evidence of these documents, the Ottoman massacres of the Armenians were aimed at two Christian *millet*s, the Armenians and the Syrians, or as they came to be known, the Assyrians. The drive was not so much racist as religious. There are frequent references to the kidnapping of women and unmarried girls and their forced conversion or incorporation into Muslim harems. From the Armenian point of view, they were of course lost to the Armenian "nation".

But if the term "genocide" is to be invoked, the historian must insist that the particular circumstances of each situation are made clear and the term not extended so as to diminish its historic meaning. In the meantime, these documents bear witness to the horrors perpetuated by the leadership of the government of the Committee of Union and Progress, to indicate what kind of union and what concepts of progress they embraced.

Historically speaking, there does exist a link between the massacres of the Armenians

and the Holocaust. It is one replete with the cruellest of historical ironies.

The mass deportation of the Armenians fired the anti-Zionist governor of Palestine, Djemal Pasha, with the notion of "solving the Zionist problem" in Palestine by similar means, starting with the forced evacuation of the Jewish population of Jaffa, under the same pretext of military necessity, and envisaging thereafter the similar deportation of the Jewish populations of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and all the Zionist settlements. It was the German authorities, alerted by Zionist informants and by the German military commander in Palestine, General Kress von Kressenstein, who stepped in to thwart him, and eventually to have him recalled. The semi-feudal status of governors of Turkish provinces would otherwise have enabled Djemal to carry out his policy of "ethnic cleansing" without interference from Istanbul. He had already demonstrated his ruthlessness by his execution of the leading Arab nationalists in Damascus the previous year.

The current state of Holocaust studies – and the term is not too loose a way of describing the growth of a specialization both in research and education, not only in Israel where it is an essential part of Israel's pre-history as seen by most Israelis, but also in Europe and the United States – has developed against the so-called Denialists or Revisionists who have begun creep out of the shadows where they once lurked (I can remember when their pamphlets were both written and circulated anonymously) into the public light, even into some self-styled academic centres.

The Holocaust recaptured the attention of the wider public, of course, with the appearance of the film *Schindler's List*. But it is worth noticing the foundation three years ago in Britain of a journal devoted to Holocaust education.

**The Holocaust was unique, not in its inspiration but in its adoption into the bureaucratic system of the German state. Other states and their leaders have encouraged the unlimited use of force, the unleashing of mass action, the removal from the protection of the state of categories of its citizens, even racially defined categories. None has made its goal systematically to exterminate every man, woman and child includable in that category, or devoted the machinery of government to the execution of that task.**

The Nazis then brought into service three of the biggest threats to any civilized society. They gave their sociopaths and psychopaths a justified and protected status as executors of their demands. They provided a scapegoat for the dissatisfactions and feelings of inadequacy which are the common lot of humanity. And they enlisted the willingness of ordinary members of society to go along with their more violent fellows, even to the obliteration of their normal humanity and sense of guilt.

Naim Dangoor writes:

1 – Neither was the Holocaust completely racial in character, nor was the Armenian mas-

sacre entirely religious. Karaite Jews were left unmolested, and Egyptian Arabs were granted honorary Asian status. In the Ottoman imperial system, every community was regarded as an autonomous *millet* with its own ethnic roots and religious tradition. It is a fact that in 1915 an Armenian leader was organising an army to attack Turkey.

2 – Pro-English Djemal, who had already deported 30,000 Jews from Palestine, was prevented from ordering further deportations not so much by German intervention as by the intervention of the US Ambassador in Constantinople Henry Morgenthau.

3 – The significance of the publication of these Armenian documents shows that even 80 years after the event, a new generation can feel outrage at what happened to their kinsmen against all rules of decency and humanity. But while Armenians may have no legitimate target to pour their anger and outrage upon, Jews have plenty of targets still available in the form of Holocaust denialists, neo-nazis, anti-semites, etc. So, the Holocaust will never be forgotten. New generations of Jews from now on will want to know why 6 million of their co-religionists were massacred in cold blood and will feel justified in taking revenge not so much on the perpetrators themselves as on those who still follow in their footsteps.

Uninformed commentators urge the Jews to forgive and forget. But forgiveness can only be earned through complete and genuine repentance. This does not appear to be forthcoming ●

Your journal has been promoted and extremely valued due to your well-known personality and your charismatic nature. You personally and *The Scribe* are on our tongues in Israel. I and all my friends hope and wish that you could carry on the appreciated and highly esteemed task you put yourself responsible of.

Dr Lilian Joury too is doing a wonderful job about the Iraqi Jews.

The following is a review of my recent book which might be of interest to your readers.

### *Simtaot Le-lo Motza (Dead-End Lanes)*

This book (in Hebrew) covers the day-to-day life of the Jewish community in Baghdad from the first half of the twentieth century. It is a story about the morals, values and the magnificent heritage of the community.

The spiritual development and self-actualisation of the two main heroes of the book, Saleh and Aboud, are depicted as they cope with the struggles of day-to-day life. In a short time, they change from carefree boys to responsible men.

The book tells the story of the lane, "*El Kutcha*", where the women used to sit and chat in the evenings, and the "*Chaikhana*", the small coffee shop where the men would unwind after a long day's work and play a few rounds of *Shesh Besh* (backgammon).

The intricate details of the Jewish wedding are described – from the tricky role of the matchmaker (*El delala*) to the "*nedunia*" paid by the girl's parents to the bridegroom.

The book describes the heroic stand of the Jewish woman in the critical days of the "*Aliyah*" and the "*Maabarot*" (huts) and her perseverance that enabled her to stand by and support her husband as they built their life on a strong foundation without any outside help ●

Book price incl. postage: £10.00, obtainable from the undersigned ●

15 Bialik Str.,

Yehuda Barshan

Apartment 17

Kiryat-Ono 55203

Israel

# *The Jews, Opium and the Kimono*

by Ezra Yehezkel-Shaked, a former kibbutznik and now a TV producer

Published 1995 by Rubin Mass Ltd., Jerusalem.

From the author:

Dear Naim

Many thanks for your hospitality when I visited you last. In the meantime my book has finally appeared in Hebrew (with an English synopsis).

I hope that you will enjoy reading it and that we shall see translations into English, Japanese and Chinese in the near future.

When I am next in London I hope it will be possible for me to give a lecture about my book.

Holon Israel Ezra Yehezkel-Shaked

Synopsis of *The Jews, Opium and the Kimono*.

This documentary-type novel traces the fascinating history of the Jewish communities in the Far East.

Jews played an active part in the modern history of India, China, Singapore, Japan and Hong Kong.

The sources for this book were personal interviews with scores of its heroes, their letters, rare archive material, written memoirs, documents and other sources published in the Far East, in addition to scores of background books. Jewish history in these countries has not enjoyed much attention and is presented comprehensively for the first time in this work.

**Chapter 1:** From the Tigris to the Ganges, the Whangpoo and as far as the islands of Japan.

**Chapter 2:** Jews in the Russo-Japanese war that opened the century.

The story of the victory of the Asian Japanese over the mighty Russian empire in 1905, describes an astonishing Jewish saga.

**Chapter 3:** From Odessa and Kishinev to the Whangpoo.

The sufferings of the Jewish survivors of the chain of pogroms in Russia who came by devious routes to China. Jews took a central part in the industrial development of Manchuria, and contributed to the incredible growth of Shanghai.

A few daring and adventurous Jews played part in the events leading up to the fall of the Manchu dynasty.

General "Two-Gun" Cohen was the only white high-ranking officer in the Chinese army.

**Chapter 4:** Manchukuo and the "Jewish Triangle" of the Japanese empire.

Translation of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" into their language first brought the attention of the Japanese to the Jewish world, and shaped Japanese policy towards the Jews during the Thirties and Forties.

A description is given of Japanese efforts to find ways of dialogue with the Great Powers by means of the Jews under their rule. Their impressions of the "Protocols" remain to this day with the Japanese people.

**Chapter 5:** The great exodus from the cities of the Third Reich to Shanghai.

Surprisingly, the wanderings of some 20,000 refugees from the Third Reich to Shanghai, virtually the only place of shelter in the world then still open.

A small group of mainly Baghdadi Jews, considered to be among the richest in the world,

took upon themselves the financial absorption of some 24,000 co-religionists who arrived during 15 months.

**Chapter 6:** Escape in panic from Poland to Japan.

The heroes of this episode, among them 300 students of the Mir Yeshiva, the only yeshiva to have survived the Holocaust intact.

**Chapter 7:** "Banzai!" – long life to Japan.

The Jewish population of Japan reached its zenith while Japan was an ally of Nazi Germany.

**Chapter 8:** From Japan to the city of gangsters – Shanghai.

Shanghai was home in those days to millions of people including more than 60 religions and races.

**Chapter 9:** India, the quiet station at the crossroads.

Also the arrival of thousands of Jewish refugees from Europe and Asia to India has barely been told.

**Chapter 10:** In the shadow of the Japanese occupation.

The declaration of a new policy towards the Jews, the coming of S.S. units under the command of the "wicked butcher" Colonel Joseph Meitzinger to Shanghai, the attempt to annihilate the Jews of Shanghai, the confinement of those from the countries under the Third Reich into a "Ghetto" (the only Jewish ghetto to be created in the East).

**Chapter 11:** In the Japanese internment camps.

Jewish nationals of countries of the Allied powers (mainly those of the Iraqi community, other than those who still held Iraqi passports), were interned in camps throughout the Japanese Empire. Eye-witnesses tell of their experiences and efforts to maintain their religious customs in the "darkness" of these camps. Kosher meat was conveyed by Japanese army trucks to the camp at Lunghwa.

**Chapter 12:** Turning off the lights.

The dropping of the atom bombs, the end of the colonial era, the closing of the ghetto in Shanghai, the operations of the Jewish pro-Palestinian underground among the communities and the smuggling of weapons to Palestine.

For the first time, two Jewish prime ministers – David Ben-Gurion and David Marshall of Singapore – met in Jerusalem.

**Chapter 13:** Epilogue.

The dispersion of the protagonists in the book to the West and Israel and the fate of the synagogues and other community properties subsequently.

The author is a journalist, producer and director with the Television service of the Israel Broadcasting Authority, Channel One.

From a review of the book in the *Jerusalem Post* by Yossef Yaakov

## **Sassoons, Shahmoons and Co.**

After the British victory in the two Opium Wars fought against China in the 1850s. The payoff was the concession to import opium legally into China mostly from India and Burma, through the Five Treaty Ports along the coast, including Shanghai and Hong Kong.

The British East India Company had the monopoly and could not lure Englishmen out to administer their imports, especially the warehouses. There was too much reluctance to encounter the climate, the diseases, the lack of suitable education etc. So British colonial poli-

tics led them to the Iraqi Jewish communities in Bombay, Calcutta, Poona and elsewhere in India. There they found a few dozen educated, qualified personnel, trained in banking and office tasks.

This was the first appearance in the Far East of ethnic Jews, beyond the legendary converted Kaifengfu community in the interior dating back to the Marco Polo expedition and perhaps even earlier. The clans which undertook the brief assignment (for the "legal" opium trade did not last all that long) included the Sassoons and the Kadoories. (These two clans included prominent Jews who were Knighted).

They were supplemented when developing their own businesses in real estate, stockbroking and imports and exports in Shanghai and Hong Kong by the Shahmoons, Ezras, Hayims and Abrahams, as well as the richest of all, Silas Hardoon, a great local benefactor of the Jewish community. All in all, they never exceeded 1,000 souls, and were generally Orthodox in religious observancy.

An interesting sidelight on the Jews in Japan was their enthusiasm for Japan's victory in 1904 against Czarist Russia. They hoped, as did millions of other Jews around the world, that it would alleviate Russian anti-Semitism. The writer of Hatikva, Naftali Hertz Imbar, actually wrote a poem in praise of Japan.

The prominent American Jewish banker, Jacob Schiff, provided crucial credits to the Japanese for the war and became justly renowned in Japan. But his action inevitably bolstered Russian anti-Semites who thereupon "justified" their support and dissemination of the notorious forgery *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Japanese Grand Admiral Togo who commanded the forces against Russia, was commemorated by an Egyptian Jewish family who named their newborn son Togo. He grew up to be a film director and founded a film studio in Alexandria, which he called "Togo"®

### **Book Review**

**"Personalities Penned on Paper –  
the handwriting analyses of  
famous people".**

by Allan Conway, 41 Bridge Road,  
Wembley Park, Middx

The author is an active member of the Board of Deputies, a well-known graphologist who has lectured in Oxford and Cambridge, on the media, and raised substantial funds for charity. He also lectures on Psychology and Finance.

He demonstrates considerable insight and sensitivity, and presents enlightening analyses of people famous in all walks of life – politics (including Israel Prime Ministers Shimon Peres and the late Yitzhak Rabin), acting, the law, business, clergy, journalism, academia and social work.

He covers different aspects of graphology which indicate the wide range of the subject, essential to an understanding of the complexity of a person's character. These aspects include the form of writing, connectedness of script, the margins, the pressure, size of script, the slant, spacing, the zones, specific letters, the left-handed writer, etc.

The author rightly observes that "handwriting says more about you than many chosen words. You simply cannot hide yourself in your handwriting as it is not the hand that is writing, but the brain."

It is well worth acquiring this fascinating work®

London

P.S.G.

# Reform or Perish

## 1. "The Sacred Chain":

*A History of the Jews* by Norman F. Cantor, Harper Collins Publishers London, £20.00

## 2. "Vanishing Diaspora"

by Bernard Wasserstein, published by Hamish Hamilton, £20.00

Reviewed by Naim Dangoor

To say that Judaism is declining and Jews will disappear in 100 years, is perhaps a sign that the Mashiyah is coming. Mohammed said Mashiyah will not come until all Jews vanish from the earth.

With a world population of 5 billion, the Jewish number of 15 million is any way almost insignificant; only 3 per mille. But the trend is also apparent in Christianity, Islam and other major faiths regarding commitments and observance. But being majority, it is not so obvious. A general decline in traditional religions is itself a sign of the advent of the Messiah.

The Jews are a peculiar people, having been chosen from time immemorial to propagate and disseminate the moral truth of the Creator of our Universe to the rest of mankind. In this capacity, we have been persecuted as the Suffering Son, not just for our sins but also for the sins of all humanity.

If the Holocaust, the most terrible crime in history, that happened in our own lifetime, in the middle of the twentieth century, can be denied by some people, and doubted by others, is it any wonder that writers like Cantor can speculate on the authenticity of events that took place 3000 years ago?

A little learning is a dangerous thing, and the wonder is that semi-educated people like Cantor should be given pen and paper to write up the kind of trash that masquerades as historical books. The origins of Jewish Monotheism go back thousands of years before David, Moses and Abraham.

The absence of archaeological proofs of their existence reminds me of the following anecdote:

A man boasted to his friend that digs in his country uncovered the existence of cables underground, which was proof, he said, that his ancestors had the use of the telephone. The friend retorted that digging in his country had produced nothing underground, which was proof that his ancestors had the use of the wireless!

Even a personality like Norman Bentwitch (1883-1971) Attorney-general in mandated Palestine (1920-31), though not a historian could harbour similar doubts. He told me many years ago, that the sequence of the Shabbath must have changed over the years, and that we may be observing a different day of rest from the one originally introduced.

I assured him that sequence of the Shabbath has been kept religiously, certainly since Moses, most probably since Abraham and very likely since Adam, who introduced it 9000 years ago.

The Dead Sea Scrolls of 2200 years ago, show clearly how constant the Bible Text has remained over this period, because we and our Rabbis and Scribes made certain that Scriptures in every details, even to some minor spelling errors, should be transmitted unaltered from generation to generation.

The Torah has kept us to this day alive, because we have kept the Torah in all its requirements, alive and holy. We greatly suffered to protect it, we gave up our lives in its defence.

The decline in the Jewish Diaspora is due to a low birth rate, intermarriage, assimilation and secularisation. Yet intermarriage might arguably enrich the Jewish community, if it could bring itself to welcome non-Jewish spouses with alacrity. In this respect, reform Judaism

can provide a useful link with those who find Orthodoxy too demanding.

Rabbinical Judaism has survived, and become the model and foundation of Christianity and Islam, because it was itself the result of reforms introduced in Babylonia after the destruction of the First Temple by the Prophet Ezekiel and, later, by Ezra The Scribe.

The flexibility of these reforms allowed us to escape the fate of the Lost Ten Tribes, and of the Sadducees, The Samaritans, the Karaites, who have practically vanished because of the rigidity of their doctrines.

The Torah forbids us from adding to it or subtracting from it but this must be seen to apply to the rank and file only. We are also told that (the voice of the multitude is equal to the voice of God), and so it should be possible for an authoritative body of Jewish religious leaders to adapt certain rules to the changing requirement of the day.

It is a paradox that we are taunted with falling numbers when world Jewry has just suffered the criminal murder of 6 million of its people. The Jewish people have not yet recovered from the trauma of this unparalleled event.

Arnold Toynbee writes in "A Study of History";

**The Jewish religion is meant for all mankind.**

It may be true that, without the carapace of the Torah and the Talmud, it is impossible for the Jews to maintain in diaspora their distinctive communal identity in its national form; but there are two ways in which a community's distinctive national identity may disappear: the Israelite way and the Roman. The Ten Tribes lost their national identity through being assimilated by peoples into whose countries they had been deported; the Romans gave up theirs by incorporating in their community the peoples whose countries they had united with their own. The two ways are antithetical in several senses. The Ten Tribes' way is passive, involuntary, and inglorious, and it is natural that the Jews should be on their guard against meeting the fate of their kinsmen. On the other hand the Roman way is active, deliberate, and noble, and the renunciation of communal identity in its national form does not involve the loss of communal identity itself when 'an ancient civilization' has been 'transmuted into a universal religion'.

Today the Jews in the diaspora are being told by some Israelis that they are doomed to suffer the fate of the Ten Lost Tribes if they do not emigrate to the present Israeli state. But, in truth, the choices open to the Jews in the diaspora are not confined to these two alternatives. There is a third choice: the Roman choice of incorporating instead of being assimilated. The assimilation of the Jewish diaspora by the surrounding gentile majority is thus not their only alternative to emigration to Israel. Another possibility is that the Jewish diaspora might win converts to a denationalized and defossilized Judaism among the gentile majority around them. What the Romans did on the political plane, the Jews could do on the religious. They could incorporate gentiles in a Jewish religious community by converting them to the religion of Deutero-Isaiah. The greatest of the Prophets up to date, though not necessarily the last of them, would be, not Muhammad, but a Jewish seer who inspired his fellow Jews at last to dedicate themselves to their universal mission wholeheartedly. The World has been waiting for this prophet for 2,500 years.

He is our awaited Mashiyah. When he comes, all humanity will recognise The One True God Of Israel, and follow one Religion ●

## Books received:

1 - *God a Biography* by Jack Miles  
Publisher Simon & Schuster £20.00  
The Story of God as it appears in the Old Testament.

The author is a former Jesuit. He studied at the Hebrew University and holds a doctorate in Near Eastern languages from Harvard University.

2 - *A History of God*  
by Karen Armstrong  
From Abraham to the Present:  
The 4000-year quest for God  
Publisher Heinemann: London £20.00

The author was for seven years a nun in a Roman Catholic order and is now an agnostic. She describes her experience in her first book *Through The Narrow Gate* published in 1981. Her other books are: *Beginning the World; The First Christian: St. Paul's Impact on Christianity, Tongues on Fire. An anthology of Religious and Poetic Experience; The Gospel According to Woman: Christianity's Creation of the Sex War in the West; Muhammad: A Western Attempt to Understand Islam.*

3 - *The Middle East*  
2000 years of history from the rise of Christianity to the present day  
by Bernard Lewis  
Publisher: Weidenfeld & Nicolson  
London £20.00

The historian Bernard Lewis charts the successive transformations of the Middle East, which was the birthplace of three religions and many civilisations, beginning with the two great empires, the Roman and the Persian, which disputed the region two thousand years ago; the development of monotheism and the growth of Christianity; the astonishingly rapid rise and spread of Islam over a vast area; the Mongol hordes of Jengiz Khan; the rise of the Ottoman, Turks in Anatolia, the Mamluks in Egypt; and changing balance of power between the Muslim and Christian worlds.

The author, a well known authority on Islamic and Middle Eastern history has, since 1974, been an Emeritus Professor of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University.

His many books include: *The Arabs in History; The Emergence of Modern Turkey; the Assassins; The Muslim Discovery of Europe; Cultures in Conflict; Christians, Muslims and Jews in the Age of Discovery.* His books have been translated into more than twenty languages ●

## "Out of their minds: The Lives and Discoveries of 15 Great Computer Scientists"

by Dennis Shasha and Cathy Lazere.

This is a fascinating collection of profiles and interviews with some of the men. "In most sciences", the book points out, "the seminal thinkers lived in the remote past." But computer science in its modern form goes back only to the 1930's, and most of the pioneers are still alive. It is as if we could speak with Euclid, Archimedes and Galileo.

Dennis Shasha is a professor of Computer Science at New York University's Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences. He holds a BS from Yale University, an MS from Syracuse University, and a Ph.D. from Harvard University. His previous books include *Database Tuning: A Principled Approach* and two mathematical detective stories: *The Puzzling Adventures of Dr Ecco and Codes, Puzzles, and Conspiracy.* Dennis is the son of Alfred Shasha and Hanina Shasha (nee Zilkha) ●

The Torah-Education Department and the Department of Sephardi Communities in Jerusalem, supported by the L.A. Pincus Jewish Education Fund, has just published "Annals of Iraqi Jewry", in English. The authors and chroniclers whose works have been included in this book are among the foremost experts in the history of Iraqi Jewry. They portray the community's customs and religious functions, its culture, tradition, and very unique folklore and contains photographs (some of the contents listed below).

We are sure this book will be of interest to your community and it is available from our office at a cost of £20.00:

Miriam Barkai  
Head of Torah Department in Gt. Britain  
2b Golders Green Road  
London NW11 81H  
Tel: 0181 455 1344

## ANNALS OF IRAQI JEWRY

### Some of the contents

Childhood in Baghdad	<i>Emil Morad</i>
My Baghdad	<i>Claire Yaniv</i>
A House in Baghdad	<i>Yitzhak Bar-Moshe</i>
The Challenge of the River	<i>Eliyahu Agasi</i>
Sayings and Proverbs of Iraqi Jewry	<i>Davis Shemesh</i>
After the Pogrom	<i>Yitzhak Bezalel</i>
Iraqi Justice	<i>Rahamim Rejwan</i>
Faith and Intelligence	<i>Rabbi Yosef Hayim</i>
Synagogues in Baghdad	<i>Professor Meir Benayahu</i>
The Great Synagogue in Baghdad	<i>Professor Meir Benayahu</i>
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From the Jewish Calendar	<i>David Suleiman Sassoon</i>
Arranging a Marriage	<i>Professor Yitzhak Avishur</i>
The Freckle-Faced Bride	<i>Esperence Cohen-Moreh</i>
Divorce and Beit Sharai	<i>Yosef Meir</i>
Id El-Ziarah in Baghdad	<i>Avraham Ben-Yaakov</i>
The Economic Decline of Iraqi Jewry	<i>Nuriel Zilka</i>
The History of Jewish Women's Clothing in Baghdad	<i>Avivah Muller-Linzt</i>
The Evil Eye	<i>Morad A. Michaeli</i>
Autonomy and Self-rule of Iraqi Jewry	<i>Eliahu Agasi</i>
The Development of Jewish Education (1750-1950)	<i>Dr Zvi Yehudah</i>
The Tradition of Protection	<i>Sammi Michael</i>
Scapegoat	<i>Eli Amir</i>
The Iraqi Community in Los Angeles	<i>Professor Shmuel Moreh</i>

I received *The Scribe* No. 64 through a friend and was delighted to come across many names of very dear friends which brought back happy memories. I was born in Baghdad and raised in Bombay. During India's Independence Day my husband and I sailed for Egypt. I was the last Jew to arrive in Egypt as the war with the Arabs broke out. During one of the wars my husband was charged with spying for Israel and sent to prison. After he was released, which was after the Six Days War, we left all our worldly goods and sailed for Israel. I would very much like to send greetings to all my dear long lost friends and my dear family and want to thank you for publishing the lovely photographs of our beloved uncle E. E. Sassoon.  
Ramat Gan Nancy Dayan

## 1001 Baghdad Proverbs

by Moshe Hakham

Review by Rabbi A. Bassous

Printed in Israel

This book which is the most comprehensive of its kind contains 1001 Baghdadian proverbs in Arabic and Hebrew. However, it is not the first of its kind. In the *History of the Jews in Baghdad* David Sassoon writes on page 195 that a collection of 50 proverbs was made by A.S. Yehuda in 1406 and a little booklet under the title *Kissat Ahl-el-Mathal* was printed in Baghdad containing a number of proverbs. Over a 100 such proverbs are scattered through the Babylonian Talmud. These sayings are prefaced with the words "as people say".

One father provided for a thousand children but a thousand children did not provide for one father.

My father can only boss my mother.

My son belongs to his wife but I swear by his life.

The blood is thicker than water

I would like to draw your attention to the recently published *One Thousand and One Baghdadi Sayings*, compiled and edited with Arabic texts, Hebrew transliteration and translation together with copious commentaries by the Ramat-Gan scholar Moshe Hakham.

Another anthology of Iraqi sayings, not only those that were in current usage by Baghdadi Jews, had appeared in 1991, also with Arabic text, as well as with transliteration and translation and commentary, all in Hebrew. This imposing, heavyweight illustrated edition is the work of Rahamim Rejwan, just turned 80, who is also the author of several books, including an absorbing autobiography as well as a collection of short stories dealing with the Aliya of the Iraqi Jews. However, the title of Mr Rejwan's anthology is *1001 Arabic Saws, Sayings and Lore*, for the very reason that they are not exclusively Jewish, as is the case with Mr Hakham's work.

I feel I must also comment on Menashe Naghar's dilemma concerning the Biblical "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" (Exodus 21. 21; Leviticus 24. 20; and Deuteronomy 19. 21). He seems to be at a loss how to explain this to his Christian interlocutors. It all started with a couple of verses in the Gospel according to St Matthew (5:38-39):

"Ye have heard that it has been said An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That you resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee in their right cheek, turn to him the other also"

The law is "a way of making the punishment fit the crime". It is meant to protect the weak, however humble and destitute, against the rich and the powerful. All this is in sharp contrast to the usage, once current in England, when an injury inflicted on a nobleman was worth 1,500 shillings, whereas against a farmer was 300 shillings, a serf 40-80 shillings, and a slave, nothing. (Sir Winston Churchill's *History of the English-speaking Peoples*, volume 1, Chapter IV.)

The turning of the other cheek, so much touted by the Christians, and generally honoured in the breach, has its origin in the Prophet Jeremiah:

"It is good for a man that he bear the yoke of his youth..."

He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him; he is filled full with reproach

("Lamentations", 3:27-32)

For those who still cling to this old shibboleth know little, and understand less, of Jewish law and history

Jerusalem

Eliahu Khazoum

## Dead-End Lanes

The above book was written by Mr Yehuda Barshan, who now lives in Israel. The book would be specially interesting to those Iraqi Jews who lived in Iraq during the period between 1920 and 1951, provided they are all versed in the Hebrew language.

I read the book recently, and I have no hesitation to recommend it to the Iraqi community who live here in London and who happen to read Hebrew.

The book reminds us of the lanes and corners of Baghdad as well as its streets and markets. How can we forget the river Tigris and the delicious fish that came from it? I can never forget the peaches or the water-melons stored in the basement "sardab" for cooling.

The stories narrated in this book are exciting and original. They describe the way of life the Jews had in Iraq, among the Moslem community.

I do respect the author of this book, who must have invested considerable efforts to remember all the lanes and corners of Baghdad, and the other towns in Iraq. I enjoy the company of the author and his wife when I see them in the summer holidays over a Bridge Table in London

London

S. N. Soffair

## What is the matter with them?

Babylonian Jewry had a continuous existence in the Land of the Rivers for over 2500 years and had a glorious history in religion, politics, economics and education, by any standards.

Iraq was one of the first centres of early civilization, the home of many empires, the heart of the Middle East, and now the world's second richest in oil reserves. Jews had lived there through the ages, relatively free from persecution and harassment.

Those who migrated to India and the Far East were proud to call themselves Baghdadi Jews - even those who came from Aleppo and Yemen. Yet, there is a modern trend that Iraqi Jews who made good, having lived there for ten generations or more, and intermarried within the community, prefer to cover up their background, and claim a foreign origin - Spain, Portugal, Vienna, Latvia - all centres of extreme Jewish persecution. What is the matter with them?

We cannot put all the blame on Saddam and his bad reputation. Sir Philip Sassoon, in the twenties and thirties, used to say he was a Parsee!

Perhaps the inferiority complex started when Mesopotamia was given over to Arab administration, and began to slide into a tribal, backward society. In 1917 we had high hopes that "liberated" Iraq would become a progressive modern country, in which the prominent community would play a leading role

N.D.

## Empire of the Sultans: Ottoman Art from the Khalili Collection

'Empire of the Sultans: Ottoman Art from the Collection of David Khalili' celebrates the recently completed Brunei Gallery, an elegant addition to the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. Comprising some 200 works, including an impressive selection of calligraphy, Qur'ans, manuscripts, arms and armour, metalwork, ceramics, textiles and scientific instruments, this first major exhibition to be held in the new gallery explores almost every aspect of life in the Ottoman Empire, from military achievements to religious devotion.

The elegant design of the new Brunei Gallery provides the perfect setting for the dazzling riches of this exhibition of Ottoman art. Designed by Nicholas Hare Architects for the School of Oriental and African Studies, the building includes gallery space on two floors incorporating the latest security and climate control technology, and is linked to conference facilities including a 300-seat lecture theatre. The gallery, which has greatly enhanced the teaching and research facilities at SOAS, was made possible by a generous benefaction from The Sultan of Brunei Darussalam.

'Empire of the Sultans' opens at the Brunei Gallery, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1, from **23 May to 31 August 1996** ●

### Adam and Eve

All men have a single ancestor who lived less than 200,000 years ago, according to an American scientific report. The early man, nicknamed "Adam", belonged to a small tribe, possibly from Africa.

Geneticists studied the genes in a mixed-race group of men, noting differences in the male-only Y-chromosomes of Africans, Aborigines, Japanese and Europeans. Genetic mutations happen at predictable intervals, allowing calculation of how long ago people diverged. The Y-chromosome, which is passed from father to son, is one of the two sex-determining chromosomes.

In a report in the latest issue of *Nature* magazine, Dr Michael Hammer of the University of Arizona estimates that "Adam" lived 188,000 years ago. He was not the loner depicted in Genesis, but more likely a member of a small group of primitive people. His genes happened to survive while those of his colleagues did not, probably because they failed to procreate.

Dr Hammer's report matches the "Eve" ancestral theory for women, which was reached after a worldwide survey of DNA sequences in the 1980s. It concluded that all female groups, from Europe to Australia, could trace their ancestry back to a single woman who lived in Africa some 200,000 years ago. This opposed a theory that mankind evolved in different regions of the Old World from an earlier ancestor, *Homo erectus*, who migrated from Africa a million years ago. A separate report in the same issue of *Nature* offers a more recent dating for "Adam".

There is nothing to suggest that "Adam" knew "Eve", said Dr Hammer, although research suggested that he was of African origin ●



Among the many friends that Mr. Shaoul H. Sasson (Abu Zuhair) met during his recent visit to the United States and Canada were Dr. & Mrs. Gourji Rabby (top picture) and Mr. & Mrs. Morris Chitayat.

Firstly, I am writing to thank you for the September copy of *The Scribe*, which contained a copy of my letter asking for information concerning my Grandfather Menashe Mashal and his business in Manchester. It was after this letter that you kindly put me in touch with Mrs Lydia Collins.

Since writing to you and after several letters to Mrs Collins, I have had great successes in tracing my grandfather's family. I have been in touch with Joshua Nathaniel, my mother's cousin in Montreal, who Mrs Collins put me in touch with, and also since my letter in *The Scribe*, I have had a letter from Grace Marshall, another of my mother's cousins in Toronto. I am amazed at how quickly I have managed to put together my family tree and if it hadn't been for *The Scribe* and Mrs Collins, I wouldn't have known where to start.

Once again, my grateful thanks and appreciation ●

Oldham  
England

Pamela Houghton (Mrs)

### The Youngest Major General in the Israeli Police

Major General Yair Itzhaky's (Schaik) parents are Itzhak and Daisy.

Itzhak left Iraq in 1943 and Daisy in 1950. They got married in 1952 and joined the Police Force and both became officers; now they have retired. Daisy is my wife's cousin.

Daisy is the daughter of Khedhoury Shohet (known as Khedouri Abu Leblanjoo). Her son Yair was born in Israel in 1953 and joined the Army. He became an Army officer and took part in the 1973 War.

In 1973 he joined the Israeli Police and graduated very quickly and became Major General in 1993 with a B.A. in Criminology and an M.A. in Politics, Science and the History of the Middle East at the age of 39 years ●

London

S.H. Sassoon

# My First Visit to the U.S.A. and Canada

by Shaool Hakham Sasson

In August 1995 I left for Toronto where I stayed seven days, attending the wedding of David, the son of my cousin Farah, as well as different Iraqi Community gatherings. I also met there two more cousins, Clarette and May, who came from Australia especially for the wedding. In Boston I met other cousins, Dr. Frederick Ezekiel and his brother Prof. Shaool Ezekiel. Fred graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, taught for a few years there and currently has his own company.

I haven't seen most of my relatives for fifty years. All of us were born in Iraq, but we left our country of birth during different times, heading to different destinations and, thanks to the Almighty, we were able to see each other again in a family atmosphere kind of environment.

In all these cities, I attended different Iraqi Jewish functions, took organised trips with plenty of sightseeing opportunities that emphasised relaxation and adventures. Some of these trips were done with my relatives while others were taken alone so that I could enjoy myself at my own pace. In Philadelphia, I stayed with a friend whom I haven't seen for 48 years. In all these trips I had a wonderful time. Among the places that I visited were the Niagara Falls, and in Washington D.C., the Holocaust Memorial Museum, the White House, the Congress and the Arlington National Cemetery. In New York I had a tour of the United Nations building, the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, the Rockefeller Center, the Empire State Building, the Washington Square Park, the Statue of Liberty, the World Trade Center, the Jewish Museum and the Circle Line Sightseeing Cruise. I also visited the gambling casinos of Atlantic City in New Jersey.

While in New York, I was the guest at Congregation Bene Naharayim at their synagogue in Queens on Ereb Shabbath as well as on Shabbath morning. I was welcomed by the President, Akram Chitayat, my friend Elias Shohet and the board of trustees of the Congregation. More than 100 people attended that evening's Oneg Shabbath. The Minha and Arbith services were held according to the traditional Iraqi way. After the services, Chitayat gave a few welcoming words in my honour, and that was followed by a speech by Maurice Shohet. As in Toronto and Montreal, it was also in New York that I met relatives and friends whom I haven't seen for a long time.

It was a great feeling to see on the wall the pictures of great Iraqi Rabbis, among them those of Hakham Abdallah Somekh, Hakham Yosef Haim, Hakham Abraham Hillel, Hakham Ezra Dangoor and my late father. The evening was concluded with reciting the traditional "Esheth Hail" and the Friday night's Kiddoush. All of this was followed by a dinner.

On Saturday morning I attended the community's services where I was called to *Aliyah la Torah*. In the few words that I gave between the Shahrith and the Moussaf services, I thanked the Community for the big honour I was given at the synagogue. Before the luncheon, I was asked to make the Kiddoush which I gladly did according to the Iraqi way. I then did the brakhoth of the "Hammosy" upon the bread.

The Friday night Kiddoush as well as the Saturday morning one were followed by "Shebahoth" that reminded me of my old days



1. Left to right: Daisy; Shaool H. Sassoon; Major General Yair; Itzhak.



2. Shaool Hakham Sassoon; Farah; Prof. Shaool; May; Dr. Frederick; Clarette.

in Baghdad.

On this occasion, I would like to mention that the Babylonian Jewish Community in New York is well organised and highly motivated in perpetuating the Babylonian heritage. Their attitude in being good people, caring for others, honouring the family and getting together for Shabbath and holidays reflected the long-known values of the Iraqi Jewish Community everywhere. Its leaders have their love to the Community as their guiding line.

There are few individuals like Akram Chitayat, Elias Shohet, Maurice Shohet, Eliahou Shamash, David Someck, David Shohet and their Cantor, Aaron Abrahams, who are really traditionalists. They continue to hold the fort of the Babylonian heritage. In the Community's praying, all the Hebrew words are pronounced the Babylonian way and the melodies for their prayers and their Torah reading are unique, which as we all know, go back thousands of years from the Babylonian era.

Finally, I would like to mention that this trip was a very unique and interesting one but tiring for someone who is 87 years old. I felt very proud about my cousin's accomplishments, and I was glad to see the Iraqi Community in New York united, well educated and progressing. I strongly recommend to everyone in our Community wherever he/she is, who do visit New York, to go and join the Iraqi Community's services on Shabbath, and I am pretty sure that the atmosphere they will see there will remind them of their own family and of getting together in their country of birth, Iraq.

## Biographical Sketch Shaoul Ezekiel

### Education:

Imperial College of Science, London, B.Sc. 1957

M.I.T., S.M. 1964 – Sc.D. 1968

### Professional Experience:

Development Engineer – Carrier Communication and Data Handling, General Electric Company, Coventry, England, 1957-1959

Research & Development Engineer – Flight Simulators, Canadian Aviation Electronics, Montreal, Canada, 1959-1962

Research Assistant – M.I.T. 1962-1968

Instructor – Department of Physics, M.I.T. 1968

Assistant Professor, Department of Aeronautics & Astronautics, M.I.T. 1968-1972

Associate Professor, Department of Aeronautics & Astronautics, M.I.T. 1972-1976

Associate Professor, Departments of Aeronautics & Astronautics, and Electrical Engineering & Computer Science, M.I.T. 1976-1978

Professor, Departments of Aeronautics & Astronautics, and Electrical Engineering & Computer Science, M.I.T. 1978-1986

Professor, Departments of Aeronautics & Astronautics, and Electrical Engineering & Computer Science, and Director, Center for Advanced Engineering Study, M.I.T. from 1986.

Publications: Books, leaflets and studies in Engineering and Laser.



**50 years after the aliyah from Iraq of the late Shaoul and Habiba Shohet, 86 of their children and grandchildren  
We appreciate the initiative of this family gathering**

I was very pleased to receive the information regarding my great-grand uncle E. E. Sassoon. I cannot thank you enough for taking the time to delve into this matter for me. I have been trying for years to get answers to these questions, but no one could help me, and all I had to do was get in touch with *The Scribe*.

Please congratulate and thank your very able research team for me. I think they are great.  
**Sydney Dolly (Dayan) Shadler**

*Scribe*: What research team? Our family records were all prepared by me single-handed over the years●

The article about the Khazars in your last issue states that they were ruled by Kings of Jewish extraction. In fact, the Khazars were non-Jewish people who followed the lead of their King and all converted to Judaism.

I am the daughter of Avraham Ludvipol who died in 1921. After the First World War he founded in Tel Aviv the first daily newspaper in Palestine. It was first called *Hadashoth Ha'aretz*, but soon changed its name to *Ha'aretz*. It still flourishes now in Israel.

Thank you very much for forwarding *The Scribe* which I find extremely interesting  
**London Mrs Marnina Belenky**

First I want to let you know how much I enjoy reading your journal. It brought me a lot of memories of my childhood. I am a graduate of Shamash School in 1951, the school last class before the aliyah to Israel. I wonder why I am not seeing any pictures or writings about that school in the issues of your journal. I assumed that because none of us at that time was able to take out any letters or any documents with us when we left Baghdad. Nevertheless, I would love to hear from friends and classmates of that period. I imagine that everyone is somewhere in Israel, U. K. or the U.S.A., and perhaps through reading your journal some contact might be established between us. I admire your mission. As always, I look forward to receiving your journal●

**PO Box 8290, Sami Haik (Hayek)  
Dallas, Texas 75205**

### **Soviet immigrants to Israel**

Since 1989 a total of 770 thousand Soviet immigrants came to Israel adding 12% to the population.

Among the arrivals were: 58,000 engineers, 14,000 doctors, 10,000 scientists and specialists.

The annual cost to the government of these immigrants is 3.5 billion dollars●

A Jew was asked by his friend, "I see you are reading the National Front paper and not the *Jewish Chronicle*. How come? The reply was "The J.C. always writes of arsons in Synagogues and desecration of cemeteries, which I find very depressing. However, the National Front paper always claims that Jews control banking, politics, trade and the professions which I find very uplifting"●

**Stockholm S.E.D.**

May I take this opportunity to thank you all very very much for the excellent articles written in *The Scribe*. It has enlightened me on many important mid-Eastern subjects, which have a great impact on our daily lives.

I read with much interest the article entitled "Baghdadi Customs"●  
**Israel Jacob Raphael**

Carol Basri, a leading lawyer of New York, arrived in London last November to take part and speak at a Conference on "Sustainable Ethics in Corporate Practice: Saints and Sinners"!

The Conference was well attended by delegates from various European countries●



Picture supplied by S. H. Sassoon

, including doctors, engineers and specialists, got together to take the above historic commemorative photograph, and hope that others will follow their example.

*The Scribe* has been a great help in a journey back to our roots.

I was born in Baghdad in 1941 and now live in Germany with my wife and two sons. My three brothers live with their families in Toronto, Canada. My late brother Benny gave his life for Israel in the Six Day War.

In February 1995, together with other Jews here, we reestablished the Jewish community of Lorrach (south-west Germany) and I was elected as Chairman of the community. We had a good start. I have done my utmost to enable our many new members from the former Soviet Union countries to live Purim and Pesah which I organised from donations.

Later, things got more complicated as the President of the Jewish Organisation of the County Baden, Mr G Nissenbaum, who up to then refused to support us, appeared in our community and declared me as dismissed. I assured him that I will fight for my rights with every possible democratic and judicial mean●  
Grenzach, Germany Dr Abraham Ambar

Thank you for the chance to receive your very interesting and informative publication. I have great enjoyment reading the interesting pieces and comments●  
U.S.A. Herman Stivelman

Thank you for your time recently at your offices. I came away with further knowledge of world history, particularly as it relates to the fortunes of our most illustrious Jewish people. Some day soon I hope to introduce many of my Sephardi origin acquaintances and dear friends to you. If ever you plan a trip to the U.S. or, better yet, change your mind and agree to an invitation to a gala in your honour, I would hope to be allowed to participate.

Please add Dr Lev Hakak to your mailing list. He is a prominent member of the Sephardi Jewish Community in LA, being a professor of Near Eastern languages & Culture at UCLA and an Attorney-At-Law. He was also the main organiser of the November 11th "Babylonian Heritage Night and Exhibition" attended by several hundred●

Littleton, Colorado Ben (Saul) Mares

The pictures of old Iraq published in the "Scribe" evokes in me painful memories of my home country. I have been placing these pictures before me every evening and look at them with tears running from my eyes●  
Riyad Saudi Arabia Adnan al Rashid

I read with astonishment a review of Sami Michael's book *Victoria*. For the record, and to purify the reputation of the Iraqi Jewry, I wish to ask how can the author let his fantasy fabricate such falsehoods about his own roots, things that never happened, just to have a wider circulation of his book? Throwing mud at one's own ancestors is a sacrilege and a grave insult to the strict morals and religious way of life of the honest, hardworking people our predecessors were in the old country.

Sydney Melina Hoory

*Scribe*: To mark the publication of *Victoria*, a study evening was recently held at the Or Yehuda Babylonian Centre on the work of the author Sami Michael. The focal point of the evening was a lecture by Prof. Lev Hakak of the University of California who has studied the oeuvre of this author. His wide-ranging research is to be published in the journal *Babylonian Jewry* of the Research Institute of Babylonian Jewry, due to appear soon.

Sami Michael explained that the novel was not autobiographical, nor does it refer to the main affluent Baghdad Community. He said "Victoria is the story of Abu Shibil, Abu Sifain and Ras el-Chol (poor Jewish quarters in Baghdad). This is the debt which I believed I had to repay before I die.

"Victoria is a memorial to that world from which I drew so much, which I loved, and which I feared would be lost"●

# The case for a fixed Shabbath

by Naim Dangoor

6pm to 6 pm local time all over the world, all the year round.

According to the story of Creation in the Book of Genesis, the day is counted from morning to morning, for the story says "and evening came and morning came – One Day."

The day was treated differently in different cultures. Morning to morning in Egypt, evening to evening in Babylon, and morning to evening in Arabia, viz. Ramadhan is treated as fasting from sunrise to sunset only, the night being of no consequence.

When the Jews were carried captive to Babylon in 586 BCE, they came under the influence of Babylonian customs and also found it more practical to observe the Shabbath evening to evening.

Thus, when the Greek translation of the Bible, the Septuagint was made in 70 CE for the benefit of the Greek-speaking one million Jews of Alexandria in Egypt, the wording of the story of the Creation was modified to read "and the evening and the morning were One Day."

The St James Authorised Version in English, which was based on the Greek Septuagint, expresses the day in the same way, i. e. and the evening and the morning were one day, indicating that the day starts in the evening. However, in the Jewish translation of the Bible and also in modern translations of the Bible based on the Hebrew version, the original sense has been restored to read "and there was evening and there was morning One Day."

Basing himself on the Authorised Version, Bishop Ussher came to the conclusion that the creation of the world took place at 6pm on Friday evening, at the Autumn Equinox which we celebrate by Rosh-Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. But the view that the calendar started at 6pm on Friday need not be empirical, but can be both convenient and logical. All the measurements of the day in the ancient world were based on the movement of the Sun, which was considered as a deity, being the visible source of all life. However, the length of the day based on the movement of the Sun, whether from morning to morning or evening to evening, is never 24 hours, but continues to change throughout the year, all over the world, with the exception of the Equator. I remember how my late grandfather, Hakham Ezra Dangoor, used to go up to the roof of our house every evening to watch the exact setting of the Sun beneath the horizon, to set his watch at 12 o'clock, which was the "sunset" system of time measurement followed in the East. The only measurement of the day that is fixed throughout the year and is exactly 24 hours is the modern method of measurement from midnight to midnight. There is a case, therefore, for adopting a system of measurement which does not depend on sunrise and sunset.

The Shabbath that we observe commemorates God's resting after finishing the work of Creation and this must have happened at 6pm on Friday as God did not work "at night". Thus it can be stated logically and truthfully that the period of God's resting started at 6pm on Friday, lasting obviously for 24 hours. For this reason there is a strong case for observing the Jewish Shabbath during that fixed space of time, which would avoid the difficulties of the



**Debating Society of Rahel Shahmoon School Baghdad 1928**

The above photo shows members of the debating society of Rahel Shahmoon School.

Left to right:

Seated: Nazim Aslan; Yossef Alwaya; Anwar Zilkha

Standing: Ezra Battat; Abdulla Dangoor; Dawood Salman; Ezra Mazala  
Ramat-Gan

Yossef Battat  
Advocate & Notary

hours changing out of hand from season to season and becoming absurd in Northern countries where the sun never sets in the summer months and never rises in some winter months.

It would not be unreasonable to assume that when God created the Universe, time was already in existence. But modern science teaches that the Big Bang brought into being not only Matter and Space, but Time also. That is why I am fascinated by my grandfather's commentary on the Chumash, written some 75 years ago, where he says that at the Creation, God created Time.

This, in fact, is in accordance with a proper understanding of the story of Creation in the First Chapter of Genesis.

Our limited minds may find it difficult to imagine a pre-Creation existence without time, but timeless eternity is the domain of God, and eternity is more natural than finite time.

To count the Jewish Calendar from the Creation – *layetzirah* (Anno Mundi), we would have to start from the beginning of Creation on a Sunday morning which corresponds to the Big Bang. But if we count the Calendar from the Friday evening, then it is no longer Anno Mundi but Anno Adam who in fact came into being at the end of Creation. It is therefore more logical to start our Calendar from Adam, as the seven days of Creation may have covered millions of years ●

Quotable quote:

You get mad if you try and act the part of God. I see why they say Humility is a virtue. Humility is what keeps you sane in a human being.

*They came to Baghdad* (1951) by Agatha Christie.

## The ME Peace Process

The success or failure will be measured by what Israel will make of it. A Palestinian entity 1.5 million Arabs, if properly managed could form a vital bridge of communication with the neighbouring Arab countries for the peaceful development of the region and its prosperity for the benefit of all its nationalities ●

## Europe's future

For what it did to the Jews this century and before, Europe has forfeited its right to survive in its present form, even less as a united Europe dominated by Germany and the Vatican. But where can the challenge come from? The answer is – Islam!

With Europe's population static and the population of the countries surrounding it doubling every 20 years, the Third World, led by Moslem fundamentalists can have a walkover by the year 2050, helped by the 40 million Moslems already inside Europe, and by a climate that continues to get milder.

When, by the seventh century, Christianity was set to engulf the whole Mediterranean world, our Semitic cousins of the Middle East could not stomach the pagan nonsense of its teachings. The great Arabian Prophet arose in time to assert the pure monotheism of Abraham. In a short time, the Moslem armies were well on the way to Paris and, not long ago, the Ottoman Moslems were knocking on the gates of Vienna.

What should our attitude be if the Moslems resumed their inroads into Europe? We should re-examine our options as we may yet be able to teach Christian Europe a lesson it deserves for what it did to us.

Peace between the Jews and the Arabs may open a new chapter in world history.

## The Barcelona Conference

Having sensed the potential danger lurking from the south, 15 European countries recently convened the Barcelona Conference. It was attended by Israel and various Arab countries. The conference discussed co-operation in the control of terrorism.

Europe is allocating six billion dollars over five years to raise the standard of living of countries across the Mediterranean, in the hope that this might reduce the influx of immigrants into Europe. However, such an expenditure may only encourage more immigration ●

N.D.



Israeli Ambassador to India, Mr Ephraim Dowek, attended a function last July at Calcutta's Beth El Synagogue organised by David Nahoum.

The above picture shows Ambassador Dowek with the Sefarim which are housed in Baghdadi-style silver cases and displayed so everybody can visit after the prayers ●  
London Esmond D Ezra

Kudos for your success in making *The Scribe* a household word and a landmark in 20th Century Iraqi Jewish history. I've found the September issue singularly interesting and I don't want to miss any of your future issues.

It was vicariously edifying on the part of *Scribe* reader Munir Ata of Montreal to declare in the September 1995 issue that "Jerusalem is ours" that "we will cling to it and we will never surrender it." He even goes on to admonish the Arabs to "forget about Jerusalem....," etc., etc. But most of us Jewish Israeli citizens have paid dearly for the pipedreams of remote control quasizionists chirping contentedly in the security of their dark crannies at a well-calculated distance from Israel's flaming frontiers.

Now listen Mr. Ata: the mere fact that you are a Jew who lives in Montreal doesn't turn you automatically into a "we" when you speak of Israel, especially when *our* Israeli blood is at stake. If you and your ilk are prepared to fight for Jerusalem then come over here and fight! Don't just sit in remote Montreal and play with your joy-stick. And, please, never a word about "we" in connection with Israel or Jerusalem.

**Yehud, Israel Ezra S. Soffer**

*Scribe:*

1. Reader Munir Ata spoke only of Jerusalem and not concerning Israel in general.
2. It has been generally recognised, and repeatedly declared by Teddy Kolleck and other Israeli leaders that, as stated in the Talmud, Jerusalem belongs to the totality of the Jewish people, whether living in Israel or in the Diaspora. Every Jew can regard himself as a citizen of Jerusalem.
3. The Middle East conflict must not be seen in the narrow sense as between the Israelis and Palestinians, but in the wider sense as between Jews and Arabs of the region. Jews of Arab countries paid dearly for this unequal struggle by being harassed, dispossessed and dispersed to the four corners of the world ●

The picture on page 36 of the last issue may well be of David Elias and his family.

I rather think, however, that the notable you identify as Lord Brampton, The Queen's Uncle, is in fact Field Marshall The Lord Bramall KG, Lord Lieutenant of London. People have been sent to the Tower for less!

**Bushey Heath, Herts Barry Hyman**

*Scribe:* Thank you for pointing out the error in the caption. We had already received this information from Buckingham Palace, but no mention was made of the "Tower". David Elias has apologised for not giving us the correct name and position of the Peer in the picture ●

### Man of the Millennium

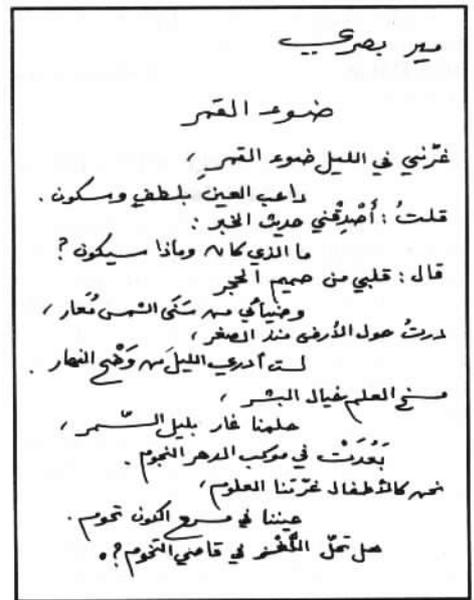
As the year 2000 approaches, people are considering the world events of the last 1000 years. *The Washington Post* has recently nominated Ghengis Khan, the 13th Century Mongol conqueror as the Man of the Millenium. Although he died at 60, his empire stretched from the Pacific to Eastern Europe and from Siberia to the Persian Gulf. It was the greatest land Empire of all time. Unparalleled slaughter for his day helped him achieve his success.

Genghis Khan was not the most benevolent person of his age, nor the deepest thinker, nor was he the greatest liberator; he was simply a thug. He was an apostle of extremes who embodied the half-civilised, half-savage quality of the human race.

This description can easily fit the Europe of the 20th Century, and especially the German people who produced Adolf sHitler who receives the title of the Most Evil Person of the Millennium ●

I was very impressed with your publication which I recently saw at my sister's home in Florida. I would appreciate being on your mailing list. I was born in Baghdad, Iraq ●

**Delray Beach Florida Clementine Cominsky (Shakerchi)**

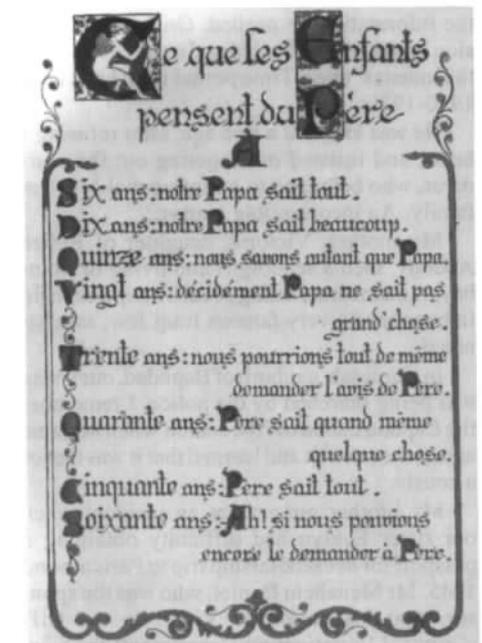


### Moonshine

**Meer S. Basri**

The Moonshine beguiled me in the night  
Gently, lazily, it flirted with my eye.  
I said, O tell me the truth,  
What was there and what will be?  
The Moon said, my heart is made of solid  
rock,  
My light is borrowed from the Sun.  
I spun round the earth since my birth.  
I do not discern night from day.  
Science obliterated man's imagination,  
Our dream dried up in night's darkness.  
The stars went far off in Eternity's parade.  
Like children we were dazzled by science,  
Our eyes hovered on the Universe's stage.  
Can they solve the puzzle in the distant  
worlds? ●

When children we take everything for granted,  
but as we grow older we appreciate the wisdom  
of our parents' words.  
The following is a poem . . . .



If Moses was Egyptian as Nasser used to say, and Jesus was a Palestinian, as Arafat now claims – what are we left with? Even Habakuk, they say, belongs to them! ●

Enclosed are two articles depicting the two main topics as I grew up.

**Boca Raton  
Fl. USA**

**Abraham Haya**

### **The start of the College of Pharmacy in Baghdad**

Digesting the tales told by our parents, it seems that after World War One, training under an accredited Pharmacist entitled the person to pass an exam and earn a graduate degree. My father, Menashe Haya, a Pharmacist himself during the Ottoman rule, was in charge of the examination and was a signatory to those diplomas.

Late in the 1920s, to supplement his income, he held classes in the family house basement. Approaching Exam time, an English Professor, (I believe named Mr Benezone), was recruited by the Ministry and appeared unannounced in Baghdad to establish a Pharmacy School.

He decided that he would prepare questions for the upcoming exam according to British standard, hence my father could not participate and he further ruled that partakers must resign their job to qualify for full time student status.

No one knew the British Standard and advice could not be tendered.

The majority of the class, mostly family men needing their measly earnings, decided to conform and chance it. To everybody's delight, a good percentage passed!

My father was congratulated as the results surpassed everybody's expectation.

### **The Story of a Police Detective**

A cardboard backed portrait, 3ft high, of an official in uniform, with *sidara* (head-gear), wide leather belt and shoulder strap, was treasured by our family. Often my father spoke of the famous Police Detective, Salman Haya. He was revered as fame caught up with him, having solved hard criminal cases through his creativity and wit. Once, he mingled with traders and their mules and, disguised as one of them, spent overnight outside the city, and got the information he needed. On another occasion he got himself jailed and eavesdropped on the inmates' tales. Time period must have been 1910-1920s.

He was killed at a ripe age, after refusing a bribe, and insisted on fingering out the murderer, who belonged to an influential Moslem family. An incorruptible martyr.

My mother, Victoria, daughter of Ruben Aboody, then a schoolgirl and living in Bombay, remembers a Eulogy (called *Aspade*) held in honour of a very famous Iraqi Jew, assassinated.

In Karradah, a suburb of Baghdad, our house was being searched by the police. I remember the Captain called off the search when he came across the portrait and learned that it was that of a cousin.

My brother remembers an incident when our sister Evelyn had difficulty obtaining a passport for her scholarship trip to Paris around 1945. Mr Menahem Daniel, who was the sponsor, sent his employee Victor to the CID (Criminal Investigation Department) for help. He was baffled when the official picked up the phone and ordered that Evelyn Haya's application be processed immediately even if it was for Palestine. Turning to Victor he said: "Salman Haya was my boss, to whom I owe my position and whatever I learned"●



On 23.12.1995 Dr. Victor Meir Dellal celebrated his 90th birthday with a party at home for over a hundred guests family and friends.

**The above picture shows from left to right: Violette Cermone (nee Elbeg); Esther Drysen (Shamash); Mrs Boys; Fahima Dellal; Doreen Shaoul; Victor Dellal; Penny Shaoul; Edward Shaoul; David Dellal; Joyce Sopher (nee Dellal); Ezra Hakkak.**

This was no surprise to those who know him as he has together with his wife Fahima always kept an open house since their marriage 63 years ago. Victor came to Manchester in 1920 soon after his mother died in the Influenza Epidemic of 1919 which cost more lives world wide than the Great War. He was under the care of his brother George who took responsibility for his education. First at Heaton Moor School, then to study medicine at Manchester University. After qualifying as a doctor, he married Fahima, daughter of Ezra and Masooda Sassoon.

He set up in General Practice in London, where he continued working in the same practice until 10 years ago, first single handed then joined in the 1960's by his son-in-law Edward, son of Gourgji Shaoul, and daughter Doreen.

Dr. Dellal spent the last war in the British army where he rose to the rank of Major.

His son David is an accountant married to Desiree, daughter of Gourgji and Khatoon Shina.

Although Dr. Dellal left Baghdad as a school boy and never returned he has amazing memories of the life of the Jewish Community, which had not really changed over many hundreds of years. He tells of going to the Synagogue for the first service to say Kaddish for the year of mourning for his mother, leaving home before it was light. He remembers going to the Turkish baths with relations returning from Persia too dirty to go home after the long over land journey. He remembers the Arabs wrapped up for warmth, but bare footed in the rain; the black maid lighting Shabbat candles; the brothel closed on Shabbat and Yomtob! And the metal shutters with which the windows were closed in times of trouble.

Through their stories Victor and Fahima have given their children and six grandchildren a strong sense of identity with their past, stretching back thousands of years and a great pride in their Babylonian heritage●

**D.S.**

### **Rifka Ben-Porath**

Rifka Ben-Porath has passed away at the age of 66 after a long illness. I went to the funeral. What a eulogy Mordechai gave. He added, that his grand-daughter of 12 said, "Grandma - you'll go straight to Gan Eden for all the good things you did in your life". 250 people came to the Shiva.

One of their three daughters who had seven children looked so young. Her first husband died of cancer at 39 and now she remarried a religious, divorced man who had five children. The elder daughter has just had a boy at 41 - her fifth. There are 15 grand-children already. From all accounts, Rifka was a remarkable woman. As Mordechai's book is finished, I hope he'll get it translated into English. I am sure all he said about Rifka is in the book and he is dedicating it to her. He is a very special person●  
**Tel Aviv** **Estelle Hillaly**

I enclose £500 and request you to send four complete volumes of *The Scribe*. I intend to give one volume to each of three synagogues in Australia in which I am associated. Keep up the good work●

**N.S.W. Australia**

**Michael Dalah**

Please put my children on your mailing list so that they can receive their own copies, rather than wait until they come home to grab mine●  
**London** **Dr. Doreen Shaoul**

I have just received the September 1995 issue of *The Scribe*. I find it most informative and documentary, with so many pictures tracing the history of the Iraqi Jewish community. All of us are lucky that the Foundation is expending this priceless effort to maintain the flow and documentation of our heritage●  
**New Jersey** **Dr Edward G Nawy**

# Jews of India Exhibition

Curator: Orpa Slafiak

In June 1995 the Department of Jewish Ethnography mounted an exhibition "The Jews of India" to celebrate the rich and colourful heritage of the three distinct communities that settled in the India sub-continent – the Jews of Cochin, the Bene-Israel and the Baghdadi Jews. The open-mindedness of the Indians towards other religions allowed the Jews to adhere to their religious heritage and at the same time integrate into the surrounding cultures and absorb customs and lifestyles.

The exhibition has put an emphasis on many aspects of religious and secular life – synagogues, ritual objects, ceremonies, homes, costumes and jewellery – while pointing to the differences between the three communities. It culminated years of field work carried out both in India and in Israel during which hundreds of people were interviewed and numerous objects collected.

Coinciding with the opening of the exhibition was the inauguration of a highly ornate and colourful synagogue transferred from Cochin and installed in the museum.

A lavishly illustrated catalogue accompanied the exhibition, one in Hebrew and one in English.

The three communities are as follows:

## The Jews of Cochin

This is the oldest of the Indian Jewish communities, located in the green and fertile Malabar Plain, a coastal strip in southwestern India that once belonged to the Raja of Cochin and today is part of Kerala State. Already in antiquity Malabar was known for its wealth of spices, which attracted merchants – among them Jews – from distant countries.

Although there are numerous traditions as to the early origins of the community, the earliest written document relating to them dates from the year 1000 – a set of copper plates engraved with a list of religious and economic privileges granted by the local Hindi ruler to the Jewish leader Joseph Raban. This source indicates that the Jews were already well established in the region and integrated into local economic life. Early in the 16th century, Jews expelled from Spain settled in Cochin; they were called "Paradesi" (foreign) or "White Jews" by local Malabari Jews. In the 17th century there were Jews in five localities in the region, and eight synagogues had been built.

The political history of Malabar in the modern era saw foreign rule by a series of European nations: first the Portuguese (1498-1663), who brought the Inquisition that persecuted local Jews; then the Dutch (1663-1795), under whom the Jewish community flourished. Under the British (1792-1947), the community continued to thrive, and many Jews were employed in the colonial bureaucracy.

At its height in the 1950s, the Cochin community numbered approximately 2,500; most of these Jews immigrated to Israel and settled in the Jerusalem region, around Beersheva, and in the Upper Galilee.

## The Bene Israel

The Bene Israel, the largest Jewish community of India, numbered some 25,000 just before their immigration to Israel. For many generations they lived around Bombay, in the Kolaba district of Maharashtra State. Scattered in villages, they were isolated from other Jewish communities. Though unaware of the Jewish

legal system that had developed since the Second Temple Period, they maintained strict observance of the Sabbath, circumcised their newborn sons, and began prayers with *Shema Israel*, the central liturgical credo of Judaism. Renewed contact with the Jewish world came early in the 19th century, when teachers from Cochin arrived to instruct them in religion as well as in the Hebrew language. At the same time, missionaries tried – unsuccessfully – to convert them, and their failed attempts only served to awaken Jewish identity among the Bene Israel and forge them into an independent community.

In the late 18th and 19th centuries, with the establishment of the British East India Company and later with the consolidation of British rule in India, many of the Ben Israel left their villages and moved to the big cities, mainly to Bombay. There they forsook their traditional occupations – oil-pressing, agriculture, and petty trade – to become construction workers, carpenters, longshoremen, and civil servants.

In the 1950s and 1960s many immigrated to Israel and, despite initial obstacles raised by the country's religious authorities, were very successfully integrated into Israeli society. As of 1994 the community numbered some 45,000, with most of the Bene Israel living in Lod, Ramla, Dimona, Beersheva and Haifa.

## The Baghdadi Community

The term "Baghdadi" was originally used with reference to Jews who came to India from Iraq and Syria, and later from Yemen, Iran, and Afghanistan. First to arrive – in the mid-18th century – were merchants from Basra, Baghdad, and Aleppo affiliated with the British East India Company. After settling initially in the port town of Surat, they moved to the rapidly-growing cities of Calcutta and Bombay. An additional group of Baghdadis arrived in India early in the 19th century, following a wave of persecution by Iraqi rulers.

The Baghdadi community in India was dominated by several prominent, almost legendary figures, the founders of dynasties and of world-wide commercial empires.

Baghdadi Jews tended to be merchants, bankers, and industrialists, with only a few going into the liberal professions. Interestingly enough, they also made significant contribution to the early Indian film industry. While preserving a strong communal identity and most Iraqi Jewish traditions, these Jews adopted a British way of life and separated themselves from the local Jewish and non-Jewish population. Until the opening of Jewish schools in the area, they sent their children to private schools or to missionary schools in which Hebrew was taught.

When India attained independence in 1947, most of the community (some 5,000 people) left for English-speaking countries; only a small minority immigrated to Israel.

## Baghdadi Dress

Subsequent to their arrival in India, Baghdadi Jews at first retained their traditional dress, which was influenced by the fashions of the Ottoman Empire in the 18th and 19th centuries. However, Indian influence was soon felt in the choice of fabrics and materials as well as in decorative elements, embroidery, and local motifs.

The marked climatic differences between their countries of origin and India eventually caused the Baghdadis to adopt loose, single-layered garments, but not for long – at the

beginning of the 20th century, their strong desire to fit into British society led them to abandon their comfortable apparel and adopt European wear. This desire to imitate the British way of life found expression not only in clothing, but also in home furnishings, European manners, and in the type of general education given to the community's children.

## From The Board of Deputies of British Jews

I and my colleagues here at the Board of Deputies invariably read *The Scribe* with the greatest of interest. It does much to illuminate the life of a section of our community of which many of us know too little. But your most recent issue was exceptionally impressive, and I should like to offer my personal congratulations. It was crammed with a wealth and diversity of material reflecting a wide range of knowledge and learning about the Babylonian Jewish community, as well as a justifiable sense of pride in its achievements. It was an object lesson to us all.

May I in return seek the use of the columns of your esteemed publication to remind your readers that the Board of Deputies exists to serve all sections of the Jewish community. More specifically, the Board

- provides the only public forum where all sections of our community (whether Ashkenazi or Sephardi, Orthodox or Progressive) can meet to discuss issues of common concern;
- is the address when Government Departments and Ministers wish to consult the Jewish community;
- monitors all British and European proposals for laws which might affect Jewish people;
- is asked to express the views of the Jewish community on such issues as divorce law reform, the preservation of historic religious buildings and issues of medical ethics;
- is approached by other religious and ethnic minority groups for advice and guidance;
- counters false or misleading portrayals of Jewish people or history in the media;
- has created a Jewish Way of Life Exhibition which tours the country and shows many thousands of non-Jewish schoolchildren that our religion is alive, vibrant and enjoyable;
- provides help and support for oppressed Jewish communities in the former Yugoslavia, former Soviet Union and Arab lands;
- is the only organisation to undertake statistical and demographic research about our community;
- runs a Central Enquiry Desk which attracts more than 10,000 calls a year from around the world about aspects of Jewish life in Britain.

The Board is a democratic organisation in which all Jewish groups can meet together in friendship and harmony to discuss matters of common concern. We provide a forum for unity and co-operation which are sadly lacking in a community that risks increasing fragmentation. Our wish is to work with all sections of our community. We would welcome even greater participation in our activities and in our counsels from representatives of Babylonian Jewry.

In case it is of interest

London

Neville Nagler  
Chief Executive

We recently hosted a reunion for the members of my mother's family the Zilkhas.

I really recommend to families to make such reunions and put together the information as we did, in a book as they make a great souvenir for generations to come.

The enclosed two pictures are of the Zilkha family and of the Shasha brothers●  
New Rochelle, NY Robert Y Shasha

## Zilkha Family Reunion

May 27-28 1995

by Robert Shasha

**Our roots, traditions, heritage, and family are our original birthright. What we do with them, consciously or unconsciously, is up to us.**

It is with great pleasure that we present you this family album.

The purpose is to give everyone an idea of our common heritage, to learn about each other, and hopefully to enjoy our family membership. As you will see, this is the story of a family which has successfully made the transition from the East to the West. Our uncles and aunts and grandparents really made this transition. Now the question is what do we keep of our traditions?

This family reunion idea was initiated by Ruthie Zilkha in a conversation that Ellen and I had with her over dinner at her home in Paris. We decided to host the first cousins reunion in the New York area because we thought we would get the best attendance. We hope that this will be the impetus for other reunions in the future!

As you will see, we are geographically diversified between the United States and Europe. After 2500 years of living in Iraq (and probably at least 500,000 years in the Middle East), not one of us lives there today! We have relatives interested in the arts, business, professions, and devoted to their families.

To personally editorialize for a moment, the issues I see facing all of us as a family include:

a) Will we foster the concept of an **extended family** and actually help each other in times of need? Will we be a **family in name alone or in the best sense of the word? Is blood really thicker than water?** We know that the extended family concept has broken down in most families in the Western world in the fast paced secular lifestyles.

b) Will we, as a family, put politics and ego behind us for the sake of our extended family? It is great to be the descendants of great people, but the issue we face today is **what type of tree grows from these roots?**

The answers to these questions lay with how each of us interacts with each other.

### Family Statistics as of May 1995.

- 1) There are 57 blood related descendants of Nana and Baba living around the world! Five of Baba and Nana's children are living. 20 grandchildren are living. 32 great grandchildren are living.
- 2) We are, including spouses, a total of 28 first cousins, 10 uncles and aunts, and 32 great grandchildren of Baba and Nana! This means that to a majority of our family, Iraq and Baba and Nana, are names without direct knowledge or understanding.



ZILKHA FAMILY NEW YORK 1943

Left to right seated: Khedouri Zilkha; Louise (nee Bashi); Bertie Zilkha  
Standing: Abdullah; Hanina (Shasha); Ezra; Helen (Simon); Selim●

- 3) Our relatives live in Switzerland, France, the United Kingdom, California, Maine, New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, Washington, D.C., Oregon, Texas, and the state of Washington! Today most live in the United States.
- 4) Everyone appears to be gainfully employed and happy with their life!
- 5) Our senior family member is Abdullah Zilkha who is 83 (he counts from his conception date)●

## A Short Business History of Khedouri A. Zilkha

by Son Ezra

Father was born in Baghdad in 1884. His father was a merchant. He decided to become a banker in 1899 because he was not happy at school. He started with an office and a messenger. He had two hundred and fifty gold pounds of capital which his father had given him. He dealt in bills of exchange. He also dealt in gold.

In 1902 he went to Istanbul because the gold business took him there. He went with his uncle, Youssef Shasha. It took them 29 days by caravan to get to Aleppo and then by rail to Istanbul. He returned to Baghdad in 1904. He returned because his father had died. He also had made some money. The bank prospered and managed to get through the World War in good shape. He also managed to survive the attacks of the Turkish Government on important bankers and merchants.

In 1927 after threats of the Black Hand Society – a society which to this day no one knows the origins – he opened a branch in Beyrouth. By then all seven of us were born. In

Beyrouth the bank also prospered as well as in Baghdad. But the head office moved to Beyrouth with father.

In 1931 we bought the business of the Anglo Palestine Bank (now Bank Leumi) in Lebanon.

In 1935 father opened a branch in Damascus. Damascus was a link between Beyrouth and Baghdad.

In 1937 father opened in Cairo, and the family moved to Cairo. The head office was wherever father was. We still kept a home in Lebanon and spent part of the summers in the mountains of Lebanon.

In 1939 father opened a branch in Alexandria.

In 1941 father decided to bring Mother, Hanina, Berthie, Selim & me to America in order to finish our studies. We could not go to Europe because of the war. We went to South Africa by plane and arrived in New York by ship on June 30th, 1941.

Father had never really intended to stay in America. He was not happy here during the war. He was away from his business. The bank in Beyrouth was run by Uncle Saleh Bashi. In Egypt there were my brothers, Abdulla and Maurice. Baghdad was run by a brother-in-law and nephew of father. Damascus reported to Beyrouth.

Father went back to the Middle East in 1946. On his return he realized that when the mandates would be over in Palestine that we as Jews in the Arab world were very vulnerable. He sent Selim and me to train in London, Amsterdam and a small time in Milan. He then sent Selim to New York, and I eventually went to Hong Kong. We were expropriated in Iraq in 1952, in Syria in 1954 and in Egypt in 1956.

Father died June 29th, 1956. And even though we had lost all we had in the Middle East, except Lebanon, we were re-established and able to carry on●



The Shasha brothers New York c. 1956.  
Left to right: Jim; Maurice; Frank; Albert; Alfred●

## Baba meets Nana

by daughter Helen

In 1911 or 1912 at the Alliance Israelite of Baghdad they put on a play from Racine of the 17th century. It was about Queen Esther and Nana Louise had the main role. That was a chance to be seen. Father was there looking for a wife, and was very pleased with what he saw. The next day he asked Mr. Murad, a broker for marriages and other things, and told him to go and ask for her hand. Her father refused because Nana had an older sister who was not yet married.

A few months later, Father came into the city by boat (he lived a little outside the town). Mr. Murad came to him very excited to tell him that her sister had gotten engaged the night before. Baba told Mr. Murad to go right away to the father that he wanted to marry Louise. The father said, "I cannot afford to marry off two daughters at the same time. I can't pay another dowry so soon. I can't make another wedding so soon, and I can't make another trousseau so soon. And, I am afraid of the evil eye."

seau so soon. And, I am afraid of the evil eye."

When Mr. Murad came to tell Father what he was told, he said to him, "Go right back to Mr. Bashi and tell him I only want his daughter Louise, I will make the wedding, I do not want a dowry, and for the trousseau I will bring 12 bolts of silk in different colours from Manchester." This way he managed to marry Nana only two months after her sister's wedding.

It is interesting to note that after their wedding, all the pretty girls of Baghdad were proud to marry without dowries and often the young man (if he could afford it) paid for the wedding himself●

Jewish banking in Iraq: The first Jewish bankers in Iraq were money changers. Financial transactions were based on mutual trust, and it was by no means unusual for sizeable deals between small bankers and their customers to depend on nothing more than a verbal pledge●



Early Jewish Banking in Baghdad – Bureaux de Change – money changers c. 1900  
Customers did have a choice●

## Baghdad Traditions (pre 1936 – when they left Iraq)

by Hanina and Alfred Shasha

Baghdad, the capital of Iraq, lies on the Tigris River.

The most important ingredient for Life's sustenance in the arid Middle East is water for irrigation. Iraq, with its two great rivers, has always had plenty of water. At times it was used (and still can be used) for the good of the people; at other times it was allowed to flow into the sea and be practically wasted.

Traditional houses were built around a courtyard with one or two storeys with rooms around it, and sometimes with a garden in the middle or back of the house. Gardens were highly prized because they provided fruits and vegetables, and shade from the hot sun. There was no central heating to these homes; people used the warmth of the sun in daytime and burnt charcoal in braziers at night. Air conditioning was non-existent; people sought the breeze from the river or open shady places. In summer months people put out beds on the flat roofs of their homes and slept under the sky. How many times I tried to count the stars! People kept a jug of water handy in a house so that should an owl fly by they would pour out the water to dispel a possible curse! When a member of the family left the house on a journey, they spilt a bucket of water on the road behind his carriage or car to wish him a safe journey, and safe return.

The home was the centre of activity in all respects. It was a home with a capital H. Here, mother and father made children, resided with their brood of seven, eight or ten, ate, studied, played, laughed, cried and received members of the larger family and friends. Particularly during High Holy Days families visited each other in each other's homes wearing their best clothes, offering their best sweets, coffee and cigarettes, all with a great fanfare. Matchmakers, and some were used, would bring the groom and his family to the would-be bride's home to see her and see what home she comes from. Because of large families, with children of close ages, brothers and sisters played together or with cousins and other family members. There was not much need for friends from far away.

There were schools of the Jewish Community and public schools of the government. The most famous of the Community schools were Alliance Israelite school, one for Boys and one for Girls. Beside Hebrew and Arabic, the European language taught was French. These schools made invaluable contributions to the community, in that they opened it to the west and made the west accessible to it. The contribution of these schools to the welfare and progress of the community can never be exaggerated; it was truly immense. Later on, other Community Schools, such as the Shamash School, were established and by then the foreign language was English. For the Community Schools one paid a small tuition fee, if one could afford it, and they were maintained primarily from a tax collected by the community on the slaughter of Kosher meat, which practically everyone ate.

Government-run schools were free and were open to everyone.

The population was 3 to 4 million in a country as large as France and with plenty of water. There was ample food; chickens, lamb, vegetables, rice, fruits, milk (cow and goat). Rice was the staple. Here men were usually employed as cooks, although many women were excellent cooks. It was a country blessed

with ample space.

Affluent families, gathered around the dining room table at dinner, sometimes at lunch also, and it was a happy time with the adults doing most of the talking. I, Alfred, remember my mother telling us children "listen, listen to what your father is saying....". Little did I realise then that a lot of what he said was what she had "wound him up" to say the night before to maintain discipline in the household! Here was the woman, the power behind the Home!

There were picnics on week-ends for the immediate family and friends, either to a garden on the outskirts of the city or for a boat ride on the river in the evening. To the gardens, a family took a meal with them and purchased fruits and watermelons from the garden's owner. A boat ride was often conducted by a boatman who rowed to a suitable sand bar or beach and grilled a fish he had just caught, simmering it on wood.... and covering it with tomatoes, salad.... This was adventure and a treat for us children.

Sports were conducted through the schools, the main, being soccer for the boys and callisthenics for boys and girls. Tennis was known to but a few.

On certain evenings some families would hire a carriage and go for a ride down one of the main streets.

Affluent families, very often, had two homes, one in the city and one on the bank of the river in a nearby suburb. Children would be escorted to school by a house retainer. I, Hanina, recall a man called Abbas who would take me (age 5) and my younger sister, Berthie, each on one shoulder and take us to school and back.

I, Alfred, who lived in a house on the river bank during the summer recall being taken to school in a launch during Spring and Autumn. We would hail the launch, whose seats were covered with clean white cloth and it would make a stop in front of every house to pick us up. Bus stops of your own making! When Summer came, with school out, we would play with brothers, cousins, neighbours (some Bedouin) at the river bank. We'd swim and frolic, then as a sandbar appears, our gang (peaceful I assure you) would stake a claim to part of it, would erect a tent with the branches of a palm tree, would plant a few cucumber and tomato seeds in this soil of sand and earth and these would sprout in just a very few weeks. We would swim, fish .... free as can be. What a summer camp! There used to be, and still is, a round and deep vessel made waterproof with ordinary tar called "Quffa" which can hold a lot of cargo, particularly water melons. It would move in by rowing it in a circular fashion, down stream, heavy laden with watermelons for sale. Our adults would purchase what they wanted and we, as children, with just a few pennies, would purchase a melon and gorge ourselves with this cool melon on the sandbar. Much better than candy.

Men of our ancestors were dressed mostly in a Western Suit (after WW1) while women dressed in dresses but wore shawls and sometimes veils while outdoors. Affluent women wore a garment called "esagh" woven from a silver thread dipped in gold in various designs. This was called the "Ezagh". The weaver (on a wooden loom) of such material was a skilled man and commanded a high price for this material. When the garment became old or the lady wanted a new design, she would have the material melted down under her own eyes, usually in her own home, and the material would end up in a ball of silver. From this the weaver would make yarn again, dip it in gold,

weave it in cloth, and make the new garment.

Animals were slaughtered in one's house, not as a sacrifice, but to eat or to give to the poor. Usually a lamb was slaughtered on happy occasions; the moving into a new house, feasts such as Passover, etc. A whole crew would come to your house with the lamb, and what fun it was for us, the children. Sometimes a hand would be soaked in the blood of the lamb and stamped on a wall in the house, to ward off the evil eye.

The Country, Iraq, was under British tutelage, nominally independent with a king, a cabinet and a parliament, mostly from the so-called notables and chosen by the powers to be. The Jews had fixed representatives, 5 or 6 members in a parliament of 80. Life was tranquil for all and with the beginning of the oil discoveries, and the resulting income, no one spoke of an income tax. Yes, one paid a nominal customs duties on imports and this, plus other revenue taxes, plus income from oil was sufficient to run the government.

Baghdad had its "masquerade ball" as well. On joyous occasions such as weddings, Bar Mitzvas (no Bat Mitzvas in those days), Brith Milas, a family was expected to give a party with belly dancers, music, food, drinks, etc. Since it was the custom never to refuse even a stranger to one's home, some non-invited guests would come in completely covered with the black gown (abbayi) and veil and partake in everything incognito.

In the eyes of the law people of all races, religions and ethnicity were equal. The country comprised, and still does, approximately one third Kurds in the North (where oil was first discovered), Sunnis in Baghdad and in the Centre who control the government and the army, and Shiites who are the majority among the Arab Moslem and who dwell in the South.

This is a glimpse of Baghdad of our ancestors!●

### Some verses from "Caesaræ"

by Berthie Zilkha Seroussie

"Sous le joug des Nazis, dans l'Europe  
blessée,

Ce peuple déchiré par une haine enthousiaste,  
Supporta patiemment l'ardente lâcheté  
D'un peuple insatisfait par des temps  
néfastes.

"Ces martyrs vivants de l'exode moderne,  
Sont venus - quelques uns à peine! Parmi  
nous.

Se réfugier en ces colonies sereines.  
Mélangés. Ils se sont mélangés parmi nous."

L'officier impatient du discours triste et grave  
Que le mouktar, chef de la tribu dispersée  
Lui tenait en ces lieux, d'entre le groupe  
hâve,

Lui somma de fléchir à l'ordre proclamé.

"Je viens ici, lui dit-il, fier et menaçant.  
Je viens exécuter une sentence pesante.  
Regarde mes soldats! Ils attendent, haletants,  
Ils veulent fléchir des idées récalcitrantes!"

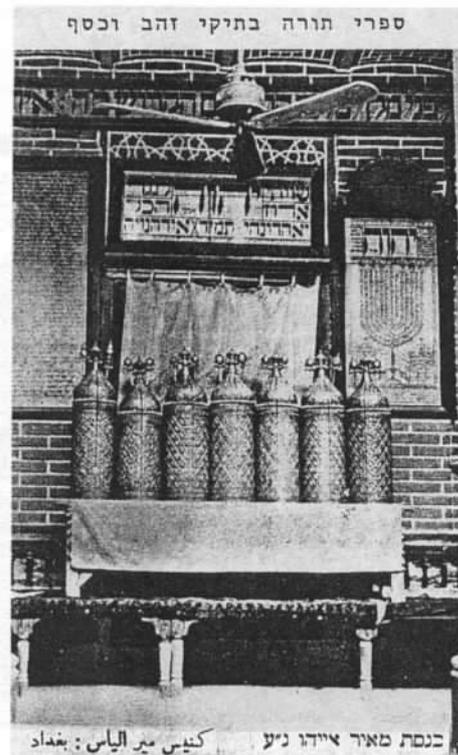
Les soldats encerclant le kibbutz effaré  
Formaient une carapace autour des insoumis.  
Car parmi eux s'étaient, la veille, réfugiés,  
Trois réfugiés, au même regard meurtri.

"Rends toi, dit-il encore ou mes soldats  
rentrent!

Rends toi! Ton ghetto ne peut résister contre  
eux!"

Le mouktar leva vers lui des yeux, tels une  
antre,

"Jamais! dit-il. Prends moi. Mais point ces  
malheureux!"●



### Iraqi Sepharim in Gilgul

It was reported in Israel that Torah Scrolls from Jewish communities in Iraq had been smuggled into Jordan and some of them were being offered for sale by Palestinians.

It appears that the scrolls, confiscated from the Jewish community during the great exodus of Iraqi Jews in the 1950's had been kept in the National Museum in Baghdad and stolen during the Gulf War.

In one case, the sellers had brought part of a scroll to the Sephardi Chief Rabbinate in Israel for examination, and were found to be genuine. But according to Sephardi Chief Rabbi Eliahu Bakshi-Doron there is no halachic obligation to ransom Torah scrolls and buy them back at an inflated price. "Human beings have to be ransomed, not Torah scrolls". Thirty years ago, some 300 Sepharim were shipped from Baghdad to the Sephardi community in London and ended up with the world Sephardi Federation. Some of the Sepharim were distributed to various synagogues around the world, but many others were sold by a dishonest employee to collectors of Judaica.

A new Sepher scroll today costs around 25,000 dollars and these historic Baghdadi scrolls could be worth even more to interested collectors.

It is not surprising that such valuable items are being stolen out from Iraqi museums by under-paid officials in order to feed their starving families. In fact even rare antiques from Iraq are now circulating in the London black market and are on sale openly in various art galleries●

My wife and I were the latest Iraqi Jews who left Baghdad to join our children in London.

We arrived in London in September 1995 and our son-in-law Adel S. Darwish showed us your latest issue of *The Scribe*. We were very pleased to read news of our previous acquaintances and friends, most of them are well known to us.

Since I was the Vice-President of the Jewish Community from 1976 till I left, I know everything about the Iraqi Jews during that period. I will be happy to answer queries about them●  
London Naji Salman Saleh (Arab)

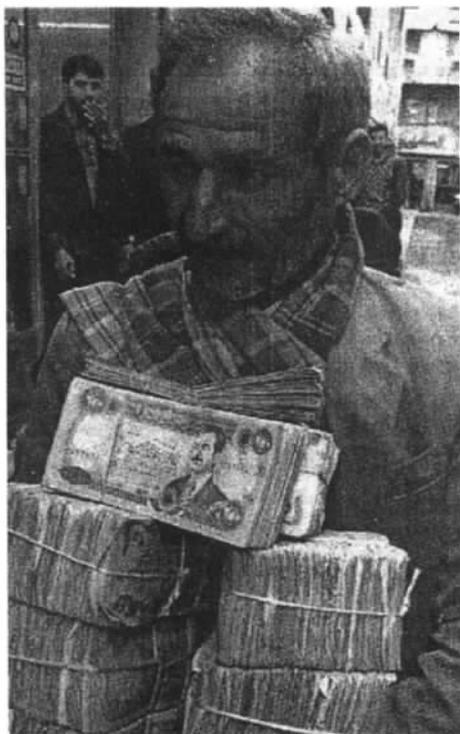
## Interview with Naji Arab:

Mr Naji Saleh (Arab) visited the offices of *The Scribe* last November and gave us the following additional information about life in Iraq.

They left Baghdad in August, soon after the escape of Saddam's two daughters and their husbands. They were subjected to an extensive search and their overland journey to Amman took over 24 hours. At Amman they went to the British Consulate to apply for their British visa but were told that they had to join the long number of people waiting to collect their visas and their turn may take several months. So they crossed the border to Israel and received their UK entry visa immediately. After visiting a large number of relatives and friends, they flew to London where they intend to settle.

### The Baghdad Community

There are only 80 Jews left in Baghdad, mainly elderly people but including ten students. Jews are now well treated and do not encounter any harassment by the authorities. The local population was never hostile to the Jews. The Community is relatively rich and gives financial assistance to all members in need. All medical bills are paid for by the Community. The price of Kosher meat is heavily subsidised. There is one synagogue in use, the Meir Tweg Synagogue. It has recently been redecorated and carpeted with air-conditioning equipment installed. Few people attend the synagogue on Friday night and Saturday morning. When a Sefer is taken out, there are no more than four or five people at the service. Ezra Haron Darwish acts as Hazan. Most people go to the synagogue on Saturday evening, which is the main social gathering and an occasion to welcome overseas visitors. Shaoul Sayegh acts as *Shohet* (sheep and poultry slaughter).



A shopper carrying a load of 280,000 Iraqi dinars which he received on changing \$100.



Wedding of the year November 1995 of Liza Tchenguiz and Gary Davis, at the Great Room, Grosvenor House Hotel London with 1000 invited guests world wide. Standing, her parents Violet & Victor Tchenguiz and her two brothers Vincent & Robert.

### Runaway inflation

Since the end of the Gulf War, and the imposition of UN sanctions on Iraq, the value of the dinar has gone down very rapidly. The rate is now over two thousand dinars to the dollar. Jews are coping with assistance from the Community. Most Christians receive remittances from their relatives abroad and only the Moslem majority feel the pinch of high prices. Those who are in business do well, but those on fixed salaries which have not been adjusted for inflation, cannot make both ends meet. Morality has disappeared, and husbands often order their wives to go out and earn money to feed their hungry family.

Property prices are at rock bottom in real terms, and those with access to foreign funds can have a field day in acquiring commercial buildings. To illustrate the degree of inflation, when Naji Arab and his wife left Baghdad it cost 200,000 dinars each for their exit visas.

### Community Assets

At the beginning the Government confiscated Community properties but, after lengthy negotiation with the authorities, these were gradually returned to them. The Alliance School has been converted to make 100 shops which produce a good rental income. Shamash School, which was built in 1928, is now in ruins and was recently let by the Community at five million dinars per annum. The Rima Kadoorie Eye Hospital was first given a 30-year lease at a flat rental at 250,000 dinars a year. However, the Government found the rent to be too low and managed to find other tenants at 870,000 dinars.

### Conditions in Kurdistan

The Kurds now enjoy autonomy in Northern Iraq without any intervention from the Baghdad Government. In Kurdistan the old dinar banknotes are used for currency and are

called the Swiss dinars. They are worth 50 local dinars to one old dinar. The Jewish Community in Baghdad were told that Mossad were very active in the North and were warned not to have any contact with them, otherwise they would feel the heavy hand of the Government.

### Frozen assets

The frozen assets of Jews who left Iraq were managed for a time by a separate department but were later transferred to the Ministry of Finance at their land registry prices, which was a fraction of their market value. Because of inflation, these values have become negligible.

### Various incidents

In the seventies the Government invited Jews to return and one Iraqi Jew living in Israel who took up the offer, and even worked in collaboration with Iraqi Security to harass the Community, was later suspected of being an Israeli spy, was arrested and apparently tortured to death. The Community was asked to come and collect his body in a sealed coffin which was to be interned without opening the box, which was against the Jewish practice in Iraq.

### Jews in Kurdistan in 1947

There were 32,767 Jews in Iraqi Kurdistan made up as follows:

4,042	in Kirkuk
2,271	in Sulaimania
3,109	in Arbil
10,345	in Mosul
13,000	in Amadia, Akra, Dehok, Zakhu and Sandor

The Kurdish leader the late Mullah Mustafa al Barazani visited Israel in September 1967 and in September 1973.

# Jews of the Raj

by Mavis Hyman  
Reviewed by Helene Sopher

"What was it like to be a Jew of the British Raj?" is a question frequently put to us in one way or another by our children and grandchildren who were born or brought up outside India.

Mavis Hyman has drawn on the personal experience of eighty people from the once thriving community in Calcutta to answer this question. In so doing, those aspects of daily life which were common to most of us are colourfully described. The anecdotes come from people who are now scattered far and wide, in Britain, the United States, Israel and Australia. An afternoon at the Races brings laughter, while parts of the chapters on Faith and Charity bring tears. Agarpara and Madhupur describe what was once the ordinariness of life, but now seem unique with the distance of time. By contrast Riots and Refugees from Burma are dramatic. All recollections of the place of Nahoums in the community bring a sense of warmth. This family firm goes back to 1868. He was a baker by trade and knew the recipes for *makhbuz*, *helawa* and *cheese* that the Baghdadi Jews loved so much. There is nostalgia in the discussion on servants, exuberance in the memories about Sport and Leisure, and the chapter on Food goes beyond physical satisfaction. Rites of Passage is about our spiritual life shown to be linked firmly to our Baghdadi roots. As an example: "The first rite of passage came with birth. D. S. Sassoon states "Child-birth (among Baghdadi Jews) is still connected with many superstitions...fears and protections... from evil spirits... familiar to the reader of the Talmud which suggests that Baghdadians kept these... rites since antiquity." David and Sophie Elias described the rites when their first son was born. "On the evening preceding the eighth day, the *Akd-el-Yas* was celebrated, we applied henna to the palm of a hand and when the colour had taken, an impression was made on a wall of the house to safeguard mother and child from the evil eye... Portions of the *Zohar* were read and afterwards we gave a dinner party. It was open house and everyone was welcome. We had a musician to entertain the guests and he sang mainly Arabic songs. We lit and placed several candles on a silver tray together with small silver bowls. It looked beautiful. The tray was passed round from hand to hand, while everyone was dancing and singing *El-Eliyahu* while clapping their hands, and people placed donations in the bowls. We gave the money to charity."

This is a commendable community effort, rich in detail, so that our privileged past may not be forgotten by future generations. The strands are drawn together sensitively and in an easily readable style by Mavis Hyman.

The introductory historical background and the last section of the book ending with the exodus of the community, show that life comes to a full circle. The beginnings of Jewish settlement in India are explained by examining those changes which made it possible in political and social terms, both in that country and in Baghdad and the surrounding areas, at the end of the 18th century. Recent publications on the situa-



## Israeli embassy opens in Dublin

By Mark Brennock

The first Israeli embassy in Ireland was officially opened in Dublin yesterday, 21 years after full diplomatic relations between the countries were established.

The ambassador, Mr Zvi Gabay, described the event as "a great historic occasion" before raising the Israeli flag.

Mr Gabay, a former head of the Middle East department of the Israeli Ministry for Foreign Affairs, formally presented his letter of credence to the President Mrs Robinson, in July 1994. He served in Cairo after the 1980 signing of the Camp David accords and has also been Israeli consul-general in Sydney.

Mr Gabay said yesterday that his country now had 103 diplomatic missions in 78 countries, including Egypt, Jordan and Morocco, and would have missions shortly in Tunisia and Oman. It was particularly appropriate that an embassy should be opened this year, the 3,000th anniversary of when King David established Jerusalem as our eternal capital".

"The future of Irish/Israeli relations is a very promising one."●

**The Ambassador of Israel, Mr Zvi Gabay, raising the Israeli flag to officially open his country's embassy.**

tion in Baghdad at the time help us to understand better than we have done before, why there were incentives to leave the parent community. In the same vein, whilst recognising the importance of personal reasons for migration from India to the West and to Israel, and the attractions of those parts of the world, the impact of wider world movements on our community are explored. It is suggested that after a period of settlement in security for the Jews which lasted two hundred years, the Second World War. Indian nationalism and Zionism were connected, directly or indirectly, to the exodus of the community from Calcutta.

This security cannot be taken for granted. At the same period Jewish communities in Europe and other parts of the world were experiencing aggressive antisemitism. *Jews of the Raj* shows how a mutual respect for religion and practices of people of a wide range of beliefs, can lead to harmonious co-existence●

We really enjoy the *Scribe* and lovely pictures of you inside. Having lived in Baghdad (in charge of Dar-el-Salam Hospital of the Seventh Day Adventists) and Iran for 12 years (1945-1956) we have found the historical references to Jewish folks and your family absolutely fascinating●

**Riverside Melvin and Laurita Jacobson  
California.**

## Lehem and Lahem

The Hebrew word "*Lehem*" (bread) is similar to the Arabic word "*Lahem*" (meat). But the difference in meaning is both significant and informative.

For, whereas Hebrew ancestors made an early switch to agriculture and a settled life, for whom the staple food became bread made of wheat and other cereals, for the nomadic Arab shepherd, meat remained the staple diet.

Milan

Albert (Abraham) Habib

*Naim Dangoor adds:* Habib's analysis is most illuminating. It shows that the historic Adam, father of civilisation by his discovery of wild wheat in the Garden at Aden, was a Hebrew.

It also explains the special reverence given to wheat bread in Jewish religious tradition: if wheat bread falls or is found on the ground, we pick it up, kiss it, and place it on a table. The full grace after meal is recited only if wheat bread is consumed during the meal. While many people try to limit their meat consumption to two or three times a week, a questioner on a medical Arabic radio programme asked if it is considered unhealthy to eat meat three times a day – at breakfast, lunch and dinner!●

1206  
No. 1206  
Date 21 April, 1926

Sir,

My attention has been drawn to the value of the work which you have freely given as a volunteer in dealing with the difficult situation arising from the flooding of Baghdad North railway station and transit shed, containing goods the value of which reached a very high total. The Government of Iraq have been materially assisted by the hard work which the commercial community has ungrudgingly undertaken, and it believes that the ready collaboration of the official and unofficial community has had the most fortunate results and has materially reduced the losses to the public revenue and the merchants of Baghdad which the floods have caused. I should like you to accept this personal expression of my thanks for the part which you have played in a gallant struggle.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

PRIME MINISTER.

Khedoury Effendâ Hillel

Khan Hassan al Ani

Baghdad.

The Prime Minister was Sir Abdel Mehsen al Sa'adoun

I am looking for an Iraqi-Jewish girl from New York for a lasting relationship leading to marriage.

I am 34 years old, tall, handsome, from a good Iraqi family. I am a University graduate. I have a good position. Please write to: David Yosef, P.O. Box 84, Allenhurst, N.J. 07711, USA.

All replies will be answered●

May God give you the strength to keep this worthy endeavour going for a long time; as an ex-journalist, I know the efforts involved are numerous.

In the meantime please send me the complete volume as advertised as well as to the five listed friends, as we don't want to miss a word●  
Great Neck N.Y. Mark Dallal

بمعد التحية  
قد لفت نظري الى الاعمال الجليلة  
التي قمت بها من تلقاء انفسكم في معالجة  
الوضعية التي نجمت عن اكتناف مياه الفيضان  
لمحطة السكة الحديدية في باب المصم  
وستودع المضاعف لها حيث كان يوجد  
بضائع تقدر اثمانها بمبالغ طائلة . ان  
الاعمال الشاقة التي قامت بها جماعة  
التجار بلا تدمير قد ساعدت الحكومة  
مساعدة ذات شأن . وتمتد الحكومة  
بان الصاروخ المماثلة التي اسديتها  
الهياكل الرسمية والغير رسمية قد ادت  
الى نتائج حسنة جدا وانقصت بصورة  
كبيرة الخسائر التي لحقت بالخزينة  
والتجار في بغداد من جراء الفيضان .  
واني اقدم لكم تشكراتي الشخصية عن  
الاعمال التي ادبتموها والجهود التي  
بذلتموها في هذا السبيل راجيا  
قبولها .

وتفضلوا بقبول تائق الاحترام

رئيس الوزراء  
عبدالمعز

I have been enjoying reading your valuable publication with great joy and pride. I was excited to see my picture (No. 64 issue) taken 70 years ago, amongst the Boy Scouts of Rahel Shahmoon School as well as the "School Exercises one" What pleasant memories of our beloved youthful school days with our school-mates, mainly Abdullah & Naim Dangoor and so many others. Alas! So many other friends are no longer amongst us, mainly the late Dr David Sala (London), Salim Shukur (Montreal), Naji Abu Ruben (Israel), Yacoub Abdullah (Israel) etc. etc●

Tel Aviv

Saleh H. Cohen

Until my mother recently sent me a copy of *The Scribe*, I had no idea that such a publication existed. I truly am impressed by what I have seen, and would like very much to learn more about my heritage. Please send me the complete volume of back issues, as well as future issues●  
Livingston, NJ Saul Mooallem



The late Khedoury Haron Hillel

I was pleased to read the article of Percy Gourgey in which he presented the views of the moderates of our community to give and take with the Arabs and to try to establish peace in the area. This policy encourages moderation and actually managed to turn even the chief of their terrorists into a moderate negotiating partner. It was pursued by the late President Sadat when he stretched his hand for peace to the late Mr Begin, who then represented the Jewish extreme right, and turned him into a moderate. Ignoring the reasonable aspirations of the Arabs and keeping the Israeli army in charge of their cities, will perpetuate the cycle of extremism in which there is no equality. While the Arabs plant bombs in buses and civilian places, the Israeli army deals with them with justice and fairness. It is not like other occupying armies such as the Iraqis in Kuwait and the Yugoslavs in their various minorities. Killing, raping, looting and ethnic cleansing are all against the Jewish grain of decency. I honour the courage of the late P.M. Rabin in getting the Israeli army out of the Arab cities, and opening a new page in our history. Nothing is perfect in this world and it is good to start in spite of setbacks.

I want to emphasise how much I appreciate and love reading *The Scribe*. It is the bond that keeps together our community which is dispersed world wide. I admire your perseverance and tenacity in writing, editing, printing, and distributing this publication with such a high standard of contents and presentation.

Also the brilliant and easy to follow recipes of Alice Shashou which encourage our younger generation to keep our cookery tradition going. My 13 year old granddaughter Rebecca found no problem in cooking several dishes from Alice's indispensable book!

London

Elias Dangoor

*Scribe*: So far the give and take mentioned above, has been that Israel gives and the Arabs take. Arafat has not corrected the PLO covenant that calls for the destruction of Israel; he still claims Jerusalem to be the capital of independent Palestine; he wants the 750 thousand Palestinians who left in 1948 to be allowed to return to Israel, without recognising that the million Jews who left Arab countries was an exchange of refugees. Peace must be negotiated on a fair and equitable basis for both sides●

# How the Babylonian Exile came to an end and what were the forces behind its liquidation. Britain's role in the ethnic cleansing of Iraqi Jews.

By a Reader in Israel

How did the state of Iraq, knowing to hate Zionism, allow the whole Jewish community to emigrate to Israel in 1950/51?

In 1947, I used to meet with Kurdish friends who had influential connections, and to hear their news and opinions on matters concerning Palestine. At one of these meetings, there was a Kurd by the name of Abd-el-Rahman-el-Jader, head of Censorship at the Ministry of Interior. He remarked, with a smile, that the Jews who were purchasing land and building houses would sooner or later leave behind all these properties and emigrate. He explained to his Jewish friends that "In 1944 an American newspaper wrote that at the time of Cornwallis, the British Embassy wrote a letter to the Royal Palace saying that trade between England and Iraq would not be revived as long as the Jews are in Iraq and governing commerce. Orders were given to ban the newspaper and to burn it, and not to sell one copy of it to the public: I am sure that the English will drive you out one of these days. But when? And how? Even the British themselves don't know, but they will exploit a certain world occasion and will bring their programme into action. We the Iraqis, government and people, will render to the English this special service, we shall drive out the Jews from here to the profit of the English, and to our loss."

We met again on 20 March 1951 after the freezing of the properties of Jews who registered to emigrate. Our friend was at the meeting and he read from a newspaper of the same day notices of British companies offering good opportunities for imports. He asked "where were these above-mentioned companies before. Why was such great publicity being given to British imports? It was clear that there was no-one left to compete with them".

To prove his prediction, our Kurdish friend said that,

1. "At the rise of the State of Israel, Muhamed al-Sadir was Prime Minister, neither he nor his colleagues harmed the Jews: on the contrary, they guarded them from all evil. The Prime Minister authorised Ahmed Hamed al-Sarraf to appear on the radio and declare that the Jews of Iraq were loyal citizens and should not be ill-treated. On June 14, 1948, Prime Minister al Sader had to resign, and in his place at the Regent's request, came Muzahem al-Pachachi—who was an anti-Semite, and handed over the security file to Sadeq-al-Bassam, a renowned anti-Semite – when he did not have knowledge of the security but to affect the Jews – and from that day the Government began harassing Jews in every way so as to make them despise life.
2. All the post that was due to leave Palestine in April/May 1948 and which was held back by the British authorities, was handed over to the Iraqi Government at the end of June 1948. As a result, all Jews who received such letters from their relatives were accused of treason and spying and were sentenced between 3-10 years imprisonment.
3. On 1 August 1948 the import licences were restricted for Jews, and controls were laid on foreign currency. This amendment only affected the livelihood of Jews.
4. A meeting was held on 14 August 1948 at

the Royal Palace. Ministers and former prime ministers were present and discussed, at Sadeq-al-Bassam's suggestion, the placing of Jews in a concentration camp, and he already planned to vacate the city at one end and so squeeze all the Jews therein under the claim that they were endangering the state. (A remark by the writer of the article:- that same day we were sitting in the company of Menashe Qashi at 4.00pm. He informed us of the danger looming over us through Sadeq's proposal. At 5.30 he requested us to wait for him as he was going to meet Jamil-al-Madfa'i. He returned and informed us that the proposal was considered after the treasurer Ali Mumtaz asked, "and what will there be on trade?" and then Jamil-al-Madfa'i burst out at Abdul Hah with: "such a decision, if it be accomplished, would cost you your throne, my Lord Regent; the Iraqi people and the enlightened world will not be able to suffer such an injustice. Hear the proposal, and do not bring it up for discussion".)

5. The English had a hand in the hanging of Shafiq Adas on 23 August 1948.
  6. In January 1949 Sadeq and Muzahem resigned. Nuri-al-Said became Prime Minister. For 11 months he fought with the Communists, hanged 6 of them and imprisoned the remainder. The sentence of Jews found guilty of Zionism was eased. But, suddenly in October 1949 Nuri-al-Said began persecuting Jewish youth, accusing them of Zionism and abasing them in the prisons with all kinds of tortures.
- Note: This happened on Succoth 1950: The festival was turned into mourning. Rosh Hodesh Heshwan of the same year was proclaimed a fast day. The parents and sons who were imprisoned demonstrated before the head of the community; they were arrested and sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment.
7. At the end of October 1949 Nuri-al-Said tabled a bill that the death penalty should be enforced on any Jew found guilty of Zionism. Nuri emphasised the measure; he was known as being non-anti-Semitic, but he was blindly following the English, and it appeared that he was obliged to follow them and to finish the programme. The bill was not passed, and Nuri then resigned.
  8. His position was taken by Ali Jawdat-al-Ayubi, and with him were appointed men of known left-wing leanings. The first thing they did was to abolish the military court. The Jews who remained in custody, awaiting trial were tried in civil courts and were sentenced to either 30 or 40 dinars, or to a month's imprisonment.
  9. The Jews started taking account of themselves. What had they to do here? If they had a way of escape, why not pursue it? Those who were caught escaping, received light sentences. Jews began selling their property and household furniture at any price in order to find an opportunity to escape.
  10. The government of Ali Jawdat resigned – not on account of the Jews – and in its place came the government of Tawfic al-Suwaidi with Saleh Jabr as minister of the interior.

They both wanted to be rid of their "Jewish problem" without harming them. It was said that at the beginning of March 1950, an envelope was handed to Suwaidi which had arrived from the British Embassy with a proposal that the Jews be allowed to leave provided they give up their citizenship.

Note: On the third of the month he invited a delegation authorised by Heskell Sberntob, and asked them that if such a law were passed in Parliament, how many Jews would leave Iraq according to this law. The replies were various: one estimated it at 5,000, another at 10,000, and finally they thought it would not be more than 20,000. The prime minister said we shall wait and see: I think that all the Jews will leave". (I heard this conversation with the note from Israel Nissim Hai who was one of the members of the delegation).

"It is said", explains Abdel Rahman "with a heavy heart the prime minister agreed to the law – he saw in it an opposition to humanity why an Iraqi passport to defend him should not be given to every Jew wanting to travel. At any rate, the bill was passed through the lower and upper houses in one day, and the Regent signed it, and its time was limited to one year until 9 March 1951.

"The English were awaiting this moment. The myth that commerce depended on the Jews in Iraq was shattered, and in November 1950 the government passed the money-changers' law which virtually liquidated the business of Jewish bankers. On the last day, 7 March 1951, many well settled merchants renounced their citizenship so that the police were at work the whole night, and also on Friday. Without a flickering of conscience, Nuri al-Said, on 10 March 1951 made the law to freeze all property of Jews who gave up their citizenship, and thus in one hour cut them off from all that they owned. This served British interest as it cleared the market for their businessmen".

Abdel Rahman continued his talk: "To you my friends the Jews, I want to tell you my opinion of what will happen to you and to the State of Israel in whose shadow you wish to seek refuge.

"At the moment the State of Israel is building itself upon excellent values, upon righteousness and equality, upon work of labour, upon unsuspending judgement, upon democratic elections, upon a government giving the people proper representation.

"With the coming of peace, your State will learn from the Arab states all the tricks, the military revolutions; lies; bribery and thievery. This will endanger your State.

"Israel may become another Middle East country like all her Arab neighbours."

Scribe: What would have happened had British Commercial and oil interests not schemed to drive the Jews out of Iraq? We must look back 2,500 years when King Cyrus permitted Babylonian Jewry to return to Jerusalem. There were then 120,000 Jews in the country. Of these 40,000 returned and 80,000 decided to stay on in Babylonia. In 1950 there was almost the same number. Without the push, the pull of Aliyah would have again attracted only one-third of the community.

The United States, and especially President Truman, are often credited with arranging the emigration of Iraq's Jewry. This, however, was done – not for the sake and benefit of Israel, but merely to save the Jews from further persecution and harassment. Ben Gurion let it be known that Israel was not ready to receive at once such a large number of destitute immigrants amounting to almost a quarter of Israel's Jewish population (as if Britain were to receive 10 million new immigrants in the space of a few months). That is why the immigrants had to be kept for two years in tents and transit camps in deplorable conditions. (One bank manager, who resigned his lucrative job in Baghdad, ended up selling oranges on the streets of Tel Aviv!)

British policy to drive the Jews out of Iraq, and indeed of other Arab countries, was a double-edged sword: a) to clear the Arab world of its Jews and their dominating commercial position, hoping to take over that lucrative market, and b) to embarrass Israel with immigrants, already busy absorbing Holocaust survivors.

When Pachachi became prime minister in June 1948 at the direction of the pro-British Regent Abdul Ilah, he spent most of his short term in office touring Arab countries to forge a unified Anti-Israel policy. Thus, when peace seemed possible in 1949, the opportunity soon evaporated. British officials of Iraq showed their anti-Jewish prejudices in petty ways too. A consignment of 200 cases of Assis orange drink was not allowed through by the Director-General of customs – a Mr Monk. Although the Jewish importer explained that the goods were shipped and fully paid for by him long before the ban on imports from Palestine was announced, Monk refused entry and ordered that each bottle be opened and poured down the drain. The departure of Jews resulted in a deep financial crisis; and the government had to borrow 3 million dinars from the Eastern Bank (established in London by the Sassoons and managed by Mr Haskell) to pay its employees.

The British oil companies refused to negotiate a new agreement and release more cash until 1953 when all the Jews had left. Thereafter, large oil royalties poured into the country and a development Board for major projects established.

It may seem odd that we who live in freedom and relative tolerance in Britain should air criticism. But the rules of democracy permit us to bring out the truth.

For the record, we play by the rules. British-Arab policy towards Israel had one positive feature. It represented the 800,000 Jews who left Arab countries to go to Israel as being in exchange for the same number of Arabs who had left Israel in the wake of its war of independence as suggested in U. N. Resolution 242. However, on various occasions when foreign minister, Shimon Peres unwisely declared in the Knesset that Jews from Arab countries must not be regarded as refugees, but as *olim*, the truth is we left as refugees and arrived as *olim*. Israel may also be planning to cancel out Jewish rights for compensation against Palestinian claims.

**WE SERVE NOTICE ON MR PERES, NOW PRIME MINISTER, NOT TO THROW AWAY OUR RIGHTS FOR MASSIVE COMPENSATION FROM IRAQ AND OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES AND TO REFUSE PALESTINIAN CLAIMS FOR 1948 REFUGEES TO RETURN TO ISRAEL AS THEY WERE BALANCED BY AN EQUAL TRANSFER OF JEWS FROM ARAB COUNTRIES ●**



**"Naqqar" prize giving at Frank Iny School Baghdad 1962.**

**Left to right:**

**Front row: Dhia Isaac Cohen; Noori Noorallah; – ; Wasim Saleh Twaig; Rita Kattan (Dallal); Rony Kharmoush; Freddy Faraj Tajaryan; Ezouri Shahrabani.**

**2nd row: Vera Aghassi; Aida Basri (Zelouf); Emil – ; Perla Korine; David Ihsan Samra; Salman Ihsan Samra; – ; Sally Samra (Dalah);**

**3rd row: Khedher Shukur; – ; Rita Khermoush; Ellis Dallal; – Talwar; Kamal Shkouri.**

**4th row: Ezra Atrachtchi; Vera Saeed; David Farid Samra; Rachel Twaig; Fouli Lawy; David Arbilli; Moshe Dallal; – ; Gladys Joseph Daoud (Kattan); Rachel Elia Shaoul (Denous); – ; Lily Shina; Vivy Shina (Emzayim); David Gabbay.**

**Behind Gladys Daoud, Hilda Salem Shamoon (Yamen); Edward Ghazal ●**

My wife and myself have anticipated reading for a number of years with the greatest of interest *The Scribe* and have been impressed by the quality of the articles, the pictures that have been included and the variety of topics.

I was born in Egypt and came to the USA about 50 years ago to study psychology. With a small group of other Egyptian-born Jews, we have established the Historical Society of Jews from Egypt. We have preferred to call it Jews from Egypt rather than Egyptian Jews, since many of us have continued to maintain our identity with the country of our parents and grandparents who had come to Egypt from different countries, and as you probably know, most of Jews from Egypt had a French education.

Enclosed is the first modest issue of our Newsletter which we have appropriately called *Second Exodus*. We have many plans to reanimate the legacy of our lives in Egypt and time is of the essence.

We would like to bring to the attention of Jews from Egypt around the world the existence of our organisation. I am assuming that some of your readers, like myself, may have come from Egypt and therefore an announcement in your journal would be very much appreciated.

**2416 Quentin Road Victor D. Sanua  
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11229 Research Professor,  
St. John's University**

It has been a few years now since I visited my dear charming cousins, Stella and Sasson in London, and found out about your lovely publication. You published my letter, requesting to be on your mailing list which caused my dear cousin, Elsie Solomon, who is now living in Montreal, to find me. She is a cousin that I had never seen, since I was but a baby when we left Iraq! We grew up in Teheran, Iran, isolated from all of our relatives. However, my dear parents, *alaw hashalom*, were good enough to make sure we knew the names of all of our relatives, so that when Elsie called and said, "Hello, you don't know me, I'm your cousin," I knew exactly who she was: my mom, Victorine's first maternal cousin. My name and city of residence in *The Scribe* was enough for her to find my number and call! Since then, of course, my brother David Shaby, (who lives in Andover, Massachusetts) and I have visited her and she's been to Boston as well to visit our families!

*The Scribe* has meant a lot to us. You can imagine the excitement of meeting a cousin for the first time. My dear mom, Victorine, daughter of Rachel Solomon and David Yacoub Shaoul, and my dear dad, Haim Shaby, son of Nouam Khezzam and David Shaby would have cherished every word of your publication.

Thanks for keeping the Iraqi community together! ●

**Lincoln, Ma. U.S.A.**

**Velda Adams**



I was introduced to your publication *The Scribe* by a brother preacher. He had been in Salt Lake, Utah at the Library of the Mormon Temple, and had come across your publication. He made Xerox copies of material he was interested in, and was sharing them with me.

Because of my personal love of Israel, my numerous Jewish friends around the world... with a very real "Jewish heart", your publication immediately became of great interest to me.

I am president of Baptist International Seminary and School of Theology, located in Oxon Hill, Maryland. We are just 30 minutes outside of Washington, D.C. I enclose several of our printed materials relating to Israel and the Jewish people.

Sir, would you please send me information about how I may secure a subscription to *The Scribe*, as well as possibly procuring single copies of all your back issues, for our Library facility. Please advise me as to the cost and I shall be more than happy to forward such to you.

I would also like to know the meaning of your Foundation name: EXILARCH'S, its history and purposes? If you would be so kind to enlighten me I would be eternally grateful. I remain very respectfully yours. Shalom.

Oxon Hill, MD.

J Roy Stewart

*Reply:* Our publication is sent free of charge to all interested readers.

The full volume of *The Scribe* from issue No. 1 is available in a gold embossed hard binder at US\$75 inclusive of postage.

Our Foundation is named after the Exilarch who was head of Babylonian Jewry for nearly 2000 years, since the exile of King Yehoiachin in 597 BCE. This office continued until 1270 CE, when it lapsed with the Moghul Conquest of the Middle East. This office, however, was revived by the undersigned in the year 1970, exactly 700 years after it had lapsed. The Foundation is a registered charity helping deserving causes, both Jewish and non-Jewish, and has been publishing *The Scribe* since 1971, which serves to link together members of Babylonian Jewry now dispersed all over the world. Shalom●

N. D.

Your March 1995 Journal was passed on to me which I enjoyed reading immensely and I was particularly excited to see a print of "Beit Abu Ruben" (your September 1994 issue, page 5) as I was the last born in that mansion which was then partly in ruin.

For your information my father Josef and his first cousin Eliahou Lisha'a were the Sheikh Sasson's last two families resident at "Beit Abu Ruben" when it was vacated in the late 1920's●

London

D. J. Sassoon

Thank you very much for the relation that you made between Dr Sharon and me as he is from my family, and we had never known of that until your *Scribe*. I think that your journal, makes a truly excellent service to most of the Iraqi Jews from all over the world●

Israel

Marguerite Zebaida

*Scribe:* Readers are requested when writing to give their maiden name or their earlier name if it was changed in their new country of residence●



Left to right: Brevet Elementaire 1938

Front row: - ; Mr Jarasi; Madame Shohet; Mr Sabagh; Madame Jarasi; Mr Kapone; - ;  
2nd row: Emi Rejwan; - ; Jacqueline Shamash; - ; Salima Cohen; - ; Madeleine Haim; - ;  
Violette Sheker; - ; Nazima Aslan; - ; Rachele Bashi; Raymond Shamash.

3rd row: Naim Shag... - ; Victor Shohet; - ; Abie Cohen; - ; Edward Dangoor; - ; Jamil Shuker; - ; Salim Khabbaza.

The following story might be worth including in a future issue:-

In an oasis in the desert about an hour's drive by carriages that we owned at first and later on about twenty minutes when we owned a car there is a place called Sredat.

We used to go there from time to time specially when the epidemics of plagues or cholera came to Baghdad. There was a village there where a clan of not more than twenty families lived in mortar built shacks. We used to pitch our tents on the shore of the Tigris about twenty minutes walk away from the village and we became friends with these villagers as we bought our needs from them, such as bread, milk, eggs and vegetables.

One year we decided to celebrate the High Holydays in that oasis. As my uncle's uncle could use our vehicles to commute back and forth to the city to go to his business he also pitched his tent next to ours.

My cousin went to the Synagogue and borrowed a Sefer Torah and hired a hazan with his shofar. Between uncle and nephews we had enough men to form a Minyan to conduct our prayers there, and so the shofar sounds rung through the desert winds. That was the year 1924●

Montreal

Munir Ats

I was interested to read in your last issue Pamela Houghton's letter concerning her grandfather Menashe Mashaal. My mother Muzli Mashaal was the youngest sister of Menashe Mashaal. She was married in 1925 three years after her brother passed away. Our side of the family has lost touch with Menashe Mashaal's grandchildren in England, and in fact I have never met them. I would like very much to get in touch with Mrs Houghton.

Thank you for doing such a wonderful job in publishing *The Scribe*●

Michigan

Alfred Gourji

It gives great pleasure to see such valuable photographs as the one on page 11 (issue 64) which commemorates the reception in Bagh-

dad of the League of Nations Delegation by the Baghdadi Jewish Notables.

My intuition tells me that the names of Menashi and Sion Gurji were inverted when mentioned at the foot of the picture. I am satisfied with my version just by looking and comparing face, age and shape.

I seize this opportunity to say further that the two brothers were a class by themselves and the respect of Sion towards his elder brother was beyond description, wholeheartedly and exemplary to the point that he could not have accepted him in the picture, more distant from the centre than himself. This is my conviction as in many instances I found Sion meticulous and over-nice in this regard.

Milan

E. Yamen

*Scribe:* Thanks for your correction which will also apply to the photograph with King Feisal appearing on page 11 of *The Scribe* no: 54●

For the first time I read the last issue of *The Scribe* where I recognised many friends mentioned by names and pictures.

I studied at the Alliance School in Baghdad, from the Azil (kindergarten) till the last form and continued my studies at the Idadiya Secondary School. After graduation, I emigrated to Israel.

I will be grateful to receive *The Scribe* regularly●

Israel

Yeheskel Shina

With reference to the photograph appearing at the bottom of page 22, the person sitting to the left of Mr Sabagh, mentioned as assistant director, is in fact Mr Djarasi●

London

Richard Moshi

A recent programme on Egyptian television said that the custom in Egypt is to name a new born child when it is a week old because Pharaoh's daughter named Moses on the 8th day (when he was a week old)●



Arabs and Jordan annexed the land not occupied by Israel.

The population growth between 1949 and 1966 underlined the disparity of interest. The Jewish population rose to 195,000. This number included many Jewish emigrants from Morocco, Iraq and other Arab lands where they had long been harassed and persecuted.

In June 1967, the Israeli Government had urged Jordan's King Hussein not to enter the war. His decision to enter the war and attack Israel was decisive for the future of Jerusalem and has determined its situation until today. Within two days the Jordanian sector of the city was under Israeli control. The physical barriers were thrown down. "We earnestly stretch out our hands to our Arab brethren in peace," declared Moshe Dayan, the Minister of Defence, "but we have returned to Jerusalem never to part from her again."

East Jerusalem, one fifth of the built-up area of the city, was incorporated by Israel, and the city was given new municipal boundaries. By the end of 1993, the Jewish population had risen to more than 400,000, the Arab population to 155,000.

With reunification, Israel pledged to uphold freedom of access and worship, and this pledge has been kept. But while maintaining open access to the holy sites of Christianity and Islam, each Israeli government since 1967 has been committed to maintaining Jerusalem both as its capital and as an undivided city. However, the British Government refused to recognise Israel's sovereignty in any part of Jerusalem.

The 1994 Washington Declaration, signed by Hussein and Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in the presence of President Bill Clinton, confirmed Jordan's special position with regard to the Muslim holy places in Jerusalem.

There are many scenarios whereby Israel retains sovereignty over the whole city, while the Muslim holy places keep their already substantial autonomies. Although the Jews and the Arabs in Jerusalem lead separate lives, perhaps in this very separation, topographical and social, may be the best hope for the peace and prosperity of a permanently united city. This is not unlike the situation in many large cities throughout the world, where minority groups have a respected and protected place within a wider sovereignty. Christian Copts in Cairo, Hong Kong Chinese in Vancouver, Muslims in Delhi, Russians in Kiev and Hindus in London are among those who seek not political independence but the right to participate and contribute as equal and respected citizens.

*Scribe:* The above is abridged from an article in *The Reader's Digest*. We wrote to Sir Martin pointing out that the ancient Canaanites spoke Hebrew and not Arabic and, as such, could not have been the ancestors of present day Palestinians. He replied: How very kind of you to write to me about my Jerusalem article (I have not seen the *Reader's Digest* version) and also for sending me that detail about the Canaanites speaking in Hebrew. This is certainly an important point that ought to be more widely known.

I am fascinated by the immensely interesting articles. This historic information and opinions contain much food for thought. I look forward to receiving future issues. My younger son and his wife, living in Vancouver, are eager readers of *The Scribe*.

Bat Yam, Israel

Judith Dattner



#### Shamash School

#### Baghdad 1951

From left to right: First row: (1) Helene ..., (2) Estherine Mercado-Khabbaza, (3) Bertha, (4) Nazima Ibrahim, (5) Hanina Kateb, (6) Claire Rashti, (7) Aziza Katan, (8) Hilda Zackaria, (9) Claire Kashi, (10) Grace Rabiya, (11) Vivienne Shamash, (12) Nahida Cohen, (13) Rachel Shamash, (14) Matilda Ibrahim, (15) Diana Soffer, (16) Klelia Dangoor, (17) Evelyn Elias, (18) Yvette Shamash, (19) ..., (20) ..., (21) Rose Doury, (22) Daizy Shizazi

Esther Mercado-Khabbaza

### A Prayer

Oh Lord! Let history new chapters contain,  
Different from the gloomy past and the pain,  
Let my people be proud again,  
Let hopes come true and not in vain!

Let all people be directed to the right,  
Without hatred, without war or fight,  
Let us all be fair and objective in sight,  
That's what I pray the Lord for, day and night!

Let the wealthy help the poor and the sick!,  
Let the strong be kind to the miserable and weak,

Let's have the strength our enemies to forgive,

Lord! Let us all this achieve!

#### From Esther Mercado, Ramat-Gan

Here is a free translation of the Arabic poem which appeared on page 20 in the last issue of *The Scribe* for the benefit of those who cannot read Arabic:

### Greetings to Naim from a reader

May time grant us a meeting which we badly need;

In the name of our old friendship, blessed be your deed;

It's great, that *Scribe* to read;  
It's both a pleasure and a joy indeed!

A century's news it contains;  
Which can alleviate – a lot – our pains;  
Pictures of those times, are so few;  
A source of memories, both old and new!

Be blessed, you people – our pride;  
Who are always ready – nostalgia to provide;  
May good thoughts, all the way long – be your guide;  
May security be your share as well as peace of mind!

E.M.



Haider Khana Mosque as seen from Shamash School Baghdad

### Shamash and Alliance Schools Reunion

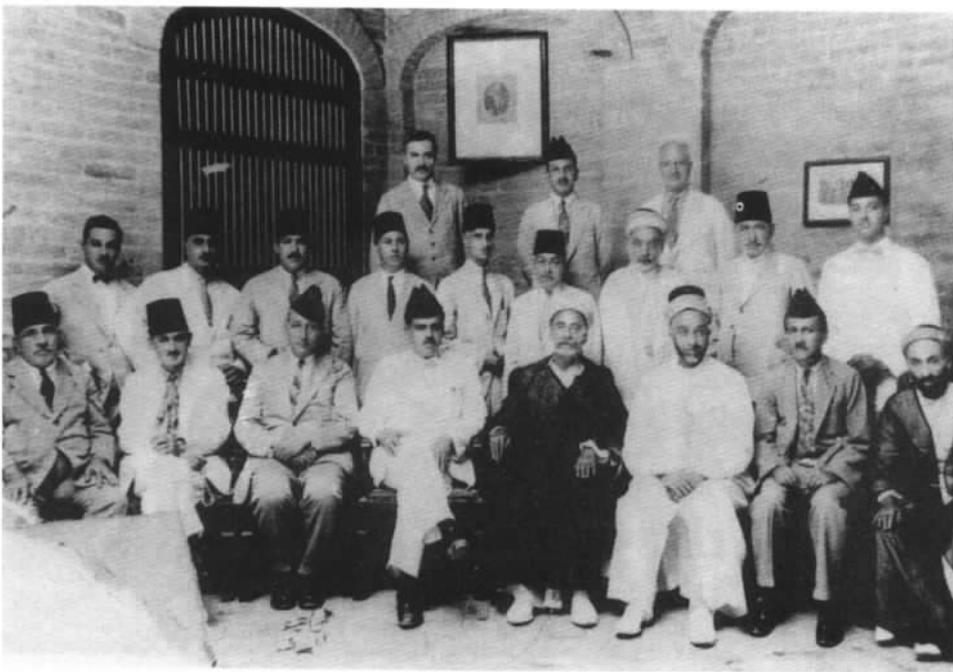
The Babylonian Cultural Centre is planning an International Convention on 13 June 1996 of the graduates of the Shamash School and the Alliance Schools of Baghdad to be held at the Hekhal Hatarbut Halls in Tel-Aviv.

All graduates are invited to attend this Convention and also to send to the Centre information such as: the names, addresses and position of other graduates, pictures, certificates, personal recordings of memories and events relating to these schools. Please contact:

**Babylonian Cultural Centre**  
83 Hahagana Street  
P.O. Box 151, Or-Yehuda 60251  
Israel

I was born in Bombay in 1943, the second of two girls of Jack and Rachel Shellim. I came to the UK in 1964, met and married my husband who originated from Calcutta. On reading an old issue of *The Scribe*, I came across names of people who date back to my youth and, unbeknown to me, my late mother.

Many thanks in advance for this journal  
London Pamela Solomon (Shellim)



Herewith another photograph of the Baghdad Chamber of Commerce, of the late twenties, which antedates the two pictures appearing in the last issue.

The fact that half the members were Jews, is evidence of the paramount role played by our community in the economic life of the country●  
New York

Alfred Shasha

Left to right (seated): Sion Aboudi; –; Eliahou al-Ani, secretary; –; Qassim Pasha al-Khedhairi, president; Ja'far Abul-Timman, vice president; –; –.

Standing: Kamel al-Khedhairi; –; –; Ezra Iny; Yamen Shasha; Muhammed Haj Khaled; Ezra Aboudi; –.

Back row: –; Nuri Fattah; Abraham Haim H. Ishaq●

## The Farhood of 1941

As I mentioned in my book *"Flight from Babylon"* (published by McGraw Hill), the Farhood demonstrated that those Jews who stood up and fought, saved themselves, as we did to save our house when we used bricks to fight off the mob. Also, Jews did help Jews at the risk of their lives, but Arabs who were friends of Jews and protected them, in turn attacked other Jews who were away from their neighborhoods. The Christians were in collusion with the Moslems in that regard.

The Farhood created such an insecurity among the Jews who lived in Iraq for over 2000 years, that immediately after the Farhood, two main Jewish movements started in Iraq: one a defense organization which procured weapons and organized youths to defend the Jewish areas in Baghdad, and the second was a Zionist underground movement (Tnuva'h) which was responsible for Hebrew education and for Zionist indoctrination of the Jewish youth in Israel to promote Aliyah to Israel. So much so that before 1948 over 2000 Jewish young men and women left Iraq illegally for Palestine to join various Kibbuzim and settlements in Eretz Israel. The Farhood was the cause for the mass immigration of the Jews from Iraq, when the government of Iraq failed to protect its Jewish citizens after the establishment of the State of Israel. Instead, the Jews were subjected to imprisonment, internment in camps, hangings and killings. The execution of the late Shafik Adas, one of the most prominent Jews in Iraq, was the last straw. It prompted the Jews to leave everything behind and flee from Iraq. The only Jewish community in the world who left *en masse* to go to Israel, penniless, and it is only because of the Farhood and its aftermath●  
New York (Prof.) Heskell M. Haddad, M.D.

## The Baghdad Farhood

I first tried to avoid reading the articles about the Farhood of 1941 for its painful and bitter memories; but eventually I turned to pages 24 and 25 and embarked on reading the articles with due concentration and devotion. This accords with the biblical precept *zakhor al tishkah* (remember – never forget).

We should write down our history and get lessons from it. *The Scribe* is doing really that. We started with the Bible, which remained the cornerstone of our experiences, and the cycling of our life and history never ceased since then. In his article, Elias Shohet stopped short in saying that the Iraqi police and the army had participated in the looting. They had killed as well: my mother's first cousin was shot by a policeman. Then the number of those who were injured and died was never agreed upon. The Iraqi historian Abdel Razzak al Hasani from the mouth of Abdalla al Kassab (who was a member of the investigative commission), said that the total number of those who were killed was 600. Ali Hijazi of the Baghdad police confirmed what al-Kassab said (see page 245 of al Hasani book: *al Asrar al Khafiyah* (the Hidden Secrets)).

Elias Shohet mentioned in page 25 the "Golden Square" and just coincidentally two of the four officers in question were shown in the picture overleaf on page 27, who were Mahmood Salman, the Iraqi Airforce Commander (first from right – standing), and Fahmi Saeed, the commander of Iraqi tanks and armoured forces (fourth from left – sitting). What a coincidence!●  
Milan

Edward Yamen

It is always a moment of great pleasure when I receive *The Scribe*. Especially so when my eye meets the picture of my grandfather, the last chief rabbi of Baghdad Sasson Kadoori (see last issue of September 1995, page 11). I'm the son of Marcel Semah-Sasson (the rabbi's daughter) and the late Edward Semah. I've spent my youth in Israel where I went to school and studied philosophy and electronics at the University of Tel Aviv. Later, I joined the army (six days Yom Kippur war). In 1975 I moved to London, then Berlin and Paris, changing my vocation to that of visual art. I'm now living in Amsterdam, I'm married and have one son, Jom.

Being Sasson's grandson, I bear in me part of his heritage, and there are periods in my life that this heritage is coming very close to my skin. One of these periods was The Gulf War: although Baghdad was miles away – not only physically, but by now also mentally – I felt perplexed when Baghdad was bombed. Baghdad, so strange and far away, yet so utterly known and close to my heart. During this period I made thirty-three drawings, one at each day of the war. Last year I exhibited them for the first time, in the Van Reekum Museum in The Netherlands.

Although the Gulf War prompted me to make a series of drawings, I usually make three-dimensional works. In the Mondriaan-year I had a big exposition in The Netherlands, and my work is exhibited regularly●  
Amsterdam

Joseph Semah

## Rashid Ali Revolt

I am as always, impressed with the range of topics covered by *"The Scribe"*, and by the range of its readership – Switzerland, Canada, South Africa...truly a dispersed people!

Regarding the articles on the 1941 Rashid Ali Revolt – it is true that there remain many secrets about this campaign, and I am keen to learn more from whoever has tales to tell! The British were taken by surprise, and had to send a rag-bag force called "Habforce" to relieve the cantonment at Habbaniyah – this was not a military force in its normal sense, but partly Palestine Police, partly Trans-Jordan Frontier Force (TJFF), and partly Army and RAF volunteers, with a few commandeered lorries and armoured cars. The TJFF was, strictly speaking, not allowed to fight outside the borders of Transjordan, 60 authority had to be sought from London *after* the start of the campaign. I have read accounts of the RAF defence of Habbaniyah – which had a stock of elderly training planes that had to be adapted in a hurry to carry guns and bombs. The general weakness of the Allied forces – despite their successes against the Iraqi "rebels" – may explain why they hesitated to enter such a city as Baghdad until they had some guarantee of further reinforcements.

There is a book *"History of PAIFORCE"* which describes in fairly whimsical style the "Persia and Iraq Force" which was then cobbled together from troops – mainly from India – to hold the countries named. Apparently they also attacked an armoured train – though no-one else has any record of any such thing in Iraq!

I would be interested in corresponding with anyone who has memories of this rather confused and difficult period, especially of the military or transport aspects●

9 Primley Gardens  
Leeds LS17 7HT  
Phone-Fax: UK – 0113 269 3330

Rabbi Walter  
Rothschild

## In Memoriam

With the 50th Anniversary of the end of World War II, I thought to share the following story with you.

In 1939 my brother Edward A. Bashi was in London, along with two of my cousins studying at Universities there. One of my cousins, Victor K. Ani was killed in an Air Raid, my other cousin, Albert E. Ani was lucky enough to reach the United States to continue his studies.

My brother enlisted in the Royal Air Force against the wishes of my parents and flew fighter aircraft against the Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain.

In 1943 I arrived in New York with my husband and three children, when by a lucky circumstance we met Edward who was being sent to train American pilots in combat flying. He was much decorated with medals for his role as a fighter pilot. He told us then he was going to return to England, to continue combat flying. My husband and I begged him not to go back as he had certainly done his share, but to no avail. He returned and joined Bomber Command to fly over Germany.

On the 28 November 1944 returning from one of those missions, his plane, a Lancaster Bomber was shot down near the German border in France. The plane with seven crew members came down near Vittel, where six crew members including my brother were killed. Miraculously one of them, Norman Thorm was ejected from the plane and his parachute opened. He was hidden by the French villagers, but was soon captured by the Germans from where he managed to escape. He joined the French resistance. At the end of the war he married a French girl and settled there.

There is a small Royal Air Force cemetery in the churchyard in They-Sous-Montfort, where my brother and the five other cronies are buried. His gravestone is marked with a Star of David.

Every year, Norman Thorm goes to the Churchyard to pay homage to his fallen comrades. He is joined by the local schoolchildren who place flowers on each of the graves●

Palm Beach

Naima M Saleh

## A Matter of Life & Death

Dying is a sequence of living; and once we are born, we have to die.

According to a recent opinion poll, the vast majority of people would prefer to die peacefully in their sleep, and thus avoid the trauma of parting from a familiar world into the unknown, or perhaps into eternal oblivion. But a young Baghdadi has a different idea. Overheard in a Baghdad alleyway years ago:

– What manner of death would you like to die, Hassan?

– Wallah ya Mahmud atmanna amut men el dhehek (I wish to die from laughter) a reference to the saying, mat men el dhehek (died from excess laughter). Not much laughter in Baghdad, nowadays. People are dying by the thousand, to be sure; but certainly not from laughter●



In your issue No. 64, Dr R Mukamal's letter brought pleasant echoes from the past. I will remember Ronald practising the *shehitah* with our group in the backyard of the Meir Tweg Synagogue. More than a hundred people used to pass by us every morning and we rendered all of them satisfied with our good manners and swift service. At that period all the existing *mohels* and *shohets* left Baghdad and new ones had to replace them. To be *amohel* myself, I studied at the hands of Hakham Shuwa, the best known *mohel* of the time. I kept my services on call whenever asked to do the job. Moreover, in accordance with our traditional attitude through the centuries, I performed circumcisions to Moslem babies as well.

The Talmud teaches us *Pirqa Aboth* "If there is no man in place, your duty is to become the man"●

Milan

Edward Yamen

The following is a translation of an article written by the satirist Ephraim Kishon published in the newspaper *Yisrael Shillano*.

"This is a country which is so small that there is no place in the world map to write its name on it. This is the only country in the world where taxpayers abroad founded it. This is a country whose borders are not defined. This is a country in which the mother learns the mother tongue from her children. This is a country in which people write Hebrew, read English, speak Russian and curse in Arabic. This is the most advanced country in the Middle East thanks to the Arabs. This is a country where all treasures are in the hands of Jews and yet they are unhappy.

"This is a country which has separated state from religion but only the religion governs; This is a country where you can find an Atomic Reactor but not a parking lot. This is a country which has overcome the Arabs' boycott but not the strike of the teachers. This is a country which succeeded to produce drinking water from sea water but swimming in the sea is still forbidden. This is a country which produces less than what it is eating, yet no one dies of starvation. This is a country in which people do not expect miracles but they consider them.

"This is a country whose existence is always in danger but it's citizens get ulcers from the neighbours. This is the only country in the region whose government is left-right. This is a country where every man is a soldier, yet every soldier is a man (gentleman). This is a country which is 47 years old but wise and experienced as if it is 20 years old. This is the only country in the world where I feel at home. It is my country"●

Great Neck N. Y. Albert Khabbaza, MD

I was very pleased to find in the last issue (no. 64) the pictures of my dear friend Avner Meiri (p. 10), my late cousin Helene Ishayeq (p. 15), and of my former teacher of Physics Eliahou Sasson (p. 32) and of Dr Naim and Mrs Renee Dallal (p. 38) with whom I meet occasionally at some of the Iraqi Jewish Association functions here in Toronto.

I was born in Baghdad. My parents were Benyamin Semah and Florine Shayeq. In 1950, my parents, my three brothers and myself moved to Israel. After serving in the Israeli Army for seven and a half years, I left with the rank of 1st Lieutenant. I studied Law at the University of Tel Aviv and practised until I left Israel for Canada in 1964. Since then, I lived most of the time in the City of North York, in Metropolitan Toronto. My first son Eddy has an Electronics business here and my second son Jason is in his final term for a B.Sc. degree at MacMaster University in nearby Hamilton.

My younger brother is Prof. David Semah of the University of Haifa.

I would like to point out an error which I found in your issue No. 38 in the list of Jewish Senior Officials of Iraq – 1945: the third name in the list should be Benyamin *Semah*, the name of my father, who was a senior auditor at the office of the Auditor-General of Iraq. There was no Benyamin Sabih in that office. The Assistant Auditor-General was known as Joori 'Lwaya. Ezra may have been his second name.

I find pleasure in reading *The Scribe* which provides good information about the Jewish Community of Iraq and its valuable contribution to the cultural and social life in that country. Considering the misleading and cheap sensationalist publications (in Israel) about Jewish life in Iraq, the value of *The Scribe* becomes even greater●

Toronto

Jack Stevens (Semah)

## MIDDLE EAST REFUGEE PROBLEM

Egyptian historian Dr. Baha Adin Abrashi created an uproar for suggesting to solve the Palestinian refugees by creating an autonomous Palestinian entity in the Sudan or in Egypt's western desert.

He accused the Arab nations of using the suffering of the refugees as a political card while doing nothing to help them.

"The Arabs had no interest in helping the refugees because their plight made Israel look bad", he said.

Dr. Salem Tamari who represents Palestinian refugee committee, said that the Palestinian people "demand the right of return for all refugees", and added that Israel should pay compensation to those who choose not to return.

Tamari added that these demands will be officially raised at the Israeli-Palestinian peace accord talks, scheduled for May of next year. He reflected the Israeli claim that Jews who fled Arab countries should also be paid compensation.

"Most of the Jews chose to leave their homes and were not forced to do so by an ongoing war," claimed Tamari. "Besides this is a problem which should be settled with those countries and has nothing to do with the Palestinian refugees".

**Scribe:** The Middle East conflict is not between Israelis and Palestinians. The Arab governments themselves widened the conflict by attacking Israel several times and by persecuting their Jewish communities, it became a struggle between Jews and Arabs.

The claim of Palestinian refugees for compensation can only be considered alongside the claims of Jews who had to leave their ancient homes in Arab countries. They have to be considered as refugees because of the ill-treatment they received in their countries of origin and the confiscation of all their properties.

Most of these Jews arrived in Israel as Olim, but they certainly left their countries of origin as Refugees. There was a push and pull.

Moreover, not all the Jews who left Arab countries went to Israel and therefore there can be no final Middle East settlement unless the full rights of Jews of Arab countries are fully satisfied.

It is illogical to ask Jews who left Arab countries half a century ago to return under present conditions. In addition, if those Jews had left of their own free will, why did the Arab governments denationalize them and confiscate their properties? However, when full peace is established in the region, new Jewish communities will no doubt be re-established in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, the Gulf states and North Africa●

### The late Frank Ini

I read with great interest your story on the Dinner held in New York to the memory of Frank Ini. Frank's grandmother and my father's mother were sisters, which would make him my second cousin.

I remember, just after the war, he came to Bombay for a few days on business. He visited us a couple of times and then invited us all for lunch at a very fancy restaurant. I remember him as a very charming man with a lovely smiling face. He and my father were thrilled to meet again after many years●

Sydney, Australia Dolly (Dayan) Shadler

## The Holocaust Educational Trust

Established in 1988, the Holocaust Educational Trust is playing the leading role in Holocaust Education in the United Kingdom and our achievements have been recognised by the Secretary of State for Education; The Trust produced and distributed 7500 copies of a teacher's pack of "Schindler's List" to every secondary school and college in the UK. The Trust has produced, after extensive research and consultation, a short summary of the Holocaust, targeted for use by school children and young readers. We have already distributed thousands of these publications and have orders for more nearly every day.

The Trust publishes and distributes Sir Martin Gilbert's short educational booklet, "The Holocaust - Maps and Photographs" in the UK and the rest of the world.

The Trust is the main referral agency used by the media. We have formed the Parliamentary nucleus in Britain in the battle against the resurgence of Fascism and anti-Semitism through the Inter-Parliamentary Council against Anti-Semitism - whose efforts now extend around the globe.

We depend on voluntary financial contributions to continue our important work.

London Lord Merlyn-Rees

**Scribe:** Free copies of Holocaust literature can be obtained by writing to The Holocaust Educational Trust, BCM Box 7892 London WC1N 3XX●



I have heard many stories from my extended family all of whom grew up in Iraq. Your publication served to confirm and enhance the picture I have of what life was like for the large Jewish community that once called Iraq their home.

My grandfather, Albert Murad, who passed away this year left Baghdad some 50 years ago. At the time he left he was 50 years old and took with him his wife Rachel and 5 of his 6 children including my father Henry.

The above picture which was taken in Baghdad around the turn of the century, shows my grandfather, Albert Murad, as a child sitting on the right with his father and brothers●

New York Richard S. Murad

## The Diary of Sir Ronald Storrs

I am enclosing photocopies of two pages from the diary of Sir Ronald Storrs, which was published some fifty years ago under the title of "Orientation".

Storrs was very active in the Middle East during the First World War, and some of his views are interesting indeed, particularly where the actions of the British Foreign Office are concerned. The diary entry of May 12, 1917 mentions a visit he paid to the home of Menahem Daniel. That of May 16, 1917 talks about a visit he received from "the Grand Rabbi". Your readers may find these two entries of great interest. The two entries of Sir Ronald Storrs were as follows:

On 12 May 1917, at 5.30 to tea with the ancient Jew Menahem Daniel, in a fine house over the river. Apparently he has other houses at Kifl and Hilla of which, like the town clerk, I hope to take advantage. The patriarch in an apparent abstraction swallowed several liqueur glasses of cherry brandy. Told me that in his youth, there being no other school in Baghdad, he was sent to study at the mosque. Has built a large Hebrew school since. Explains away his own ignorance of Jewish local history by the irrefragable excuse that the records were destroyed by Hülagü. Showed me his correspondence, Arabic written in Hebrew characters, as the Armenians often treat Turkish.

I received the Grand Rabbi on 16 May 1917. He tells me there are neither Sephardim, Ashkenazim, Karaim, nor Sadducees in Baghdad: only the right Nabuchadnessar brand, Kosher of the Kosher. Over 55,000 and numerous schools. Persecutions here took the milder but (considering the martyrs) more agonising form of insistence upon gold in exchange for miserably depreciated Ottoman paper.

Montreal Naim S. Mahlab

**Scribe:** Menahem Daniel born in Baghdad 1846, died 1940 age 94. He was educated (also) at Midrash Talmud Torah. In 1875 he represented Iraq's delegate to the Istanbul Parliament. He received from Sultan Abdel-Hamid, the title of Pasha, Effendi and Saadetlu. In 1910 he established the (Gan) kindergarten. He was already 19 years old when The Alliance School, the first secular Jewish school was opened in 1865. The first Moslem secular school was opened five years later in 1870 by the Turkish Governor Midhat Pasha.

The Chief Rabbi of Baghdad at the time mentioned above, was Yeruham Nessim Elyashar of Jerusalem who officiated as Chief Rabbi of Baghdad from 1914 to 1918●

## Morning Prayers

by Dr Victor Sasson of New York

I wake, perturbed, to the chatter of birds  
Twittering their silly songs to the sun.  
Silly birds, thus wasting their breath in vain,  
Serving a servant devoid of sense.  
Yet their fervent, impassioned prayers soon  
Awaken in me a great urge to pray,  
And I sing my Hallelujahs to Him,  
Who is the Master of the Universe.  
I welcome, with open arms, the new day,  
Breathe in the morning air without a curse.  
Good creatures, birds! Got some pretty good  
sense

In their teeny-weeny heads. They surely set  
An example, even for people with fame;  
Could put Leibnitz and Spinoza to shame●



# The Kaddish and what it stands for

by Aaron Aaron

Founder President of New South Wales Association of Sephardim, Sydney and its Sephardi synagogues. Author of *The Sephardim of Australia and New Zealand*.

Kaddish is seen as the prayer for the dead. It is recited with great emotion and just as greatly it is misunderstood.

Kaddish is prayed in the Aramaic language. We have been led to believe that it was to confuse the angels, but in fact, when Kaddish was introduced, Aramaic rather than Hebrew was the spoken, national language of the Jews.

Some of us have made Kaddish the be-all and end-all of our prayers to our Maker. I have seen people go from one synagogue to another so that they could recite an additional Kaddish. I have also seen people leave the synagogue to go to another synagogue when they have missed the first Kaddish. Others will not go to the synagogue at all, unless they want to recite Kaddish at a minyan.

Originally Kaddish was not part of the synagogue service. The Talmud records that at first it served as a prayer at the conclusion of public discourses on Aggadah and Talmud.

In the sixth century of the Common Era, it is mentioned for the first time as part of the prescribed synagogue prayers. By Geonic times it had become a statutory prayer for the synagogue, requiring the presence of ten adults when recited. The practice for mourners to recite Kaddish seems to have arisen in the thirteenth century. And yet Kaddish contains no mention of death or guilt. Rather it is a declaration of faith in Israel's natural purpose, loyalty to our Creator.

There is no basis for the view that Kaddish is for mourners in the Talmud. The only source for that idea seems to be in a legend about Rabbi Akiba, but we Jews do not base laws on legends.

True, the Kaddish makes no reference to the Resurrection of the Dead, but in the Sephardic version it strongly refers to the Messianic period in the words "*we yismah purkanay we karib Meshihei*".

Rabbi Bahya says one who recites Kaddish in the synagogue makes a public declaration that G-d's name will be sanctified and praised by everyone.

"*Yehei Shemei Raba Mebarakh Le'olam Le'almei 'Almaya*."

Resh Lakish tells us that to a person who responds with "Amen", with all his strength, all gates will open. To say "Amen" is more powerful than many good deeds. The Talmud, indeed, states that the person who says "Amen" is greater than the one who recites the blessing. It is as if the listener says "You are saying the words, but I in the innermost recesses of my being show that they are true; you recite and I affirm; you repeat and I believe". But a mindless "Amen" is meaningless and may as well not have been said, according to the Shulhan Arukh.

The Rabbis asserted that the dead can receive atonement through the charity of the living. From this we learn that the dead benefit from the charity sanctified on their behalf by the living. This applies to those who recite Kaddish or any blessing in the synagogue.

People are judged for what they do, and also for what they cause to be done. In more than a

## OBITUARY



### David Marshall First Chief Minister of Singapore

by Percy Gourgey, MBE

David Saul Marshall (Mashal) 1908-1995, was born in Singapore, the eldest of seven children. His father was the eldest of nine children, two of those brothers lived in Bombay. I met David in Singapore in 1953 during my tour of South-East Asia.

David had a dynamic personality and was a brilliant barrister and lavish in his hospitality. At his famous Sunday lunches, his cook would ask the guests if they liked Jewish, Indian, Chinese or Malay dishes and would respond to their individual preferences. David hated injustice or discrimination of any sort. He applied to join the exclusive Singapore Swimming Club—reserved for Europeans only—and some judges of the High Court stated that if he were refused entry, they would resign their membership. He was accepted and thus broke the racial ban.

But his fame rests not so much on his ability as an outstanding advocate but on his political career in which he was elected as Singapore's first Chief Minister in 1955, albeit under a British colonial administration. On his Labour Front gaining the largest number of seats in the first election held in 1955, he was invited by the Governor to become the first Chief Minister. He made an heroic stand for independence but was frustrated in his aim when constitutional talks in London in 1956 broke down. After resigning as Chief Minister in 1956, because he failed in his bid for independence—as Labour candidate for the Assembly and, following his election, criticised Lee Kuan Yew, the new Chief Minister, for not bringing this about.

symbolic sense the deeds of the living are those of the departed. The dead can find atonement in deeds which they might never have contemplated but which are "theirs" nevertheless.

G-d never closes the book on a life as long as the ripples of that life are still in motion, in miswa and prayers.

The Talmud stresses that an opportunity to hear Kaddish and to respond "*yehei shemei Rabbah...*" takes precedence over the opportunity to respond to any other prayer.

The Kaddish is not a prayer for the dead, but a pledge from the living; not a superstitious phrase but a man's motto for life●

David was educated at an excellent school in Singapore, St. David's, but was forced to leave it because his father insisted that he stay away for Yom Kippur. In 1934 he went to London and qualified as a barrister in the Middle Temple. On his return he began to practice, and also joined the Singapore Volunteers. When the Japanese took the city in 1942, he was captured and spent the rest of the war in prison camps under the Japanese.

After the war he resumed his practice as a lawyer and began to take part in politics. He made suggestions to the Rendel Constitutional Committee, which in 1953 made recommendations on Singapore's political future.

He finally retired from politics in 1963, and from his Bar practice in 1978. His brilliant advocacy which influenced juries to return "not guilty" verdicts, has been held to have influenced Lee Kuan Yew's decision, in 1970, to abolish the jury system. Thereafter he served as Singapore's ambassador to France, Spain, Portugal and Switzerland, successively.

He was also Chairman of the Jewish Welfare Board for many years. He was married with a son and three daughters.

#### David Schayek adds:

During his war time captivity, David Marshall was a difficult prisoner. His British superior officers threatened to have him court-martialled after the war if he continued to be troublesome.

#### Elias Dangoor writes:

In the mid fifties I used to go regularly to Layali Baghdad Cafe, on the banks of the Tigris in Baghdad and sit with a group of people much older than me. They included Abraham Mashaal who, one day came with a telegram in his hand he had just received from his nephew David Marshall from London, stating that: "The Secretary of the Commonwealth Sir Lenox Boyd is inviting you to London to join in the celebration of granting independence to Singapore, please confirm acceptance".

We have all encouraged him to go and told him that this is a very high honour and the chance of a lifetime, especially as the British Embassy was arranging all the necessary arrangements and flights. But he thought that he was too old.

The other members of the group included: Abraham Hayim Akereb, Eliahoo Meir Heskell Hayim, Sulman Ezra Ishaq Saleh (Sassoon), Sion Sabha and Saleh Shukur●

### Shalom Singapore

The small yet diverse Jewish Community of Singapore has started a new magazine called "Shalom Singapore". It is intended to be a quarterly publication which will also be sent to Jewish communities and institutions around the world. Robert Craiu was appointed as its Editor.

The last time the Singapore Jewish Community had a regular magazine of its own was in 1937-8. It was called "*The Israelight*" and was edited by a young David Marshall who later became Prime Minister of Singapore.

Shortly before his death last December, David Marshall wrote in the first issue of *Shalom Singapore*: Immediately on my return from my legal studies in 1937, I managed to get an enthusiastic group around me and we published the "*Israelight*". I believe there were 4 issues and then we were too busy to continue (I'll offer \$100 to anyone who can find me a copy). My best wishes to all those who labour to produce the new magazine●

My grandfather Eliahoo Ezra Levi was born in Aleppo, Syria, middle of the 19th century, he married in Baghdad and lived there. My grandparents were among many Jews who left Baghdad for India at the end of the 19th century. My grandparents settled in Calcutta where five more children were born to them.

I enclose a copy of our great Hakham Shlomo of Calcutta, who has written many books and some were published just recently in Israel. He was a direct disciple of our great Hakham of Baghdad, Yosef Hayim.

I thought it will give great pleasure to many thousands of Jews of Calcutta, now scattered, living in New-York, Los Angeles, London, Australia, Canada and of course Israel.

London Benjamin Solomon Levi

## Hakham Shlomo — A Portrait

Hakham Shlomo Twena, of blessed memory, was a native of Baghdad and lived there for at least 24 years before he came to the shores of India, already a distinguished graduate of a Yeshiva. About the year 1880 he was sent to India at the request of one Ezekiel Joshua of Bombay (maternal grandfather of David Solomon Sassoon) who required the services of a Dayan and a Shohet. As a student he had made a name for himself as one of the most promising young men in the academy. The famous Hakham Yosef Hayim, a spiritual leader of the Baghdad Jewish community from 1859 to 1909, was quoted in response to a query from India on religious observance as saying that it was not necessary for the Jewish community of India to address their questions to him as they had someone in their midst, namely, Hakham Shlomo, who was as competent and well-versed as he himself in the intricacies of the Law.

About 1885 he made Calcutta his residence, judging from the publication of his first book in that year at the press of Elias Moses Dueck Cohen. Soon he became spiritual head of Calcutta Jewry and delivered sermons in Arabic in the then newly constructed Maghen David Synagogue. A dispute between himself and the elders of the Synagogue, probably on account of the unusual length of his sermons, forced him to stop his attendance there. Although there were three other Synagogues in the city at the time, the creation of an additional venue for public prayer was a clear indication that freedom of religious expression as great as Hakham Shlomo's could not be stifled.

Those who heard his sermons still recall his resonant clear-throated voice that facilitated forceful and forthright delivery. For Calcutta Jews it was the only source of Hebrew education available. Many parents and grandparents of our generation owe their knowledge of the Torah to this revered teacher. Mourners were consoled by his comforting eulogies. Religious observances were beautified and made more meaningful by his masterly interpretation and fluent expounding of the Law. He was known never to have prepared any of his addresses, but would, with natural confidence, give utterance to them.

He would earn his living by selling religious articles imported from Baghdad and Palestine. Additional income would be derived from the slaughter of animals and birds, and from the teaching of Hebrew to the children of well-to-do families. Besides, he ran a printing press chiefly to publish his own prolific writings. He



The Jewish Cemetery, Rangoon.

I would like this letter published in your next issue if possible as a part of it refers to an urgent matter.

### "An Experience of a Lifetime"

I have just returned from Rangoon Burma now called Yangon Myanmar and was on a cruise ship that stopped there for 1½ days, the object of the cruise was this stop in Rangoon as my father was born there.

I visited Mesmead Yeshua Synagogue and was greeted by Mr Moses Samuels who is the trustee and takes loving care of the Synagogue. I wrote to him 2 months before sailing as Mr Aaron Solomons of California gave me his address and for which I am very grateful, as he had also been there a year ago.

Mr Samuels greeted me with great excitement, when a party of 30 Jewish people from the ship arrived with me and he produced the 2 Sefer Torahs and insisted that I have photos taken with him. Then Mr Samuels produced a book of children born since the synagogue was opened, and there on the first page and the first line was my father's name, Abraham Hai son of Shaia Abraham and Simha Saleh Sassoon, born February 12th 1893. You can imagine how excited I was to see this, although I had my father's birth certificate, it had only a few details on it. Everyone there was as excited as I was, as I never knew my grandmother's name before. I did not have time to examine the whole book, but my father's brothers and sisters must also be in that book as they were also born there, but the coach was waiting to go to the cemetery.

The cemetery was in a deplorable condition, and I was unable to find my grandparents' graves, Mr Samuels told me that the Burmese government intend to destroy the cemetery as they have done with the Christian ones.

I hope someone reading this might help me to find the right people to help get this cemetery preserved, as this is a rare community that should be helped, as most of those buried there are originally from Iraq. It was a wonderful experience that my wife and I will never forget!

London

Joseph Abraham Hai

edited a weekly paper *Maggid Mesharim* for eleven years from 1889-1900. The purpose of this magazine, written in Arabic-Hebrew, as outlined in the first issue, aimed at making known the deteriorating conditions of the Jews of Baghdad under the Moslems in order to gain the sympathy and material aid of English Jews. The magazine contained news items and topical articles and produced ethical and Midrashic epistles, stories and legal discussions of a very high literary and contextual standard.

Sometimes while visiting a friend, or in the middle of a conversation, he would get an inspired thought and reach out for the nearest article to set it down in writing – the table sheet, a handkerchief, and even the palms of his hands. His learned contributions in the field of homiletics and Law, Aggadah and Halakha, have given Calcutta a distinguished place on the map of Jewish scholars.

In eleven years at his press he printed 71 books most of which were his own composition. The subject matters covered included ethical topics, explanations of Biblical passages, sermons, legal treatises, prayers and even translations of modern Hebrew literature

like Ahavat Zion of Mapu. His most outstanding literary and scholarly masterpiece was his commentary on the first verse of the Book of Genesis, "In the beginning G-d created heaven and earth", which ran into one thousand and five explanations and interpretations. Parts of this gigantic work called *Hamisha Wa-Alef* have been published, but the major portion has not passed the manuscript stage.

Of Hakham Shlomo's seven sons and four daughters only two took after their father. Both of them passed away without having the rest of their father's works published. These precious manuscripts are being worm-eaten gradually and thrown away in the Calcutta Genizah awaiting another Shechter to "discover" them at some later date.

At the age of 50 he lay very ill. Doctors gave up hope. The community, however, could not bear the thought of losing its sainted teacher and preacher. Supplications were offered on his behalf and one, Hakham Eliyahoo, publicly offered seven years of his span of life to Hakham Shlomo. He recovered and lived exactly seven years longer. He passed away suddenly at the age of 57.

# COOKERY CORNER

by Alice Shashou

## Stuffed Slit Aubergines

900g (2 lb) long aubergines  
1 small onion, chopped  
1 clove garlic, chopped  
½ green pepper, chopped  
2 celery stalks, chopped  
2 tablespoons oil for frying

### The Filling:

225g (8 oz) minced beef or lamb  
1 teaspoon dried onion (optional)  
2 tablespoons parsley, finely chopped  
2 tablespoons mint, finely chopped (optional)  
1 teaspoon oil or margarine  
Salt and pepper to taste

### The Sauce:

½ cup lemon juice or to taste  
6 tablespoons sugar or to taste  
2 tablespoons tomato paste  
Salt and pepper  
Enough water to cook the aubergines

Remove stems from aubergines (do not peel).

Cut the aubergines at one inch intervals but not right through. Sprinkle the cut surface with salt and leave in a sieve for half an hour. Rinse in cold water and dry with a kitchen towel.

Meanwhile, prepare the filling by blending all ingredients thoroughly. Stuff this filling generously in each slit of the aubergines.

In a large pan, heat the oil and sauté onion, garlic, green pepper and celery until transparent. Place the aubergines in one layer.

Prepare the sauce by mixing all the ingredients together and pour over the aubergines. Bring to the boil. Taste and adjust. Cover the pan and turn down to a gentle simmer until most of the sauce has evaporated. (It should taste sweet and sour.) Place carefully in a warm serving dish. Serve hot with Vermicelli Rice.

## Eve's Pudding

450g (1 lb) apples, peeled, cored and sliced  
75g (3 oz) soft light brown sugar  
Grated rind of 1 lemon

For the sponge topping:

100g (4 oz) unsalted butter  
100g (4 oz) caster sugar  
100g (4 oz) self-raising flour  
2 eggs, size 2, beaten  
¼ teaspoon vanilla essence

Icing sugar for dusting

Ground cinnamon for dusting (optional)

Lightly butter an ovenproof serving dish.

Place apple slices in the base of the dish in layers. Sprinkle each layer with the brown sugar and grated lemon rind. Set aside.

Cream the butter and caster sugar together until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs adding a little flour to avoid curdling. Add vanilla essence. Fold in the remaining flour and spread over the apples. Using a palette knife, spread evenly so that the top is completely covered.

Cook in pre-heated oven, 350°F, 180°C for about 35 minutes or until golden.

Serve with custard sauce or cream. You can substitute sliced apples for sliced pears.

Serve hot ●

The recipe of the spiced sponge apple cake which appeared in our last issue (No 64) was by Helene Sopher ●

## Steamed Chinese Fish

1 kilo 350g (3 lb) whole fish (trout, sole, mullet, sea bass etc.) cleaned

3 tablespoons grated root ginger

3 tablespoons soy sauce

1 level tablespoon sugar

1 tablespoon white wine vinegar

75g (3 oz) mushrooms, sliced and cooked without adding water or 4 large Chinese mushrooms, soaked for 20 minutes, drained, steamed and shredded

4 spring onions or shallots chopped

Salt and paprika to taste

2 tablespoons oil

1-2 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped

Mix together the salt and ginger and rub over the fish inside and out. Leave for about half an hour or more. Mix together the soy sauce, sugar, paprika and vinegar and pour over the fish. Leave to marinate for another half an hour. Place the fish on a heat-proof serving dish and put the dish in a steamer. Spoon over the marinade. Add the mushrooms and spring onions or shallots.

Cover the container and steam for about 30 minutes. The fish will flake easily when tested with a fork.

Meanwhile, fry the garlic in the oil in a small pan until golden and pour the hot oil and garlic over the fish.

Place the fish onto a heated serving plate. Top with the vegetables. Serve hot.

**Tip:** I use a steamer and line it with silver foil to prevent the marinade from dripping into the boiling water in the pan ●

## Tips

When you soak burghul, sprinkle it with salt to prevent it from getting mushy.

Buy brown eggs one week, white eggs the next, to know which eggs to use first.

Suck a clove to help relieve toothache.

Use a tea strainer to dust icing sugar.

Cover the page you are using in a cookbook with clingfilm to stop it getting splashed and messy.

Place a sheet of aluminium foil on the bottom shelf of the oven to cut down the time and effort in cleaning it.

To stop the crust of a pie burning before the rest of it has cooked, wrap a thin strip of kitchen foil around the tin rim and fold up over the crust.

Before using bamboo skewers, soak in cold water for 1-2 hours to stop them from burning during cooking.

Push a few sprigs of rosemary with a lump of margarine into the body cavity of a roast chicken.

## Alice's International Cuisine

Alice Shashou's popular cookery book can be obtained by writing to: Mrs 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 ●

## From a reader

## Pressure Cooking

Better results can be obtained from inferior meat cuts by cooking them in pressure cookers—they become more tender than ordinary cooking. A typical recipe is as follows:

## Beef Pot Roast

1 Kg (2lb) piece of brisket, boned and rolled salt and pepper  
50g (2oz) cooking oil  
375ml (¾ pt) hot brown stock  
2 bay leaves  
1 x 5ml (1 tsp) mixed herbs  
200g (½ lb) small young carrots, left whole  
2 large parsnips cut into 2.5cm (1 inch) cubes  
1 x 15ml spoon (1 tbsp) cornflour

Wipe, trim and season the meat. Heat the oil in the open cooker and brown the meat well all over. Lift out the meat and drain the excess fat from the cooker. Away from the heat add the stock, and stir well to remove any residue from the base of the pan. Put in the trivet rim side down. Replace the joint and add the herbs. Cover, close the lid, bring to the boil and cook for 36 minutes. Release the steam QUICKLY. Open the cooker and arrange the vegetables around the meat. Season. Close the lid, bring to the boil and cook for a further 4 minutes. Release the steam QUICKLY. Slice the meat and serve on a warmed serving dish surrounded by vegetables. Blend the cornflour with a little water, add to the cooking liquid, bring to the boil and stir until thickened. Serve as gravy ●

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