

E-mail us at  
scribe@dangoor.com

We have created  
a Scribe Web site at  
Dangoor.com

# The SCRIBE

JOURNAL OF BABYLONIAN JEWRY

PUBLISHED BY THE EXILARCH'S FOUNDATION

*The Scribe* is now available  
as a complete volume from  
No.1, in a gold-embossed  
hard binder, with provision  
for additional issues.  
UK £75, Overseas US\$130  
including postage.

No. 72

SEPTEMBER 1999

Est. 1971

★ A Happy New Year 5760 to all our Readers and Friends ★

● BEST WISHES FOR THE YEAR 2000, THE 21ST CENTURY AND THE NEW MILLENNIUM OF THE COMMON ERA ●

## Peace is not enough

by Naim Dangoor

Prime Minister Ehud Barak has promised to bring about the peace of the brave. But peace is not enough! It must not be the end of the road, but only its beginning.

The Arabs must come to realise that the State of Israel planted in their midst is more for their benefit than for the benefit of the Jews. The Arabs are lucky but stupid; the Jews are clever but unlucky. Look at the balance sheet. It is said that the State of Israel was the direct result of the Holocaust. But is the establishment of a precarious Jewish State in the midst of hostile neighbours worth the lives of 7 million Jews? The answer must be No. On the contrary, the Holocaust is to a great extent the product of Zionism. It was to prevent Jews in great numbers from reaching the middle-east.

A faction of the British Foreign Office recruited - Mufti Amin Husseini, who spent the war years in Berlin, to organise the Final Solution. The plan was to prevent Jews at any cost leaving Europe and end up in the Middle East.

Since the creation of Israel a hundred other states came into being and were admitted unanimously and quietly into the United Nations, while Israel is still struggling for sheer existence, plagued by terrorism and hostile propaganda.

On the other hand, in the same period of 100 years the condition of the Arabs has improved dramatically and at little or no cost. At the end of WW2, 22 independent states emerged, with sudden undreamed of oil riches, covering an area of 6 million square miles, with populations doubling every generation. Surely, Israel comes as the icing on that cake.

Yes, Israel is there for the benefit of the Arabs with its technology, military power, and world connections.

The following anecdote illustrates how Iraqi Jews used to regard the luck of the Moslem:

Three people went to Heaven, a Jew, a Christian and a Moslem. At the gate, the Jew was asked his name, when he said "Heskel" he was told to wait at the door. The Christian said his name was Jaju and he too was told to wait. But when the Moslem came and gave his name as Abu Jasem, he was told please come in, you are welcome. Whereupon, the Jew took up a bundle of clothes and followed the Moslem. When they stopped him at the door, he said, "I am carrying Abu Jasem's luggage" and was let in.

The Arab is our brother, we have no other.

Together Jew and Arab can make of the Middle-East an important region, rivalling racist and murderous Europe. Together we can show mankind how to run the world. Together, we can bring nearer the Messianic Age. Let us show them we can do it. ●



*Man of the Hour, Prime Minister Ehud Barak.* ●

The Khazars, an ancient nomadic Turkic people, reached the lower Volga region sometime in the sixth century. They rose to great power and the Khazar Empire at its height (eighth to the tenth century) extended from the northern shores of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea as far west as Kiev.

In the eighth century the king of the Khazars and a fairly large number of his nobles adopted Judaism.

Khazaria was a busy trading centre and Jews from other countries came there to trade and even to live. Persecution by Byzantine rulers drew a great number of Jewish refugees to the Khazar Empire. The Khazar Empire was greatly weakened when in 965 its capital was sacked by the Russians, but it survived in its reduced state until the middle of the thirteenth century when it fell victim to the Mongol invasion.

The Jews of Khazaria may have been among the founders of the Jewish community of Poland and of the other Jewish communities of Eastern Europe. The horrors that followed the First Crusade (1096), drove the Jewish masses to Eastern Europe, to a peaceful Poland, and this emigration continued during the entire twelfth century.

The great Mongol invasions which began in 1240-41 and were repeated in 1259 utterly devastated Poland.

The only way of filling up the gaps in the population of the ravaged land was to invite immigrants with skills, of peaceful disposition but capable of building and defending strong cities.

It was mainly from Germany that the response to the invitation came. The German immigration was accompanied and followed by Jewish immigrants who were encouraged by special privileges granted to them.

The butcheries committed in Southern and Central Germany in 1298 by Christian mobs and the even worse atrocities against Jews at the time of the Black Death in 1348 and 1349, brought fresh masses of German Jews to Poland.

The Jewish privileges were virtually abolished in 1454.

Because of their superiority in numbers, wealth and cultural attainments the arrivals from Germany succeeded in a relatively short time in imposing their own rituals, customs and speech upon the local Jews, and upon Sephardic and Italian Jews who also arrived - in far smaller numbers - in the sixteenth century.

The Yiddish dialect of German, used by the western arrivals, began to dominate the speech of all the inhabitants of the Jewish quarters throughout the realm.

The Jews of Poland played an important

part in the economic life of the country. They enjoyed unprecedented economic and social freedom in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They were revenue collectors on behalf of Polish landlords, bankers, physicians, and Jewish autonomy grew to the point where the Jews virtually governed themselves.

The central institution of Jewish self-government in Poland from the mid-sixteenth century until 1764 was the council of the Four Lands (Greater Poland, Little Poland, Galician and Volhynia). The Jews of Lithuania broke away in 1623 and formed their own Council. The Council for the Four Lands administered the collection of the Jewish tax from the Jews of Poland, and in the formal view of the Polish authorities its powers did not extend beyond that. But the state authorities were well aware that the Council served as an institution of Jewish autonomy in the full sense of self-government.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Jewish culture and scholarship flourished. The first formal yeshiva in Eastern Europe was founded in Cracow by Rabbi Jacob Pollack (1460-1511), who was already famous as the founder of pilpul and hillukim, the sophistic method of talmudic discussion. The yeshiva became famous when Rabbi Moses Isserles (known as Rema) took over its leadership.

When Joseph Caro's shorter codification of Jewish law, the Shulchan Aruch (the prepared table) appeared, Isserles wrote his Mappah (Tablecloth) incorporating the Ashkenazi practice. The addition of the mappah to Caro's primarily Sephardic work resulted ultimately in the Shulchan Aruch's acceptance in the Ashkenazi as well as the Sephardic world.

The Yeshivot of Poland became the model for Talmudic study for the rest of Europe. Students from Germany, Bohemia, Moravia, Hungary, even Italy went to study there. From the second half of the seventeenth

century, most rabbis in Germany and Central Europe came originally from Poland.

In the middle of the seventeenth century, however, disaster struck Polish-Jewry, beginning with the Cossacks rising in the Ukraine against the Polish landowners, and the Jews hated from their role as agents of the landowners.

Under the *arenda* system, Jewish arendators took over practically all inhabitants of villages and estates, collected dues from mills and other establishments, exacted the required days of labour from the serfs, and even administered justice to them all. The arendator paid the landowner a fixed sum for a specified period and in return received all the income.

In 1653, an autonomous Ukraine came under Russian's protection. This launched a new war in which Russian and Cossack forces marched against Poland. Meanwhile, Sweden invaded west Poland.

Between 1648 and 1658 Cossacks, Muscovites, Swedes, Tatars, Transylvanians and Brandenburgians invaded Poland, causing destruction of life and property comparable to that of the Thirty Years' War in Germany.

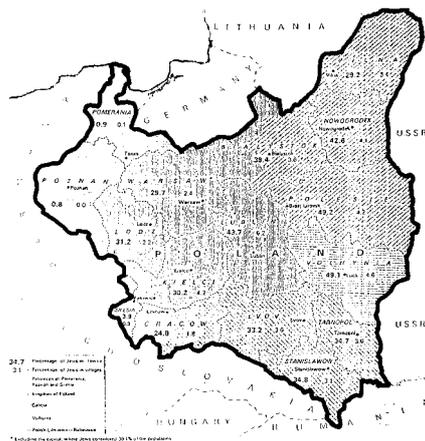
Cossack cruelty was so great that many Jews preferred to flee to captivity under the Crimean Tatars, to be sold as slaves. This was a harsh fate but final deliverance by Jewish redemption of captives at the slave markets of turkey was a foreseen possibility. Many Jews fled westward, going as far as Alsace, Holland and England.

The Deluge, as the catastrophe came to be known, brought death and devastation to both the Jews and the general population during the years of insurrection, invasions and wars. Famine and epidemics which swept either the whole or parts of the country contributed further to the havoc.

Soon, the Jews started to increase again in numbers and follow economic diversification, and progressively deepened their peculiar brand of East-European Jewish culture. Polish-Lithuanian Jewry, and its descendants became the main reservoir of Jewish manpower and intellectual dynamism for many lands - sending out émigrés first into neighbouring countries - and soon to Central and Western Europe and its New World dependencies as well.

For the Jews of Poland, most of the eighteenth century, was a period of harassment and blood libels aimed at igniting the religious fanaticism of the mob.

In 1764, the Polish Sejm established a different system for collecting the Jewish poll tax, and adopted a resolution which brought the Council of the Four Lands to an end.



In 1772 fearing that Russia may take over Poland, Prussia proposed and Russia and Austria agreed that each take a piece of Poland.

In 1793 Russia, under Catherine the Great, again moved against Poland and there was a second partition of Poland-Lithuania.

The third Partition of Poland which followed in 1795 was the end of an independent Poland until after World War I.

Disturbances and pogroms in Russian areas of the Pale of Settlements led in 1882 to the influx of the so-called "Litvaks" into Poland.

They played a major role in spreading the ideas of Jewish nationalism in Poland; it was they, for example, who led the Warsaw Hovevei Zion, the precursor of Modern Zionism.

By the end of the 19th century, the Jewish population of Poland had become more and more dominant in the cities.

Their role in urban commercial ventures became more pronounced. By the end of the 19th century, a numerically small but highly influential Jewish professional class had made its appearance, particularly in Warsaw. The Jews, therefore, constituted an urban, middle-class and proletarian element within the great mass of Polish peasantry.

However, it had become apparent that the Jews were gradually losing ground to non-Jews in trade. The rise of non-Jewish middle-class, with the resulting increase in competition between Jew and gentile marked a process which gained impetus in the 20th century.

The collapse of Germany, Russia and Austria at the end of World War I was followed by victories for Polish armies in a number of conflicts; the most important, victory in the war between Poland and the Soviet Union, resulted in Poland's reconstruction as a sovereign state, enlarged by the addition of large tracts of Belorussia, Ukraine, Germany and Austria. Galicia was restored to Poland. The new state was approximately one-third non-Polish, the important minorities being Ukrainians, Jews, Belorussians and Germans.

As in the case of other newly created states, Poland signed a treaty with the Principal Allied and Associated Powers obligating itself to protect the national rights of its minorities, specifically promising Jews their own schools and to respect the Jewish Sabbath. The Polish constitution, too, formally abolished all discrimination based on religion, race or nationality, and recognised the Jews as a nationality.

But Jewish hopes were not fulfilled. Far from barring discrimination against non-Poles, the policy of the inter-war Polish state was to promote the ethnic Polish element at the expense of the Jews, the most vulnerable of the national minorities.

What distinguishes the inter-war years

from the pre-war era was the anti-Semitic policy of the Polish state, which Jewish leaders accused of leading to the economic extermination of Polish Jewry. Jews were not employed in the civil service, there were very few Jewish teachers in the public schools, practically no Jewish railroad workers, no Jews employed in state-controlled banks, and no Jewish workers employed in state-run monopolies (such as tobacco and liquor). But all was not unrelieved gloom.

In 1937-38, the wave of pogroms and attacks swelled and as Polish fears of its mighty German neighbour increased, government and public anti-Semitism was intensified.

On September 1, 1939, the German army invaded Poland. On the 17th Soviet forces entered Poland. On the 27th Warsaw surrendered to the Germans. On September 29th, a Soviet-German treaty of Friendship was announced. Poland was partitioned; the Soviet Union got slightly more territory, but the majority of the population came under German control.

On June 22, 1941, the Germans launched an attack on the Soviet Union. The Russians were taken by surprise, and within a matter of days they were forced out of Poland. They re-entered Poland in June 1944 but it was not until early 1945 that they drove the German forces out of Poland.

On October 28, 1939, all the Jews in German-occupied Poland were rounded up and confined to ghettos in a number of cities. The first major ghetto to be created was the Lodz ghetto in April, 1940, and Jews from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia were among those deported to Lodz. The first death camp to be completed was at Chelmno, sixty kilometres from Lodz; it began functioning on December 8, 1941, with mobile vans, using engine exhaust gases. Extermination camps were established also at Treblinka, Sobibor, Majdanek, Belzec and Oswiecim (Auschwitz).

By the liberation, the great Polish Jewry, numbering more than 3,000,000 in 1939, had been almost entirely annihilated in the Holocaust. Those who survived mostly did so by taking refuge in the USSR. The majority of these were repatriated to Poland between 1945-47 and in 1956-58. Anti-Semitic incidents after the war caused many of the survivors to emigrate, mainly to Israel.

Between 1948 and 1958 about 140,000 Jews left for Israel. After the Six Day War in 1967 a further outbreak of anti-Semitism, which took the form of an anti-Zionist campaign resulted in a new wave of emigration. Today, the Jewish community numbers less than 6,000. ●



*A very recent postcard issued by the Polish government intended to celebrate the post-Holocaust prospect of Warsaw. ●*

I would like to say how much I enjoy reading *The Scribe*, which comes to our synagogue in Colchester. It is more relevant to me personally, as I am working on a doctorate on the Jews of the Ottoman Empire.

It has occurred to me that I may appeal to your readers for any information that they may have in respect to the areas on which I am working. I hope that you can publish my letter in that hope.

Firstly, I am interested in the press of the region, around 1895 to 1925. I read Judeo-Spanish (Judezmo, Ladino), in Hebrew characters as well as Latin. I am also concerned with the novels (romansos) that were published at the same time in chapbook form. My other area of interest is in the journal editors and authors, particularly Alexandre Benghiat, although others involved in this work are as important. ●

**Mrs Sandy Bennett,  
MA 18 Hatfield Rd  
Ipswich, Suffolk IP3 9AF  
e-mail amber@anglianet.co.uk**

## **THE JEWS OF ARABIA**

Condensed from a recent lecture at the Montefiore Hall - London. *Scribe* 71 pp. 37-39.

The above lecture was given by Mr Lucien Gabbay, President of the Board of Elders, Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation. ●

# Thoughts and Afterthoughts - by Naim Dangoor

## GOD AND MAN

If we complain and ask God, "Where *were* you at the time of the Holocaust?" His retort, meant to put us in our place, would probably be, "Where were *you* when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if you have understanding." (Job 38:4).

This attitude, in fact, conforms to man's inferior view of himself in relation to our Creator. **"When I behold Thy Heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou have established; What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?"** (Psalm 8: 4,5).

Man's inferiority complex is due to his boundless ambition and limitless possibilities, but man is precious to God as the culmination of the Creation process of the Universe. The cosmos has been searched far and wide without success for any evidence, even for any elementary form of life, never mind an intelligent being. Thus, man is unique, just as God Himself is unique.

The Jewish Bible, the early portion in particular, is a universal charter for the human race, going back to the dawn of civilisation. It affirms the unity of God, that the universe is a result of an act of Creation. The Bible affirms that man was created in the image of God, which does not mean just the appearance. We were endowed with a spark of love, a spark of genius, a spark of justice and a spark of holiness.

The Bible affirms that man has free will - not the ability to do what he likes, but merely the ability to choose between good and evil. All the good that comes our way is from God and all the evil is from our own doing. The Bible does not preach superior and inferior races. Bless that genius, that super Prophet who wrote down that eternal charter of mankind.

For millions of years, God had put his hope in the dinosaurs - much brawn and little brain. They were good for nothing. They fought and killed each other and made no progress. After 100 million years. (What patience!) In one fell swoop, God got rid of them. In due course, man appeared, small in body, large in brain.

In the ante-deluvion period, man indulged in violence which likewise grieved God. Just as he did with the dinosaurs, he again decided to wipe out the human race from the face of the earth, but not entirely. Before the onset of the flood, God made a covenant with Noah, the idea being that the chosen people would suffer for God the wickedness of mankind.

It is this covenant with Noah that was transmitted down the generations and

reaffirmed to Abraham and the children of Israel.

If we say "Dear God, we are not complaining, but is it fair that we were 'chosen' only as the suffering son, the sacrificial lamb, to endure the wickedness of mankind?" His reply would probably be, "Are you suggesting that mortal man is more righteous than God?" (Job 4:17).

In fact, as chosen people, we do have a choice - to conquer or to suffer. The chosen people, what do they resemble? They resemble the man who was selected to be King for a day. He was installed in the morning on his throne and asked to govern. But, they put a millstone suspended above his head. When they came in the evening to see what he did, he complained, "How can you expect me to think and act properly with that millstone above my head?" They replied, "If that object was bothering you, why didn't you order its removal?"

But, in the choice between conquering and suffering, the Jews have definitely decided that suffering performs our duty to God more faithfully than conquering.

Man is only at the beginning of our role as masters of the universe. We have a long way to go yet. God's message is simply this: until man becomes god (angel, Elohim), if he can avoid destroying himself, or merit annihilation by the Almighty, mankind is expendable. We have to learn to accept this fact of life.

By accepting our role as the suffering son, we have implicitly accepted this fact of life - this truth.

When the Torah tells us: "Behold, I have given you this day Good and Evil, Life and Death, therefore choose Life," it does not mean mortal life, but everlasting life; not individual life, but the life of the species; not the life of bread and comfort, but spiritual life. For man does not live by bread alone.

We who are at the tail-end of God's wonderful creation, can notice and experience the limitation of His creative ability. متعجب جاللة بعيرة

Said the Bedouin pointing to heaven as a fast Cadillac whizzed past him, "You think you are wonderful having created a camel!" Said a cynic as he contemplates the female anatomy, "The entrance is near the toilet, and any key can open the door!" The idea of fitting the female of species with a lock and key is not new. At the time of the Crusades 900 years ago, crusaders who volunteered to go to the Holy Land were allowed to fit their bride with a chastity belt and leave the key with the mayor. In case the soldier was killed, the mayor would release the bride. On

one occasion the key of a beautiful young bride was entrusted to the mayor, and when they were half an hour on their way, the mayor came galloping and told the soldier, "You gave me the wrong key!" "You are telling me!" replied the soldier and, continued on his way.

According to Jewish law, a newly married man is in fact exempt from military service for 12 months.

Some people can even tell God what an ideal human habitat for the faithful should be like - an evergreen garden with flowing rivers of orange juice and other exotic fruits, teaming with virgin maidens and young boys - a paedophiles' paradise. Mortal man enjoying the taste of immortality. In contrast to the squalor and the human misery which is the lot of the majority of mankind.

Some scientists argue that the universe needs God's continued attention to keep it going. I reject that view. When you spin a top, it keeps going until its energy is run down. The same with the universe, it keeps going until its energy is expended, it does not need God's constant attention to keep it going.

So, if the universe is the product of an absentee God, what do we mean when we say God is merciful and compassionate, long suffering and forgiving sin? Does it mean simply that God is not there or that he doesn't care? No, we are the product of a good God whose merciful, compassionate and forgiving qualities are imbued in all his creation.

When God told Moses, "No man can see me and live." He meant that mortal man is of no consequence. He is of no intrinsic value. Mortal man is just a stepping stone to greater heights. It is presumptuous and vain therefore to speak of reviving the dead. It does not make sense.

In the presence of the Eternal, mortal man would be consumed like dried grass. ●

My father's family all come from Baghdad and moved to Israel in 1950. From there, my dad and mom moved to the USA in 1960, with their one year old son (that is me). My grandmother as well as most of my family still live in Israel.

My grandmother who is 90 years old has 62 offspring, when you include her children (9), grandchildren, and great-grandchildren (53). I have been to the Iraqi museum in Israel and am interested in the history of our people which is how I stumbled onto your magazine. ●

Rami Abada

New York

*A sharp tongue is no indication of a sharp mind. ●*

## BOOK REVIEW:

### Where is God?

(This book was published under a different name)

by **A. N. Wilson**

Published by John Murray

Reviewed by **Naim Dangoor**

Which god are they talking about?

When Pharaoh AkhenAton (who was the nephew, real or spiritual of our Joseph), attempted to introduce monotheism in Egypt, which he learnt from Joseph, he wanted to be practical and beyond all doubt. The god he offered for universal worship was none other than the sun. Aton, the Sun, was One, Unique, the Undoubted Source of Life, Visible, Indivisible, Eternal. But the Egyptian priesthood would have none of this nonsense and refused to follow Hebrew traditions. The experiment failed and AkhenAton was banished.

Ramesees I was the Pharaoh who knew not Joseph, (Exodus 1:8) who started the nationalist 19th Dynasty in 1319 BCE. This new dynasty started to oppress the Hebrews.

Moses, who was the nephew, spiritual nephew, successor, heir, Crown Prince of AkhenAton, also went into exile. "And it came to pass in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died" (Exodus 2: 23). That was the death of Ramesees II who reigned 65 years.

Amnesty was declared by the new king Merneptah in 1237 BCE and Moses returned to Egypt.

After his experience in the wilderness, Moses could not endorse AkhenAton's brand of monotheism. He could not accept the sun as being our final stop in our search for God. Abraham had gone through all this before. He thought whether the sun, the moon, the stars were the true God, and rejected each one in turn.

The One True God of Abraham was in fact the One True God of Adam. The tradition was passed down through the generations. It was only rediscovered by Abraham. Moses apparently tried his best to convert the young new Pharaoh over to the worship of the One True God, but failed. This may have been the source of the legend that the Torah was offered to other nations but they rejected it. Merneptah was very sympathetic, but could not surmount the opposition of his powerful establishment. The Koran deals at length with Moses's attempt to convert Pharaoh. As he allowed Moses to depart with the Hebrews to worship their God, he told Moses: "And bless me also."

Moses then proceeded to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt.

الله ما أنفع بالعقل أنعبد

God was not seen, but worshipped through thinking. That is why there is controversy about God's existence. Should we then satisfy ourselves by worshipping the sun, the visible source of all life? We now all know that the sun is not eternal, in fact the whole universe is wasting away. Should we not continue to reach out for that amazing Power behind it all? ●

## N. A. T. O.

### North Atlantic Terrorist Organisation

by **Naim Dangoor**

After the Second World War, the Soviet Union began to withdraw within its shell, to lick its wounds and plan for the future in the dawning atomic age and in a world now divided into two main camps - the Democratic and the Communist.

In the words of Winston Churchill, an iron curtain fell across Europe. Suspicion breeds fear, and the West was afraid of Russia's vastly superior conventional capability before nuclear stock-piling by America could restore the balance.

Thus, the United States organised a long cordon sanitaire to contain the Soviet Union in the shape of NATO, for Western Europe, TITO for Yugoslavia, CENTO for the Baghdad Treaty countries of Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Pakistan, and SEATO for South-East Asia. These measures served their purpose well, despite the ensuing nuclear arms race, and kept the world in general peace for many decades.

The coup de grace came when President Reagan decided to embark on the Star War programme which was beyond the Soviet Unions economic capabilities. The United States thus emerged as the only superpower in the world.

While over the years Tito, Cento and Seato fell by the wayside, Nato celebrated its fiftieth anniversary last April with satisfaction at the success it achieved as a defensive organisation. But, with no power in sight to challenge America's supremacy, Nato's defensive role has come to an end. It was transformed instead into an aggressive body.

Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Thus, with German Neanderthals at the helm, Nato became a terrorist organisation acting without UN sanctions targeting hospitals and civilian bridges crowded with people in broad daylight, using ultra-modern weapons from the air, with no risk to its soldiers.

But, who won this unequal war, the 2-day blitz-Krieg that lasted 70 days? There can be no doubt that, despite the damage, it was Serbia's will that prevailed in the end.

At Rambouillet, Milosovitz accepted the terms, but rejected the referendum that was certain to give Kosovo independence after 3 years. He vowed to fight to the end whatever the cost, and that is precisely what he did. The cease-fire terms no longer refer to Kosovo's independence and keeps that province as part of Serbia.

I have no axe to grind for Milosovitz. All I know is that this is the third German-inspired war that the brave Serbs had to fight this century. In WWII they helped the Allies by holding down large Nazi forces at a cost of 250,000 Serbs dead. Nato has said no help to Serbia while Milosovitz remains in power. He will no doubt join the queue of Castro, Gadaffi

and Saddam.

Now EU- the European Union has turned its attention to the Middle East, giving the Jewish State one year to make peace with the Arabs. Let us see if the great nation of America will follow this demand.

German soldiers should bow their heads in shame before attempting to unearth evidence of ethnic atrocities committed by the Serbs. For their own German fathers had managed to carry out their criminal ethnic cleansing without leaving a trace.

Yugoslav Jews resented what they saw as one-sided support by foreign Jewish organisations abroad for the NATO campaign. ●

### END OF THE BARTER AGE

To the Director, London School of Economics

The sale of gold reserves by some central banks is a clear indication that paper money has at last come of age. It no longer needs the backing of a commodity to make it respectable or acceptable. The barter age is at an end. But, the amount of interest paid by the community for the use of money is staggering, and greatly distorts an economy.

The next logical step should be to realise that promissory paper money (I promise to pay the bearer...) must be issued - not in the name of the central bank but in the name of the consumer. Every citizen would be allocated an interest-free credit limit at various stages of his life - on leaving school, on starting a business, on getting married, on buying a house - based on ability to repay. The economy would have a built-in monetary regulator in that the money in circulation would be directly linked to the demand for goods and services.

This system would go a long way to satisfying the ban on usury imposed by Judaism, Christianity and Islam, but without a practical proposition offered for the solution of the problem.

**Naim Dangoor**

**Reply**

Thanks for your letter. Interesting ideas, but some way off surely?

Best wishes

**Anthony Giddens, Director.**

**Scribe:** *It is impossible to put new wine in old bottles.* ●

Dear Editor,

I am writing to let you know that we enjoy reading the Scribe very much and think that Naim is providing an invaluable service to our community the world over. Long may it continue!

Please accept the enclosed cheque as our contribution. ●

**Suzanne & Harone Kattan**

**Hampstead**

# Jerusalem---

by **Zvi Gabay**

Israel Ambassador to the Irish Republic  
(Who has finished his tour of duty last August)



*Iraqi born Ambassador Zvi Gabay, Israel's envoy to Dublin has returned to Israel with his family. On this occasion a reception was held at the Exilarch's Foundation to bid farewell to Mr Gabay and his family, at which some 40 friends were present.*

*The above picture shows from left to right: Ambassador Gabay; Renee Dangoor; Mrs Gabay; daughter Orna; Naim Dangoor. ●*



*Currently 13 Iranian Jews are accused of spying for Israel, which carries the death sentence. The above picture shows a vigil outside the Iranian Embassy in London, in protest against what is believed to be a false accusation against the 13 Jews.*

*A history of the Jews of Iran appears in numbers 56, 57 and 58 of The Scribe. ●*

From: *The Chairman of Bar-Ilan University*

Dear Mr Dangoor,

I have much pleasure in writing to you as the newly-elected Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Bar-Ilan University.

I am sure you will be particularly interested in the establishment of the Dahan Institute for Sephardic Heritage and Jewish Identity at Bar-Ilan which was inaugurated last month.

In partnership with Bar-Ilan University my family has established this Institute which will be dedicated to the creative development, production and wide-ranging distribution of innovative curricula in Sephardic heritage and

which will reach out to teachers in all streams of Israel's school systems and Jewish day schools throughout the world.

This Institute represents the most comprehensive initiative to date to preserve and perpetuate Sephardic Heritage through educational and outreach endeavours. Bar-Ilan University is unique in its capacity to draw a full range of educational, research, outreach and technological resources to carry through this vital mission and I am very proud of our achievements.●

**Aharon Dahan**  
**Chairman**

**Bar-Ilan**  
**Ramat-Gan**

Jerusalem is unique. A city which has taken nine measures of the world's beauty, when mountain air is clear as wine, where the Shofar (Ram's horn) sounds mingle with the ringing of church bells and the call of the Muazzins (announcers of the hour of prayer) above the mosques creating heavenly music, where sanctity reflects eternity. Jerusalem occupies little geography, yet much history.

Throughout its long annals, Jerusalem has become the pivot of Middle Eastern and Western history. Christian and Moslem prophets followed Jewish ones and embodied the city with their faith. Conquerors who came from the far corners of the earth devastated her and vanished. Only the Jews have maintained an unbroken bond of aspiration, longing, anticipation and, ultimately, reclamation.

My ancestors, the exiled children of Israel, made in Mesopotamia (Iraq), the country of my birth, a commitment to Jerusalem:

*"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its cunning.*

*If I do not remember thee, may my tongue, cleave to the roof of my mouth;*

*If I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy." (Psalms 137: 5-6).*

This is maybe the first Jewish commitment in exile to the eternal capital.

Even before King David made the city the capital of his kingdom 3,000 years ago (1004 BCE). Jerusalem has been the focus of Jewish consciousness, religion and nationhood. Since King David, Jerusalem's destiny unfolded. From an isolated village, it grew into a centre for tradition, culture and learning. King Solomon complemented Jewish sovereignty over the city with spiritual centrality and built the Temple as a centre for worship. Subsequently, the city remained the capital of King David's dynasty for 400 years, until it was conquered by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. King Zedekiah, the last King in the Davidic dynasty, surrendered Jerusalem and "The King of Babylon exiled all of Jerusalem .... burned the Temple .... and tore down the walls of Jerusalem" (Kings II 24,25). When Babylon fell to Persia 50 years later, the Jews returned to the land of Israel, and rebuilt Jerusalem and the Temple. Once again, Jerusalem as the centre of Jewish culture and religion; and this centrality continued for the next five and a half centuries. When the Seleucid-Hellenistic Empire violated the temple in Jerusalem, the Maccabean revolt

# ---The Focus of Jewish History

broke out (167 BCE) and Jewish independence centred in Jerusalem was reclaimed by the Hasmonean Kings.

Upon the restoration of the Jewish Kingdom, Jerusalem entered a period of growth and development, until 70 CE, when a bitter struggle against Rome came to a catastrophic end. The second Temple was burned down, Jerusalem was destroyed and its inhabitants enslaved and deported once more. It was in Jerusalem under the Romans, that Jesus of Nazareth walked with his followers and died on the cross.

Throughout all the subsequent periods of foreign occupations over Jerusalem - Roman (until 324 CE), Byzantine (324-614), Persia (614-638), Moslem Arabs (638-1099), European Crusaders (1099-1291), Mamluk (1291-1516), Ottoman Turk (1516-1917) and the British Mandate (1917-1948), Jewish presence and attachment to Jerusalem remained constant and enduring, in spite of many periods of persecution. Jews always settled in Jerusalem and since 1844 (the first official public census) have constituted the largest ethnic group in the city.

For Jews, Jerusalem always played a predominant role - 'Jerusalem' is mentioned over 800 times in the Bible; Jews the world over pray three times a day in its direction and on holidays, bid one another the traditional farewell "next year in Jerusalem!"

The Christian and Moslem links with Jerusalem are essentially religious. The Christian rulers and the Moslem - Arab Caliphs did not make Jerusalem their capital. For the Romans, Caesaria was their capital, the Arabs ruled Jerusalem from their Capitals: Damascus, Baghdad and Cairo respectively. Acknowledgement of Jerusalem's centrality for the Jewish people was expressed by Pope John Paul II.

***"For the Jews, Jerusalem is the object of a profound love, full of the footprints of many generations and a wealth of memories from the time of David, who chose it as his capital, and of Solomon, who built the Temple. Since then, their eyes have been set upon it .... day after day, they focus on it as a symbol of their nation."***

(L'Osservatore Romano, Vatican Daily, 20 April 1984).

Soon after the termination of the British Mandate, a sad moment in Jerusalem's recent history occurred when the city was unnaturally divided. As a result of the ensuing war, on May 28, 1948, the Jordanian legion overran the Jewish Quarter in the eastern part of the city, while Israel held onto the western neighbourhoods of the Jerusalem. Soon afterwards, Israel declared Jerusalem as its capital, once again.

In 1950, Jordan formally annexed the Eastern part of Jerusalem which includes the Old City and West Bank; annexation was not recognised by any state including any Arab States, but for Pakistan. Thus the Holy City was divided, by barbed wire, mine fields, and Jordanian soldiers were stationed on its ancient walls.

Between 1949 and 1967, all Israelis - Jews, Moslems and Christians were barred from their holy places in the Old City, in flagrant violation of the Israel-Jordan Armistice Agreement signed in March 1949. Foreign tourists to Jerusalem were usually requested to present a certificate of baptism. During these years, any reminder of Jewish presence in the city were systematically erased. A road was built through the ancient Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives, tombstones were used to pave floors in military camps and latrines. Fifty-eight synagogues, including the 700 year old Hurva Synagogue in the Old City, were for the most part, destroyed and desecrated. Free access for Jews to their holy places, particularly, the Western Wall, was denied. Israeli Moslems were also precluded from gaining access to the Mosques in the Old City of Jerusalem.

The nineteen years of separation ended when Israeli Defence Forces managed to repel the Arab invasion and re-took the Old City. Thus the city was reunited and returned to its natural State. This was certainly a cause of celebration for the well-wishers of Jerusalem. Shortly afterwards, the Government of Israel enacted the Law for the Protection of Holy Places, guaranteeing freedom of access and worship to the holy sites for all faiths and denominations; internal autonomy for various religious groups in administering their respective properties and holy places, and criminal penalties were imposed on anyone desecrating a religious site.

At the same time, the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) extended Israeli Law, jurisdiction and administration to the eastern part of Jerusalem, thus unifying the city under Israeli rule and putting an end to the discriminatory regulations which prevailed in the city. This legislation was re-affirmed in July 1980 by the enactment of the Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel, which restated Israeli's rights and obligations concerning the city.

Since its reunification, the Government of Israel has aimed to keep alive the unique heritage of Jerusalem. Historical sites are painstakingly preserved. These relics of the past, from its glorious era during the First and Second Temples, through the

Babylonian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Persian, Arab, Seljuk, Crusade, Mamluk, Turk and British are being restored with dedication for all to enjoy. A great task Israel has undertaken. In a sense, the Jerusalemites are remembering 'The days of old' and considering 'The years of many generations'.

Fifty-one years ago, Jerusalem once again became the capital of Israel, and since its reunification, it has become a free city, visited every year by many tourists and pilgrims of all faiths and denominations, including Moslems and Christians from Arab and Islamic countries. Great care continues to be taken to cultivate Jerusalem's special character - its unique beauty, its universal spirit as a holy place for the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam, while accommodating its growing population from 266,300 in 1967 to 690,000 today. The Palestinian Arabs have also grown from 25.8% in 1967, to 30% of Jerusalem's population, since its unification.

Historically, spiritually and politically, Jerusalem was and is the Capital of the Jewish people. However, the city has its share of problems in the turbulent situation of the Middle East, this is over and above its daily municipal administrative problems. Therefore, Israel has agreed to address the issues relating to Jerusalem in the permanent status negotiations of the Current Peace Process between Israel and the Palestinians.

Thirty-two years after its reunification no-one expects Moslems and Christians to give up their claims to their holy places, however neither should expect Jews to give up their ancient capital. Only recognition of the centrality of Jerusalem to the Jewish people and the right of millions of believers of the monotheistic faiths to their holy sites, will foster co-existence and harmony in the city, and shoulder the challenge of the future, while using the words of King David, who made this city the capital of our nation:

***"Pray for the well-being of Jerusalem, may those who love you be at peace. May there be well-being within your walls, and peace in your palaces." (Psalms 122: 2-3, 6-7). ●***

The Baghdad Haggadah  
in Hebrew, Arabic (in  
Hebrew Characters) and  
English

has been now reprinted and  
can be obtained from:  
The Exilarch's Foundation  
4 Carlos Place,  
Mayfair, London  
W1Y 5AE, UK.

(א) מאמר זה נשפך לנגח ואין יתכן לה' ולהכמיר, וסונונתהק עלעטיט טענה, וכלם כמותה ביותה, אשלגל עניינ הנפש הנה כהו טעם  
 והטר עיוונת דוח כהאדם הטובה היא לטעלה, והנה היא טעמו כהאר על עקום אשר נב כעניינה הנה יהיה יתרון לה טעם כהו (ג' יא)  
 לב כהו יתקדוהט - עד ובעט גדולם יעמל, ולב כהו יתרון כהו (טעמה) לנגח גדולם, וכהו יתרון כהו (א' כ' ככחל שארע) (שם כד)  
 מה ענין לנגח, והטעם טענה לא יכיר כהו, וכל כהו לבלאר היקר, על טעם, טענה כהו מוחלם אלגל, טענה השוב כהו, ועל כהו יא הטעם יתרון  
 (ט"ו) (טעמה)

יוֹתֵר לַחֲכָם מִן הַפְּסִיל בְּהַדְעָנִי יוֹדֵעַ לְהַלְהֵד נֶגְדַת הַחַיִּים: (א) עֲזוּב  
 מִרְאֵה עֵינַיִם בְּהַלְהֵד נֶפֶשׁ גַּם יָדָה הֶבֶל יִרְעֵיתֶיהֶם: (א) מִהַר שִׁהָהוּ  
 כָּבֵד נִקְרָא שְׂמֹו וְנֹדַע אֲשֶׁר הָיָה אָדָם וְלֹא יִיכָבֵד לְדוֹן עַם  
 שֶׁיִּתְקַיֵּה מִמֶּנּוּ: (א) כִּי יִשְׁדְּדֵי בְּיָמֵי הַרְפָּה מִרְפִּים הֶבֶל מִרְדֵּי  
 יוֹתֵר לְאָדָם: (א) כִּי מִיִּיֹדֵעַ מִה־טוֹב לְאָדָם בְּחַיִּים מִסְפָּר יָמָיו  
 מִן לְאִשְׁהָל מִאֲדָא לְלִפְקִיר אֶל עֲאֵרָה לְיִסְלָה אִמְתָּאם אֶל חַיָּיתָא: (א) כִּי  
 רִאֲיִיתָ אֶל עֵינָי מִן שְׁהִיחָת לְנַפְשׁ אִיִּצָא הָאֲדָא בְּאִטְל נִקְבָּץ אֶל יָדָה  
 (א) אֶל כָּאֵן מִן מִזְמָן אִתְּסַמָּא אִסְחָו יִתְעָרִיף אֲנָהוּ אֲנִסְמָן וְלֹא יִסְתַּעֵב  
 אֵן יִקְאָצֵם לְמִן אִקְוִיָא מִנּוּ: (א) לְאִתְּנָהוּ יוֹגֵד אִמְרוּ כְתָרָא תִזְיֵד אֶל  
 בְּאִטְל אִישׁ פִּא יִידָא לְלִ אֲנִסְמָן: (א) לְאִתְּנָן מִן יַעֲרָף מִאֲהוּ כִיר לְלִ  
 (א) כִּי מֵהַ יִשְׁרִיף לְחַסֵּן דְּכַפְלָא כִּיֹּן שְׂהַל לְעֵיתָה הַלְבַשׁ וְנִשְׁמַר נֶסֶם הַטְּבַח  
 וְעַשִּׂיב מַה לְעַט, רַלְהָ אֶל אֶל הוּא טַיִדֵט לְכַנְיָה טַלְמֵוּ בְּחַיָּי כַלָּא יִנְקוּ וְהַעֲתָ וְיִשְׁמַח  
 כְּחַלְקוּ וְנֶסֶם בְּשִׁטְוִן מַטְוִן ה' נֶדֶר מִיִּיֹדֵעַ: (א) כִּי מִוֹב עֲרָה־טַיִם כְּכֵן הַטְּוֹלֵם טַלְמֵוּ  
 חוֹצֵי טַמֵּה יִמְוֹב לֵב מַדְנֵבֵשׁ הַדְּלֵבֵת אַחֵר נִחְוִין קְטוֹלֵם. כִּיִּיֵדֵדֵד כֵּל כִּי הַדְּנָה בְּטַיִי  
 הַטְּוִקֵה הַכֵּל כִּיֹּן שְׁמִיף אֲדָם לְטוֹחַ: (א) וְהַדְּנָה לְלֵא הוּטֵל כִּי מַה שְׁהִיֵד (כְּכֵד) כְּכֵד  
 נִקְרָא טַמֵּוּ הַל כְּכֵד נֶשְׂבָאֵן לְנַפְשׁ וְמַה תִּשְׁעֵל הַדְּנָה טוֹד, וְכִרֵט, מִרְפֵה הַטְּקֵרָה וְנִוֵל  
 לְאֲדָם אֲשֶׁר הוּא, כְּלַמֵּר הַדְּוִה כְּכֵד נִוֵרֵעַ וְאֵן לְעִנְוִת, חֹו וְכִרֵט, כְּכֵד נִוֵרֵעַ אֲשֶׁר הוּא  
 אֲדָם וְטוֹמֵר לְטַקְדָה הַזִּמֵּן וְלִשְׂמֵי יִקְלָטֵן כִּי לֵא יוֹבֵל לְשִׁנְתֵי הַנְּזִיָה, וְיִשִּׁי יוֹבֵל לְ—  
 בְּעַפְרֵי, טַס שְׁרִקָץ מַטְל, כְּטַס הוּרֵב חֲתִיִּצְרוּ, וְאִכְפֵּי טַה יִנְחִיֹן אֲדָם חֵי יִשֵּׁב כְּכֵד—  
 וְדוֹס כִּי נִשְׁוֵל טַלְוּ, כְּטַס הַטְּאֹרֵף, וְלִתְרַגֵּל לְעַטְבֵּי כִי אֵן, וְלַעֲתִיד כִּי טַדִּיין, וְהַדְּוִה  
 יִתְרִין עַל הַטְּרֵי מְכֹוֹ יִכֹּל לְלַבֵּת בִּין חַיִּים, וְכִרֵט שׁוֹבֵב בִּין חַיִּים, כִּי טַמֵּה נֶסֶם טַה וְהַכְּכֵל טַוִּים הַטְּרֵי נִוֵסֵם  
 טַקְרָה הַכְּכֵד טַטְוִים וְנֶסֶם כִּי טַה יוֹרֵק לֵא מִן הַכְּכֵל, וְטַמֵּה אֲוִפֵּי מִחִיץ מַה לְעַט עַל כְּדוּמֵל לֵא שְׁרִיֹא יוֹדֵעַ לְעַלֵּל נֶדֶר חַיִּים  
 כִּי קַל יִקְוֹטֵל מְכֹוֹ יִכֹּל לְטַמֵּר בְּאִמְרֵי חַכְמֵיִם: (א) אֶלְיִי בְּכִיִּיתָ לֵב שְׁמִיץ

Hactav Institute, Jerusalem, of Dayan Ezra Basri is in the process of publishing a commentary on the Bible book of Ecclesiastes by Hakham Ezra Reuben Dangoor which he wrote over 80 years ago. Above is a full size copy of a page of the Manuscript which has been carefully kept by his grandson Naim Dangoor. Note the small marginal commentaries added at the age of 70. ●

**BOOK REVIEW:**

**Songs and Verses of Babylonian Jewry in Hebrew**

by **Abraham Ben Jacob**  
Published in Israel

Reviewed by the late **Abraham El-Kebir** in a letter we have come across in our archives.

Dear Naim,

I have to thank you for lending me the book "Shira ve Piyut" which I am now returning to you. The compiler is Abraham Ben Jacob, the same as the author of Yehudei ei Babel. I found it most interesting and absorbing. It contains the poetic works of people, mostly rabbis who

were born in Iraq during the last two hundred years. Many of them left Iraq and lived abroad particularly in Israel, India and China.

Among the well-known personalities I found the names of Hakham Youssef Haim; Hakham Sasson Levy (Smouha); Hakham Ezra Dangoor; Hakham Shamoun Aghassi and others. I knew Hakham Youssef Haim as a prolific writer but not as a gifted poet, which greatly surprised me.

Among the lay writers the book mentioned Salim Ishac; the Moreh, Shamoun Mouallem

Nessim; Meir Zakri, Ezra Haddad and some others, in addition of course to a large number of writers in earlier periods.

Among the writers whose work was not published I found the name of Ephraim Abdalla Yousef, who published a most interesting booklet "Bar ve Lehem" which included in 46 verses, the most complicated rules of the Jewish calendar. I was surprised that this poem was not published.

**Scribe:** Abraham El-Kebir Z"L died 22 May 1973. ●



1910, three generations of Hakham Ezra Dangoor:  
 Right to left: Wife Habiba (daughter of Moshi Gareh); Harav Ezra Dangoor; daughter Farha Shaoul Basri; grandson Saleh Basri; grand-daughter Muzli (later married to Eliahoo Tchwela). ●

## THE CHINESE CALENDAR

In China, everybody has two birthdays - one according to the old Chinese calendar and one according to the modern Gregorian calendar.

In China the calendar was a sacred document, sponsored and promulgated by the reigning monarch. For more than two millennia, a Bureau of Astronomy made astronomical observations, calculated astronomical events such as eclipses, prepared astrological predictions, and maintained the calendar. Analysis of surviving astronomical records inscribed on oracle bones reveals a Chinese lunisolar calendar, of the fourteenth century B.C. (about the time of Joseph in Egypt).

Various intercalation schemes were developed for the early calendars, including the nineteen-year and 76-year lunar phase cycles that came to be known in the West as the Metonic cycle and callipic cycle. From the earliest records, the beginning of the year occurred at a New Moon near the winter solstice. The choice of month for beginning the civil year varied with time and place, however.

Before 1911 the Chinese lunarsolar calendar was the only one in use in China. Following the revolution of 1911, the traditional practice of counting years from the accession of an emperor was abolished,

and the Gregorian calendar came into use. In 1930, the use of the Chinese calendar was restricted to religious and ceremonial events, and for marking birthdays. That is how in China everybody has two birthdays - one according to the Chinese calendar and one according to the modern western calendar, but both dates are expressed in western terms, similar to the Jewish practice of having a Hebrew birthday and a western birthday, but each expressed in its own terms.

The Chinese calendar is very similar to the lunisolar Hebrew calendar and both apply a 19 years cycle. But whereas there are disagreements about how to calculate Chinese dates, our far-sighted Rabbis some 2,000 years ago made certain that only one official Hebrew calendar came into use to the exclusion to all other versions, and this had made possible that dates of festivals and of months are universally accepted by Jews all over the world throughout the generations. The calendar is based on very accurate calculations rather than observation of the moon and the sun.

*Note:* The two birthdays, both among Jews and also among the Chinese coincide every 19 years when, in China the person is required to give a party to his friends. ●

I have read and seen pictures of the Soffair family in your issue No: 69. I also come from the Soffer (this is how we spelled it in Egypt) family and am interested in getting a contact with the family if they are willing to do so for the sake of information about our roots.

My father is Joseph Soffer, 93, living in New York with my two brothers and sister. My grandfather was Reuben Soffer from Baghdad who came to Egypt as a merchant he married my grandmother, who came from Turkey, and settled in Cairo, where my father and us were born. I have a brother Reuben Soffer who has a grandson Reuben J. Soffer. My elder brother is Clement Soffer and my sister is called Marcelle.

I am named Allegra after my grandmother, Simha Soffer. I was married to a second cousin called Cesar Mizrahi who worked and lived for a number of years in Suez (Egypt). He was very friendly with the Dangoor family that resided there and had a business of goldsmith or jewellers I don't quite recollect. My husband passed away some 9 years ago due to a cancer disease. I have two married children with grandchildren. My son Solly Mizrahi is a Professor in transplant surgery and chairman of the surgery department in the Soroka hospital in Beer-Sheba hospital and professor at the medical centre of the university there.

My daughter Leny graduated as Engineer in Landscape worked as a biology teacher for some time but is now a travel agent (freelance). As for myself, I am a retired high-school teacher for English.

This is all the information about myself and family record. I have once met a professor Mr Sopher (this is how he spells his name), at the university of Haifa who denied being Iraqi, he comes from India and has no connection whatsoever with Iraqi Soffers.

As far as I remember asking Iraqi immigrants about the Soffers, they always said that they were all one family. It was possible that some may have crossed to India and others to Iran, but they are all of the same origin.

I would appreciate if the Dangoor family of Suez reached England too, write to me if they wish to do so. ●

**Allegra Mizrahi**

**19 Bayliss Street  
 Mt. Carmel Apt. 7  
 Haifa 34814, Israel**

A man went to seek counsel from a top barrister and asked him: "What do you charge?"

"I charge £200 for three questions," replied the barrister.

"Isn't that a bit steep?" asked the client.

"Yes it is," replied the barrister. "Now what is your third question?" ●

## BOOK REVIEW:

by Linda Dangoor-Khalastchi

### Why People Don't Heal and How They Can

by Caroline Myss

Published by Bantam Books

263 pp. £7.99

I couldn't help thinking of the concept of the Trinity when I started to read the introduction to Caroline Myss's book "Why People Don't Heal and How They Can." The number three kept coming up. The chakra system of the Eastern religions alongside the Sefirot of the Kabbalah and the Christian Sacraments are constant reference points throughout the book. The three astrological ages: that of Aries, Pisces and Aquarius and the three different types of physical and spiritual energies which are defined as Tribal, Individual and Symbolic are interestingly analysed and referred to in the same way.

What has this got to do with healing? You may ask.... Please bear with me and I will try to explain briefly what has taken the author over fifteen-years to research.

Let us begin with the chakra system which was developed in the East and served as the basis for certain Hindu, Buddhist and Tavist teachings. The chakras, and there are seven of them, are the traditional energy centres of the body. They are the areas of interconnection between body and spirit and when opened up - through advanced practices of Yoga - lead the individual to enlightenment. Each chakra roughly corresponds to a location in the physical body and the author likens them to energetic computer discs or data banks that collect information. On a metaphorical symbolical level, the chakra system, the Tree of Life of the Kabbalah and the Christian Sacraments are one and the same in Myss's opinion and she demonstrates this with a graphic illustration which makes her concept much clearer.

Let me move on the Astrological ages. According to her an astrological age lasts about 2,000 years during which time human consciousness develops in new ways. During each age, a certain kind of energy is dominant affecting people's lives, their health and their spiritual outlook. For example, the age of Aries, which ran from about 2,000 B.C. to the birth of Christianity, was an era of law and authority and domination of the physical environment. Tribal energy and culture and a strong sense of nationality was the prominent theme of that period. The laws to define appropriate tribal responsibilities were given to Moses during the Arien age and the author sees a correspondence between these laws and responsibilities and the first, second and third chakras, "...which are those most aligned to family, money, power, sex and self-esteem." Even today, tribal cultures of the Middle-east and the Mediterranean rim preserve an emphasis on codes of honour and shame.



*In 1910, Mrs Farha Sassoon, who had moved from India to London in 1901, came to Baghdad in search of Judaica and spouses for her children. No suitable spouses were found, but plenty of manuscripts were acquired.*

*Above, left to right:*

*Front row: Rachel (Lady Ezra) Flora's daughter; Mrs Sion Aboody; Salim Sion Aboody; Flora Sassoon (Farha); Yemma Hanna (sister of Heskell Gubbay, Flora's aunt); Dina Hayim (sister of Flora Sassoon); Mozelle Sassoon (Flora's daughter, d. 1921).*

*Standing: Sion Aboody (cousin of Flora Sassoon); David Sassoon.*

*In 1920, the great Synagogue was badly in need of repairs and more old books were sold to raise money.*

*Afterwards, Hakham Ezra Dangoor, who was Trustee of the Synagogue, wrote to Mrs Sassoon that a printed Bible was sold in England at a very high price and thought that what was paid for the Baghdad books was not adequate. Mrs Sassoon replied "that early printed books very often fetched more than manuscripts." But nevertheless, sent an extra 200 rupees (£15). ●*

The age of Pisces which followed and which is about to end in the year 2,000, heralded from the start a new emotional consciousness, the idea of duality and separateness and the development of self. Courtly love and western romance was born during this age which also encouraged the growth of science and medicine, and this became the leading weapon against the superstitious core of Tribal perceptions. Its power is Individual, and the corresponding chakras are the fourth, the fifth, the sixth and the seventh chakras - love, will clarity and spirituality.

Christianity was born at the beginning of the Piscean age and Buddhism and Islam flourished throughout the last 2,000 years.

What is about to begin is the age of Aquarius and it will have a different energy yet again. Its energy will be a symbolic one and we have been feeling its effects already in the past few years. If division and duality is the theme of the Piscean age, wholeness and objectivity is the Aquarian's. Seeing the world through a symbolic and unifying vision will be its strength.

From all this dense and rich information, Caroline Myss gleans certain patterns and manages to make it relevant 'symbolically' to an individual's behaviour. Our physical and psychological past as well as our historic and genetic past contributes greatly to the way we react to the events in our lives. We can react in a Tribal, Individual or Symbolic way. The way

we react determines how we see an event, and when illness sets in, it is according to the way we view it that permits the healing process to take place or not. "...Illness may also convey the message that you have to change your life... quite drastically. Because change is among the most frightening aspects of life, you may fear change more intensely than illness and enter into a pattern of postponing the changes you need to make."

When she begins to deal with issues of disease and the cultural and individual contexts in which people become physically and spiritually ill, different layers of meaning appear and so much is explained. Disease and illness may also be "...a catalyst for expanding personal consciousness as well as for understanding the greater meaning of life."

Healing is her profession and she has devised different kinds of healing programmes and methods for people to follow. In this book she provides healing rituals to help one get and stay well. This is what is so good about Caroline Myss, she gives you the concept and the theory and then the practice.

The many clinical examples and stories both personal and professional make this book fascinating and compelling reading.

"Healers often cannot teach, and teachers cannot heal. Myss can do both. She is a blessing to the human race because she shows us what we all may yet be." - is how an admirer once spoke of her. ●



*Last April, another auction was held in Israel of various items of Judaica from the Sassoon Family Estate. Above, an illuminated monumental Megillat Esther (Scroll of Esther). Ferrara, Italy, circa 1770 which fetched a record price of \$629,500 including buyer's premium.*

*The Scroll is 424 cm long, written on velum in dark-brown ink, covered with silver decoration with floral motifs.*

*While other Sassoons were busy making money in the property market and the stock exchange, in international trade and banking, David Solomon Sassoon was quietly collecting Jewish manuscripts and other Judaicas which have turned out to be the wisest of all investments. The Sassoon collection now includes the 14th century Farhi Bible estimated to fetch \$20M. ●*

## **SEPHARDIC HOUSE HONOURS IRAQI JEWS**

by **Martha Gabbay**

The Sephardic Experience Week-End held recently honouring the Iraqi community began with services at the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue on Central Park West, New York. Memories were rekindled by the traditional Friday night food, and the singing of Grace after the meal. Three generations sat together; strangers conversed as if they were old friends. Everyone enjoyed themselves. Friday evening concluded with a lesson on "The Life and Works of Rabbi Joseph Hayyim, The Ben Ish Hai."

The celebration of Iraqi continued after Saturday morning services. Participants were served a delicious Iraqi Sabbath lunch. The meal was followed by a lecture on "The Origins of the Baghdadi Community in India" by Prof. Joan Roland (see new titles for her book).

Iraqi Cabaret was the theme of Saturday night's entertainment. A trio of musicians provided old time melodies for our enjoyment. Hotly contested games of Shesh

Besh were played, complete with vociferous bystanders offering advice. Everybody enjoyed the snacks, especially the dessert table.

Sunday was a day for lectures. The programme started with a tribute by Carole Basri to her grandfather, Frank Iny, and the Jewish High School he founded in Baghdad.

Dr. David Kazzaz of Denver, Colorado, gave a talk on the last wave of immigration from Iraq. He has authored a book, "Mother of the Pound: Memoirs on the Life and History of the Iraqi Jews," which is a tribute to the courage of his wife, and is to be published by Sephardic House. The book relates the final chapters in the history of the Jews in Babylon.

At Sunday lunch a lecture was given on "Jewish Writers Who Are Master of Arabic" by Prof. Sasson Somekh.

"May G-d Protect Them," a moving presentation of the 54 Jews remaining in Iraq today, ended the weekend. Sephardic House is the only organisation that strives to keep alive the heritage of minority Sephardic Jewish communities. ●

## **BOOK REVIEW:** by **Linda Dangoor-Khalastchi**

### **Mother of the Pound**

by **David Kazzaz**

Publisher Sepher-Hermon Press, Inc.

479 pp.

"Mother of the Pound" is an intriguing title and awkwardly un-English. This is due to its direct and literal translation of the Arabic "Um el pound."

The author, David Kazzaz, explains that it was a nickname the Jewish community in Baghdad gave to "a brave young woman called Louise..." whom he knew from birth, and who emerged as a true heroine amidst the fear and harassment that engulfed the Jews of Baghdad in the 1940's. According to him "...with a British pound pinned to her lapel... she led the exodus that would swell to include 92% of her people."

During the Taskeet, "She set an example by leading her people to freedom" and became "Known from Baghdad to Jerusalem as the mother of the pound."

In the late 1940's, David Kazzaz got engaged to Louise. In those times, when a young lady got engaged, she would receive a gold coin, a silver coin and two copper coins from her fiancé. When David Kazzaz gave his fiancé a gold pound coin, Louise made it into a sort of brooch which she pinned to her lapel. According to him, she was the first person to dare go into a Taskeet office in 1950 and renounce her nationality and apply for a laissez passer to leave Iraq. This brave gesture was a real act of courage for anyone to do, let alone a woman, and it apparently encouraged a flood of Baghdadi Jews to do the same. As a result, she became a celebrity nicknamed Mother of the Pound all because of her gold pin.

Although she subsequently got into trouble when leaving Baghdad because of it - she was accused of and tried for smuggling gold out of the country - she finally made it to Israel where she married David Kazzaz.

It is her courage which inspires Kazzaz to write this book which is organised in four parts. Part one focuses on his personal recollections, family history and the rhythm and traditions of daily life in Baghdad. Part two describes the biblical and historical roots of the Babylonian Jews. In part three, a more recent history of Iraq, and Baghdad in particular, is evoked. And part four is his account of his life in Israel where he pursues a post-doctoral training in neurology at Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospital before moving to the United States, where he practices psychiatry for 27 years. Kazzaz ends his book with a message to all human kind: "...know yourself. Cling to your physical and spiritual roots. Believe in yourself. Your own will can mould your fate."

A touching and informative book which makes engaging reading, although the repetitive praising of his wife's qualities was slightly irritating. And, come to think of it, why does he omit to mention her family name? It is odd that he only refers to her as Louise, or the mother of the pound. ●

# The Ishtar Gate of Babylon

I recently had the opportunity to visit the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. It houses the restored Ishtar Gate of Babylon. The attached gives a full view of the gate, and of a mural that decorated the throne room. It is really a very impressive structure.

Also restored was a cuneiform tablet that states that the builder of the gate was none other than our erstwhile 'friend' Nebuchadnezzar. This would date the gate to the time of the exile, and may have impressed our ancestors.

One item I found interesting, was a listing of the months in the Babylonian calendar. It reveals how closely Jewish and Babylonian cultures are related:

## BABYLONIAN HEBREW

Tashritu	Tishri
Arahshamna	Heshwan
Kislumu	Kislev
Tebet	Tebet
Sabatu	Shebat
Addaru	Adar
Nisannu	Nisan
Aiaru	Iyyar
Simanu	Siwan
Du'uzu	Tammuz
Abu	Ab
Alulu	Elul

The only variation is the month of Heshwan. Tammuz, the Babylonian god, is the same as Dumuzi, the Sumerian deity. Apparently the Jews retained a soft spot for Tammuz. The prophet Ezekiel (6th century BCE), complained in Ez. 8:14 that some Jews were observing the fast of Tammuz in the Jerusalem Temple. Later in the same chapter, he also refers to some who were worshipping the sun, a hangover from the days of exile in Egypt. ●

**Naim S. Mahlab**

**Montreal**

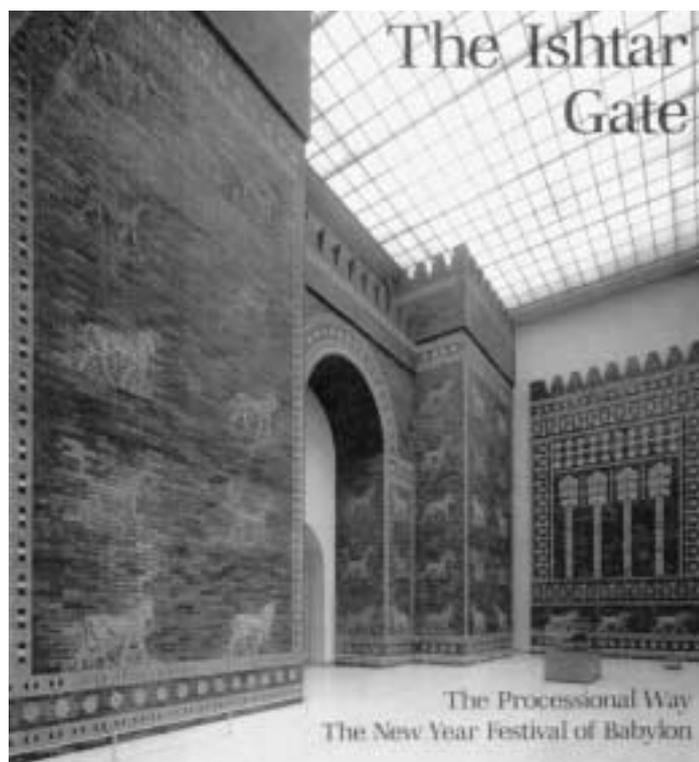
**Scribe:** An exact reproduction of the Ishtar Gate, perhaps modelled on the German version was carried out in Baghdad 50 years ago, as the entrance to the new Iraqi Museum. It was never completed and it was rumoured that the architect managed to build for himself a luxurious villa out of the funds.

In the 80's Saddam Hussein spent large sums to restore the ruins of ancient Babylon and make it an important tourist attraction.

Naim Dangoor writes: Historians state that the first part of the exile to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BCE of some 11,000 captives, the cream of Jewish society, including artisans, architects, engineers, town planners, craftsmen, and other professionals was for the purpose of rebuilding and improving his capital. Nebuchadnezzar wanted Babylon to surpass Nineveh the Assyrian capital, which his father had captured only 28 years earlier, and so he brought all the Jewish craftsmen and artisans who eventually made Babylon the most elegant city of its day. (see **The Exilic Age** by C.F. Withey. Longmans. 71pp.)

It is most likely therefore that the Ishtar Gate and other famous Babylonian landmarks were the results of their endeavours.

**Historical note:** Babylonia (From Gulf to north of Baghdad). Non-Semitic race. Sumerians, with non-Semitic language ruled. About 3000 BCE Semitic tribes forced their way from region of Arabian desert and took most of northern part of the country which became known as Akkad. Both people lived side by side but between 2300-2000 BCE Sumer had supremacy. After 2000 BCE power passed to Semitic population. Meanwhile other Semitics (Amorites) arrived and made Babylon their capital and took over the old culture (old Babylonian) was created. This lasted until c.1760 when kingdom was destroyed by Hittites and, later, Kassites. The latter's rule lasted until c.1200. Meanwhile, in the north, Assyria had risen to power and more than once overran Babylonia. From c.900 Babylonia often came under yoke of



Assyria especially as a result of quarrels between old Babylonian and new Chaldean tribes which penetrated into South Babylonia.

Often Chaldean as well as Babylonian kings on throne were often appointed by Assyria. In the year 625 better times came from Babylonia with the accession of Nabopolassar (Chaldean). With the help of the Medes he destroyed the Assyrian kingdom for good which was divided between the Medes and Chaldeans. Under his son Nebuchadnezzar this 'New Babylonian Empire' reached its peak (he conquered Judah). But under his son Evil Merodach (562-560) who pardoned Jehoiakin and his successor, a rapid decline came. A new Indo-Germanic Persian kingdom rose and in 539 under Cyrus (ruled 558-529) Babylonia became part of the great Persian Empire (for over 1000 years).

The Jewish exiles in Babylon had a hand in this. When Nebuchadnezzar went back in 586 BCE to destroy the Temple, and bring most of the Jews captive to Babylon, they waited for an opportunity to take revenge. This came with the rise of Cyrus and by a swift plan of diverting the river from Babylon, the capital had to surrender unconditionally within 48 hours without a 'shot' being fired.

A thousand years later when the Persians in their turn began to persecute the Jews, Babylonian Jewry invited the Moslem Arabs and helped them take over the land of the rivers.

Although Babylonia, or Iraq, was largely populated by Jews, the population was still a mixed one and in the course of time the non-Jewish population became majority.

Originally the princes of exile were collectors of taxes, later Parthians elevated them to real princes in recognition of services.

Caliph Omar awarded the Exilarch Bostanai for a wife the daughter of the conquered Sassanid Chosroes II. Jews of Babylonia sided with Ali against Muawiya. A Jewish preacher Abdullah ben Saba laid the foundations for the later sect of Shiites.

Ali made Kufa his capital and thither Jews came (in 641) who had been expelled from Arabia. Thus perhaps Arabic gained ground among Iraqi Jews.

The lesson to learn from all this is that the Fertile Crescent is the greater homeland of the Jewish people, and that to secure its survival, Israel must take an interest and take part in the management of all this region. ●

## ISRAEL-TO BE OR NOT TO BE

**Here, in his inimitable style, Moshe Kahtan deals with a question that every Israeli fears, but dares not ask!**

Never, in the annals of history, has there been a case where a state defeated her enemies in several wars of aggression to eradicate her and then go to them, knees bent, and sue for peace, acting as a defeated nation with the understanding that they can impose their own conditions and demands. Israel did it and the whole world applauds. Why???

It has been said that where madness rules the absurd is in the neighbourhood. After 2000 years of exile, persecution and wanton murder of the Jews by Christians and Moslems in the name of God or any other excuse in all the lands of the globe, Israel re-established herself as an independent State just over half a century ago in the same historic land where the Kings of Israel ruled over 3000 earlier.

A new breed of leadership telling the people that Israel must practice "political correctness." In brief, there is hypocrisy on a massive scale: By the world at large who is supportive of a diminishing Jewish State - and what is new about that - and an apathetic Jewish community in the Diaspora and Israel, led by successive governments in the last decade, who seem hell bent to accommodate the whims of the PLO and Syria, claiming that Israel has to pay the price for peace never explaining why or how this bizarre conclusion was reached.

Ever since Shimon Peres resurrected him from the dead, Arafat has been assuming more and more power. He gives the word and the Jews are not only singing but also dancing to his tune.

How convenient it was to introduce terms to win support from a certain section of the population. Victims of terror became 'price for peace.' Some Israeli citizens were labelled as 'settlers' in order to sever them from the rest and attach a bit of stigma to them to make them an easier target. How do you 'dismantle' a town and why not dismantle an Arab 'settlement?' By giving credence to all such nonsense Israel is demonstrating to her enemies and the world at large not a military weakness, but one of a nation and its fibre. This has not been unnoticed by the Arabs who are responding with contempt clothed in a 'peace cloth' as long as they are progressing towards their ultimate objectives.

Israel did not invade to occupy Judea, Samaria and Gaza in 1967. The Arabs themselves gave up these territories in yet another unsuccessful attempt to crush Israel who should neither apologise for this failure nor be blamed for regaining in a defensive war these same territories which were invaded by Trans-Jordan and Egypt in 1948 and remained occupied, yes occupied by them until the 6-day

War. But the world at large has a priority. With the double-faced leaderships in both East and West preaching to Israel the virtues of 'compromise' and their favourite dumb slogan "Land for Peace" familiar, whilst at the same time they bombarded Yugoslavia back into the Stone Age emphasising their principle of no compromise and no flexibility in their imposed conditions of surrender. Whatever happened to the 'Gesture of goodwill and the confidence building measures.'

Let us not kid ourselves: the day of reckoning will come and all the empty 'visions' will explode in the faces of the "Oslo architects" for all to see the calamity brought by them upon the Land of Israel.

It is not possible to go into all the details in this limited space. But, some of the absurdities taking place can be summarised as follows:

1. The President of the State claims that Israel must withdraw totally from the Golan as a price for peace. In a normal world, the aggressor is made to pay.
2. Israel, the Jewish state, asks the PLO to recognise its right to EXIST. How low can one sink to make such a request.
3. Jews in Israel are given jail sentences for being suspected of thinking to insult Islam whilst Arab murderers of Jews have safe havens to go to and if caught, a good chance to be freed as a goodwill gesture.
4. There is something bizarre about having Arab neighbours who consider themselves as Palestinian residents of Israel and call for relinquishing the state in favour of a Palestinian one, are able to abuse the democracy in which they live in order to achieve their aims. Israel designated them as Israeli Arabs!
5. An ex-law breaker is appointed Minister of Justice.
6. A previous finance minister who played havoc with the economy is re-appointed to the same job only this time he claims a willingness to follow "responsible policies."
7. Israel accused by the Arabs of attempting World domination and the Arabs trying to kick her out of 10,000 square miles of Territory while they sit on over 5 million square miles of land.
8. Arabs accusing Israel of racism and ethnic cleansing having themselves ethnically cleansing their countries from Jewish presence and advocated for liquidating the rest.
9. Israel's promise to Jordan supplies of water over the availability of which she has no control demonstrates a high degree of incompetence.
10. "Oslo" was hailed as a 'Peace Accord' but after more than six years of talks no one seems to know what they have agreed upon.

11. Whoever expects peace out of establishing Palestinian areas of control in the heartland of the country, does not demonstrate a knowledge of reality only one of illusions. Oil and water do not mix.

12. The Hebron "accord" followed by Wye can and will only lead to an eventual explosive conflict.

13. Israel claims sovereignty over Jerusalem and yet Jews are forbidden to pray on their holy sites, control of which has been handed to a Mufti. Good old days!

14. The controversial mosque may be considered the 3rd holiest site by the Arabs of late, but what is it doing on top of the Jews' holiest and most sacred one?

15. The failure of successive governments to deal with Lebanon in an appropriate manner. No country would have tolerated over such a period of time to be a constant target for terrorist activities from a neighbour officially supported by other countries without retaliating to put a final end to it. Instead, agreements were made that permitted them to hit the IDF at will and ended up, through the continuous cat and mouse games, with Hizballah being trained, in effect, by the IDF.

Netanyahu, had a rare opportunity to put things right if only he stuck to the principles he put in his book "A Place Among Nations." He did not and the rot continues.

Ehud Barak, a most distinguished among men, has yet to show his prime-ministerial talents. For the sake of the country he has to put an end to the farce initiated by Shimon Peres. It will not be easy now but then the fate of Israel and the Jews has never been an easy one. If he does that, then we will all wish him luck and give him our support. His job is to protect Israel's interests and not the PLO's or anyone else's for that matter. Stop the senseless divisions amongst the people, tell them that they are all one family and they are the ones that matter. Declare that all those who do not have loyalty to Israel the Jewish State as it is, should themselves move out of the country and not move the country out for them, this to include Jews and Arabs alike. Speak the truth unto the nation and confirm that there is no future in the illusion dreamt by those who brought a disaster of great magnitude taken upon all of us and that has yet to unfold. When this is done, Israel will regain respect once again, not only from the Arabs but the whole world. Then and only then she will have a real chance to make a lasting peace. For that let us all pray, otherwise we will all, whoever we are and whatever we are, be the toys of every Tom, Dick, Harry and Bill. We have but one Country, we have but one Israel. SHALOM. ●

# Rahel Shahmoon School

## Putting a face to the name

Thousands of pupils graduated from the Rahel Shahmoon School established in 1923 in her memory by her father Elia Shahmoon, after her tragic death in the first week of her marriage. She succumbed to a virus which traditional medicine and sooth-sayers could not cure.

Money was added to her dowry to rebuild a property (formerly Taawen School) in the centre of the Jewish quarter of Baghdad, with modern classrooms, science-lab, gymnasium, a stage and a beautiful Synagogue.

To the right the Shahmoon family.

Pictures below show various activities at the School. ●



*Baghdad 1920*

*Back Row: Rahel Shahmoon and her sisters Kate (Gubbay); Flora (Solomon); Mozelle (Bekhor).*

*Front row: Left to right: Naim Shahmoon; Messouda Shahmoon (step mother of Elia Shahmoon); Serah Shahmoon; Elia Shahmoon. ●*

★ *Contentment consists not in great wealth, but in few wants.* ★

★ *Truth, like a cork under water, is bound to come to the top.* ★



*1924 - Visit of Prime Minister Jaafar al-Askari to Rahel Shahmoon School.*

*Left to right: Headmaster; Ezra Menahem Daniel; Schools' Inspector A. Brotman; Jaafar Pasha; Abraham Nahom; Tahsin Quadri; Shaoul Sulaiman. ●*



*1924, Boy Scouts with Headmaster Shimon Muallen Nissim and Sports-master Tawfiq Basri. ●*



*1925 - Physical training exercises. ●*



*1937 - Basketball team. ●*

# Inauguration of the School



1924 - Chief Rabbi Hakham Ezra Dangoor surrounded by prominent members of the community, which was at its zenith, on the occasion of the first visit of Elia Shahmoon to his School, following his return from Shanghai.

From left to right 1st row sitting:

---; Sion Nisan; ---; Abraham Hayim Somekh; Sasson Daniel; Menahem Daniel; Chief Rabbi Ezra Dangoor; Elia Shahmoon; Sasson Murad; Sasson Shahmoon; Abraham Hakham Nissim.

Second row; Yamen Cohen; Shimon Moualim Nissim; ---; Ezra Chitayat; Joseph Hakham Isaac; ---; ---; Salman Yehouda; ---; Shaoul Khazma.

Third row: Ali Ghalib Azawi; Sayid Jawad; Baroukh Khazma; Salih Yehouda; ---; Ezra Shehayik; Joseph Murad; Hougui Twena; Ezra Abdalla.

Fourth row: David Abou Roubein; Abd El Sattar; Moshe Soffer; Ezra Twena; Reouben Zelouf; Mouhamad Fatian; Moise Mayer; Rouben Y Zelouf; Gourgi Shehayik; Jacob Moualim Nissim.

Courtesy of Rabbi Abraham Gubbay

## Babylonian Jewish Centre in Great Neck, NY

An ambitious project has been started in Great Neck, New York, by the establishment of the Babylonian Jewish Centre to serve the religious, educational and social needs of the Jewish Community originating from Iraq and Iran.

Sufficient funds were pledged to make possible the purchase of the property which costs \$800,000.

The President of the centre is Edeed Ben-Josef and Officers and Trustees are:

Albert Nassim; Shlomo Bakhsh; Dina Nathan; Verna Rabbie; Isaac Ainetchi; Lana Bakhsh; Sammy Dallal; Jenny Haim; Jamil Hardoon; Joe Jenghana; Fred Jiji; Edna Kamara; Edna Mashaal; Diana Phillips; Ronnie Rabbie; Saul Sheena.

It is interesting to note the minimum scale of contributions required for the purchase and running of the Centre:

Founder	\$200,000
Builder	\$100,000
Gold Sponsor	\$ 50,000
Silver Sponsor	\$ 20,000
Sponsor	\$ 10,000
Friend	\$ 5,000

The Centre publishes an interesting by-monthly newsletter called "Babylonian Roots", of which the first issue appeared in March/April 1998.

The Spiritual head of the Centre is Rabbi Yehuda Eliyahu of Iraqi origin who is also in charge of the Slah (synagogue). Rabbi Eliyahu has a very strong Rabbinical background, especially since his father has been a student of the world renowned Cabbalist Rabbi Kadouri, in Israel, for over 30 years. Rabbi Eliyahu has been a Rabbi for a congregation in Hong Kong for 2 years, and came back to New York along with his family, in 1997. He currently studies and lectures in various synagogues.

"The Torah" Rabbi Yehuda Eliyahu said, "has the power to unite all Jews, whatever their ages and wherever they live."

We wish the Babylonian Jewish Centre and its organisers every success.

The Centre is now the proud owner of five Sefer Torah's including the one in memory of Salman Darwish, donated by his wife Mouzli Darwish and daughter Evelyn Somekh; also one donated by the Kamara family and one by the Bakhsh family. ●



*The Shas Party has won a record 17 seats in the present Knesset gaining 4 ministries in the Barak Government namely - Labour and Welfare, Health, National Infrastructure, Religious Affairs.*

*In the 24 seat cabinet, 4 ministers are of Iraqi origin namely: Binyamin (Fuad) Ben-Eliezer (Abdel Ezair) (One Israel): Communication: Born in Iraq, 63, married with five children. Former general who served as Minister of Housing in Rabin and Peres governments.*

*Dalia Itzik (One Israel): Environment: Born in Israel, 47, married with three children. A teacher, she has served as deputy mayor of Jerusalem.*

*Ran Cohen (Meretz): Trade and Industry: Born in Iraq, 61, married with four children. A former high-ranking officer (Brigadier-General), founder of an organisation fighting drug abuse.*

*Yitzhak Mordechai (Centre): Transport: Born in Iraqi Kurdistan, 55, married (for the second time) with three children. Served as head of all of Israel's three military commands - northern, southern and central - and was Minister of defence under Mr Netanyahu until January 1999.*

*Eleven ministers out of the 24 are Sephardi. The three additional to the above eight are:*

*David Levy (One Israel); Foreign Minister: Born in Morocco, 62, married with 12 children. Formerly Minister of Housing, Immigration, Foreign Affairs.*

*Professor Shlomo Ben-Ami (One Israel): Internal security: Born in Morocco, 56, married with three children. An historian and formerly Israel's first Ambassador to Spain.*

*Rabbi Eli Suissa (Shas): National Infrastructure: Born in Morocco, 43, married with four children, was Interior Minister in Netanyahu government.*

*The above picture shows Spiritual Head of the Shas Party Harav Obadia Yosef, former Rishon Le-Sion and Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel on a visit to the Iraqi Community centre some years ago, being greeted by Naim Dangoor, its President. We are glad to note that Harav Obadia recently had a successful balloon operation. Wishing him many more healthy years. ●*

## IRAQIS WANT FAIR PLAY

by Naim Dangoor

I refer to the meeting hosted by Lord Janner regarding claims of Jewish assets in Arab countries, in the House of Lords. As a major potential claimant for my assets in Iraq and on behalf of 3000 Iraqi readers of my Journal, The Scribe, I wish to make the following statement:

In 1951, Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett stated in the Knesset that when the time comes to settle Palestinian claims for property they left behind, account will be taken of Jewish assets left in Iraq.

**Q1** Since Israel admits holding substantial Palestinian assets, the Israeli Government should be able to pay Iraqi immigrants something on account. Repeated approaches elicited the reply that no payment can be made to the Iraqi immigrants since billions were spent on resettling them in Israel.

**Q2** Is Israel justified in charging Iraqi immigrants for three years of squalor in tents and transit camps, while later immigrants from other countries were given the red carpet treatment?

**Q3** The above position can only apply to Iraqi immigrants who came to Israel. What about the thousands who went to Europe and America, whose potential claims are more substantial? How can their confiscated assets be cancelled against the Palestinian assets?

If Israel succeeds in setting-off Palestinian assets on the strength of Jewish assets left in Iraq and other Arab countries, the net result would be that Israel will have confiscated Palestinian assets, and makes a present to Saddam and others of Jewish assets.

However, Palestinian claims will not go away, they amount to hundreds of billions. Israel will have to pay them something in the end, but will have lost in the process all Jewish claims.

Jewish claims must include our share of the mineral wealth of our countries of origin. These can amount to astronomical sums. At the first WOJAC conference in Paris in 1975, this principle was endorsed and must not be overlooked. Justice demands that individual claims must be recognised, if only on paper for the time being. ●

*(The above letter to the Editor appeared in the London Jewish News)*

## JEWES OF ARAB COUNTRIES SEEK LOST PROPERTY

A massive drive is underway to win the return of tens of billions of dollars worth of property left behind in Arab countries by Jews who fled under duress.

The effort, which is being led with the support of the World Jewish Congress, is modelled in part on the attempt by Holocaust survivors and their heirs to win restitution from Swiss banks.

In addition to the potential monetary payoff, which is substantial, the campaign to win compensation for the material losses suffered by Jews who fled Arab countries has significant historical and political consequences. On the political level, the Jewish claims may be used in the final status negotiations with the Palestinian Arabs to neutralise, or even to trump, Arab claims on property that is now within the borders of Israel. And on the historical level, the effort is an attempt to document the obliteration of the Jewish communities in many Arab countries, a tragedy that has garnered far less attention than the destruction of European Jewry.

An important factor, besides getting the money, is to have the historical record set straight. Jewish losses are many times more than the Palestinians could ever claim.

The executive director of the World Jewish Congress, Elan Steinberg, said the World Jewish Congress had pledged its full support for the effort. "I think this is a matter of justice for all Jews."

The government of Israel has also been supportive of the effort to gather information about the property claims. Some have guesstimated the claims to be in tens of billions of dollars.

The properties, in countries such as Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, include houses abandoned by Jews, businesses and bank accounts that were seized or left behind, and communal property such as synagogues, schools and cemeteries.

One rough way of estimating the Jewish claims would be to note that in 1948, Jews were 2% of the population of Arab countries. Granting Jews 2% of the land mass of Arab countries would leave Jews with an area more than 7 times the size of Israel in its current borders, and a valuable share of the oil wealth.

In 1945, more than 870,000 Jews lived in Arab countries, according to the organisers of the restitution effort. An estimated 600,000 went to Israel, while 260,000 found refuge in Europe and in North and South America.

If Israel intends to use the Jewish claims merely as a set-off for Palestinian claims, this can only cover the Jews who came to Israel. Jews who went elsewhere have every right to expect their individual claims to be recognised, if only on paper for the time being. ●

## THE DEMISE OF WOJAC

Dear Mr Dangoor,

Over the past few years we informed you several times of the severe financial difficulties that threatened WOJAC's existence. During this time, we approached every relevant factor and did our utmost to find a solution to WOJAC's predicament. We weighed all the options, but have found none that could be considered acceptable.

On the 14th of July, 1999, the General Assembly of WOJAC convened and was given a report on the financial situation of the Organisation.

Since the Government of Israel and the Jewish Agency have decided to discontinue their support of WOJAC, the General Assembly resolved that the members of the World Executive of WOJAC be advised that, the General Assembly authorises the Executive of the Israel Head office to liquidate the Organisation and consequently, terminate WOJAC's activities in Israel and abroad.

cc:Mr Ehud Barak, Prime Minister of Israel;  
Mr David Levy, Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Mr Abraham Burg, Speaker of the Knesset

## REPLY:

Dear Mr Benozair,

I am sorry to learn from your letter that WOJAC is now going to close down. This seems to be inevitable as, for the last 15 years, WOJAC has been pretending to act under the false pretences of acting for the benefit of Jews from Arab countries, whereas, in fact, it was only a tool in the hands of the Israel Government.

It seems odd therefore, that just as the claims for compensations are about to be discussed, that the government has decided to withdraw its support. I would like to stress the following:

1. That the Jews from Arab countries have a right to claim a share in the wealth of their country of origin, and this fact should not be forgotten when dealing with a set of Palestinian claims.

2. That Jews from Arab countries who did not settle in Israel must reserve their right to receive adequate compensations from their countries of origin. ●

**Naim Dangoor**

The Zubeida family tree in the Scribe of April 1999 shows Ghala my grandmother (maternal) as 3.11 as marrying Silman Sasson Zubeida. I have never heard of Silman Zubeida till this family tree. It shows my maternal grandfather Meir Baher as 3.10 but does not show who his father was. Definitely Meir and Ghala were the children of the brothers Isaac and Moshe. I always understood that Joseph Baher shown as 4.9 was the brother of my grandfather Meir. In fact, this Joseph did marry Charlotte Shashoua a child of about 9 years old. Joseph died young and on his death bed he chivalrously divorced Charlotte who was still a young child so as to spare her the complications of Kholitza as otherwise she would have been a childless widow, subject to rights of the brother-in-law.

I suspect in your family tree Simha 4.4 should have been shown as married to Isaac not Moshe Baher and Meir should have been shown as a brother of Joseph and Sasson. ●

**David M. Schayek**

**London**



*The Israeli Knesset has been in the news recently with the victory of Prime Minister Ehud Barak having a 75 out of 120 majority supporting his government with its first priority of reaching a comprehensive and final Peace settlement with all the Arabs of the region.*

*The above picture shows Renee and Naim Dangoor before the famous Chagal tapestry hanging in the hall of the Knesset and depicting the arrival of the Mashiya bringing peace to Jerusalem. ●*

# BOOK REVIEWS

by Linda Dangoor-Khalastchi

## An Intelligent Person's Guide to Judaism

by Shmuley Boteach

Published by: Duckworth.

170 pp. £14.95

Agitated and entertaining! That's what I would call Shmuley Boteach. His mercurial mind jumps from one subject to another, burning up nervous energy to convince us that Judaism is not dead, that Judaism is not dusty and old-fashioned, but very much alive and well, and acutely relevant to now, to contemporary life. Why?? Because it "Champions law above love, practice about faith, and religious service above theology and dogma..." In short, because it sets out clear laws of ethics and conduct. And this, according to Boteach, is exactly what our modern and self-indulgent world is in need of. This modern world which seems to have lost its integrity, its way and its purpose because..... Godless.

"..... without God, modern-day ethics have no anchor and are based solely on human whim. Without an ultimate standard by which to measure right and wrong, good and evil become nothing more than euphemisms for personal or collective tastes."

But our dear rabbi is no ordinary salesman. He is a sophisticated marketing man who uses journalistic devices to sell his ideas... to-the-point and brief chapters... clear and attractive headings and subheadings (promising answers to age-old questions) to name but two. Knowing that our concentration span is short these days, he zaps like lightning from one serious subject to another to insure that we do not put his book down too quickly, that we do not get bored.

I am sure that the title "An Intelligent Person's Guide to Judaism" was not a random choice. Advertisers use words in a particularly careful way and so does Boteach. It is a very catchy title and what it is suggesting (not overtly, of course) is that all other guides about Judaism were not written for intelligent people or, to put it more bluntly, that they were written for the unintelligent and since you are a very intelligent person (you do consider yourself intelligent, don't you? it seems to be asking.) Then, this is the book you have been waiting for. This guide is for you. Buy it now! That seems to be the underlying message.

In his acknowledgement he says: "There are many books written on Judaism, but this one differs in that it seeks to present the ideas

behind the Jewish faith in today's context, rather than serve only as how-to guide to Jewish ritual. Whereas other books present Jewish ideas as having evolved historically, I am seeking to promote the idea that the Jewish religion is a holistic set of inextricably linked values which together comprise a state of the art system for human Potential." Wow! Note the use of words like 'holistic' and 'state of the arts', much in Vogue these days. A good journalistic device securing him a younger and, dare I say an 'alternative' audience.

But whether one agrees with Boteach's views or not does not matter, or rather should not stop one from reading him because he is essentially entertaining, informative and often courageous. He is not afraid to ask difficult questions which he tackles openly and bravely, albeit, fleetingly. Serious issues such as the law, suffering, women, male and female energy, the Jewish nation, the Sabbath, God, anti-Semitism and the future of the Diaspora and much more are all discussed in his book. However, he gives me the impression of a man in a hurry whizzing through complex questions, concepts and philosophies in a matter of seconds. Not much depth but a lot of breadth!

Did you know that no human was ever predestined to suffer, die or ache? That, like his Father in heaven, man was meant to live eternally? "But severing themselves from the infinite source of life when they sinned, Adam and Eve began to decay. Adam brought destruction into the world. He might live on after the sin, but then he would succumb to death, just as every apple when detached from a tree succumbs to rot, God condemned Adam to a physical death."

However, Boteach believes passionately that it is reversible. In his chapter on suffering he says: ".....as there was never meant to be any place for death in our world, neither was there ever any plan for suffering or pain. The Garden of Eden, previously this earth, was perfect. Only now, in this interim period between life in Eden and life in the perfect world-to-come, are we ravaged by cancer, aids, car crashes, war, hatred, and genocide. But since it was not part of the original plan, this rabbinic teaching declares suffering has no meaning. It was an error, an aberration, a mistake to be corrected, a crooked line that can still be made straight..." but unfortunately, he does not tell us how. Unless he means that when all men become 'good' and obedient, only then will the crooked line be made straight... He spends

time on the issue of suffering which he believes is a profoundly Christian issue in contrast with the Jewish view which totally rejects any belief in the ennobling qualities of suffering. However, our rabbi loses his cool very quickly on the subject "... it irritates me no end whenever people speak of how much they have learned from hardship and suffering, as if similar lessons could not have been acquired through a far less painful means."

He goes on to contradict himself two paragraphs later by saying "...undeniably, suffering can cause man to rethink his life and find wisdom as to its enhancement and the betterment of the lot of his fellowman."

This is typical of Boteach. Talking so fast that he forgets what he had just said and contradicts himself in the process. Or, feeling that certain ideas are too passionately stated he counter balances them with milder and opposing statements. An adept juggler of ideas who wants to pull us into the whirlwind of his enthusiasms.

There is a chapter on the very fashionable subject of female and male energy. The Ying and Yang of Judaism, so to speak, with a provocative sub-heading "Judaism as the next Buddhism," here he states that in the coming century Judaism will emerge as the next Buddhism, "A religion which the West's inhabitants do not directly adopt, but look to as the source for their own spirituality." And he ends with a hard-sell, "Judaism enjoins man not to leave the earth and connect with God in heaven, but to create heaven on earth. Not to renounce material pleasures, but to celebrate our humanity with God as our partner. Not to embrace a life of celibacy, but of holiness in sexual relations. Only Judaism emphasises that body and soul can achieve a perfect harmony, and that man can do good by harnessing, rather than transcending, his most basic instincts. Judaism is the perfect spiritual energy for a generation that wants to be wealthier and more prosperous than ever before, but not to be seduced by its own prosperity... This does not mean that our religion is any better than others. Only that the opportunity has finally come for our religion to reveal its teachings to an increasingly willing audience." Wishful thinking, perhaps. I don't know about you, but I felt rather uncomfortable reading this, however, a rabbi who dares say that he has no problem in admitting that religion is a crutch because "Experiencing insecurity is part and parcel of being human". ●

## The Last Kabbalist of Lisbon

by **Richard Zimler**

Published by Arcadia. 318 pp. £11.99

In 1990, the author Richard Zimler was in Istanbul researching Sephardic Poetry when he discovered a set of 9 leather-bound manuscripts in a small cylindrical chest which was used by Sephardic Jews to house the Torah. The manuscripts were written in the square Hebrew script but the language used was old Portuguese. That is to say old Portuguese phonetically transcribed in Hebrew. They were all signed in a careful script by a man named Benekiah Zarco and seemed to have been written over the course of 23 years from 5267 to 5290 - 1507 to 1530 CE.

The Kabbalist of Lisbon is the translation of these manuscripts, a mystery story set in 16th century Portugal.

In 1496, King Manuel of Portugal decides to convert the Portuguese Jews to Christianity rather than expelling them and by so doing, losing such valuable and erudite citizens. Under dreadful and coercive methods some did convert. However, these New Christians, as they were called, secretly persisted in their beliefs praying in Hebrew and keeping the Sabbath and as much of their rituals as was possible.

One of these 'Secret' Jews was Abraham Zarco, a renowned and respected Kabbalist who was found dead with a dead naked girl by his side. The story is narrated by his nephew, Benekiah Zarco a talented young manuscript illuminator who tried to solve this enigmatic murder.

This is a 'who-dunnit' thriller with a difference. In this hauntingly beautiful mystery story - which also introduces us to the hermetic traditions of the Kabbalah - Richard Zimler authentically captures the daily lives of Lisbon's clandestine Jews evoking their fears and harrowing experiences in those dark times.

Richly written with remarkable erudition, the author weaves an intriguing murder thriller with vivid historical and religious detail and transports the reader across space and time. An exotic novel that can be read on many level like a true Kabbalist text. ●

My husband subscribes to your publication and we look forward to receiving every issue. My late father-in-law Reuven ben Yahyah Shakarchi (Robert Shakarchi) was born in Baghdad in 1904. I know that Robert was in the RAF and worked as an interpreter. He was also a proof-reader/type setter for an Arabic newspaper. Robert's parents were Yahyah and Chukla (Rachel) Shakarchi. The family was in the confectionery business. If any of your readers has any additional information about the Shakarchi family history, I would be very pleased and grateful to hear from you. ●

**Mary Ann Shakarchi**

e-mail: [taramas@juno.com](mailto:taramas@juno.com)

## Natural Alternative to HRT

by **Marilyn Glenville**

Published by Kyle Cathie Ltd. 219pp. £10.99

This book is a must! Every woman should read it, (and, I dare say, men too would benefit greatly from it!)

Most women, living in modern society, will be faced with a choice to make at around 50-55 years of age: that is whether to have or not to have Hormone Replacement Therapy, otherwise known as HRT.

To make a decision as important as that, requires some knowledge about the menopause, about how the body functions before it and how it changes after it, as well as a clear definition of HRT and the risks involved in making that decision.

Natural alternatives to HRT is a comprehensive examination of the menopause and the myths which surround it, often perpetuated by drug companies and those Doctors who treat it as an illness. It is about choices that most women do not know they have. Choices to prevent and treat menopausal Symptoms naturally without resorting to HRT.

For the woman in her 20's, 30's or 40's this book explains and prepares her for the changes she might expect in the future. For the woman who is going through or has gone through the change of life, it gives her detailed information and an optimistic alternative which would allow her to ask the right questions and to make the appropriate decisions. But, this book is not just about having HRT or not having HRT, and it would be doing its author, Marilyn Glenville, a great injustice to define it in that way. It is also about the importance of nutrition and diet, (did you know that eating animal protein, after a certain age, depletes our bone reserves making us vulnerable to and possible candidates for osteoporosis?) About the ageing process (did you know that both men and women alike experience some loss of bone mass as they age and this begins in their 30's?) About the repercussions of one's life style on the body and its close links with degenerative diseases, as well as about insomnia, low-libido, migraines and depression.

Not very optimistic you might think. But I assure you it is Marilyn Glenville who is one of Britain's leading nutritional therapists truly believes that many of the problems experienced by women at the menopause have more to do with poor diet and an inappropriate life-style than with falling hormones. Since our life styles have changed dramatically from that of our parents and grandparents, we need to make a conscious effort to program the right kind of exercise in our lives today. And, it would be hard to exaggerate, according to her, the benefits of regular exercise and regular sexual activity. It is a case of "If you don't use it you lose it." ●

## The Stillest Day

by **Josephine Hart**

Vintage. Paperback. 207pp.

The first time I read a book by Josephine Hart was about 8 years ago. I had not heard of her before, nor did I know that she is married to Maurice Saatchi. But the book, in question, (Damage) made a big impression on me at the time. It was later made into a film with Jeremy Irons and Juliette Binoche as the Protagonists.

Her latest novel "The Stillest Day" is yet another masterly portrayal of obsessive desire gone horribly wrong. It tells the story of an art teacher who lives in a small village with an aged and sick mother and who is resigning herself to marrying a farmer who has been courting her for many years, but who has not yet popped the question. But as one senses that he is just about to do so, a man arrives in the Village with his pregnant wife, and this event brings a dramatic change to their humdrum lives.

Our spinster heroine, named Bethesda Barnet, feels instantly, and for the first time in her life, a physical passion for this newcomer who is to teach at the same school as her. The farmer pops the question and is told that he has to wait for the answer.

Josephine Hart writes in the first person and the thoughts and longings of Miss Barnet are described in gripping and unusually evocative style with a particular emphasis on the body. A certain mounting tension begins to weave itself into the cadence of the book and one almost feels that one is watching a film as one reads this story unfold into an unexpected and psychologically macabre thriller. Its mesmeric quality with the unforeseen twists of events makes it a cross between a Roald Dahl tale and an Alfred Hitchcock film.

The adept and sure-handed author guides us through the inner world of her heroine who inevitably falls in to social disgrace and ruin. And, although, the story is not to my taste, I cannot help but admire the masterfully powerful prose and the way the book is structured. Josephine Hart has an ease with the English language that makes her writing elegant, confident and disquieting. ●

Don't entrust your money to a friend.

In the end, you may lose not only your money, but also your friend! ●

### Tip for deep frying:

*Place a small piece of carrot in the oil when deep frying, (it presents accumulation of burnt particles).*

*Cold tea is very beneficial to plants.*



*The participant Rabbis.  
Left to right: Rabbi Dr Abraham Levy; Rabbi Dr. Haym Soloveitchik;  
Chief Rabbi Bakshi-Doron;  
Emeritus Chief Rabbi Sirat of France. ●*

In February 1998 a seminar on a Dialogue between the three Monotheistic Religions - Judaism, Christianity and Islam was held at Rabat capital of Morocco under the patronage of King Hassan II.

The Jewish representatives were:

Rabbi Eliahu Bakshi-Doron - Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel; Rabbi Dr. Abraham Levy - Spiritual Head, Spanish & Portuguese Jews' Congregation, London; Rabbi Rene-Samuel Sirat - Chief Rabbi of France; Rabbi Dr. Haym Soloveitchik of New York.

Common values shared by the Three Monotheistic Religions:

- Belief in the One True God - Merciful, Compassionate.

- Peace - Justice - Human dignity - Love - Tolerance - Solidarity - Humility - Forgiveness. All these values emanate from Almighty God.

It was stressed that all these values have to be put into practice and to follow the basis of co-existence, namely that we are equal but different.

**Scribe:**

*Equal but different sounds like equal but separate which was the philosophy of the discredited Apartheid regime of South Africa. ●*



*Rabbi Dr. Abraham Levy speaking to other delegates. ●*

## Jewish Arab Co-operation

by Avraham Rabinovich

from The Jerusalem Post

Internet Edition.

Sent in by David M. Khalastchi

Morocco's late King Hassan discussed his vision of a strategic alliance between the Arabs and the Jewish world in a 1977 meeting with the former Jerusalem deputy mayor Andre Chouraqui.

In the royal palace in Marrakesh, Andre Chouraqui saw his book lying on the table near which King Hassan waited to receive him.

Chouraqui, was the first Israeli to have ever been publicly invited to an Arab country. It was his book, "Letter To An Arab Friend", which had moved the Moroccan monarch to defy Arab precedent by extending the invitation.

Chouraqui had, in the book, spelled out with eloquence and sweeping detail the contribution of Jews and Arabs to each other's culture over the centuries.

During their hour-and-a-half meeting, the king revealed that he was thinking beyond peace to the possibility of a strategic alliance between the Arab world, on one hand, and Israel and world Jewry on the other.

"The king said that within 10 years of a peace agreement such as an alliance would constitute a world power of the first order," recalled Chouraqui. As Hassan saw it, the power would stem from a combination of Arab demography and oil and Jewish technological, military and financial skills.

Chouraqui then went to president Ephraim Katzir. "I told him the story and he said "You're free to do as you wish." Chouraqui did.

During his meeting with Hassan, Chouraqui elaborated on his own vision of peace. In order to help the Arabs come to terms with Israel's permanent presence in the Middle East and not grudgingly accept it as a foreign intrusion or a fait accompli that could be reversed when opportunity permitted.

As for the practical aspects of peace, Chouraqui rejects Prime Minister Ehud Barak's stated objective of physical separation of Jews and Arabs.

"We should unite people and separate authority," he says. In a Jewish-Arab federation, which he advocates, borders would be open.

Is it realistic to think in terms? More realistic, believes Chouraqui, than it would have been after the Six Day War to imagine today's realities, including multiple peace tracks.

In east Jerusalem this approach is already in effect, with Arabs who live under Israeli sovereignty voting for Palestinian Legislative Council.

"Palestinians couldn't speak Hebrew 30 years ago," he notes. "Today they speak it better than many of us. In many ways, they've

become more Jewish than the Jews." Israeli Jews have not done nearly enough, he says, to learn Arabic or to learn that there is more to Arab culture than bombs, that it is, in fact, a great culture.

Fear of levantinization must give way, he says, to a true readiness for co-existence. "It is a mistake not to want to be part of the Levant. Jews have always lived in the midst of other nations and remained Jews. What is there to be afraid of? In our generation, we have always lived in the midst of other nations and remained Jews. What is there to be afraid of?"

It was only a few months after Chouraqui's visit to Morocco that Moshe Dayan came there in disguise to meet, under the king's auspices, with Hassan Tohami, Egypt's deputy premier - a meeting that was prelude to president Anwar Sadat's breakthrough visit to Jerusalem later that year.

After publication of his translation into French of the Koran, with his own commentary, Chouraqui would visit Morocco as the king's guest a second time. "This time we spoke for three hours."

In 1983, Chouraqui obtained permission to visit his native Algeria in order to show his birthplace, the town of Ain Temoucnet, to his eldest son. "He was getting married and I didn't want him to found his own family before touching his roots."

The family had lived in Algeria since the expulsion of Chouraqui's ancestors from Spain. Chouraqui's father was a prosperous merchant and owned vineyards in the surrounding countryside. He was the parnass, or head, of the Jewish community and built a synagogue which was converted into a mosque after Algeria's 150,000 Jews left together with the French, in 1964.

Chouraqui and his son entered the building - one of the most beautiful in the Mediterranean region.

From the desk in his book-lined study in Jerusalem's Abu Tor quarter, Chouraqui, 82 next month, looks out at a panoramic view of the Old City with eyes that see a panoramic view of history as well.

**Scribe:** *For the last 30 years, Naim Dangoor has been advocating such a Middle-east federation as the only basis for a lasting peace among all the peoples of the region - not only Jews and Arabs but also Kurds, Assyrians, Turkemen, Copts, Berbers and others. This takes us back to the millet system of the Ottoman Empire which worked well in a multi-ethnic society, but was cruelly dismantled by imperial and oil greed.* ●

★ *It doesn't matter what the colour of your skin is - what matters is the colour of your heart.* ★



*How to bless a King. King Hassan II receiving a blessing from Dayan Toledano.* ●



*Moroccan Jews enjoyed close relationship with their Moslem brethren going back to the glorious days of Andalusia which lasted for hundreds of years. On the expulsion from Spain in the 15th century, both communities returned to Morocco with the common memories of earlier days.*

*King Hassan II who died last July had many close Jewish friends and advisors. He enjoined the people of Morocco to look after the Jews in order to ensure peace and prosperity for the Nation. At his funeral, Israel provided the largest delegation of mourners, totalling over 200, headed by President Weizman and Prime Minister Barak.* ●

## EARLY ALPHABET

by Naim Dangoor

The suggestion, (Letters, Jewish Chronicle, June 4th) that the Ten Commandments were handed down at Sinai in Egyptian hieroglyphics is a gross insult to our rich and ancient Jewish heritage.

The writer argues that the earliest example of alphabetical writing discovered in Palestine goes back to only 11th century BCE. But, the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

During their sojourn in the Land of Goshen, the Children of Israel spoke Hebrew - an Israelitish dialect of Canaanitish, and were little acquainted with the 'alien' Egyptian tongue and its form of writing.

It is generally agreed that the first alphabet appeared around 1700 BCE in the Canaan area, fully 400 years before the Exodus from Egypt and was most certainly available to Moses and the Priesthood. In fact, John F. Healy's "Reading the Past: The Early Alphabet" (British Museum) illustrates such a carved alphabetic inscription on a sandstone sphinx, dating from c. 1700 BCE.

All this accords with my own projection that this simple form of writing was invented by none other than our Patriarch Abraham during one of his trips to Egypt to study their system of writing. He came up with the first 16 letter phonetic alphabet which is the basis of all the alphabets in the world. (See: Monograph "Was the Alphabet a Hebrew Invention by Dr. Diringler, published by The World Jewish Congress.")

Those 'Ancient Hebrew' letters were used by Abraham to write down the oral traditions received from earlier generations and which became the first chapters of the Bible. At Sinai, the Ten Commandments, as well as the whole Torah was given in Hebrew and recorded in that alphabet. It exists in the Samaritan Scroll of the Torah and the Book of Joshua. (For a Samaritan copy of the Ten Commandments in Ancient Hebrew, see Scribe No. 70 page 28).

The 'Ancient Hebrew' alphabet was changed to the more attractive 'Assyrian' script by Ezra The Scribe, in Babylon in the fifth century BCE.

When we say someone is illiterate, we only mean that he can't read and write, we do not mean that he can't speak or understand the spoken words. Man had perfected speech over thousands of years and that achievement gave him a great advantage over animals. The invention of the phonetic alphabet made a link with the spoken word, rather than with the mental picture behind it.

The alphabet is the basis of all learning. It made learning universal, just as speech is universal. It democratised learning, whereas Egyptian hieroglyphics kept learning the monopoly of the priesthood. The alphabet was part and parcel of the Torah.

## Book Review by Naim Dangoor

### FROM THE FRYING PAN INTO THE FIRE

#### A People Apart

#### The Jews in Europe 1789-1939

by David Vital

944 pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £30

Even before Hitler made of the Germans savage mass murderers, my late father used to tell me that Jews in Europe are like salt in food - a small amount is necessary; a moderate amount can be tolerated, but a large amount becomes unacceptable - which means that anti-Semitism is endemic in Europe, to that Continent's lasting shame.

The notion that anti-Semitism is an endemic disease in the minds of most Europeans can be illustrated by the fact that Poland got rid of virtually all of its 3.3 million Jews, anti-Semitism there is still very strong, and foreign tourists who maybe suspected of being Jewish, are always stoned and abused.

The modern history of the Jews in Europe begins with the French Revolution. Emancipation, benefited Jews in innumerable ways, but it also increased the risks, because it replaced the personal by the impersonal and brought Jewish communities directly into contact with the modern State with all its power and unpredictability. In earlier periods, Jews had survived and even prospered through the well-loved skills of their leaders in making use of personal contacts with the great.

This seems to suggest that Jews should accept anti-Semitism as a fact of life and should only try to find out the best way to handle it. This is unacceptable.

The fact of the matter is that Democracy itself in the shape of majority rule is responsible for modern anti-Semitism. There is an obsession in the world today that Democracy means the rules of the majority. But, majority rule as an expression of Democracy is only valid where differences are over minor issues. In all societies divided by race, religion, language or colour, the rights of

In the past, we used to say that the Phoenicians invented the alphabet. The Phoenicians are no longer mentioned, it is now believed that Canaan was the origin.

What indication is there that Abraham was involved in the early alphabet? The answer is in the question. In Genesis 17:5 "Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham..." God changes Abraham from Abram by inserting the letter h and changes Sarai's name (Gen 17:15) "As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be..." changing her name from Sarai to Sarah by adding a mute h at the end. This h is an alphabetical letter, and I believe is sufficient proof of its use as such. ●

all sections have to be equally respected. Hitler came to power through the ballot-box, and then used his democratically obtained authority to destroy his opponents.

We are told, for instance that in 1931 of the total population of Poland of about 32 million, less than 65% were Poles. The Jews made up nearly 10%, and in towns like Warsaw, Cracow, Lublin, Lodz and Lwow, represented between a quarter and a third of the inhabitants. It is as if we have to show sympathy to the Poles for being only 65% of the total population. Why should the Poles not be only 65%, a 55% or any proportion.

Majority rule, even majority tyranny, is the root of political evil in a world which is becoming increasingly globalised.

Discriminated against they might be always, and actively persecuted from time-to-time. Jews were living on the slopes of Vesuvius, but the soil was rich and irrigated by a culture and religion of mesmerising power. The very fact that they were a people apart was a source of happiness as well as danger. But, of course, the volcano was there all the time, and when it finally erupted, the results were devastating. Vital's epilogue lists updated figures of the destruction of two-thirds of the civilian Jewish population of Continental Europe during the Second World War. Of a total population of 9,415,840 in 1939, the lowest estimate of losses was 5,596,029, the high one 5,860,129. Poland lost about 90% of its Jews, Lithuania 85% and in eight other countries losses were over 60%. David Vital's provides a grave and exhaustive account of the political background to this monstrous crime against a gifted, civilised and peaceful people, who, although numbering only one in 400 of world population, produced on their own the three most influential personalities of the 20th century - Marx, Einstein and Freud. ●

The Scribe issue No: 71 was very, very stimulating, especially the Cover Page. ●

Charles Rouben Setty

Stanmore

★ *When wealth is lost, nothing is lost, when health is lost, something is lost, when character is lost, all is lost.* ★

★ *Frown less and laugh more. Preach less and practice more.* ★

**TIP:** *Put a spoon into the glass dish before pouring in the hot liquid to avoid cracking.*

## SAFRA SELLS HIS BANKING INTEREST

HSBC (Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation) is to buy Republic New York Corporation and its sister company Safra Republic Holdings for \$10.3 billion (£6.3 billion) - its biggest-ever foreign take-over of an American bank.

The deal adds \$71 billion to HSBC's \$483 billion assets, making it the third largest bank in the world, behind Citigroup and Bank America.

However, Republic is also precisely the type of mid-sized American bank that analysts expect to be the focus of the next wave of mergers and acquisitions.

Both Republic New York Corporation and Safra Republic Holdings are part of the banking empire of reclusive Edmond Safra, who stands to make about \$2.9 billion from the sale. He set up Republic New York Corporation in 1966 as a community bank with 55 employees.

HSBC said late last night that it would issue 88 million new shares at £21 to raise \$3 billion towards the cost of the acquisition.

Republic New York Corporation's main business is the Republic National Bank of New York, which has 2 million customers and 83 branches - the third largest network in the city after Citibank and Chase Manhattan. It also has private banking operations in New York, Miami, Los Angeles and Asia. As a result of \$191M suffered in Russia, and elsewhere, Republic Bank shares fell to a low of \$36 last January, but the price has since doubled. HSBC gained 83 new branches and 2 million customers, giving it 30,000 wealthy international clients world-wide and \$56.5 billion under management.

In 1992 HSBC purchased Midland Bank at £3.9 billion. Mr Safra praised HSBC's chairman, Mr Bond, as "One of the very few great global bankers," adding that "I am pleased to entrust to him the banks I dedicated my life to building."

Edmond Safra receives \$2.9 billion from the deal which he plans to invest in a charitable foundation.

Edmond Safra, 67 is one of eight children of a Syrian Jewish banker whose ancestors were gold traders in the Ottoman empire. He grew up in Brazil before moving to Geneva, where he launched the private Trade Development Bank.

### HISTORICAL NOTE

The Safra banking empire started life as Safra Freres, well over a century ago in the Ottoman empire. The family financed trade between Aleppo, Constantinople (now Istanbul) and Alexandria. When the Ottoman empire came apart, Jacob Safra, a former partner in Safra Freres, set up a separate banking business under his own name in

Beirut. With its base in the Lebanon, the Jacob Safra bank became the bank of choice for many of Syria's and Lebanon's rich Sephardic Jewish families, who trusted the Safras to manage their business and personal financial interests with care and discretion.

After the birth of the State of Israel in 1948 the Sephardic Jewish community, originally from Spain and Portugal, but now based in Arab lands, found itself under siege.

Although Beirut remained the centre of banking and commercial activity in the region, the Safra family migrated to Brazil, where Jacob and his son Edmond established a new bank, the Safra SA in Sao Paulo, which eventually changed its name to Banco Safra de Investimento. This bank is run and controlled by Edmond Safra's younger brothers Joseph and Moise, but has no shareholding connection with Republic and its subsidiaries.

In 1972 he used the \$40M of capital that he accumulated from dealings in Italy to buy into a small Geneva finance house and, propped up by the assets of his wife, the former Brazilian heiress Lily Monteverdi. The business was eventually to expand and grow into the Trade Development Bank, a large private and trade finance bank, which pulled together the old Middle Eastern clientele of the original Safra family business in the Ottoman empire and Beirut.

As the Trade Development Bank built up its asset management business, becoming one of the most successful private banks of its time, with interests in Geneva, London and New York, it began to attract the attention of bigger players in the financial market, who wanted both the wealthy and exclusive client base and Edmond Safra's skills as a private banker. Sensitive dealings between Mr Safra and his client base among Sephardic merchant and banking families were and are still to this day conducted in a rare Judaeo Arabic script, used only by the Sephardic Middle Eastern communities.

After a bad deal with American Express, Mr Safra set about to recreate his empire under the rubric of Republic National Bank of New York.

Edmond Safra's skill has been to harness the savings of an affluent, scattered and little understood ethnic group. Much has been written of the post-Holocaust era and the dispersion of the Eastern European Jews to Western Europe, the US and Israel. But the rise of Israel as a modern Middle Eastern power led to a second Diaspora among the descendants of those who initially fled the Spanish inquisition in the 15th century - the Sephardic Jews.

Mr Safra, as part of that group, has been able to win their loyalty, gathering 30,000 wealthy investors from the Sephardic Diaspora from not just Syria and Lebanon, where they began, but

Iraq and Iran, and the Jewish communities of Latin America. In this very tribal group, which has at times felt politically isolated from more westernised Jews, investing with the Safra bank is a link to both the past and a secure future.

Edmond, an investor alongside the Reichmann family in Canary Wharf, has wanted out for personal reasons. He is believed to be unwell and less able to serve the needs of the community with which his family has dealt for generations.

The risk for his successors, HSBC, is that the high-rolling secretive asset management business it is buying with Republic will be less trusting of an Anglo-Scottish management culture and that clients will gradually repatriate their funds to managers, including other members of the Safra family, whom they have trusted for generations. That would make the price paid by HSBC (\$350,000 per client) look extremely steep. ●

### To Mr Avner Meiri (Fouad Saigh) Ontario-Canada

Our objection to publishing your article is your statement that the Torah was written down around the 10th century BCE. It is well-known and established that the alphabet was invented in the 18th century BCE at the time of Abraham and in the region frequented by Abraham. That invention was available to him and the book of Genesis was in fact the diary of the Patriarchs, in which they recorded all the oral traditions passed down from earlier generations, beginning with our ancestor Adam, who discovered the wild wheat in the garden of Eden some 9,000 years ago. It is my belief that the alphabet was in fact invented by non other than Abraham himself or by his secretary or by a member of his entourage.

Your attitude to our Patriarchs, that they are not pure fiction is rather condescending. Your instance on having pottery to prove the authenticity of the Bible is not reasonable. These have to be supplemented with constructive thinking, which reminds me of the story of one man telling another: "In my town they excavated the street and found cables there which shows that our ancestors had the use of the telephone." The other man replied: "In my town they dug up the pavement and found nothing." "What could that mean?" asked his friend. "It means" he replied "that my ancestors had the use of the wireless!"

The Israelites certainly did not borrow from the Canaanites the elements of religion as you claim. The Hebrew religion was unique, its roots going back far beyond Abraham, and contradicts everything the Canaanites stood for.

The Bible itself is unique and does not require additional evidence. ●

## HAVE THE ARABS FINALLY LOST THE JEWS OF IRAQ?

by **Ibrahim Gharabia, a Jordanian writer**

Translated from Al-Hayat

Newspaper 14.7.1999

The Jews of Iraq may have been one of the Communities which had contributed to the plurality and richness so characteristic of Arabian life. A similar loss may soon take place in the case of the Kurds and Berbers. Such plurality is crucial in all countries and especially the Arab. Arab/Islamic civilisation was renowned for its capacity to absorb and tolerate different cultures and different nationalities.

The Jews of Iraq were both Iraqis and Arabs at the same time who had contributed important examples of art, literature and culture. For example, Samir Naquash, the Iraqi novelist who lives in Israel, still speaks and writes in Arabic and declares and defends his Iraqi and Arabic identity in Israel. Jewish musicians and singers were very prominent in the artistic life of Iraq, notably the singer Salima Murad who was famous in Iraq in the recent generations and who married the popular singer Nathem al-Ghazali. Well-known professors such as David Semah and Sasson Somekh have taught Arabic literature in the universities of Israel. Iraqi Finance Minister Sasson Heskell managed to conclude a favourable treaty with oil companies that enabled Iraq to receive royalties based on the price of gold.

Even though nearly all of the Jews left Iraq for Israel and other countries, they still lead an Iraqi life wherever they may be, including later generations who don't even speak Arabic.

Sami Zubaida who left Baghdad in 1963 and who is a professor at London University still cherishes his Iraqi and Arabic identity and has written of his past experience in this capacity in French magazine recently "Orient et Occident."

Many members of the Communist party in Iraq besides Sami, were Jews. One of its founders and leaders was Abu Fahad who was a Jew and he was hanged in 1949 for his views. It is interesting to note that Jewish members of the Communist Party were asked to convert to Islam to show solidarity with their Moslem fellow members. Some did convert, but others refused, saying, they were neither Jews nor Moslems but Marxist. In fact, they became persecuted on two counts both as Jews and as Communist.

Most of the 130 thousand Jews of Iraq lived in Baghdad and constituted the middle-class and merchants and lawyers and accountants and professors. Most of the business quarters in Baghdad used to close on Saturdays. With their knowledge of foreign languages and good education they rendered a great help in the establishment of the State of Iraq in the 20's.

The Jews were virtually driven out of Iraq as a result of discrimination and persecution and

had to endure years of hardship in the transit camps of Israel.

In his book the "Republic of Fear" the engineer and author Kana'an Makiya voices his regrets for Iraq's loss of its important Jewish Community.

### **Naim Dangoor writes:**

History has shown that there was no future for Communism. It cannot, therefore, be a unifying force in the Middle East. Even in Russia, its country of origin, Communism collapsed in 1989.

Communism is the politics of envy, reducing everything to a common denominator. It is said that the Tenth Commandment is an attack on Communism, and an endorsement of Capitalism. Whereas most of the Ten Commandments deal with social morals, Honour your parents; Do not murder; Do not steal, etc., the last one says Do not covet your neighbour's donkey....

God is telling us if you want something that your neighbour has, do not try to take it from him, but you should go out and get it yourself. Of the two systems, Capitalism is the lesser evil.

The true course is in between, the economics of the Torah, restricting the accumulation, storage and transmission of wealth, especially when it consists of land values and interest-bearing public and private debts.

Historical note: After the Farhud of June 1941, in which hundreds of Jews were cruelly massacred overnight, thousands of homes and businesses looted, the Jewish youth of Iraq were shocked and disillusioned, and found themselves unable to obtain visas to go anywhere.

In order to ensure their families' safety and be able to defend themselves in case of a renewed attack, they organised themselves by joining either the Communist Party, or a newly formed Zionist movement, both being underground activities carrying the death-sentence for their members.

On another occasion, I had a memorable experience in 1951, when Yousef Basri and Yehuda Saddick were under sentence of death for accused Communist activities. I was on a long overnight flight from London to Baghdad on a B.E.A. Viscount, on which I was allocated a seat in the last row but one. Looking behind me, I was surprised to see the last row occupied by none other than King Feisal, the Regent Abdul Ilah and Prime Minister Nouri al-Said, also returning to Baghdad. I was tempted to plead with them to show mercy to Basri and Saddick, but I was unable to muster the courage. I have often blamed myself for having missed a golden opportunity which fate brought me so close to the three most powerful men of Iraq without an appointment.

Tolerant Islam: Islamic fundamentalism and Arab nationalism that echo religious fanaticism of Europe, are incompatible with the image of tolerant Islam projected by most historians.

Thus, the designation of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, or the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Arab Republic of Syria are aggressive and unacceptable. Minorities should enjoy the same rights as majorities, and restrictive and oppressive designations must be absent in multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-language societies. India can take credit for absence of discrimination of non-conformists.

● الدين لله والوطن للجميع



*As we were looking at my mother's album from her Baghdad days, we came across the above photograph that we thought might be enjoyed by your readers; a September 10, 1961 procession of Jewish youth participating in a ceremony honouring the Iraqi President, Abdul Karim Qassem. ●*

**Steven Meer**

**New Jersey**

**IRAQI JEWS FOUGHT  
WITH THE ARABS  
FOR INDEPENDENCE IN THE FIRST  
WORLD WAR - THEY TOOK PART IN  
THE ARAB REVOLT OF 1916-18**

Lectures by Nuri al-Said on the Arab Revolt at the Iraqi Staff College in Baghdad.

Recently reprinted in Beirut (in Arabic)

Sharif Hussein of the Hejaz led the revolt against the Turks in June 1916, when they were fighting alongside the Germans in the war against the Allies, Britain and France.

Assisted by the British with gold, arms and munitions and supplies, the Sharif proclaimed himself King of the Hejaz. His armies led by his sons the Amirs Ali, Faisal, Abdullah and Zaid, and supported by Colonel Lawrence of Arabia and other British and French officers, defeated the Turks in the desert, and freed the Hejaz from Turkish domination, and, with General Allenby's armies, penetrated into Syria and raised his banners in Damascus and Aleppo in October 1918.

The British approached the Arab officers and men captured from the Turkish ranks and held in prisoner of war camps in India and in Egypt and took them to the Hejaz where they joined the Arab Revolt. Among them were Nuri as-Said, Ja'far al-Askari, Ali Jawdat,

Jamil al-Midfai and other officers who, later on, became prominent in King Faisal's Iraqi administration of 1921-58.

Nuri as-Said, prime minister of Iraq, gave three lectures in May 1947 in the Baghdad Staff College on the Arab Revolt and his exploits in the First World War. His lectures were printed at the time in Baghdad and reprinted recently in Beirut. They form an important source of the history of Arab struggles for independence.

In his lectures, Nuri al-Said stated that he went from Jeddah to Cairo in 1917 for health treatment. He availed himself of the opportunity to get in touch with the British Army Command and met the Arab officers and men who volunteered to fight in the Hejaz in King Hussain's legions. He then said:

"My attention was attracted by the presence of one-hundred volunteers of Iraqi Jews, headed by two Jewish officers. They came from the prisoner camps to fight under the banners of King Hussain. The British and French Commands tried to separate these volunteers from their other brethren and employ them in the Palestine front but did not succeed, as they insisted to serve under the Arab flag in the Hejaz."

Nuri as-Said, in his subsequent lectures, mentions the exploits of the Iraqi Jews in the Arab war.

Muhammad Mahdi al-Bassir in his "History of the Iraqi Question" published in Baghdad in 1920, the prominent leaders of the Moslems, Jews and Christians to ask their opinion on the government to be formed in Iraq, liberated by the British from the Turkish dominion. The Jewish delegates were Sasson Heskell, Ezra Menachem Daniel, and Yahuda Zelouf. They joined the Moslem and Christian leaders to ask for an independent national Iraqi government to be formed in accordance with the Allies' Declaration.

Sasson Heskell then became the first Minister of Finance of independent Iraq under King Faisal I. Ezra Daniel, and before him, his father Menahem Daniel, were senators. Yahuda Zelouf, who for many years was chairman of the Jewish Council, was elected deputy for Baghdad in the Parliament of 1933. ●

محاضرات نوري الصيد عن الثورة العربية .

يهود العراق تطوعوا للحرب في الثورة العربية  
تحت راية الملك حسين ملك الحجاز .

ألقى نوري الصيد في أيار ١٩٤٧ سلسلة محاضرات  
في كلية الأركان العراقية عن الحركات العسكرية للجيش  
العربي في الحجاز وسورية سنة ١٩١٦-١٩١٨ . وقد  
طبعت هذه المحاضرات في بغداد آنذاك ، ثم أُعيد  
طباعتها في بيروت مؤخرًا ضمن منشورات الدار العربية  
للموسوعات .

قال نوري الصيد انه ذهب من الحجاز الى مصر سنة ١٩١٧  
لمعالجة مرض ألم به . وانتهز الفرصة للاتصال بالسلطات  
العسكرية البريطانية في القاهرة ومقابلة المتطوعين من  
العراق وسائر البلاد العربية للاشتراك في معارك ثورة  
الحجاز الكبرى .

ثم قال نوري الصيد :

" وقد لفت نظري وجود مائة متطوع من اليهود العراقيين  
وحمل أسهم ضابطان يهوديان جاؤوا من معتقلات  
الأسرى للعمل تحت راية الملك حسين . وقد حاولت  
القيادة البريطانية والفرنسية فصل هؤلاء المتطوعين  
عن بقية اخوانهم واستخدمهم في جبهة فلسطين ، فلم  
تفلح ، إذ أصرت على الخدمة تحت الراية العربية في الحجاز  
وذلك محمد مهدي البصير في كتابه " تاريخ القضية  
العراقية " المطبوع في بغداد سنة ١٩٤٤ ان مندوبي

الطائفة اليهودية ستعون حقيق وعمرًا مناheim  
دا نبال ويهودا زلوف اشتركوا في حزيران ١٩٢٠ في  
مقابلة السير ارنلد ولن الحاكم الملكي العام مع اخوانهم  
من المندوبين المسلمين والمسيحيين ، وفي مقدمتهم محمد  
جعفر ابو التمن واحمد الشيخ داود ومحمد الوهاب النائب  
ومحمد الصدر ويوسف السويدي ، وطالبوا بتأليف حكومة  
وطنية تؤلف حسب تصريحات الحلفاء ، وفي مقدمتهم  
بريطانية وفرنسية . وذلك الوفد ان الأمة انتدبتة  
للدخول في المفاوضات التمهيدية لهجاز هذا الامر ، وهي  
تنتظر بفارغ الصبر تحقيق أمانتها العادلة .

وقد اصبح ستون حقيق بعد تأليف الحكومة  
الوطنية وزيرًا للمالية ، وكان عمرًا دا نبال عضوًا بمجلس  
الاعيان بعد أبيه مناheim دا نبال ويهودا زلوف نائبًا  
عن بغداد .



Captain F Ashe Lincoln  
QC, RNVR

## ASHE LINCOLN

by Abdulla S. Dangoor

Not long after my acquaintance with Ashe Lincoln, I took my nephew, Richard Moshi, who was then called to the bar, to seek his advice as to which Chamber he should join. For many years, Ashe was a pillar of the community and privy to its problems. It was Mr Creditor, the Editor of a Yiddish paper who confided in him that he only consented to his daughter's marriage to Hugh Gaitskell, leader of the Labour Party, on condition that Mr Gaitskell be circumcised. He personally took him to hospital to have the operation performed. Mr Lincoln joined the Royal Navy in 1939 and played a great part in the detection of mines and torpedoes, and helped in the recovery of one of the first magnetic mines. He then volunteered for the commandos and took part in the allied landing in Salerno. He later, was one of the first British officers to cross the bridge at Renagen on the Rhine, the only bridge left standing after the Germans had blown up the others.

After a distinguished war service, he aspired to become a Tory member of Parliament but was thwarted by crude anti-Semitism. He withdrew as prospective candidate as some of the then members of the constituency association were anti-Semitic. In fact, one member resigned in protest. In the 1945 election, even Mr Macmillan was unscrupulous in his utterances. "Do you want to see dark faces across the benches?" he asked the electorate. "The overwhelming majority of rich people in Britain," he declared, "were Jews and Armenians." When Ashe mentioned the racial trend in the Tory party to Mr Churchill, the great man was not unsympathetic. "Look what they have done to me" he told him. It is ironic and a far cry from his anti-Semitic sentiments, one of Macmillan's daughters married a man of

## From the Internet:

**There is no speech, there is no talking, neither is their voice heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. (Psalm 19).●**

I and my family enjoy reading "The Scribe" and wish to thank you for all your hard work and effort in making the magazine successful and enjoyable.

I wish to share some witty Arabic phrases with you which I used to hear from my parents in Bombay. I was born in India in 1929. My parents came from Basra to Bombay in 1902. I lived in Golders Green, London, since 1964 up to 1985. Now I live in Haifa, Israel, retired at the age of 69 after working for Bet-Rabbanot for 13 years.

The sayings are:

- kan u ma kan ala allah u tiklan.
- Il li mabenu shukayi ma tshuuku.
- Tah-el fas ala el ras u ma lenu khlas.
- Mabenu khair bas dekhenu ye'emi.
- Asfoor bel id ahsan men ashra al sejra.
- Titi-titi methel ma rehti jiti. ●

Aharon Menahem

Haifa, Israel

## KASHRUTH

Question: What's non-kosher yet is permitted by the Rabbis?

Answer: VIAGRA

Yes, the anti-impotence drug has been found to contain a tiny amount of animal matter, rendering it treif (as one would think).

But, Rabbi Abraham Blumenkrantz, an American Kashruth expert, says that, as a medication that adds pleasure to the Sabbath (not to mention the rest of the week), it is permissible.

However, it is banned during Pesach - along with all other raising agents. ●

Jewish descent whose father Leo Amery drafted the Balfour declaration.

In 1948, Lincoln devoted his energy to the service of Israel and advised Ben-Gurion on the need for a navy which apart from a great advantage in military operations, was instrumental in the protecting the many immigrant ships on their way to Palestine.

Mr Lincoln was Master of the Bench of the Inner Temple, a recorder and deputy judge of the Crown Court and deputy world president of the international Association of Jurists and Jurors. His book "Secret Naval Investigator" and "Odyssey of Jewish Sailor" were of immense interest.

Last October, I attended the Memorial service held at the New London Synagogue and watched the judges and senior Naval officers pay tribute to a great Jewish sailor. Among the speakers was vice-Admiral Sir John Coward. With Standards flying aloft, I realised that at long last the Senior Service of the realm had embraced him as one of their own. ●

I find the Scribe very interesting. It keeps me informed about events and happenings, and keeps me close to my Jewish (Sephardic) heritage.

I do look forward to receiving it as it is the best reading material I have found so far.... it does surpass all other reading materials. ●

Joseph Edward

Canada

e-mail: julios@idirect.com

I was shocked when I read in the Scribe of April, 1999, that in his address in the commemoration service, Mr Meer Basri claimed that Rabbi Sasson Khedhour, President of the Community defended the innocent Jewish detainees. I challenge his statement and say that at no time Sasson Khedhour defended the Jews of Iraq. The administration counsel indeed may have caused them more harm than good. They were all concerned about the positions that they were holding. The sour relationship between Sasson Khedhour and the Jewish community started in the thirties, before I was born. People often talked how the Rabbis at that time called on the community to boycott him and not to buy meat supervised by him. His positions in 1941 at the time of Rashid Ali and in 1948 are very well-known. Khedhour did not want the Jews to leave Iraq and of course he never made efforts to help them leave at any point of time.

Soon after the Six-Day war of 1967, at the time when discriminatory laws were enacted to impose severe restrictions of Iraqi Jews and the arrests of innocent people had began, Khedhour made several false declarations to foreign reporters. He kept saying that the Jews in Iraq were enjoying full civil and religious freedom like other citizens!

He travelled on Saturday, February 8, 1969 (a few days after the hangings), to the Presidential Palace to congratulate Al-Bakir on the anniversary of the 1963 coup. He stood smiling in front of the cameras and the Iraqi television used this opportunity for propaganda purposes, since the whole world was condemning the executions at that time.

The false statements that he continued to make while the Jews were living in terror, had pleased the government.

After his death in 1971, the Government began to allow the Jews to leave the country.

I think that his supporters should at least keep their mouths shut and not make false statements that open old wounds. ●

Ramzi Loya CGA

Toronto, Canada

★ Tact does for speech what salt does for potatoes. ★

ת"סג

# OHEL Children's Home & Family Services

cordially invites you to attend its

## 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Dinner



*Honoring*

OHEL'S MAN OF THE YEAR

# ALAN SHAMOON

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD, PRESIDENT & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



CHAIM KAMINETZKY  
DINNER CHAIRMAN

BERNARD D. FISCHMAN, ESQ. & BRUCE HERMAN, ESQ.  
CO. CHAIRMEN

SUNDAY EVENING • JANUARY 16, 2000

NEW YORK HILTON • RECEPTION 5: 30 PM • DINNER 6:30 PM

FOR DINNER OR JOURNAL INFORMATION PLEASE CALL 718-972-9338

TOLL-FREE IN THE USA 1-888-311-OHEL • FAX: 718-851-2772

4510 16th Avenue Brooklyn, New York 11204 • E-Mail: [oheldevlop@aol.com](mailto:oheldevlop@aol.com)

### WHAT IS OHEL, BAIS EZRA, AND THE LIFETIME CARE FOUNDATION?

- RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATION FOR ADULTS WITH PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITIES
- BAIS EZRA PROGRAMS FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED
- THE MILTON SCHULMAN FOSTER CARE PROGRAM
- SERVICES & RESIDENTIAL CARE FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS AT RISK
- EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS
- DOMESTIC ABUSE PREVENTION AND SHELTER PROGRAM
- PREVENTIVE CARE & COUNSELING PROGRAMS
- SUMMER CAMP FOR CHILDREN WITH EMOTIONAL DISABILITIES
- DAY CAMP FOR CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
- GUARDIANSHIP, ADVOCACY AND CASE MANAGEMENT FOR JEWISH ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES
- MOBILE CRISIS TEAM

*Everyone needs a Family*  
**Ohel**  
CHILDREN'S HOME AND FAMILY SERVICES

**CARING FOR  
MORE THAN  
1,750 PEOPLE  
EVERY DAY**

# Picture



Soon the Millennium Celebrations will be in full swing, but many venues such as the Royal Albert Hall are not arranging any function on Friday 31 December because of transport and help difficulties that evening.

However, celebrations should be in order for the whole week before and the whole week after the event.

The above photograph is a reminder of happy days gone by of a gala fancy dress ball at the Royal Albert Hall. In the picture is Tiffah Shamoon and friends. ●



The Elms International Jewish summer camp at Carmel College. Sarah L. Batmitzvah also at Carmel College.



The above picture was taken at the wedding of Gideon son of Charles and Dr. Lilian Joory and Joy daughter of Ezra and Eileen Hakkak. Right to left: Naim Dangoor; Lilian Joory; Renee Dangoor; groom Gideon; bride Joy; Charles Joory. ●



Mr. Ehud Barak on a recent visit to London. Left to right: Uri David, host; Naim and Renee Valentine and Menahem Barukh. ●

# Gallery



*Renée Dangoor who is among the participants shown here, recently celebrated her 50th birthday, with a gathering of 400 guests. ●*



*At the Exilarch's reception:  
Ambassador Zvi Gabay with David N. Khalastchy. ●*



*Renée Dangoor; General Ehud and Mrs. Barak;*



*At the Gideon - Joy wedding.  
Left to right: Naim and Renée Dangoor; Jacob Darzi of New York; Evelyn and David Khalastchi; Yvonne Saltoun; Sas and Marjorie Peress; Arlette and Jimmy Shamash. ●*

## East is East and West is West and the twain often met at Jewish Babylonia



### POPE MEETS IRANIAN LEADER

Last March, Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, a moderate Shi'a Muslim cleric, is Iran's most senior religious leader to visit the Pontiff. He is also the first President of the Islamic Conference - a pan-Muslim organisation uniting 55 Islamic countries - to visit the Vatican.

In his speech, President Khatami said that the three Monotheistic Faiths - Judaism, Christianity and Islam, are all equal. In his reply the Pope said that, Christianity and Islam together account for more than two billion believers - a third of the world's population, but he omitted to make any mention of the Jews. After the slaughter of 7 million Jews in his native Poland, Jews no longer appear of any significance in the Pope's eyes.

The Pope gave President Khatami a painting of Peter and Paul, founders of the Church. The Pope may have momentarily forgotten that both Peter and Paul were Jews.

Khatami is the modern successor to the ancient Persian Empire of the East and the Pope is the successor of the old Roman Empire of the West. It is said that East is East and West is West and the twain never meet. But in the early centuries, Persia and Rome waged continuous warfare at the gates of Jewish Babylonia. Babylonian Jews honoured their traditional loyalty to Persia since the days of Cyrus the Great of the 6th century BCE, and did not allow the Roman armies to pass through into the East. ●



**STOP PRESS.** Congratulations to our Dear Friend Mordechai Ben Porat and his new Bride Nehama, on their recent wedding, which was attended by high Israeli personalities. Shown above, the couple with Chief Rabbi Elishu Bakshi Doron, who conducted the service. ●

## AFRICAN TRIBE PRESSES BID FOR RECOGNITION AS JEWS

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies decided this week to meet the leadership of the Lemba tribe after renewed approaches by the Lemba Cultural Association.

Genetic tests in the United States, revealing that Lemba males carry a DNA sequence distinctive to Cohanim, have sparked further investigations into the tribe's origins.

The president of the Lemba Cultural Association, whose symbol is an elephant within a Magen David to depict the blending of African and Jewish cultures, is Prof. Matshaya Mathiva.

He represents 50,000 Lemba in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique, and said the Jewish origins of his tribe, and the practice of Jewish customs, have been passed down orally over generations.

"We ritually slaughter our cattle, we only eat fish with scales, we do not mix meat and milk. We have always followed the Old Testament. But, unfortunately, during colonial times, the missionaries in Africa forced many to learn the New Testament, as the only way to receive an education was in their schools."

Prof. Mathiva claims that, according to oral history, his tribe left Judea and settled in Yemen, where there was a Jewish kingdom.

"They then crossed over into Africa. One group went to Ethiopia, and the others moved down the east coast, between Tanzania and Malawi, to become the ancestors of today's Lemba."

Prof. Mathiva, a retired professor of African languages, literature and culture at the University of the North, said his family name "was originally Seremane, a derivative of Solomon, and we came from one of 12 lineages of the Lemba."

He has, over the years, felt disappointment at the lack of the acceptance of the Lemba by the Jewish community.

"They are not halachically Jewish," has been the frequent rabbinical response. It is argued that many Lemba are practising Christians, whose claim to Judaism stems from patrilineal descent which does not make them Jewish in the eyes of Orthodox authorities.

This has not deterred the Lemba from building a synagogue in Louis Tichardt, in the north of the country near the Zimbabwe border. "The structure is in place and we are now raising funds for the rest of the building," says Prof. Mathiva. "Whether we are accepted or not, Israel is our ancestral home and the Jewish people are our brothers."

The national president of the South African Board of Deputies, Mervyn Smith, confirmed that the Board was ready to meet the Lemba leadership.

"We hope to meet them and address all their

concerns," he said.

He emphasised, however, that it was not within the Board's jurisdiction to enter into halachic issues.

The head of the South African Beth Din, Rabbi Moshe Kurtstage, said the local rabbinate could not rule on the status of the Lemba. "It is an international rabbinical problem," he said. "They have to consult the Chief Rabbis of Israel."

Prof. Mathiva said that he and other Lemba would be prepared to re-convert to Judaism, like Ethiopian Jews, "because it would confirm what our forefathers had to say." ●

From **The Jewish Chronicle**

The Lemba, a Bantu-speaking people of southern Africa, have a tradition that they were led out of Judea by a man named Buba. They practice circumcision, keep one day a week holy and avoid eating pork or pig-like animals, such as the hippopotamus.

Several groups around the world practice Judaic rites or claim to be descended from biblical tribes without having any ancestral Jewish connection.

But the remarkable thing about the Lemba tradition is that it may be exactly right. A team of geneticists has found that many chromosome a set of DNA sequences that is distinctive of the cohanim, the Jewish priests believed to be the descendants of Aaron. The genetic signature of priests - a hereditary caste, with certain ritual roles - is particularly common among Lemba men who belong to the senior of their 12 groups, known as the Buba clan.

The discovery of the Lemba's Jewish ancestry has come about through the intertwining of two unusual strands of inquiry. One was developed by geneticists in the United States, Israel and England who wondered what truth there might be to the Jewish tradition that priests are the descendants of Aaron, the elder brother of Moses. ●

## New Books by Meer Basri

Three new books (in Arabic) by Meer Basri have now been published in London and Beirut: "The Jews of Iraq," "The Arts in Modern Iraq" and the third volume of "Literature in Modern Iraq."

"The Jews of Iraq" profusely illustrated, deals with the history of Iraqi Jews in modern times up to the Mass Exodus of 1950/51 and the remaining small community in the last fifty years. Short biographies of its leaders and prominent men are given (Sasson Heskell Minister of Finance, senators, Menahem and Ezra Daniel, judges, civil servants, lawyers, journalists, rabbis, poets and men of letters, etc). There are also chapters on Jewish religion and ethics (religion, the Books of Moses and the Prophets, prayers, feasts and fasts, women,

## BETH SHALOM HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL & EDUCATIONAL CENTRE

Beth Shalom - The House of Peace - is a centre for reflection, learning and discussion. It is a place wherein the duty of remembrance and the responsibility of education combine and present to society the implications of the past and challenges of the future.

Beth Shalom was originally conceived by Stephen and James Smith in 1991 following a visit to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, Israel.

They felt it a personal and social duty to respond to the tragedy of the Holocaust particularly as the world had largely stood by at the time. As contemporary society seemed reluctant to teach or to question the role of human responsibility, they wanted to create a place that would do this.

Toward this end, the Smith family decided to dedicate space within the confines of their Christian retreat, Beth Shalom, to forward the aims of commemoration and education. This they saw as being a means of bringing the Holocaust to the attention of the wider community, and in particular, the Christian world, which had in many ways failed in its duty during the Nazi years.

"It is the duty of the Christian world to respond to the tragedy of the Holocaust and to own up to its failings towards the Jewish community over many centuries. While the Jewish community suffers the burden of the Holocaust, it is simply not a Jewish problem, but that of all of those who are prepared to admit the failings of humanity," remarked director, Stephen Smith on the concept of the centre.

This duty they realised through developing an environment in which the communities destroyed by the Nazis are remembered with dignity, and where future generations can be challenged by the tragedy they represent. It is a centre for education wherein Jews and non-Jews work together to address issues such as anti-Semitism and racism in society today and to challenge the complacency of the civilised world towards vulnerable groups in society. In light of the Holocaust, particular attention is paid to the Jewish-Christian relationship, but it also asks questions of a broader nature, too.

To achieve this, Beth Shalom offers opportunities for young and old, for those close

Kabbalah, the Messiah).

"The Arts in Modern Iraq," also illustrated, deals with calligraphy, architecture, music and singing, drama and cinema, painting and sculpture).

These and other books by Meer Basri may be obtained from Arabic bookshops in London and Beirut. ●

to these events and for those who are more removed, to learn and to discuss its implications together. To this end, the centre provides education facilities for a range of age groups and backgrounds. There are seminar facilities for educators, clergy and students who wish to explore the Holocaust or discuss its implications on Jewish-Christian relations. It is in part a place of remembrance for the destruction of European Jewry, but in addition, its library facilities and exhibition provide alternative means of reflection and research.

The centre focuses on educational activities and group seminars, and so there are a number of constraints which you may wish to be aware of. Firstly, it is important to realise that the centre is not open to the general public. School parties/universities, synagogues and churches mainly use the centre although all groups are welcome. You will need to join a group in order to make your visit to the centre worthwhile. The centre works with groups as the programme of the visits allows for lectures, discussions and workshops and is tailored to meet the specific needs, requirements and perspectives. If you are planning a one-day visit we have a minimum group size of 20 persons per visit. It is recommended that you book well in advance, as the centre is very much in demand.

At Beth Shalom you will find everything laid out for your convenience. We want your group to be able to spend time to reflect and to take away an experience, which leaves further food for thought. Toward this end, we will tailor the day to suit the needs of your group. It is important that whoever comes is able to take away something relevant to their own experience, interest and background.

Around the centre there are spaces for reflection and contemplation on its beautifully landscaped site. Beth Shalom is based in the grounds of a 19th century farmhouse in rural Nottinghamshire. Within the grounds there are also commemorative gardens dedicated to the memory of the victims of the Holocaust. The memorial rose garden is a particularly sensitive way in which visitors to the centre can contribute to the on-going duty to remember. The rose garden has become increasingly meaningful as it captures the thoughts, feelings and experiences of many hundreds of visitors who have chosen to plant roses in it. ●

**For further information, please contact:**

**BETH SHALOM  
LAXTON  
NEWARK  
NOTTINGHAM NG22 0PA  
TEL: 01623 836627  
FAX: 01623 836647**

# MY HONORARY WORK FOR THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF IRAQ

by **Meer S. Basri**

In the autumn of 1945 the late Rabbi Sasson Khedhoury prevailed upon me to become a member of the Jewish Lay Council which administered the Community's religious endowments, properties, schools and hospitals in Baghdad. This proved to be the beginning of many years which I devoted to the service of the Community in an honorary capacity. Rabbi Sasson Khedhoury was President of the Community since 1933. The chairman of the Council was Eliahou Haim Tawfiq and the vice-chairman Advocate Sion Shoua Jiji.

I found the Community's administration chaotic and inefficient. The secretary had tendered his resignation and the employees and committees ceased to function regularly. I strove immediately to re-organise the offices. I selected a young, hard-working lawyer Salim Khabbazah, as secretary and had a new accountant and clerks appointed.

We prepared new regulations for the Committee responsible for the administration of schools, hospitals and properties of the Community as the old regulations, issued in 1929, have become obsolete. New committees were formed to supervise the activities in accordance with the new regulations. Gourji Heskell, a lawyer and former Land Registry official, was asked to make an up-to-date record of the Community's estates and Waqfs (trusts) complete with detailed information and title-deeds.

In the autumn of 1947, the Lay Council was re-elected under the chairmanship of Eliahou Haim Tawfiq. I was chosen as vice-chairman. The members were Abraham Elkabir, Jacob Shelomo, Advocate Sion Jiji, advocate Abdallah Sion Shina, Menashi Shaoul Shashoua, etc. However, the year 1948 augured badly for the Jews of Iraq. The Government took the pretext of the partition of Palestine and the proclamation of the State of Israel to declare martial law and harass its Jewish citizens. Hundreds of Jews, young and old, were imprisoned for spurious accusations. Government officials were summarily dismissed. The Jews were forbidden to leave the country, and those who tried to depart clandestinely to neighbouring Iran were incarcerated and subjected to torture and outrageous treatment.

Rabbi Sasson Khedhoury, the Lay Council and the leading Jewish notables, Senator Ezra Menahem Daniel, Deputy Abraham

Haim, Sasson Abed, Moshi Shohet, Abraham Elkabir, Abraham Nahom and others initiated forlorn efforts for the protection and defence of the Jews. We interviewed the Regent, the Prime Minister, ministers and high officials and submitted addresses and supplications to stop the rising campaign of persecution and vilification. Every effort was exerted to alleviate the pains of our poor community.

In October 1949 Rabbi Sasson Khedhoury resigned his office of President feeling unable to help his co-religionists. The late Heskell David Shemtob was elected chairman of the Lay Council and thus became ex officio President of the community. I was myself re-elected as vice-chairman.

After a few months, in 1950, a new government was formed headed by Tawfiq al-Suwaidi with Saleh Jabr as Minister of the Interior. The Ministry enacted a law for the voluntary relinquishment by Iraqi Jews of their nationality preliminary to their leaving the country. The community made arrangements for the voyage by air of the persons deprived of their nationality. Subsequently, with the concurrence of the Minister of Interior, a special committee was formed to work in close touch with the Nationality and Passport Department and supervise the travel arrangements. Its chairman was Sasson Sion Abed and the members Abraham Elkabir and Moshi David Shohet.

I resigned from the Lay Council in October 1950.

In the middle of 1951, the transportation of de-nationalised Jews to Israel came to an end. Many thousands of Iranian Jews who had lived in Iraq, most of them probably for hundreds of years, but without acquiring the Iraqi nationality, left in the meantime for their country of origin. About 15,000 Jews remained in Iraq, mostly domiciled in Baghdad.

In 1953 Heskell Shemtob, the Acting President of the Community, tendered his resignation to the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry re-appointed Rabbi Sasson Khedhoury as acting President. He kept his post until his death in May 1971. Advocate Naji Chachak was named secretary to the Community.

In the meantime, the Israelite Community Law of 1931 was repealed. The Ministry of Justice issued instructions governing the administration of the Jewish Iraqi Community. The Lay Council was abolished to be replaced by an Administrative Committee for Iraqi Jews entrusted with the management of Jewish affairs, synagogues, schools, properties and religious and cultural

bequests. The first Administrative Committee was elected under the chairmanship of Farid David Samra. In 1958 a new Committee was elected with the late Salman Daniel as chairman. It reorganised the School Committee and asked me to head it, with Joseph Reuben Masri as a member and Abdallah Shaoul Obadiah, headmaster of the Frank Iny School, as secretary.

The Administrative Committee remained in office until 1966. However, its chairman Salman Daniel resigned for health reasons. He was succeeded by the vice-chairman Heskell Setty. Mr Setty died in office and was succeeded by his deputy Naim Reuben Masri. The late Eliahou Ezra Khalastchi was chosen as vice-chairman.

The Ministry of Justice decided in 1966 to dissolve the Committee and appoint an interim committee headed by the acting President of the Community Rabbi Sasson Khedhoury, with Advocate Salman Saleh Elkabir and three other members, to manage affairs until a new committee is elected by members of the community. Accordingly, elections were held in February 1967. I was appointed as chairman of the new Administrative Committee, with David Nessim Khalastchy as vice-chairman and Menashi Shaoul Shashoua, Morris Menashi Khalastchi and Joseph Jacob Zilkha as members.

We proceeded to re-organise the administration of the community but were overtaken soon by events. In June 1967, the Six-Day war broke out with Israel. The Iraqi Government adopted immediately an oppressive policy against all Jews whose number dwindled to about 3,300 persons, including women and children. Many Jewish merchants were arrested and jailed without trial. Restrictions were imposed on the movement of Jews inside Iraq and the sale of their property. Telephones were removed from Jewish homes and offices. The few employees in the government and companies were dismissed, pharmacies and commercial firms closed, and Jewish students refused admission to universities and higher educational institutes. The President of the Community and the Administrative Committee renewed their efforts in defending the community and pleading for the restoration of its rights, releasing the detainees and the removal of restrictions.

Matters took a turn to the worse in July 1968 on the advent of the Baath Party to power. A number of Jews, together with Moslems and Christians, were arrested accused of treason and spying, tried by a martial court in denial of the elementary rudiments of justice and executed publicly in the midst of macabre rejoicings of the

populace and the President of the Republic Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr, himself. Many other Jews were incarcerated and tortured to death. More than 1,300 Jews left Iraq clandestinely, fleeing the persecution, to Iran, in 1970-71, in dire circumstances by way of the rugged Kurdish mountains. Then the Iraqi Government decided at last to grant passports to the Jews and allow them to leave the country, forfeiting their nationality if they failed to return within three months, and their property confiscated.

Rabbi Sasson Khedhoury died in May 1971. I was appointed acting President of the Community in addition to the chairmanship of the Administrative Committee.

In 1972-73, tragic events took place when 28 Jews were abducted at different times by the Security Police from their homes or the street presumably killed. All my endeavours on their behalf were fruitless except that I was able to save the life of three persons who were released after one month of detention and grim torture.

Passports were withheld again after the Yom Kippur War of 1973. After many pleadings with the Authorities, the Jews were again permitted to leave the country.

I was re-elected twice, in 1971 and 1974, to the chairmanship of the Administrative Committee and the Presidency of the Community. I finally left Iraq with my family in October 1974. We lived in Amsterdam for a few months and then settled in London.

The number of Jews remaining in Iraq dropped to not more than 350 persons. Most of them reside in Baghdad, but a few are domiciled in Basra and Hit on the Euphrates.

Reuben Naji Elias, vice-chairman of the Administrative Committee succeeded me as chairman and President of the Community. Jewish schools were taken over by the Government in 1974 along with all other Christian and private educational institutions. However, the Administrative Committee still manages the tiny community's affairs, properties and religious bequests. Help is extended to the poor and aged who form a large part of the remnants. The Jewish holy shrines, the tombs of Joshua the High Priest, the Prophet Ezechiel and Ezra the Scribe are in the hands of Moslems. The Prophet Nahum's tomb at the village of Alqosh is under the custody of the Chaldean Christian Bishop. All these shrines are revered and well looked after by all sections of the population. The Jews are permitted to visit them and to exercise their religion freely.

After more than 2,500 years, Jewish settlement in Iraq, the Land of the Twin Rivers, has come to an end, with all its

vicissitudes and glories. It bequeathed a most exalted and holy heritage to the Jewish people and the Mosaic religion: the Babylonian Talmud.

**P.S.** The above was written in 1975 after I settled with my family in London. Since then most Jews who remained in Iraq left the country. Now, the community dwindled to not more than 50 or 60 persons, including women and children. Reuben Naji Elias went to Holland in 1998, and the community is now headed by Abraham Joseph Saleh

Shohet, aged 76. He still manages its synagogue (Meir Toeg's), trusts (Waqfs) and properties with no interference by the Government.

On October 4, 1998 a Palestinian entered into the Community Offices in Mustansir Street and killed the accountant and clerk and two Moslems who happened to be there. The offender was arrested and committed to trial for murder and was hanged in June 1999. ●



*After surmounting many obstacles and difficulties, Mr Shaoul Hakham Sasson at last succeeded in publishing (in Arabic) a book on the life of his father who for 40 years, on and off was the leader of the Jewish community of Baghdad, from 1930 until his death in 1971. These were turbulent years in the life of the community and of the administration, by the end of which the Jewish community of Baghdad dwindled from 150,000 to no more than 2,000.*

*With the community now numbering some 60 elderly people, the 2,500 year history of Babylonian Jewry has virtually come to an end, with the hope that it may be revived in the contest of the comprehensive Middle East peace settlement.*

*The book was launched at a reception held at the Or Yehuda Babylonian Jewry Cultural Centre.*

*Above Right to left: Zuhair Shaoul and wife Joyce; Professor Shmuel Moreh; Dr. Meir Sasson and wife Doris and, sitting, the author Shaoul Hakham Sasson (abu Zubair) signing the books. ●*



*Above, front row: Victor Tchenguiz; Dr. Meir Sasson and wife Doris; Abraham Chitayat, President of Bene Naharayim Synagogue in New York. ●*

# TOWER OF BABEL MAY HAVE BEEN LOCATED NEAR THE BLACK SEA

Sent in by **Elias Dangoor**

A British archaeologist claims he has discovered the site of one of the most famous buildings in history, the biblical Tower of Babel, in a remote region of eastern Turkey.

Michael Sanders, a classical publisher, believes new satellite photographs from Nasa, the American space agency, and a reinterpretation of ancient biblical text suggest that mythical tower actually existed - in the Pontus region of the Black Sea coast of Turkey.

Most archaeologists believe Babel was located in Mesopotamian Babylon, the ruins of which lie South-west of Baghdad in Iraq.

Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi leader, has even attempted to rebuild ancient Babylon, erecting badly constructed brick walls at the site.

The remains of several huge ziggurats, or stepped towers, near Babylon have given further credence to the theory that the tower was in Mesopotamia. But there has never been any physical proof.

"A location in Pontus makes much more sense in terms of the Biblical story," said Sanders last week. He believes he has found a possible location near a place whose name means "Gate of God," the same literal meaning as Babel.

In the Tower of Babel story in the book of Genesis, Noah's descendants led by Nimrod arrived at Babel in the land of Shinar. On his arrival Nimrod, known as the mighty hunter, decided to build a tower up to heaven. But God punished the people for their arrogance in trying to build such a folly. To cause confusion among the builders and make their job impossible, God made them all speak different languages rather than their common tongue.

Sanders has reviewed a number of old texts, including the Targum Yonathan an Aramaic version of the Bible. It reports the tower was located in the "Land of Shinar" and that this was found in the ancient territory of Pontus.

"I was amazed to find after I decided that Pontus was the most likely location that several modern academics make this place the origin of all the modern languages of the West. Not Africa, not Mesopotamia, but right there, where I believe the Tower of Babel was."

Other researchers who believe the origins of the Bible lie in the Black Sea region include Robert Ballard, the discoverer of the Titanic, who is currently working on a three-year research programme on the Black Sea, which he believes could be the location of the biblical flood.

David Rohl, a Manchester classicist, claims that many of the events of Genesis, such as the flood, took place in eastern Turkey but places the Tower of Babel in Mesopotamia.

Other academics have suggested the tower

could have been an observatory. Another theory is that it was an altar to the all-powerful Mesopotamian god Marduk and his consort Zupinatu.

One text went so far as to claim it was topped with a "cedar-made bed and gold-engraved throne." But Sanders is dubious. "We just don't know what the function was. In ancient times, there was a compulsion to build high to get closer to God."

Sanders' work is a challenge to conventional beliefs. Traditionally, biblical scholars and archaeologists have placed the dawn of civilisation in Mesopotamia, the area bounded by the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, now mostly located in Iraq.

The main historical event linking Babylon with the Tower of Babel story is the fall of the temple tower built by King Etemenanki, which was rebuilt by Nabopolassar and his son Nebuchadnezzar II. The name Babel in Genesis is thought to be a play on the words for Babylon, gate of God, and "confuse." The English word babble is derived from the story.

Sanders is planning an expedition to the "Turkish Babel" in the spring of next year. "This theory might appear unconventional to some people but to many early scholars it would have made sense. A lot of the belief that Babylon is Babel stems simply from the similarity of the two names," he said.

**From The Sunday Times**

**Naim Dangoor writes:**

The Biblical narrative can be reconciled with modern scientific research by admitting the possibility of more than one location for the Garden of Eden. At the end of the last ice Age, some 9,000 years ago, Adam discovered the wild wheat in the Garden of Eden in Aden. As world climate became warmer, the population centre moved north, where water was more adequate for agriculture. Another Garden of Eden was in eastern Turkey, here rises the four rivers mentioned in the Bible - the Euphrates, the Tigris, Sihon and Gishon.

The Black Sea area became a sheltered oasis, where the water level was considerably below the level of the Mediterranean. Then, one day, the narrow passage between the two seas broke and flooded a large area, drowning most of its population. That was the location of Noah's flood, which is confirmed by the fact that his Ark was said to rest atop Mount Ararat in eastern Turkey.

The British Admiralty had confirmed that water flows from the Mediterranean to the Black sea through the straits of Bosphorus.

Our friend Ahmed Osman must be commended for his objective research into Hebrew antiquity.

However, it is not true that Ashkenazi Jews

had little or no contact with the Baghdad Rabbinat. In the year 800, Charlemagne wrote to Harun-al-Rashid (addressing him as Aaron, King of Persia) asking him to send Rabbis to Europe to cater for the religious requirement of the Jewish population who were entrusted with starting various townships in his domain. Until now, Ashkenazi Jews recite a prayer on Shabbath for the Exilarch and the Babylonian heads of Jewish academies, a practice which is not followed by Sephardi Jews.

The Khazars had to choose Judaism because they were located between the rival Christians of Europe and the Moslems of the Middle East. When Harun-al-Rashid fought the Khazars and lost, he took it out on the Jews of Baghdad, ordering them to wear a yellow badge.

The Holocaust was the culmination of the long standing revenge of the Vatican on the Khazars for having chosen Judaism rather than Christianity. ●

Sheila and I would like to thank you for the recent publication in The Scribe of April, 1999 of excerpts from our book, A Nostalgic Trip into the History of the Jews of Iraq.

Since your publication, we have heard from people around the world and their acquaintance with my uncle Sasson Dallal, A"H. It is amazing that a half a century has passed since his death, but memories remain alive with friends. I also heard from people who had Mon. Bonfis as their teacher in the Alliance school and they shared their stories with me.

We appreciate the support you have shown us in The Scribe. ●

**Dr. Reading A. Dallal**

**Evanston, IL**

## SAMI ON TAPE

Sami Shamon has produced two cassettes of nostalgic Iraqi songs that were popular earlier this century; such as Umil Abaya, Umil Eyoun el Soud and songs of Salima Murad.

The first of a series for which Sami claims the copyright, the voice is good and the music is polished Jewish/Israeli version of the traditional. It is a first attempt in the service of Sephardi culture. ●

★ *Life is a jigsaw puzzle with most of the pieces missing.* ★

★ *There is nothing like work to take off trouble out of your mind.* ★

★ *Memory is the diary that we all carry about with us.* ★

**TIP:** *No tips for hairdressers who own their shops.*

# برج بابل في العراق أم تركيا؟

## استخدام صور الأقمار الصناعية لإثبات أن اليهود الخزر هم بنو إسرائيل

الاشكناز - الذين هم غالبية اليهود الموجودين في العالم الآن - يتحدرون من الخزر الذين اعتنقوا اليهودية خلال القرن الثامن،

وليس من سلالة ابراهيم، اصبحوا في حياة لا يعرفون لها مخرجاً. ذلك ان جوهر الدعوة اليهودية يقوم على ان اليهود هم سلالة بني اسرائيل وهم ورثة العهد الذي اعطاه يهوه في المنام الى ابراهيم. وتحاشي اليهود السفاردي الاختلاط مع الاشكناز الذين اعتنقوهم من الاجانب، ولكن هذا الحل لم يفلح حيث كان عدد الاشكناز وسلطتهم مع مرور الزمن - اكبر بكثير من السفاردي.

وجاء الدليل التاريخي عند نهاية القرن التاسع عشر - والذي يؤكد ان الخزر والاشكناز هم نفس الاقوام - في جنيزة معبد عزرا اليهودي بمصر القديمة. وكلمة جنيزة (جنيزة بالعربية) هو تعبير يطلق على الاماكن التي تختزن بها الكتابات القديمة ذات الطابع الديني، التي لم تعد تستعمل ولا يمكن تدميرها لأنها تحمل اسم الاله حسب التقاليد اليهودية، وهي عادة غرفة مخزن ملقحة بالمعدن. وفي جنيزة معبد عزرا - وكان قد تم بناؤه خلال القرن التاسع على انقاض كنيسة قبطية في القاهرة القديمة - تم العثور العام 1896 على حوالي مائتي ألف صفحة من المخطوطات القديمة. نقلت كلها خارج مصر الى المكتبات العالمية، وبسط هذه المخطوطات تم العصور على المصادر التاريخية. الوحيدة في العالم - التي ورت بها قصة أصل اليهود الاشكناز.

### خطاب ملك الخزر

فقد تم العثور في جنيزة القاهرة - في معبد عزرا بمدينة القسطنطية - على صورة للخطاب الذي كتبه ملك الخزر يحكي فيه قصة اعتناق شعبه للديانة اليهودية. وكان حسداي بن شعروت - الذي عمل مستشارا للخليفة الأموي عبد الرحمن الثالث في الأندلس خلال القرن العاشر - ارسل خطابا الى يوسف ملك الخزر، يسأله فيه عن أصل وطبيعة اليهود في مملكته، وجاء في الرسالة التي رد بها الملك القوقازي ان اعتناق الخزر لليهودية تم في ايام الملك بولان قبل مائتي عام، وان الخزر هم سلالة يافت ثالث ابناء نوح عن طريق حفيده جومر الذي هو جد القبائل التركية، وعلى ذلك فقد اوضح الملك انتساب شعبه من الخزر الى اشكناز صراحة في رده على خطاب حسداي خلال القرن العاشر. وحتى نعرف اصل هذه التسمية علينا ان نرجع الى ما ورد في سفر التكوين اول كتب التوراة بشأن اشكناز، فقد جاء - عند الحديث عن توزيع شعوب العالم الذين قيل انهم اخذوا عن ابناء نوح الثلاثة حام وسام ويافث بعد الطوفان - ان بلاد الاشكناز تقع في شرق تركيا بآسيا، وان القبائل التركمانية التي تسكنها انحدرت عن جومر بن يافث بن نوح، بينما ينحدر الاسرائيليون والعرب من ابناء سام، وعلى هذا فإن اليهود الاشكناز - والذين يمثلون الآن تسعين في المائة من يهود العالم - ليسوا ساميين ولا هم ينتمون الى اسرائيل ولا ابراهيم.

فاليهود ينقسمون الى طائفتين رئيسيتين هما السفاردي - الذين يرجع اصلهم الى الأندلس وفلسطين - والاشكنازي الذين ينتمون الى روسيا وشرق أوروبا. ورغم ان الحركة الصهيونية نشأت بين اليهود الاشكناز في الاتحاد السوفياتي سابقا، الا انها في دعاياتها منذ بداية ظهورها كانت تلجا الى وصف من يعاديهما بأنه يعادي الجنس السامي، لتأكيد فكرة انتمائهم الى بني اسرائيل. ولهذا فبينما كانت الغالبية العظمى من اليهود الذين تعرضوا للاضطهاد على ايدي النازي في ألمانيا والحادي عشر، وظهرت غير الساميين، الا انهم اعتنقوا الحركة النازية معادية للسامية، وحاول مفكر الصهيونية التأكيد على ان "اليهود"، وبني اسرائيل، هم نفس الشيء. وكان هذا هو السبب الذي جعلهم يختارون الدولة اليهودية الحديثة اسم "اسرائيل"، بينما كانت الدولة التي اسقطها الرومان في فلسطين تدعى "يهودا".

والعبرانيين والعرب والاتيويين. ولكن الباحثين الحديثين توصلوا الى ان الجزيرة العربية كانت هي الموطن الاصلي لكل الاقوام السامية التي هاجرت منها على مراحل مختلفة من التاريخ. فاصبحت كلمة "سامي"، الآن تعني "عربي"، والعربي هي اصل اللغات السامية. وعلى هذا الأساس - وبالرغم من تغير الطبيعة السلافية لليهود الذين سكنوا فلسطين عند انتهاء مرحلة السبي البابلي - فإن اليهود في غالبيتهم حتى القرن الثامن للميلاد، كانوا يعتبرون من سلالة عربية سامية.

الا واقعة هامة حدثت في بلاد القوقاز باواسط اسما انت الى تخيير كامل لهذا الوضع، واصبح لها اثر كبير في الطبيعة السلافية لليهود منذ ذلك الحين، واصبحت الغالبية العظمى من يهود العالم الموجودين في عصرنا الحديث ليسوا من اصل سامي ولا هم ينتمون الى ابراهيم او الى بني اسرائيل. حدث

هذا عندما رأى "بولان"، - خاقان الخزر - في المنام ما يحضه على اعتناق الديانة اليهودية، فدعى الى بلاده مندوبين عن اليهود النصارى والمسلمين، لميشتركوا في مناظرة امامه عن الديانات الثلاث، اعلن بولان بعدها اعتناقه للديانة اليهودية وتبعه افراد حاشيته في اعتناق الديانة الجديدة. وفي عهد خليفة بولان اعتنق شعب الخزر في غالبيتهم الديانة اليهودية وتم بناء المساجد والمدارس لهذا الديانة في بلادهم. حدث هذا خلال النصف الاول من القرن الثامن، بحسب ما جاء في خطاب تم العثور عليه، مكتوب بالعبرية، ومنسوب الى يوسف - ملك الخزر في النصف الثاني للقرن العاشر - ردا على رسالة كان قد تلقاها من احد يهود الأندلس.

والخزر، او اترك الشرق كما تسميهم المصادر العربية القديمة، يمثلون تحالف من الاقوام البدوية الرحل، الذين قدموا من شرق وواسط اسيا - خلال القرن السابع - وسيطروا على ارض القوقاز في جنوب روسيا، الواقعة شمال انزيبجان وارمينيا في الجانب الغربي لبحر قزوين والحدود الأوروبية لروسيا. واستطاع الخزر تكوين كيان سياسي هام لهم استمر ثلاثة قرون من الزمان، الى ان قضى عليه هجوم الروس الشماليين، عند نهاية القرن العاشر للميلاد.

وعندما سقطت دولتهم في نهاية القرن العاشر امام زحف جيوش الدولة الروسية الناشئة، تشتت الخزر شمالا في اتجاه بحر البلطيق وفي كيبف وفي مناطق عديدة من روسيا وغربا في المجر وليتوانيا وبولندا في شرق أوروبا. ولم يعد احد يسمع شيئا عن الخزر بعد ذلك، وساد الاعتقاد بانهم تركوا اليهودية واعتنقوا المسيحية والاسلام. الا انه منذ بداية القرن الحادي عشر ظهرت طائفة

يهودية جديدة في ألمانيا عرفت باسم اشكناز، الذين لم يلتزموا بتعاليم الاحبار التلمودية واقتبسوا الكثير من العادات الاجتماعية من المجتمعات المسيحية التي عاشوا فيها. ولم يكن الاشكناز يخضعون في امورهم الدينية لسلطة احبار اليهود في بغداد، وكانت لهم تقاليد اجتماعية وطقوس دينية تختلف عن باقي اليهود. واصبحت كلمة اشكناز تدل على اول منطقة يستقر بها اليهود بكثافة في شمال غربي أوروبا اولا على ضفاف نهر الراين ثم اصبح هذا التعبير - في اللغة العبرية - يشير الى ألمانيا منذ القرن الحادي عشر، وظهرت منطقة أوروبا الشرقية في ما بين القرنين الرابع عشر والتاسع عشر كموطن لغالبية يهود العالم. واهتار الباحثون عن اصل هذه الطفرة المفاجئة في عدد اليهود. ما هو مصدر الاشكناز اليهود في روسيا وشرق أوروبا وألمانيا، الذين اصبح عددهم يعد بالملايين، ولما تبين لاحبار الربانيين ان غالبية اليهود

وجدوا بقعة في ارض شعنار فسكنوها... وقالوا هلم نصنع لبنا ونشويه شيا. فكان لهم اللبن مكان الحجر وكان لهم الحمر مكان الطين. وقالوا هلم نبين لانفسنا مدينة وبرجا رأسه بالسما... فنزل الرب لينظر المدينة والبرج اللذين كان بنو آدم يبنيهما. وقال الرب هو ذا شعب واحد ولسان واحد لجميعهم وهذا ابتداؤهم بالعمل... هلم ننزل ونبلبل هناك لسانهم حتى لا يسمع بعضهم لسان بعض. فبددهم الرب من هناك على وجه كل الارض. فكفوا عن ببناء المدينة. لذلك دعي اسمها بابل. لان الرب هناك بلبل كل الارض.

ومن هناك بددهم الرب على وجه كل الارض. ولما كان بنو اسرائيل من ابنا سام الذي هو جد العبرانيين، فقد ساد الاعتقاد بان جميع اليهود الموجودين الآن في العالم هم من سلالة بني اسرائيل ذات الاصل السامي. غير ان هذا الفهم غير صحيح، فهناك فارق كبير بين اليهود وبني اسرائيل. فالكتب الدينية لا تتحدث عن وجود اليهود في مصر ايام يوسف وموسى فهؤلاء كانوا بني اسرائيل، كما يختلف يهود العصر الحالي عن يهود فلسطين الاوائل الذين اعدوا من ارض الرافدين بعد السبي البابلي. بل ان النصوص التي تم العثور عليها في معبد عزرا في القاهرة بينت ان غالبية اليهود الآن - خاصة الاشكناز القساميين من روسيا وبولندا ورومانيا - تنتمي الى سلالة الخزر، وليس لها علاقة ببني اسرائيل ولا ببابل. الا ان هؤلاء - رغبة منهم في اعطاء شرعية من الكتاب المقدس على حقهم في اقامة الوطن القومي في فلسطين - اشاعوا الاعتقاد في كتاباتهم بان يهود العصر الحالي هم سلالة بني اسرائيل الذين يرثون ارضهم والوعد الصادر لهم.

### أصل اللغات السامية

وينسب اليهود انفسهم الى اصل عبراني سامي، نسبة الى عابر بن سام بن نوح عن طريق ابراهيم، وكان الاعتقاد السائد قديما هو ان بلاد ما بين النهرين هي الموطن الاوّل الذي خرجت منه الاقوام السامية الاولي من الاثوريين والبابليين والآراميين والفينيقيين

ادعى باحث بريطاني انه تمكن اخيراً من التعرف على مكان برج بابل الذي ورد ذكره في التوراة، في مكان آخر غير العراق. ويقول مايكل ساندروز انه قام بفحص الصور التي التقطتها الأقمار الصناعية لوكالة الفضاء الأميركية «ناسا» لسطح الأرض، فوجد ان بعضها بين الموقع الحقيقي لبرج بابل الشهير. ومع ان ساندروز لم يعثر على بناء للبرج في الموقع الجديد ولا هو قدم لنا الصور التي تحدث عنها، الا انه يصر على نقل برج بابل الى الموقع الذي حدده له في مدينة كاركوزا بمنطقة بونطس المجاورة لأرمينيا، بالقرب من ساحل البحر الاسود في أقصى الشمال الشرقي للأراضي التركية. ويقول ساندروز ان السبب الذي جعله يخالف الاعتقاد السائد بوجود برج بابل في العراق هو انه وجد تفسيراً مختلفاً للرواية التوراتية، يجعل موقع البرج في الأراضي التركية وليس في العراق. وهو يرى ان اسم «كاراكوزا» معناه «باب ايل» او «باب الوهيم» اي «باب الرب»، وهو نفس المعنى - في رأيه - لاسم «بابل».

### الدليل

ولم يقدم الباحث اي دليل اثري يثبت صحة كلامه، بل انه - حتى الآن - لم يشاهد هو نفسه الموقع الذي حدده للبرج. ورغم عدم تمكن الاثريين من العثور على بقايا لبرج بابل في اي موقع من ارض الرافدين، الا ان الباحثين قبلوا الرواية التوراتية بوجود البرج في بابل نظرا للتشابه الموجود في الاسم ولما وجدوه من بقايا الزقورات - وهي ابراج مדרجة ضخمة الحجم - بالقرب من بابل القديمة، الى جانب الاعتقاد السائد بان ابراهيم عليه السلام وهو الجد الاكبر لبني اسرائيل، جاء من بابل. وبحسب ما ورد في القصة التوراتية فإن ابناء نوح وصلوا الى ارض شينار في بابل بقيادة نمرود، وهناك قاموا ببناء برجا عاليا. الا ان الرب عاقب البشر بسبب هذا البناء الذي كان يحاول الصعود الى عنان السماء، ففرض عليهم وجعل لغاتهم تتعدد وتختلف فلا يعود بعضهم يفهم كلام البعض الآخر. واعتمد ساندروز على نسخة من التوراة مكتوبة باللغة الآرامية تعرف باسم ترجوم يونانان، جاء بها ان ارض شينار لم تكن ببابل وانما كانت في منطقة بونطس في تركيا. ولما كانت بونطس هذه هي ذات المنطقة التي يعتقد الباحثون الحديثون ان جميع اللغات الأوروبية خرجت منها، فقد استند ساندروز الى هذا ليدعم صحة ما ذهب اليه بخصوص موقع برج بابل.

فقد جاء في سفر التكوين - اول الكتب التوراتية - ان اولاد نوح الذين عاشوا بعد الطوفان كانوا ثلاثة، هم سام وحام ويافث. وبحسب ما جاء في الاصحاح العاشر من سفر التكوين تفرد ابناء نوح في الارض بعد الطوفان «وكانت الارض كلها لسانا واحدا ولغة واحدة. وحدت في ارتحالهم شرقا انهم

### حوادث في مصر

صدرت في لندن ديبروت مؤخرًا ثلاثة كتب مصرية من تأليف مير بصري: "يهود العراق"، و"أعلام المن في العراق الحديث"، و"الجزر الثالث من "أعلام الادب في العراق الحديث".

يتناول كتاب "يهود العراق" تاريخ اليهود الحديث في العراق حتى الوقت الحاضر مؤثرًا في السياسة والقضاء والمحاكمة والشعر والادب الخ. وفي الكتاب نصوص عن الميراث الموسوية والكتب المقدسة والقبالة والمسيح المنتظر والمرأة وسائر الشؤون. وفي الكتاب صدر حديد.

ويتناول كتاب "أعلام المن" فتلف العنود للخط والعمارة والموسيقى والفناء والتجميل والسينما والرسم والنحت. يمكن طلب هذه الكتب وسائر مؤلفات مير بصري من المكتبات العربية في لندن وسائر الاقطار العربية.

## BOOK REVIEW

by Aaron Betsky

### The complete buildings and projects

by Zaha Hadid

175pp. Thames and Hudson. Paperback,  
£16.95

Having suffered the caprices of the Millennium Commission, which refused to fund her competition-winning design for the Cardiff Bay Opera House, Zaha Hadid has since received commissions for the Millennium Dome and the Contemporary Arts Centre in Cincinnati; these are opportunities to prove that Hadid's warped folded and distorted visions - "her luscious line," as Aaron Betsky's introductory essay puts it - can be systematically translated into built form. At times, Zaha Hadid: **"The complete buildings and projects"** comes close to documenting the process of transformation from her memorable paintings to buildings, or at least drawings from which buildings can be made. Some of the entries, notably on Cardiff and on the Spittelau Viaducts in Vienna, show how the ideas move from painterly image, through exploration of three-dimensional form in models, to conventional architectural drawings like plans and sections. The book's format, though, militates against real investigation. Including sixty-four projects obviously limits space; it also means that the weight accorded to each is similar, implying that every project is of equal value. Occasionally, the project descriptions are illuminating, as in the text about the Roman site of Carnuntum, outside Vienna, which addresses the relationship between time, human intervention and landscape; often they betray their origins as the product of Hadid or her office; occasionally her authentic outspoken voice comes through: "Shoot the square; it is dead," she writes of Leicester Square Restricting the Contemporary Arts Centre in Cincinnati to a single page reinforces the impression that the process of building is subservient to the production of images.

Betsky suggests that "Hadid is a great cinematographer," referring to the apparent changes of pace, scale and viewpoint in her paintings. This book has the same feel; tantalising images abound, but readers have to make sense of them themselves. ●

I was given the Scribe issue No. 70 dated October 1998 recently by a friend.

It was a surprise for me to learn that you have a publication called "Journal of Babylonian Jewry." I was very impressed.

I enjoyed the articles and the pictures which brought lots of memories. I was educated in Alliance School in Baghdad and was delighted to see pictures of the late Mr Jacob Mahlab, the teachers and the directors of the School, especially my last French teacher Rachel Mahlab, Monsieur Laredo and Monsieur Sabagh and his wife who was my first teacher in Kindergarten. Thanks Rachel Mahlab for these photographs. ●

William Elia-Shaoul

Montreal

## Map of Baghdad



*Ground plan of the enceinte of Baghdad, 1853-1854.*

*Note how the bridge of boats used to sway to the Tigris current before they thought of anchoring the boats. Very often the bridge used to be washed away during the flood season. ●*

Map of Baghdad 1853-1854 taken from - Memoirs of Baghdad, Kurdistan and Turkish Arabia 1857.

By Commander J.F. Jones, I.N. a nineteenth century original with a new preface by Dr. R. M. Burrell, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

This beautiful map is one of the oldest city plans in the Middle East, there being no such others in existence for cities like Cairo or Mecca until the early twentieth century.

This paper is nothing less than an encyclopaedia of information on Baghdad in the mid-nineteenth century. There are very few aspects of that city's life and daily activities which are not discussed.

The report includes nine folding colour plates showing urban and river scenes; but therein lies something of a mystery. Jones thanks the English surgeon, Dr. J. Hyslop, for "his photographs" on which those plates are based. The basic principles of photography had been discovered by the early 1840's, but the first known examples from Arabia were previously believed to be the work on an Egyptian army officer, Colonel Muhammad Sadiq, who took images of the holy city of Medina in the Hijaz in 1861. But Jones's report was completed six-years previously, and if Hyslop already possessed photographs of Baghdad for inclusion in it, these would

undoubtedly be the earliest known examples from the region.

The remarkable thing of the map of Baghdad is that the Ottoman authorities, hostile to the growing presence of the British, were even less keen to see a survey of the city which might be the prelude to the further expansion of British influence there at a time of growing imperial rivalry with Russia over India.

However, Commander Jones intended to map the city despite the restrictions he faced. Secretly, he put together this detailed plan of Baghdad by sending W. Collingwood, a Midshipman in the Indian Navy, into the streets to take measurements and bring them back to him to collate. The surveyor is said to have jotted down his observations on his shirt cuff! When the map was completed its existence was kept secret, but the Ottoman authorities later became aware of it. Due to the absence of any other comparable plans of their own, and given its acknowledged reliability, in 1912 the Ottoman Governor of Baghdad made an official request for a copy of it in order to assist with the implementation of various schemes of municipal reform.

**Scribe:** *The main scheme of municipal reform planned by the Ottoman authorities was the opening of a thoroughfare from North Gate to South Gate which later became Rashid Street. ●*

## ISRAEL AND THE KURDS

Israelis are incensed that in spite of repeated denials, many Kurds blame them for playing a part in the abduction by Turkish agents in Nairobi of the Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan.

While most Kurds are Muslims, there are also a number who are Jewish. Most of them - about 50,000 - now live in Israel. The Kurdish-Jewish community is an ancient one, possibly dating back to Babylonian times. It was naturally set apart from other Kurds by religion, but in most other respects integrated into the broader Kurdish community.

Kurdish Jews have a number of distinctive traditions. Uniquely among Orthodox Jews one of their greatest religious leaders was a woman. Asenath Barazani, who lived in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, studied along side her father and eventually inherited his position as head of an eminent Talmudic college. She went on to write a notable interpretation of the Book of Proverbs.

Of the Kurdish Jews, Yitzhak Mordechai is much the most successful. He served as Israel's defence minister until January, when he was sacked by Benjamin Netanyahu. Kurds have generally been looked down on as less intelligent and sophisticated.

In contrast with their jaundiced view of Kurdish Jews, Israelis have tended to hold the Kurdish people as a whole in high regard. Even after Kurdish guerrilla chiefs vowed to strike against Jewish targets, Israeli chat-shows were full of politicians expressing sympathy with the Kurdish plight. As a stateless people without powerful friends, the Kurdish situation is similar to the one Jews were familiar with for centuries. To emphasise the closeness of the ties between the two peoples, old photographs of the legendary Kurdish leader, Mustafa Barzani, embracing Moshe Dayan have been dug out of the archives and repeatedly shown on television.

In the past, Israel has helped the Kurds. According to a former director-general of the Israeli foreign ministry, this was part of a strategy that sought alliances with other non-Arab nations in the region. Pro-Kurdish feelings were also reinforced by the assistance the Kurds provided in the 1950's when Iraqi Jews were fleeing to Israel.

Israel's clandestine relations with the Kurds were officially acknowledged in 1980 by Menachem Begin, the prime minister at the time. He confirmed that Israel had sent the Kurds not only humanitarian aid but also military advisers and weapons. Even today, the state-owned Israeli communications company Bezek transmits broadcasts on behalf of the Kurdish democratic Party in northern Iraq every evening.

The last thing Israel needs is to add 5 million Kurds to the ranks of its enemies. Israel has

been at pains to persuade the Kurds that Mossad really did have nothing to do with Ocalan's capture.

Following the attempt by a Kurdish mob to storm the Israeli consulate in Berlin, which resulted in three Kurds being shot dead, the head of Mossad, Efraim Halevy, took the unprecedented step of publicly dissociating Israel from the capture of Ocalan. Mossad does not usually comment publicly on intelligence matters, but Halevy, a British-born nephew of the late Isaiah Berlin, released a statement categorically denying any involvement.

While Israel has forged an alliance with Turkey, this is directed at containing the threat that both face from Syria, Iraq and Iran. Since the angry recriminations that followed the help Mossad gave to the Moroccan royal family in the 1960's, when a Moroccan opposition leader in exile was abducted in France, it has been a strict policy that the Jewish state will not risk its own agents on behalf of any other country.

Turkey knows this, and Israel has scrupulously avoided involvement in what it views as an internal Turkish conflict. In fact, Mossad believes that the Italians or Ocalan's former backers, the Syrians, may have betrayed him and then spread charges against Mossad as misinformation.

### From The Spectator

#### Scribe:

Israel's friendship towards the Kurds does not mean that she cannot be an ally of Turkey. Nor does it mean that Israel must sympathise with the PKK in their pursuit of terrorism in the region. It is a political minefield that Israel must steer clear of.

Moreover, it is in Israel's long-term interest to find a solution to the long-standing Kurdish problem satisfactory to the Kurds who deserve no less attention than the Palestinians. Such a solution can take the form of a Kurdish national home in north Iraq, and full autonomy for the Kurds in neighbouring countries.

The land of Turkey belongs to the State of Turkey and it is wrong to think that some people living on parts of it can opt for a separate state.

The same principle applies to Israel and Kosovo! ●

★ *He is a fool who cannot be angry but he is a wise man who will not.* ★

★ *A handsome woman is a jewel; a good woman is a treasure.* ★



*Professor Shmuel Moreh, Israel Prize laureate, 1999 in Oriental Studies. ●*

### Professor Shmuel Moreh, recipient of Israel Prize for the Oriental Studies

In your prestigious and interesting journal, you have made every inch rich with information, resulting in of a well documented and decorated issue. Every issue of the Scribe has a wealth of documents, articles and pictures which can be enjoyed not only by the Iraqi community but by all those readers who want to learn about the history, manners, customs, proverbial sayings and ideas of our glorious community. Your original, genuine and free interpretations of the historical events concerning the Jews of Babylonian origin are the most interesting articles because they are not biased, and independent, without any political interest. I am glad that many students of mine are using your journal as an excellent source for various subjects in their research.

I would like to mention, that in awarding me the Israel Prize on Israel Independence day by the President, Prime Minister, the Minister of Education and the Mayor of Jerusalem in a State Ceremony, the Prize Committee mentioned, among others, my research on the Iraqi Jews and publication of the works by Iraqi Jewish writers. Many Iraqi Jewish cultural associations and the member of the Knesset, Mr Yitschak Mordechai, organised celebrations for the occasion.

The Association for Jewish Academics from Iraq is grateful to you for mentioning its publications. In consequence, many Iraqi intellectuals started to order our books. ●

**Prof. Shmuel Moreh**  
**The Hebrew University, Jerusalem**

★ *Love blinds us to faults, but hatred blinds us to virtues.* ★

# Autobiography of Freddie Knoller, A Holocaust Survivor

He was born into a cultured Viennese family in 1921. When the Germans entered Austria, he fled west. He became a "tourist guide" and pimp for the Nazi soldiers in Paris. He joined the French Resistance, but was betrayed to the authorities by a spurned lover. The French police handed him to the Gestapo and he was sent by cattle truck to a concentration camp. As the allies advanced, Freddie went on a number of death-marches from one concentration camp to another. His supreme optimism and determination to live saved him. His parents perished, but his two brothers had escaped to the U.S.A. Freddie married an English woman, and became a successful businessman.

## **Synopsis of the proposed book:**

For many years, I have been lecturing to school children throughout Great Britain about my life during the tragic years under the Nazis. So often I have been asked by the children and teachers to put my story in writing.

It is the story of a young naive boy trying to live life to the fullest extent, a life so vivid and stirring. My attitude of hope and optimism helped me to overcome the ordeal and was one of the reasons why I am still alive today.

My father was an accountant and quite strict. My mother loved life - very easy-going, always happy and very musical. She made sure that her three sons received musical tuition. My oldest brother, Otto, played the piano. Eric, learned to play the violin, so naturally I had to learn the cello at the age of 6.

By the time I was 10, we performed on the stage and at charity functions.

From early childhood, my family and I were subjected to anti-Semitism, for which the Austrians were so well-known. I was ever so often set upon by Christian children on my way to school.

After the Anschluss, these attacks became even more virulent. On the night of the 9th November 1938, when the Nazis burnt down all the Synagogues, my parents insisted that we, the children, should emigrate.

Eric was the first to leave, on a visa to Florida in the U.S.A. I was the next one to leave, going illegally to Belgium. Otto, was the last one to leave our parents, he went illegally to Holland and from there to England. My parents did not want to leave, saying that they were too old, so nothing could happen to them.

My destination was Brussels, and then Antwerp, where I was given the address of a diamond dealer, who helped me morally and financially. There I was, a very young and naive 17 year-old boy, for the first time, away from parental control, wanting to taste all the

things which a boy, in normal circumstances, would not have been allowed to experience. The Jewish Committee provided living quarters which I had to share with two other refugees of about my age. In their company, I learned how to play poker, and how to smoke. They also introduced me to alcohol and bad women. This freedom was stopped when the Jewish Community gave me the choice, either to join a camp for Jewish refugees or to be without further assistance from them.

I chose Merksplas and later Exarde, a camp for younger refugees, where I joined the camp orchestra.

When German troops invaded Belgium in May 1940, everyone in the camp fled on foot to France. On the border, I was arrested by the French as an enemy alien, and taken to St Cyprien Internment Camp for the enemies of France, regardless of whether they were Jewish or real German Nazis. The food and hygiene at this camp were disastrous and soon typhus broke out. I escaped during the night, walking 10 km to the next town, Perpignan. From there, I proceeded to Gaillac, where my aunt, uncle and cousins lived.

In the meantime, the Germans had occupied Paris and the northern part of France, but Gaillac was still in the unoccupied Zone, ruled by the Vichy Government. I became bored, craving for new adventures. I decided that I must see Paris, the town of my dreams.

My relatives fought with me and tried to stop me going into the "Lion's Den." However, I insisted and off I went. In Paris, I became fascinated by the night life of Pigalle and earned my living by taking German soldiers to night-clubs, to brothels and to cabarets. I earned a percentage, at these places, of whatever the soldiers consumed. At the clubs, I organised myself with false identification papers and became "Robert Metzner" born in Metz, Alsace-Lorraine. I met all kinds of people: decent German soldiers, homosexuals, abusive Nazis and French collaborators.

I met a wonderful Frenchman who worked in the Resistance. I met some very nice women, and some tough prostitutes. At one occasion, I was arrested by a Gestapo officer who claimed to be an expert on recognising Jews. He agreed with me, that as I was born in Alsace Lorraine, my ancestors must have been of good German background. He could recognise this from the shape of my head. The officer warned me not to go back to Pigalle but to work for the German Reich.

In May 1943, I joined the Maquis near Figeac in unoccupied France and lived in an abandoned shepherds hut on top of a hill.

Among us were a number of Jews, quite a number of French Communists and some young people, who did not want to work in Germany under the new law of "Service du Travail Obligatoire" for the young people. Apart from political discussions and arguments, we did not do much resisting except for one attempt to blow up a German troop train. We did, however, work for the peasants and farmers in the region who paid us with food.

I had a relationship with a young girl from the next village, with whom I thought I was in love. Like a fool, I admitted to her in a moment of lovemaking that I had false papers and that I was hiding because I did not want to work for the Germans.

One day, we had an argument and I told her that I will not see her again. A few days later, I was arrested by the French Police. When I showed them my papers, they just laughed. They asked me for the names of my Resistance unit and wanted to know where I came from. In order to avoid torture, I told them that I know nothing about a Resistance unit, but that I was a Jew from Vienna hiding up in the hills. They took me to Gestapo and was then taken to Drancy, the infamous transit camp for the east.

At the beginning of October 1943, my name came up for deportation to the east on the 10th October 1943.

We were taken to the railway station and close to 100 of us were squeezed into each "Cattle Wagon." There was not enough room for everyone to sit on the floor. We youngsters made room for the old people, women with their babies and the infirm.

In the wagon, there was one bucket with drinking water and one empty sanitary bucket.

We travelled for three days and three nights, to our destination. I will never forget the stench, the arguments, the screaming of the babies and the moans of those dying. I was squeezed against a middle-aged Frenchman called Robert, a gentle person who looked very much like my father. I took a liking to him and made him as cosy as I could.

During the trip, we became good friends. He told me that he was a doctor and I did not realise then, that because of him, I am alive today.

When we arrived we saw a sign "Osviecim" on the railway platform. We guessed that we were somewhere in Poland. The platform was full of SS with dogs and there were some young people in striped prisoners clothes.

The SS selected the younger people who were to walk into the camp, but the older men and women with their children were taken

away by trucks. This was the time when we were taught German discipline through blows and killings.

Some heard alarming rumours which very few believed, but others believed them and went straight into the electrified fences. I realised that there were two choices:

You can either give up and within 2 or 3 days you are dead or you fight to live and adjust yourself to the situation "by hook or by crook." I chose the latter.

I did not look at others who suffered and moaned about hunger, or those who gave up their personal hygiene - a sign that they had given up. But wanting to live, I had to take care of myself - I was number one. I had one mission, only, to survive, in order to tell the world about the barbarism of the "cultured" people of Germany.

On a visit to the hospital I saw my doctor friend from the train there. He told me that he was put in charge of the camp hospital. He told me to come to him every evening when I return from work, and he will try to give me extra food. He was helping me because we had become friends on the train.

At work, I had to carry 25kg of cement bags on my back, day-in, day-out. To do this work and survive with the minimal rations of food we were getting was not possible. The extra food I received from my friend Robert was surely the reason of my survival.

When the Russian approached our camp, the whole camp was evacuated. The date was January 17th 1945. We were lined up in rows of 5 and were told that we will have to walk, and that anybody trying to escape will be shot. It was very cold and it was snowing.

We went westward walking in our wooden shoes on icy snow-covered roads. We were still in our striped thin clothes. People dropped like flies. Many collapsed and they were shot on the spot. We had to take the corpses and throw them in the ditch next to the road. The SS surrounded each of our column and were ready with their guns.

After walking the whole day and part of the night, we reached a brick factory where we were allowed to rest and sleep undercover. Only half of us were still alive when we arrived at the factory. One in our group, a French political prisoner did not wake up. He was dead, frozen stiff. I took his red triangle from his tunic, showing that he was a political prisoner, put it in my pocket hoping to exchange it later on for my Star of David insignia.

Finally, we were taken to a railway station and squeezed into cattle wagons, about 80 to each wagon, standing room only. We thus travelled through Austria and Germany seven-days and seven-nights until we reached our destination. Nine in our wagons died during the

journey.

Our new camp was Dora-Nordhausen. This is where they manufactured the V-1 and V-2 in tunnels underneath the Hartz mountain. We worked in the tunnels pushing wagons on rails and carrying heavy metal objects. We experienced a lot of hangings of prisoners, Russian prisoners of war and even civilians in the tunnels, who were supposed to have committed sabotage. One night, the Allied planes bombed the entrance to the tunnels. Many of our comrades who worked there in the night-shift died.

The next day we were given shovels in order to repair the damage. As the American troops were nearing our region we were again evacuated to Bergen-Belsen. There was no more food available, and the beatings stopped. The SS disappeared and were guarded by Croatian and Hungarian SS units. We dug into the ground to find some edible roots. Many collapsed from hunger and dysentery and died where they collapsed.

On 15th April 1945, the British troops entered Bergen-Belsen. We were given hot milk with rice, which we devoured like wild animals. Many of us died having stuffed themselves with the food which the stomach could not digest. A British officer asked for volunteers to go to nearby farms and bring back any food we could find. I joined this group, with a British soldier carrying a gun. We searched for food, loaded them onto a trolley in view of the protesting German farmer and his wife. When I found a large picture of Hitler hidden behind a wardrobe, I took a knife and cut the picture to pieces. The old farmer got red in his face and shouted to me "Du Sau Jud." Without hesitation, I sank the knife in his belly. We left the farm soon after this.

I returned to France after being told not to go to Vienna because all Jews have been deported from there. With the help of the American Embassy in Paris, Eric found me in a little village where I was sent by the French Government to recuperate.

Our reunion was very emotional. Eric being a soldier in the American Army, was ordered by his Commanding Officer to search in all concentration camps for his parents and myself. He went to Vienna and found out that our parents were deported to Terezienstadt. He told me that Otto became a doctor, was married, and lives in New York.

In 1947, I emigrated to the U.S.A. and became a naturalised U.S. citizen. In 1950 I met my wife, Freda, on a blind date. We got married on the 31st December 1950. After two years in Baltimore, my wife became homesick and we made our way back to her parents in London. We have two daughters Marcia and Susie who were born in England. ●

## REFLECTIONS ON MAN AND UNIVERSE by Meer Basri

I saw a light in the night,  
A ray of love from afar.  
It was so charming and bright,  
A message from a distant star.

I am on Earth a tiny sand,  
In the vast realm of Creation.  
But my mind does understand,  
the Universe and its ovation.

In the sway of constellations,  
In the black holes, is there Time?  
A myriad suns, no aberrations,  
A bright poem with single rhyme.

In our hearts the Creator,  
Reveals a feeling of elation.  
I am a lonely spectator,  
Of this noble adoration.

In a long process on this Earth,  
Man appeared with soul and mind.  
He progressed and knew his own worth,  
Shedding his wild past behind.

Is man transient or immortal?  
We muse on the hereafter.  
Is this life somewhat a portal,  
To eternity or disaster?

We are like children in a room,  
With a thin window on the sky.  
We watch light and bare gloom,  
And a meteor passing by.

But mind has its limitation,  
We cannot fathom hidden Nature.  
We must accept our vocations,  
We are only a tardy creature.

I cherish life and its splendour,  
Death is not an end to its flavour.  
To despair I do not surrender,  
And with hope I find favour.

And the, Oh! What of the future,  
What of moral thoughts  
and conceptions?  
Will our dove abash the vulture?  
Will the mind conquer emotions?

Man is great and Man is small,  
He is strong and he is weak.  
Whether he will rise or fall,  
We must be proud and be meek.

We live and learn, and after death,  
Leave a legacy of experience.  
We must work to our last breath,  
In deference or obedience.

**Scribe:** *While several writers wrote books in a language foreign to themselves it has been claimed that no-one has written poetry other than his mother tongue. The above product by Meer debunks this theory. ●*

# WHY I DID NOT CONVERT

by **Lionel Blue**

In his attempt to convert to Christianity, Lionel Blue came to the brink, but recoiled in horror. Here is an abridged chapter 13 of his book:

**My Affair with Christianity**, which was reviewed in the last issue of *The Scribe*.

The main reason I didn't jump into the baptismal font was another experience.

This second experience happened during Lent 1951 in a church.

I sat listening to the readers in a vigil, occasionally dipping into those Gospels my friends had given me, when a wave of pent-up anger surged up in me and nearly drowned me in my own fury. I could hardly hold the book because I was trembling so much. Anger at the church I sat in, anger at the Gospels in my hand, anger against this appalling Christianity which had been responsible for so much murder. "His blood be upon us and upon our children!" (Matthew 27:25). The author could congratulate himself on a dramatic success, because the letters of the text in my hand dripped with the blood of persecutions, pogroms and burnings.

I thought of the way that murderous anti-Judaism had fed into Hitler's anti-Semitism. I wanted to retch as I saw the cattle trucks with their human cargoes of misery on their way to the camps, where sentimental guards sang 'Silent Night' at Christmas. Pious XII too neutral to mention the gas chambers, how decent people like my own family were turned into devils by crude Christianity (I'd experienced that at school). I thought of such Christian inventions as the ghetto and the Jewish badge of shame. The Nazis didn't have to go very far to pick up their know-how. I thought of the dirges sung in synagogues commemorating our expulsion from Spain, to which we'd given so much; of the innocent left on sandbanks to drown or sold into slavery. It was too much, too much, and I burst into tears not out of Christian piety as my neighbours thought but out of anti-Christian anger. How could I ever think of joining them after the Holocaust? How could I ever betray our terrible Jewish history under them? Where was all that vaunted love and kindness in this? Discrimination against Jews can be read in Thomas Aquinas, and insults against Jews in Martin Luther.

I looked around. Here they all were, in this very church, after our six-million died, unconsciously sowing the seed of horror again. I want to shout out but didn't dare.

And this Christian poison hasn't stopped yet. Later on, in Spain, I knocked on the doors of a convent to join the enclosed nuns in their early morning prayer. The nun porteress told me the sisters were on retreat, but before I left she called me back out of compassion and handed

me through the grille a small pamphlet as consolation. It was another wicked 'testimony' to the blood libel!

After that, I ventured again into a London church at Easter-time. The priest, a pleasant old man, had still retained those awful anti-Jewish recriminations in the liturgy.

I despised myself for thinking of joining my persecutors. I felt like one of the 'trusty' Jewish police in the ghettos, who got a special deal for a while by sucking up to their Nazi tormentors.

I knew I would never be baptised, or ever become a card-carrying Christian. The Holocaust lay between me and them like a black cloud, a corpse, a dead weight.

What was the origin of all this pious dirt? I suppose it's so much easier making your own faith nicer by diabolising others.

Why am I speaking with such raw passion about people of long ago? Because, like most Jewish children, during the evacuation I was called a Christ-killer and was punished with a punch-up in the playground.

Later, a long time later, when I had recovered from this anger, I knew this couldn't be the end of the matter.

What would I have done if I'd been put to the test? Would I have risked my own life for people I hardly knew? Perhaps I would. Who knows? More probably, I would have looked the other way at best or become another apologist for evil at worst.

I remembered a childhood incident I had hidden in the recesses of my mind. In the thirties, when the Fascists were marching through London's East End and my mother pushed me into a shop doorway to hide, I rebelled inwardly. I longed for a drum and a black shirt to march with them - even though they were throwing Jewish oldies through shop windows and terrorising people. I didn't want to be on the losing side anymore. I was fed up with Jewish weakness, timidity and fear, with being on the losing side. I didn't want any more Jewish sentimentality and Jewish suffering. I was sickened by our sad songs. If only I could have changed sides. Thank God, I couldn't!

*Has none a fist and where's a thunderbolt,  
to take revenge for all the generations.  
To tear the world and blast the heavens asunder,  
and wreck the universe My throne of glory!*

These lines were written by the early Zionist poet, Bialick. I felt the same!

But our Jewish God didn't get off scot-free either. The world He created, if He did, wasn't a pretty place. I got acquainted with it in 'All things bright and beautiful' that I sang at school, or the 'O God, you're wonderful, marvellous, so powerful, so bossy, so self-righteous' stuff they taught us as children at

Hebrew and religion classes. The whole house of cards came crashing down.

As I remembered the honest, crude temptations of long ago, I winced. The self-righteousness oozed out of me. I was on the same level as the church. We were birds of a feather. So to change, to convert? Why bother! ●



Visiting Shanghai for my group of radio stations, I was impressed by the number of cultural centres. I had occasion to meet with several of the neighbours at the Jewish Centre and they all spoke warmly of the relationships which had existed during World War II when the city was a safe haven for European Jews. In the centre is the restored Ohel Rachel Synagogue, which houses a permanent exhibition of photographs from that period. The synagogue, built by the Sassoon family in 1920, when Shanghai had a thriving Jewish population of Baghdad and, later, Russian origins, is no longer in use, owing to a Chinese ban on organised religious worship. They welcome visitors and, although there is not a great deal to examine in the tiny museum, a warm response is assured.

The articles in *Scribe* 71 pp. 10-13 on Shanghai were of immense interest to me as within the last year I have visited the city and the old Jewish cultural centre, meeting with a number of local officials. The above photograph may be of interest to your readers. (The man holding the "Jewish Plaque" acts as the present caretaker). ●

**Prof. Eric Moonman**

**London**

Adi Zahav

Commentary on the Torah  
by Hakham Ezra Dangoor  
In Hebrew, in two volumes.  
printed in Israel.

Obtainable from:  
The Exilarch's Foundation  
4 Carlos Place, Mayfair,  
London  
W1Y 5AE, UK.

## BAGHDADI JEWS IN SHANGHAI

by **Aviva Shabi**

excerpted from an article in the Israeli paper, *Yediot Aharonot*, 1992.

Jacob Alkow, Hollywood producer and roving reporter, who came to Shanghai in 1937 as representative of a California citrus fruit company, wrote about the life of foreign residents in Shanghai during that period. Alkow, who later immigrated to Israel, had been in close contact with some of the wealthiest families of the Jewish community.

When he arrived in Shanghai, Alkow presented himself first to the Abraham family. Reuben (Ruby) Abraham was the son of the Rabbi David Ezra Joshua Abraham, head of the Shanghai Baghdadian Jewish Community, and related by marriage to the Sassoon family. In the Abraham family garden, Chinese gardeners carefully tended plants of the "four kinds". Every morning, from six to eight o'clock, Ruby and his three sons studied Talmud with the grandfather. They read Hebrew and were familiar with the literature of the Middle Ages. They were not, however, acquainted with modern Hebrew literature, and he brought them the works of Bialik, Fichman and Shofman.

Rivka Toueg (formerly Toeg) was born in Shanghai during the golden era of the Jewish community. Her father had arrived in Shanghai as a young clerk in the Sassoon Company, prospered quickly and became one of the new millionaires of Shanghai. The Toegs resided in the International Settlement in a four story house with all the uncles and aunts. They owned stables, a block of buildings in the centre of town and a wood factory on the river front.

They lived a colonial life in every sense of the word. The children took ballet lessons and listened to classical music. At home they spoke English, except for the grandmother who only spoke Iraqi Judaeo Arabic. Each child had a personal nursemaid, and Chinese 'boys' served meals at table. On the Sabbath they studied Torah in the synagogue and Sundays were spent sailing on the river, picnicking, or at the race track.

"I remember that until I was twelve years old I never took a bath by myself," she recounts. "I didn't know how to rinse a cup. I had a nursemaid who was closer to me than my own mother. The servants lived below, in the courtyard behind the house. They loved us, but when the Communists came they began to see this pattern of servants and masters as exploitation."

In 1937, after war and much bloodshed, the Japanese gained control over the Chinese section of Shanghai. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese refugees fled from the destroyed Hongkew quarter and crowded into the city suburbs. The first stream of Jewish refugees

soon began arriving from Europe. By that time there already was a large community of Russian Jews who had fled their country after the Revolution in 1917 and came to Shanghai via Harbin and Tientsin.

The stream of Jewish refugees increased after Kristallnacht and became a flood in 1939. By 1941 about nineteen thousand refugees from Germany, Austria, and Poland had arrived in Shanghai. They came by boat from the ports of Italy to Bombay and to Shanghai.

The wealthy Baghdadians of the community were active in the rescue project and founded the "European Refugee Committee." Jacob Alkow was its honorary president. Alkow raised an initial sum of about a quarter of a million dollars from a small group of wealthy people: Kadoorie, Sassoon, Hardoon, Ezra, Abraham. They established clinics and soup kitchens, and Horace Kadoorie built a school for the refugee children. When the stream of refugees increased still more, a demand to stop the flow of immigration began because the entire burden fell on the local community.

In July, 1939, when eighteen thousand refugees, were already squeezed into Shanghai, the first aid from abroad arrived through the American "Joint" (Joint Distribution Committee).

In September of that year World War II broke out and the gates were locked.

The question "Why did the Japanese allow the entrance of Jews into Shanghai?" is still a mystery. The discussions with the Japanese were conducted face to face by Victor Sassoon and Eli Kadoorie. There is no written documentation as to what was agreed upon then. But from certain hints Alkow understood, the Jews had negotiated a business deal with the Japanese who were interested in maintaining normal economic and commercial activities in Shanghai. Only late, in 1943, did the Japanese, under Nazi pressure, issue an order compelling all of the refugees who had arrived after 1937 to confine themselves to the closed quarter of Hongkew.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, all the foreign residents who were Allied nationals were moved into prison camps built in the outskirts of Shanghai. The Baghdadian community was severed in half. Most of the wealthier families who were British nationals were imprisoned until the end of the war. Those of Iraqi nationality, sometimes members of the same family, were left at home and allowed to continue with their daily lives. The Japanese confiscated the palatial mansions, the private art collections, the stock exchange and the factories. The Cathay Hotel was used to house Japanese officers, the Sassoon office buildings were turned into the Japanese propaganda centre. ●

From **POINTS EAST**

## THE FORGOTTEN MILLIONS The Modern Jewish Exodus from Arab Lands.

Edited by **Malka Hillel Shulewitz**

Published by Cassell & Co.

London WC2 - Hardback. £49.95

Reviewed by **Percy S. Gourgey**

This is a fascinating account, consisting of articles by various experts, on Jewish refugees from Arab countries. Little is known of them, as, owing to media ignorance or prejudice, "refugees in the Middle East" refers to some 540,000 Palestinian Arabs. They fled the country on the orders of invading Arab armies' commanders during Israel's War of Independence in 1948. Just because Jewish refugees from Arab countries, most of whom fled to Israel, outnumbering Arab refugees, did not engage in acts of violence and terror, it does not mean their claims and rights should be ignored. This issue is likely to be discussed in the ultimate stage of the Peace Process between Israel and her Arab neighbours, hopefully under Prime Minister Barak's new Coalition Government.

Ten chapters, contributed by ten authors cover the broad spectrum of Jewish settlement in the Middle East, including Israel, from Biblical times. This settlement long precedes that of the Arabs, who swept out from Arabia, to carry the message of Islam in the 7th century CE.

Perhaps of special interest is the chapter by Hebrew University Professor Yaacov Meron entitled "Expulsion of Jews from Arab Countries" with copious footnotes. In it he writes that "The existence of push and pull" forces in every movement of Jews to Israel is commonplace. What distinguishes the exodus of Jews from Arab countries is the particular force of 'push' that led to it.

What happened, therefore, is a kind of 'population or refugees exchange' between Israel and Arab countries, the consequences of which both sides have to bear. True, but what should not be overlooked are the claims of those Jewish refugees who did not go to Israel, totalling some 200,000 who found refuge in Europe and Americas.

While this book is highly priced, a paperback edition is likely to appear.

From the book:

Exchange of Populations World-wide.

After the Great War 1.3 million Greek refugees moved to Greece and 400,000 Turks came to Asia Minor. As a result of this exchange, both countries signed a treaty of friendship in 1930.

The post Second World War period resulted in the redistribution of some eighteen-million people. (Not counting the seven million Jews who perished in the Holocaust.)

A major post-war population movement took place in India between Hindus and Moslems affecting some 20 million people. ●

# KIPPUR FASTING

From the desk of Dayan Dr. Pinchas Toledano

1. Boys and girls younger than nine years of age should not be allowed to fast. However, if they are nine or over they should be encouraged to fast for a few hours only, i.e., if they are used to eating breakfast at 7:00 am, they should eat at 10:00 am depending of course on their physical strength.
2. If they are eleven or over and they are able to fast the whole day, they should do so. If not, they should fast as long as they are able.
3. Boys over the age of thirteen and girls over the age of twelve must fast.
4. Because of the overriding importance of preserving life, observance of both the Sabbath and the Day of Atonement gives way to the exigencies of grave sickness or similar emergency. When the setting aside of the normal prohibitions is considered requisite by Rabbis, it is best undertaken by themselves, and not delegated to juniors. Even though the chances of saving a person's life may be remote, and however brief the possible extension of life that disregard of prohibitions might achieve, such disregard is not merely permissible, but is indeed mandatory.
5. In cases of conflict of opinion between patient and doctor regarding the fitness of the patient to fast, if the patient feels unable to do so, his opinion overrides that of the doctor.
6. If the patient insists on his ability to fast and the doctor considers that the fast might endanger his life, we should pay attention to the doctor (being a Jew or non-Jew) and feed the patient. In these circumstances, there is absolutely no obligation to fast, but, on the contrary, the patient is to be considered as promoting his suicide. However, in cases of this nature, it is preferable to consult a religious Jewish doctor who appreciates the importance of Yom Kippur.
7. If two doctors are in conflict as to whether the sick man should eat or not, but the patient himself says nothing, we should listen to the doctor who believes he should be fed. If, however the patient himself sides with the doctor who believes he should not be fed, then we should not feed him.
8. Pregnant women and nursing mothers must fast, but a nursing mother who feels that fasting might jeopardise her child's life should not fast. Similarly, if a woman

has complications with her pregnancy and the doctor advises against the fast, she should follow his advice.

9. In the case of a pregnant woman who, having smelled food, craves to eat, if it is clear that if she does not eat her own life and that of her child will be in danger, one should impress upon her the importance of the day in the hope that she will calm down. If that is of no avail, we should feed her little by little until she has recovered.
10. According to our Sages, a woman is considered to be in danger from the time she is in labour until 72 hours after giving birth and during that period she should not fast. However, if she and her doctor believe that she can fast she should do so. However, the opinion of the Rishon Lizion Rabbi Obadiah Yosef is that even when her doctor agrees with her she should not fast. After the first 72 hours, if she says that she still feels unable to fast, she is to be believed even though the doctor disagrees. But if seven days have elapsed since she gave birth, she should fast.
11. The above law applies whether the woman has given birth to a live child or a stillborn child or even if she has suffered a miscarriage more than forty days after conception.
12. According to our Sages, one who on Yom Kippur eats food the size of "Kekotebet" (lit. a large date) which is somewhat less than the size of an egg, is subject to the punishment of excision, (i.e., punishment at heaven's discretion). In consequence, someone who has to eat (i.e., a seriously sick person, or a woman who has given birth) may eat food weighing no more than 30 grams, and should then wait about nine minutes or even four minutes before partaking of more food. If the doctor believes that he should not wait as time is of the essence, the patient should eat as much as necessary without delay.
13. One who is permitted to eat should not recite the Kiddush even if Yom Kippur falls on the Sabbath. If one eats bread in small quantities at regular intervals as explained above, one should wash one's hands without reciting the usual benediction "Al Netilat Yadayim." This is because this blessing should not be said unless one intends to eat 58 grams of bread or more. Consequently, in the event that one needs to eat in the normal manner, one must wash one's hands with a blessing. In any event one should recite the usual blessing over the bread.

In the Grace after meals one should insert the prayer "Ya ale Veyabo" as Yom Kippur is considered a solemn season. ●

## TOURS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

by **Elias Dangoor**



*Elias Dangoor in front of "The Burning Bush." ●*

Having been in Eilat in winter for several years, our general perception is that in winter it is almost certain to have good weather. It was not so last year. We therefore decided to take tours.

**Petra:** Being in Jordan, a one-day tour is expensive because we have to change our coach and guide each time we cross the border. We also have to pay £45 for a Jordanian visa. After two hours driving we arrived at Petra which is a small town in Wadi Mousa. The inhabitants are Hashimite Bedouins who are staunch supporters of the King. At its centre there is Ain Mousa, where they say that Moses struck the ground with his stick and the water started to flow. An Israeli army officer told me that this is not true and that there is a hot water spring in the south of Mount Sinai called Ain Mousa, which, we consider, as the real one.

The important part of Petra is the canyon in the nearby mountains. It is a long and twisted passage between the two sections of a high mountain, with rugged floor. It narrows and widens continuously. No car can drive in, and it is difficult for animals.

After having walked for sometime, we arrived in front of what appeared to be a façade of a large building with high columns and statues. In many ways it resembles the White House of America, except for its beautiful colour. We entered through the door and found a large room. All the building was carved in the mountain by the Greeks, and completed by the Romans. Between those two ruling powers,

Petra was the capital of the Nabateans, who spoke and wrote the Aramaic language. They ruled the whole area including Damascus, for three centuries until the Romans under Nero invaded it.

Moving further we reached a large amphitheatre, half Greek and half Roman. It was carved at a round corner at the end of the canyon. Then we went up the mountain to see rooms carved therein, where people used to live through the ages. They are now empty.

The tour was tiring, but it was well worth it. It took us four hours from the time we left the coach until we returned. Driving back we went through Akaba to see the town and the Royal Palace. We also saw how the Jordanians view Eilat, and the contrast between a European high-rise city and an Arab one.

**Sinai:** This was our other tour. It was exciting to see such an historic part of the world where our ancestors sojourned for forty years and, where God spoke to Moses and gave him the Commandments.

Sinai consists of three sections. The north is an open desert, the centre is a high plateau, while the south is mountainous. We were driven to the latter part where they took us to St Catherine's Monastery, which was founded by the Greek Orthodox 1500 years ago. Close to it we saw a boarded well, which they consider the one from which Moses helped a group of girls to get water, and he eventually married one of them. Next to the well there are some shrubs. These, we were told are the burning bush through which God spoke to Moses for the first time. We were also told that this bush is the original one that survived since that time, having deep roots it does not need watering and that, it is the only one of its kind in the whole of Sinai.

We were then shown Moses' Mountain, where Moses received the Ten Commandments.

Jewish people of religion dispute all these locations because none of them can be proved. ●

---

*We gratefully acknowledge with thanks generous donations from the following readers:*

Mr & Mrs H. Kattan	Hampstead, Quebec
Mr Edmond Murad	Newton, MA, USA
Mrs E. Ferris	Buckinghamshire
Mr David Shohet	Madrid, Spain
Mr M. Ephraim	Watford, Hertfordshire
Mr Kamal Gabbay	Quebec, Canada
Mr Hugh Rassaby	Lane Cove, Australia
Mr Saleh Masri	New Rochelle, NY, USA
Mrs V. Chamach	Geneva, Switzerland
Mr Charles Shamash	Jerusalem, Israel
Mr Sass Ezekiel	Saint Louis, MO, USA
Mr S. Shamash	Hertfordshire
Mrs Rachel Raby	Great Neck, NY, USA
Mr Meyer Jonah	Los Angeles, CA, USA
Mr Victor Smith	Edgware, Middlesex ●

## BOOK REVIEW:

### Mei Haveradim "Rose Water" in Hebrew

a novel by Shmuel Aviezer

Published by Halonot, Israel

The novel begins when David, the hero, is finishing high school, during the early 1940's, and follows his life until the early 1950's when he has arrived in Israel and begun to make his way here. David's childhood in Iraq was not exactly happy. Though his family was fairly well-off, his parents were mismatched. His mother's father was a Rabbi, and relations among the members of her side of the family were rigid and inexpressive. To compound the difficulty, the family was forced to move from Baghdad to Basra because David's father, a customs clerk, insulted an insolent and vindictive political figure without knowing who the man was. This incident underscores the corruption of Iraqi society and the precarious position of the Jews in it.

On a visit to Baghdad during his summer vacation, David gets to know his father's extended family, many of whom are relaxed music lovers. Although he enjoys the warmth and spontaneity of these relatives, David is stifled by the social conventions governing life among the Jews of Baghdad. Drawn strongly to the opposite sex, he cannot develop free and natural friendships with girls, because that sort of thing simply isn't done. During his summer visit, David's aunt takes him to meet Farida, a relative some two years older than David whose father is a doctor. Farida is a daring and self-confident young woman who has taken the unconventional step of going to work in a bank, where strange men can see her all the time. David is strongly drawn to Farida and wishes to correspond with her, but this is unthinkable. She may be liberated enough to work in a bank, but she cannot go so far as to receive letters from her younger male cousin in Basra.

Although he has done well in his Matriculation examinations, David cannot obtain a higher education. Opportunities for Jews are limited in Iraq, and his father can't afford to send him to England to study. For David, emigration to Israel comes at just the right time to save him from the narrow horizons of his milieu. The material hardships of life in an aluminium shed in an isolated immigrant encampment in the Judean Hills are bearable, because David finds work where his abilities are appreciated, and he enjoys freedom from the rigid conventions of Iraqi Jewish life and the latent hostility of the Muslim majority.

Maybe not too good to be true, David is certainly too good to be fictional. He is intelligent, hard-working, handsome, musically talented, and self-possessed. Although troubled by his parents' tense relations and his father's efforts to control his life, he manages to slip past these emotional obstacles without serious

conflict. Attracted and attractive to women, he also manages to keep his head and avoid destructive relationships. As a character he is not, therefore, entirely successful - after all readers and novels are interested in inner turmoil, ambivalence, ambiguity, and failures that are (or are not) overcome. In fact, Mei Haveradim should be read as a memoir, not a novel. It is written in an overly formal style with old-fashioned delicacy in approaching erotic themes, and, as a memoir, it is very successful. The full and detailed picture it presents of Jewish society in Baghdad, including the kind of houses people lived in, the names they gave their children, and the kind of food they ate, is fascinating.

A fair number of Iraqi Jews have written fiction based on similar experiences (notably Sami Michael, Shimon Ballas, Lev Hakak and Eli Amir), usually conveying a good deal of bitterness against Israeli society for accepting immigrants from Arab lands only grudgingly, misunderstanding them, underestimating their abilities, and treating them as second-class citizens. Unlike those authors, Aviezer isn't at all bitter. As for his protagonist, Israel proved to be a land of opportunity for him. After spending a few years in Beit Shemesh he found work in the Bank of Israel in 1955. There he was responsible for the printing of banknotes and the minting of coins for more than 20 years, and he has written many articles on numismatics. Aviezer writes about his formative years without resentment or nostalgia, but with confidence that they were interesting. ●

From:

**The Jerusalem Post Literary Supplement**

### TO CRACK A 'NUT'

To legislate against the ownership of hand guns in order to prevent ethnic crime is a case of cracking a nut with a stream roller. A determined criminal can always get hold of his weapon. Nip the crime in the bud. Preaching ethnic violence should be treated as first degree murder, carrying top penalties. This is the most correct way of treating racist nut-cases who achieve wide-spread publicity by their crimes. ●

Money could buy a bed but not sleep.  
Money could buy medicine but not the health.  
Money could buy the book but not the knowledge.  
Money could buy the cloth but not the dignity.  
Money could buy a woman but not the love.  
Money could buy you a guitar but not the music.  
A self content will give you everything. ●

**TIP:** *If a piece of waxed paper is placed over the knife, you can cut butter in nice clean squares.* ●



The author Nuzhat Katsab. ●

## BOOK REVIEW:

by Dr. Lillian Dabby-Joury

### Harbingers Of Peace

by Nuzhat Katsab

Nuzhat Katsab's book, "Harbingers of Peace," published in Hebrew by Ma'ariv Publishers in Israel, portrays dramatically and in accurate detail a remarkable world of women covering more than half a century. The book has also been published in Arabic. The book traverses countries and nations and builds bridges between them, Jewish, Arab and Druze women working for women, women leading other women towards a better, more enlightened and healthier society, building the first real bridge for peace in our region which is still torn by wars, disputes and struggles. This is a unique document in the history of Israeli society and the time has come to reveal it, from its hesitant beginnings, the delicate fabric of its existence and its achievements both in the Jewish and Arab communities.

Jewish tradition teaches us that man has a duty to act, but even more important is the duty to tell our young ones so they will know of their ancestors' deeds. This is a moral and social duty, a wisdom that recognises that deeds do not leave their mark for generations unless the generations know about them and relate their stories. In her book "Harbingers of Peace," Nuzhat Katsab, knowingly or unknowingly, follows this beautiful tradition, describing to this and future generations her activities in the field in which she is involved.

The writing of the book is eclectic, combining a variety of styles that are captivating in their directness and sincerity, from the autobiographical style in the chapter that includes the life of the individual and its legendary nature, incorporating her personal experiences while focusing on responsibility for the issues at stake and their importance, and an infinite web of sensitivities to various public issues, to the style of the story-teller with a poetic soul, who is deeply involved in her community and her nation as an Israeli and a Jew.

As an Israeli Jewish emissary to Arab women, throughout her manifold activities she

has not forgotten the world of her past, with its people and customs and its complex relationship with her world. Her mission among Israeli Arabs in our country is a pioneering mission, and it won the support of the establishment, which was open enough to understand the importance of her mission. This chapter describes her contribution to the status of Arab women and to improving human relations in an attempt to redress the balance of destiny in our lives together. Peace is not just a signed agreement but a system of human relationship, friendship, neighbourliness, national respect and mutual trust.

The author immigrated from Iraq in 1951 and studied at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. For the past 15 years she has been active in Israel's Arab sector - working to establish a movement to further the status of Arab and Druze women through the women's

organisation, Na'amat, and to promote co-existence.

In 1974 she was elected to the Knesset and fulfilled many public missions, while continuing to act for peace and understanding. Today she serves as the Chairwomen of AHI - an organisation established by Iraqi immigrants to promote research, literature and the arts. There is a special chapter in this book about the integration of Iraqi Jews in Israel.

Nuzhat Katsab's voice and her book are the genuine voices and actions that build goodwill and understanding, and they are the living proof that if we aspire to live in co-existence and promote peace - we can do it.

I hope this book will find an audience of readers who will see the outstanding work and devotion of this one individual as a model and an example for many others. ●

## BOOKS RECEIVED:

Harbingers of Peace

(in Arabic translated from Hebrew)

جائز السلام

ابعث لكم بكتابي هذا "جائز السلام" المغمم بالتحالف  
والعمل والتعايش الأثري بيننا وبين عرب إسرائيل وتحقيق السلام  
في ربوعنا. الكتاب يرد بصورة مقصية كفاح المرأة العربية  
والدرزية في إسرائيل لثقل مكانتها في العائلة والمجتمع - بعد  
ان فتحنا قوانين دولة إسرائيل وكأنه مرفوعة.  
الكتاب سيرة ذاتية، يتناول فترة الطفولة في  
العراق وقدم يهود العراق الى إسرائيل. وهد يوصي بحث  
خاص عن مكانه يهود العراق واندا جهم في المجتمع الإسرائيلي.  
الكتاب صدر عن جريدة "معايير" وقد حرز على نجاح  
منقطع النظير فقد نفذت فوراً الطبعة الاولى منه.

نزهة قصاب

Nuzhat Katsab (nee Darwish)

The decision of Mr Barak, the new Israeli Prime Minister, to start his negotiations with the Palestinians directly over the final settlement covering, borders, joint economical interests, water sources and immigrants parallel with the peace negotiations with Syria and Lebanon, brought immediate response from the Lebanese Prime Minister that the issue of the 330,000 Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon and their rights to return back to their homes, where they used to live, be put at the head of the agenda of the peace negotiations with the Israeli Government. Aside of that, there were similar hints on this matter from Jordanian officials.

To my surprise, these statements, did not prompt any reply from Israeli Government sources as to what about the Jewish refugees' properties from Arab countries? Although the major part of these refugees are now living in

Israel, the Government in Israel did not compensate them at all for their lost properties in Arab countries. The lost properties of about a million of these refugees more than balance the abandoned assets of the Palestinian refugees in Arab countries.

Along with the negotiations of the Israeli Government over the issue of the refugees, organisations who are old established, looking after the properties and interests of those Jewish immigrants from Arab countries, who are living in the USA, UK and Canada and other countries, must sit and put on the agenda the claims of those immigrants and attain compensations for their lost properties in similarity with the claims now symbolically paid for, by those Governments in Europe who swindled the properties, assets and monies of the European Jewry. ●

Abraham Yadid

Ramat-Gan, Israel



*Family picture of Nuzhat Katsab taken in Iraq, showing the mother in the middle and to her left Nuzhat and Aliza and to her right Juliette.  
Standing left to right: Shlomo (Saloumi); Habiba; Naim. ●*



*Right to left:  
Najwa Basyuni - wife of Egyptian Ambassador in Israel; Angham al-Zu'ubi; Nuzhat Katsab; the poetess Suad Qerman. They were signing a document "Person to Person" - a friend. ●*

## 53/103

This is the number of my house in Baghdad, situated in a narrow unnamed land (Kucha) between Qanbar Ali Street and El-Amin Street. I was born in that house and my father had bought it - the early 1920's. It was a small 2 storey building, but was 'renovated' in 1939 and was very comfortable in the centre of the Jewish community. Hanoon Market (known by the Jews as Hanooni, Taht-Eltakia and Jewish schools especially Al-Wattania school were all within a few minutes walk. Even Shamash School from which I was graduated, was about 6 minutes walk from my house.

Although many new streets in Baghdad had been constructed during the last few decades and many houses had been demolished for this purpose, it is unlikely that my house had been demolished, because it was so close to El-Amin Street which joins El-Rashid Street and Ghazi Street, and it is still there.

I would like to thank you most sincerely for the regular arrival of "The Scribe." Not only do we read it, but we also pass it on to teachers in a School nearby.

Your article in No. 71 April 1999 about the "Baghdad Hangings 1969" has prompted this letter.

My father, Mr Shaul Yaacov Yonah Suddick escaped or left Baghdad via Singapore and settled in Calcutta, India, where he married my mother Sarah Halligua; the only daughter of Yaacov Hai Hallegna and Rachel Sassoon. My mother was born in Cochin, India.

Father shortened our surname to Jacob though the community knew him and the family by his full name.

My father was later followed by his only sister Farah and his mother Habiba.

Apparently, he still had 4 brothers left there who went by the family name of Yonah (Jonah) Suddick. As far as we know, they were wealthy jewellers who had stores there.

Before he passed away, my father was told by friends who arrived from Baghdad that "one morning the 4 brothers were taken from their shops and killed in the Square." Is there anyway one could find out? Are there any survivors from my father's family? My father passed away in December, 1953 at the age of 86 in Calcutta, India.

I vividly remember him crying on hearing the news but, unfortunately, he was a very quiet man who would not talk much about his family. He was, however, a very well-respected member of the community and a successful business man.

Is it at all possible to find out more? I would love to know if we have any relations from my father's side still alive. We are now 3 sisters and one brother.

Your reply would be most appreciated and looked forward to. Perhaps you could put us in touch with people-someone who could help or through your magazine. ●

**Seemah & Saul Ezra** Jerusalem, Israel

When we renounced our Iraqi nationality, or rather we were forced to do so, our house, like all our cash and other properties were all "frozen" which means that we could not do any transaction. Just before leaving Baghdad for Israel, I learned that an Arab neighbour intended to occupy it.

I am convinced that my house is still there, and one day I or my children will go back to our house at 53/103.

If money is needed for another renovation, there is a lot of money in my name and my father's name in our frozen account in Ottoman Bank at Bank Street. I still keep the saving books of all the members of my family. The only problem I may face is the lost Deed of the house.

Is this a dream? Not at all! If *The Scribe's* proposal of a Middle East Federation where all Jews and Arabs share the wealth is not a dream, why should mine be? ●

**Albert Khabbaza, MD**

**Great Neck, NY**



Thank you very much for your wonderful journal. I enjoy very much reading it and so do my children who are 22 and 25 years old. They are very interested in our rich culture and they give it proudly to their friends to read.

This time I am writing to you to cancel a membership. It is for my late dear mother who died recently in Israel, she used to read it religiously and always discusses it with us.

She was very popular, not only with her friends, but with our friends too. The photograph shows her in the middle with the four of us. Left to right: Nadia; Isaac; Adel; Norma. Also, I wrote a bit about her and us. (I left my address and number at the end to correspond with whoever is in the same situation.

My mother Violet Muallem lost a fierce battle against cancer in Israel at the age of 75. If she was 175 it would still be too early for us! My mother was a remarkable ESHETH HAYIL with endless good qualities. A typical Iraqi housewife with the obsession of perfecting a good home. She had a great love of life involving herself with everything. She had lots of friends that I still call Aunties and they call me Binti. Best of all, she was a good friend to us as we were growing up and we felt we could tell her anything without fear. Our friends were always welcomed in our house and they all have fond memories of her. She taught us to be charitable and help people whichever way we can, even only with a kind word. Zionism was quite strong in our home, and her best moment was arriving to her dream land Israel in August 1971.

Five years ago, she had cancer but had chemotherapy and was declared clear afterwards. We celebrated her recovery and we believed the saga was over. But, two years ago, the cancer came back with a vengeance. This

disease doesn't involve only the patient, but the whole family suffers too. I admire my two brothers, Adel and Isaac, because they put their lives on hold to be by her side and fulfil her every whim. I juggled between my job and family and travelled to Israel as often as I could, as did my sister Norma from Toronto. Yet, it didn't make any difference, we were all helpless, we saw her in pain and slipping away, but there was nothing we could do. It was like being on an emotional rollercoaster. One day good news and we hung on to it, hoping beyond hope for a miracle; the next day, we tumble down again.

She never lost hope until last January, I was with her when the doctor told her the cancer had reached the point of no return. No more treatment, just giving her Morphine to control the pain to the end. I was angry because he was so blunt with her. She thanked him for being so frank and not hiding anything. Her first thoughts were the grandchildren, how will they handle the news. She was frail and upset, yet she took it upon herself to explain it to each one of them separately and help them with their grief. She encouraged us to express our grief to her so that she could help. She had remarkable courage, she deteriorated painfully slow, until she accepted defeat and agreed to go to the hospice knowing that was her last stop.

She stayed sharp to the end and paid attention to her numerous visitors who still got a lot of warmth and strength from her. Cancer was winning over her body, but not her spirit. She never stopped saying, "Thank God for everything." ●

**Nadia Nathan (nee Muallem)**  
**12 Highfield Gardens**  
**London NW11 9HB**  
**Tel: 0181 455 7742**  
**e-mail - nadian@aol.com**

## Remembrance Day and Independence Day in Israel

by **Commander Fred Sopher IN (Retd)**

Amongst the most important days in the history of the State of Israel the three that stand out in modern times are Remembrance Day (Yom Hazikaron) Independence Day (Yom Ha'atzmauth) and memorial Day (Shoah). The last one I witnessed in 1995 when I was holidaying in Ra'anana and wrote about (Issue No. 64 September 1995).

This year we (my wife and I) were again there during the period of Pesach and onwards. We lived with my daughter and her family in Ra'anana which is a small town four miles north of Tel Aviv as the crow flies and has a strong Anglo Saxon/South African influence.

Remembrance day as the name implies is a day of remembrance for those who died in the defence of the State of Israel. It began at 8:00 pm on Monday 19 April with the sounding of sirens throughout the land when every man, woman and child stood and remembered for a minute. All transport stopped in its track with the occupants of small vehicles getting out and standing with heads bowed. In the buses they stood and meditated.

For us in the Diaspora, it is hardly possible to visualise the solemnity of the occasion and it is only when you are there and see it happen that you can appreciate the feelings of the Israelis for the land and its people.

With the sounding stopping to mark the end of the minute's silence, the various Remembrance Day programmes began both on TV and radio which are too many to enumerate. The one which in my opinion was heart-rending was on one of the TV channels and was devoted solely to those who died. Each persons Rank, Name and Date were shown and read out through the nights of the 19th and day of the 20th - all 18,893 of them.

My wife and I were on Rekhov Ahuza, the main streets of Ra'anana when at 11 am on the 20th the sirens were sounded again and this time the whole of Israel stood in silence and remembered for two minutes. Even the babies stopped crying and the birds were silent as though they knew that it had to be so. I did see many people wiping a tear from their eyes obviously remembering a loved one or friend who was no longer there. I thought about my in-laws (father, mother and two brothers) who had come to this Land in its infancy during 1948/50 and though not in battle, had fallen by the wayside.

At 8:00 pm on Tuesday the 20th the mood of the people changed from solemnity to celebration as it was now the beginning of Independence Day. It started with a fireworks display. Parts of Rekhov Ahuza had been closed to traffic, stages had been put up and dance bands/pop groups began their music and singing which lasted till well past midnight. At

most the whole of Ra'anana's populace were on the streets including hundreds of prams with babies in them. There were the elderly and young and above all the children shouting and laughing and having one heck of a good time with groups of them dancing and singing in the streets. One of the side streets was also closed to traffic for the setting up of food stalls - Coke and Pepsi. Gleeda (ice-cream), kebabs, shwarma, hot-dogs, mac, sugar candy (budi-kabah for those from India) and of course the inevitable zeh a zeh.

The next morning the two of us went for an early stroll and in contrast to the night before, there was hardly a person on the streets - peace and quiet was reigning. I expected to see the streets covered with litter of the night before but were very pleasantly surprised to see them spotless. The Iriah (municipality) had been at work in the early hours and not a scrap of paper was to be seen. Kol-ha-kavod to the Mayor and his staff of Ra'anana. ●



I shall be glad if you publish the enclosed poem dedicated to my mother Saida Hakak.  
Herzl Hakak Israel

**LIGHT FROM THE SEA OF DEATH**  
by **Balfour Hakak**  
Translated by **Schulamith C. Halevy**

**My Mother's Magic**  
by **Herzl Hakak**  
Translation by **Schulamith C. Halevy**

At the Dead Sea I lay on the seaside bed  
Taking refuge in the forgetting of memories.  
I said: let me forget for a moment  
All that had transpired  
Let me consign to oblivion all my toil and legacy.

She has nothing but her life.  
Seeds of light embedded between rows.  
Singular enchantment;  
Ours are lives she knew to shape  
as if from flour. As though everything was  
ground grain by grain in the millstone.

Then from the sea came towards me a man  
Who sleeps on the sea of mirrors.  
Who floats on the water adrift in glow,  
His flesh flashing from salt, of water-glow.  
His blood flashing sevenfold.

While all the women sat upon stone steps  
toying with their fans,  
glancing in any direction they beheld a  
reticent glow upon our forehead.  
My mother kneaded her life, and ours never  
losing sight nor sorrow of her maiden field.

Holding in his hand an almond staff  
He carves into its bark  
Mark upon mark.  
White and sacred letters he diligently  
Carves, white symbols in the staff of Signs.

**HERZL AND BALFOUR HAKAK**

Herzl and Balfour are twins. Born in Iraq (1948) on the date of Israel's declaration of independence. Their family immigrated to Israel in 1950. At the age of 17 they won together the championship of the International Bible Quiz (1965).

And the man is precious to me and beloved  
And the man who rose from the sea  
Is my grandfather.

Army service in the Israel Defence Forces (1966-1969). Both of them are married. Balfour has three sons, Herzl has three sons and one daughter.

The sea is like a pure blue length of cloth  
A prayer shawl. A cloth of trembling ripples.  
He passes to me the staff from the Sea of Death  
His white face storming in fog  
His face dripping light from the Sea of Death  
Light bestowed upon my living hand.

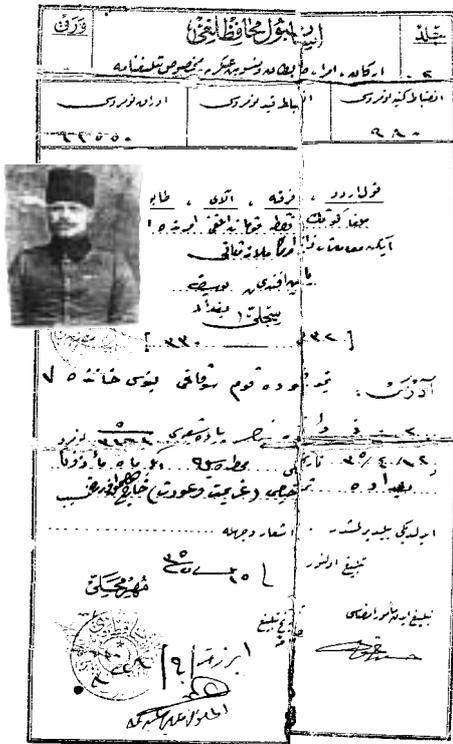
Academic studies: 1970-1977 - Hebrew literature and Bible, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem.B.A. and M.A. degrees both with distinction.

Would that the staff become a torch  
Of light in my life  
That I be fruitful in the land  
That I confer it upon my sons.●

Publications: Each of them published 6 poetry books (1970, 1972, 1978, 1987, 1991, 1998). Together they wrote a literary research (1975) and a childrens book (1982). They won two literary prizes.●

**Did you know?**

There are 4,000 Arab doctors practising in Britain, and have formed The Arab Medical Association which celebrates its first anniversary.●



The official permit issued by the Turkish authorities allowing my late father Yamen Effendi Youssef to leave Turkey for a short visit to Baghdad without forfeiting his right to his position as an officer in the Turkish Army, upon his return.

The date of the document was 15th April, year 35, corresponding to 1919 - WW1 already finished. ●

**Edward Yamen Milan**

**TIP:**

*How to cook every vegetable that grows: If it grows beneath the ground (root vegetables), it grows covered in the cold earth; then start it in cold water, and cover the pot with a lid. If it grows above the ground (green vegetables), it grows uncovered in the hot sun; then start it in boiling water, and leave the pot uncovered (no lid). Cook them until they are tender. ●*



Odette Ariel with Ehud Barak, the man of the hour. ●

Recent visitors to our offices were: Suzette Nessim, Odette Ariel and David Gabbay, children of Menashi Gabbay, all related to Hakham Sasson Dangoor and Chief Rabbi Hakham Elisha Dangoor and Saleh Iny.

Suzette Nessim keeps a four star hospitable house at Ramat-Gan welcoming groups of Jews from all walks of Israeli life.

In a recent issue of the semi-official Baghdad Arabic daily, a writer relates the activities of Menashi Gabbay and his two daughters Suzette and Odette, the writer claims that Menashi Gabbay was the general representative in Iraq for Crown Agents, and in this capacity has direct access to the Council of Ministers, using his influence to secure various commercial contracts at advantageous terms.

Suzette had a pharmacy in Basra and this was used as part of a network involving the father, and his two daughters, to smuggle Jews from all parts of Iraq to Iran across Shat-el-Arab.

In 1948, Menashi Gabbay and his daughters were arrested and sentenced to ten years imprisonment. After a number of years, they were released on bail. The father died soon afterwards, and the daughters were smuggled in the launch of the British Consulate across the river to Iran.

What made al-Jumhuriya write this story in great detail 40 years after the event? It appears to be a hitherto unknown chapter of James Bond heroism, of which all Iraqi Jews can be proud. We salute the two heroines, Suzette and Odette, and the memory of their late father. ●



From right to left: Mrs Suzette Nessim; Professor Nessim Ezra Nessim at a Sephardi function with the late Itzhak Rabin and Mrs Leah Rabin just before the six-day War. ●

الحياة  
أيتها الحياة! أنت ادري ما أنت  
ولكني أعلم أن الفراق بيني وبينك  
أمرٌ لا مفر منه  
أمامي وأمين وكيف تمّ لقاءنا  
فما زال ذلك في نظري سراً الأسرار  
أيتها الحياة! لقد طال أمدُ صحبتنا  
وكان نصيبنا الصفاء تارةً، والجفاء  
تارةً أخرى  
ولكن يعزّ الفراق إذا كان الصديقُ  
عزيراً مكرماً  
وقد يكلف العود حُرّةً في القلبِ  
أو دموعاً على الخدِّ

#### LIFE

Translated by:

Salim Khabbaza, Great Neck, NY, USA

Life! I know not what thou art,  
But know that thou and I must part.  
And how and when and where we met,  
To me is a secret yet.

Life! We have been long together,  
through fair and foul weather.  
It's hard to part when friends are dear,  
It may cost a sigh, and a tear. ●

#### BOOKS RECEIVED:

"Fi Meydan-il Adab Al-Arabi" (in Arabic)  
by Abraham Obadia ●

المقدمة بقلم البروفيسور شموئيل موريه  
كلمة في النقد الأدبي  
الشاعر عدنان مردم - بك  
مع البروفيسور شموئيل موريه في كتابه القصة القصيرة  
مع الشاعر ايليا ابو ماضي  
مع الكاتب الأديب سمير نقاش وقصصه  
في ذكرى الأديب الموسوعي الأستاذ عرفان أبو حمد الهواري  
حصة الشعر في النضال السياسي العراقي خاصة والعربي عامة  
مع الشعر العراقي والشاعر محمد مهدي الجواهري  
مع الأديب القصصي اسحاق بار موشيه  
مع الشعر العراقي - الشاعر معروف الرصافي  
مع الأستاذ نير شوحيط وكتابه قصة يهود العراق  
الشعر العربي والترجمة  
مع الشاعر أنور شاول  
الشاعر حر ولكن  
مع الشاعر شموئيل موريه  
شعراء في دنيا الشعر الحر  
سليم شعشوع شاعر وأديباً  
مع موريس شماس القصصي والشاعر  
ادباء وشعراء من اليهود النازحين من العراق  
مع قصائد الشاعر نزار قباني المغناة  
حيثما في ٢٠ من ديسمبر ١٩٩٤ "رسالة الى"  
سيدي الأستاذ الفاضل رئيس التحرير "رسالة"  
وجدانيات شاعر في زحمة الحياة "رسالة"  
من مراجع الكتاب  
المحتويات

#### BOOKS RECEIVED:

In The Realm of Iraqi Maqam and Songs  
(in Arabic)  
by Ibrahim Obadia ●

## A PRAYER FOR THE DAYS OF AWE

by **Elie Wiesel**

- Survivor of Auschwitz,  
Nobel Peace Prize Winner  
Sent in by **Albert Khabbaza, MD**

Master of the Universe, let us make up. It is time. How long can we go on being angry?

More than 50 years have passed since the nightmare was lifted. Many things, good and less good, have since happened to those who survived it. They learned to build on ruins. Family life was recreated. Children were born, friendships struck. They learned to have faith in their surroundings, even in their fellow men and women. Gratitude has replaced bitterness in their hearts. No one is as capable of thankfulness as they are. Thankful to anyone willing to hear their tales and become their ally in the battle against apathy and forgetfulness. For them every moment is a grace.

Oh, they do not forgive the killers and their accomplices, nor should they. Nor should you, Master of the Universe. But they no longer look at every passer-by with suspicion. Nor do they see a dagger in every hand.

Does this mean that the wounds in their soul have healed? They will never heal. As long as a spark of the flames of Auschwitz and Treblinka glows in their memory, so long will my joy be incomplete.

What about my faith in you, Master of the Universe?

I now realise I never lost it, not even over there, during the darkest hours of my life. I don't know why I kept on whispering my daily prayers, and those one reserves for the Sabbath, and for the holidays, but I did recite them, often with my father and, on Rosh Hashanah eve, with hundreds of inmates at Auschwitz. Was it because the prayers remained a link to the vanished world of my childhood?

But my faith was no longer pure. How could it be? It was filled with anguish rather than fervour, with perplexity more than piety. In the kingdom of eternal night, on the Days of Awe, which are the Days of Judgement, my traditional prayers were directed to you as well as against you, Master of the Universe. What hurt me more: your absence or your silence?

In my testimony I have written harsh words, burning words about your role in our tragedy. I would not repeat them today. But I felt them then. I felt them in every cell of my being. Why did you allow if not enable the killer day after day, night after night to torment, kill and annihilate tens of thousands of Jewish children? Why were they abandoned by your Creation? These thoughts were in no way destined to diminish the guilt of the guilty. Their established culpability is irrelevant to my



*Celebrating the happy end of the Sabena kidnapping (1972) at the Dan Tel Aviv: Defence Minister Moshe Dayan, PM Golda Meir, Lieut. Colonel Ehud Barak and the Sabena aircraft captain Mr. Levy and his wife. ●*

"problem" with you, Master of the Universe. In my childhood I did not expect much from human beings. But I expected everything from you.

Where were you, God of Kindness, in Auschwitz? What was going on in heaven, at the celestial tribunal, while your children were marked for humiliation, isolation and death only because they were Jewish?

These questions have been haunting me for more than five decades. You have vocal defenders, you know. Many theological answers were given me, such as: God is God. He alone knows what He is doing. One has no right to question Him or His ways." Or: "Auschwitz was a punishment for European Jewry's sins of assimilation and/or Zionism." And: "Isn't Israel the solution? Without Auschwitz, there would have been no Israel."

I reject all these answers. Auschwitz must and will forever remain a question mark only: it can be conceived neither with God nor without God. At one point, I began wondering whether I was not unfair with you. After all, Auschwitz was not something that came down ready-made from heaven. It was conceived by men, implemented by men, staffed by men. And their aim was to destroy not only us but you as well. Ought we not to think of your pain, too? Watching your children suffer at the hands of your other children, haven't you also suffered?

As we Jews now enter the High Holidays again, preparing ourselves to pray for a year of peace and happiness for our people and all

people, let us make up, Master of the Universe. In spite of everything that happened? Yes, in spite. Let us make up: for the child in me, it is unbearable to be divorced from you so long. ●



The above photograph is of the wedding of our parents Rosa and Khedoori Toeg. As we know they married in 1917 in Baghdad.

Our grandfather the late Aboody Toeg was the agent of the Rafidain Oil Company for Amara region since the British occupation of Iraq and our father managed the agency until 1951 when we all left to Israel.

Father died in 1973 and mother in 1975. ●  
**Renée; Marcelle; Richard and Clairette**  
Sent in by **S. H. Sassoon**



*Cairo 1932 - The Maqam orchestra which was entirely Jewish that represented Iraq at the Arab Music Festival with Mohammed Al-Qebbantchi as recitalist.*

*Left to right:*

*Yehuda Shamash, dumbuk (drum); Khadhouri Shamma, daff (tambourine); Yousef Za'arur Junior, qanun (plucked zither); Ezra Haron, ud (lute); Mohammed Al-Qebbantchi; Saleh Shemmail; kamana-josa (made of coconut shell); Yousef Hoogi Patao, santur (struck dulcimer).*

*Ezra Haron was included in the delegation only because he was entrusted by Prime Minister Noori al-Said to supervise the unfamiliar Western dress of the players.*

*Hoogi Patao was the top Santur player of Chalghi Baghdad, but because of his old age, he could not travel to Cairo and his son Yousef went in his place. The BBC Arabic programme has a complete set of records of all the music played by the Iraqi orchestra at the Cairo Conference as well as records of music played by other delegations. Hoogi Patao died in 1933.*

*The above photograph is from the archives of the Babylonian Jewry Heritage Centre at Or-Yehuda, now containing over 6,000 historic photographs, and was personally very kindly brought to us by Mr Mordechai Ben Porat, founder and President of the Centre. A second floor measuring 850 square metres has just been roofed and nearing completion. ●*



*1938 - The picture on the right shows the band of Baghdad Broadcasting House (5 Jews and one Moslem) with the well-known recitalist Mohammed Al- Qebbantchi.*

*Right to left: sitting: Ibrahim Taqu (cello); Daoud al-Kuwaiti (lute); Mohammed al-Qebbantchi; Yousef Za'arour (zither); Husain Abdallah (percussion).*

*Standing: Yacoob Murad al-Emari (flute); Saleh al-Kuwaiti (violin). ●*





*The above picture taken at a musical party given in 1933 by Yousef Za'arour senior in honour of the great Egyptian singer Um Kalthum, during her visit to Baghdad.*

*Right to left: sitting: Heskel Mualllem (singer); Hoogi Pataw (zither-with hammers); Nahom Yona (violin); Yousef Horesh (recitalist); Salman Moshi (recitalist). Standing: Yousef Za'arour and Um Kalthum.*

*Jewish musicians played a prominent part in the development and perfection of traditional Iraqi Maqam. In 1932 a Jewish band headed by Hoogi Pataw, with Mohammed Al-Qebbantchi, recitalist, represented Iraq at the Cairo music Festival of 1932. They won the first prize which was presented to them by King Fuad of Egypt. ●*

## TRADITIONAL IRAQI MUSIC

An Iraqi band of traditional Chalghi has recently been touring Britain and some other European countries giving performances of well-known Maqams and popular songs.

In London, this band appeared at the Kensington Town Hall to a packed audience of 800 enthusiastic listeners and also at various other venues.

As the leading recitalist of the Iraqi Maqam, Hamid Al-Saadi perpetuates the centuries old singing.

Hamid mastered the many different Maqams at an early age, enlarging on some of them and enhancing their appeal by his sensitive innovation. He was greatly praised by the great "masters" before they passed away. The late Mohammed Al-Qebbantchi, who was considered the greatest of all the recitalists, and teacher and mentor, Yousif Omar, considered him the ideal link in the chain to pass on the tradition to the next generation of vocalists. He is now an established authority in this art. Hamid has lectured for seven years at the Maqam Academy in Baghdad and now performs at local and international festivals. ●



*The above picture shows the band from left to right:*

*Hamed Al-Saadi (the recitalist);*

*Baher Hashem Al-Rejab;*

*Sahib Hashem Al-Rejab;*

*Fathel Al-Saadi. ●*

# Jewish Role in Iraqi Music

by Yeheskel Kojaman

The Iraqi Jewish community settled in Iraq long before the Arabs occupied the country.

Jews mastered the Arabic language quickly, and participated in all fields of life. The leaders of the community were treated with great respect by the Khalifs.

This article deals mainly with the role of the Jews in music during the first half of the 20th century. The Jewish community in Iraq liked instrumentalists and treated them with respect for their skills and their artistic talents. Thus, during the first half of the twentieth century, Jews were virtually the only instrumental players in Iraq. They were the musicians of the Iraqi people. In 1932, for example, all the instrumentalists who attended the first Arabic music congress in Cairo were Jews, while the singer, Mohammed Al-Qebbantchi was Moslem. At that Conference the Iraqi ensemble received the first prize from King Fuad. When Iraq Radio was first established in Iraq in 1936, the entire instrumental ensemble, apart from the percussion player, was Jewish. Almost all instrumentalists in the night-clubs of Baghdad were Jews. For this reason, on Yom Kippur and Tish'a 'be-Ab, the two most solemn days in the Jewish calendar when Jews did not play music, no live music was broadcast on Iraq Radio; only records were played.

During the late 1920's, an instrumental ensemble at a night-club consisted of violin, *qanun* (plucked trapezoid zither), *ud* (middle-eastern lute) and two percussion players. Only in the broadcasting station were cello and *nay* (flute) introduced.

Singers, both men and women, were of different religions - Moslems, Jews and some Christians. The most famous woman singer, since the early 1930's, was a Jewish vocalist called Salima Pasha (later Salima Murad). At the time, it was considered shameful for a woman to sing in public, so that no respectable family would allow their daughter to become a professional singer. Thus, a situation existed whereby women singers (and dancers) were recruited from local brothels from among those who had musical talent. Despite this, Salima Murad was loved and respected; she was asked to sing at numerous private parties where she earned a high fee. She is known to have helped many people financially, and by interceding on their behalf at Government level when necessary.

In 1936, an institute was started for the teaching of instruments, singing and acting, but most of its instrumental classes were for brass and other western instruments, such as piano and violin. The only eastern instrument to be taught was the *ud* (middle-eastern lute). However, another institution, the school for blind Jewish children existed since the late

1920's. It was started so as to teach these children a profession - such as weaving, and the making of brushes, cane seats and cradles of rope - to save them from the usual fate of begging. Most of the children liked music, and the school provided them with instrumental lessons. Many of the students became musicians in Iraq, and later, as part of the Arabic Music Ensemble *Qol Yisrael* (Israel Radio), was formed of these blind musicians.

The term "Art Music" is used to denote all music which is pre-composed, and thus in most cases has a known composer; it is distinct from folk music. In Iraq, there are two traditions of art music as sung and played in the big cities such as Baghdad, Mosul and Basra.

## 1. Modern Music

This tradition is identical with music sung and played in all other Arab countries. In vocal music, it was Egypt that dictated the new repertoire. Composers and singers of new songs appeared first in Egypt, which became the leader in the development of the "modern music" style. The new repertoire then spread to other Arab countries. It was only in the late 1920's that Egyptian musicians began to compose new instrumental pieces.

In Iraq, new compositions emerged somewhat later than in Egypt. Until the early 1920's, there were no famous composers, except for Ezra Aharon, an *ud* player who was one of the musicians in the group that represented Iraq in the 1932 Congress of Arabic Music at Cairo; he later became famous in the Middle-East Broadcast (from Cyprus), and later (first in Palestine) and then in Israel, as the director of the Arabic Music Ensemble for Israel Radio.

During the 1920's, two brothers began to gain prominence in the field of music in Iraq; the Kuwaiti brothers - Salih, a violin player, and Dawud, an *ud* player. Almost at the same time, the name of a woman singer, Salima Pasha (then Salima Murad) began to achieve fame. The brothers, Salih and Dawud el-Kuwaiti began to perform and to compose new songs for Salima. Salih became the most prominent musician in Iraq, and Salima became the most famous singer. Following the opening of the Iraqi Broadcast Station in 1936. Salih was asked to form the official music ensemble for the radio station. It was due to him, that two instruments, the cello and *nay* (flute), were introduced for the first time into the instrumental music ensemble.

## 2. Iraqi Maqam

In Iraq, this second tradition of art music is known as Iraqi Maqam. No other Arab country had encountered this form of music until the Congress of Cairo in 1932.

The *Maqam* tradition in Iraq is in fact, a

composed repertoire of about sixty songs, to be performed by a solo singer accompanied by an instrumental ensemble, the latter being known as the *Chalghi Baghdad*. In the past, the *Maqam* (pl. *maqamat*) was also sung without instrumental accompaniment. Most *Maqamat* were composed before the twentieth century. Some were composed by known composers, for example, Ahmed Zaidan and Mohammed Al-Qebbantchi (both twentieth century composers), and some are anonymous. These songs are transmitted orally from one singer to another, and on the whole are sung as the original composer composed and performed it.

All these songs were composed according to a strict set of rules which they share in common, and any new *Maqam* must be composed according to the same set of rules.

The *Maqam* is usually formed of three sections - the *tahrir* (introduction), the *matan* (the text of the poem) and the *taslim* (conclusion). Generally, they are all sung with instrumental accompaniment.

The *Maqam* is often followed by a light song called *pasta*.

The instruments that are used to accompany the *maqam* singer, differ from those used in the Modern Music tradition. The *maqam* ensemble, called the *chalghi*, consists of a *santur* (struck dulcimer), a *kamana-joza* (a four-string spike fiddle; body constructed from a coconut shell) and two percussion instruments, the *daff* (frame drum, with metal discs) and *dumbuk* (goblet-shaped drum; also known as "*tabla*" in Egypt).

During the end of the nineteenth century and until about the beginning of the 1950's the *chalghi* instrumentalists were exclusively Jewish. This profession was strictly a "family business." During this period, there were two such *chalghi* ensembles in Baghdad - the Patao ensemble and the Bassoun ensemble.

*Maqamat* were sometimes sung in coffee houses. Traditionally, though, they were performed at family celebrations; at such celebrations they performed until morning. At such performances, the *maqamat* were divided into five groups known as "chapters." Each chapter is composed of four to six *maqamat*, based on different melodic modes. These *maqamat* are generally sung in the same order, and are not repeated in another chapter.

Each *maqam* is followed by a "*pasta*." There are many *pastat* in the same melodic mode, and the singer may choose any one of them. The texts are mainly popular dialect. The *pasta* gives the audience an interval of light music during which they can clap, accompany the singer and even dance, changing the atmosphere from the very serious attention which is demanded during the singing of the *maqam*.

The majority of Iraqi Jews emigrated to Israel during 1950/51. All the Jewish musicians



The above photograph was taken in 1933 at a gathering at the home of Yousef Za'arur Senior showing the Iraqi Jewish musicians with members of the visiting Egyptian orchestra.

Sitting from the right: Yousef Horesh; Mohammed al-Qebbantchi; Hoogi Patao; Nahome Yona; tamborine player and an Egyptian musician. ●

emigrated as well, except for some of the women singers, such as Salima Murad, Sultana Yusef, Nadhima Ibrahim. Musically, it was a difficult period in Iraq, as there were insufficient musicians, but the problem was initially solved by using graduates of the Institute of Fine Arts and by borrowing musicians from other Arab countries. Later, many musicians and composers in modern music appeared, and any new *maqam* singers and *chalghi* players were trained at the Institute, which opened a special branch for teaching *maqam*.

In Israel, the situation for the Iraqi musicians was also difficult. In Iraq, their numbers had been sufficient to play to the millions of Iraqi people, but in Israel they found themselves limited to an audience of only tens of thousands - and an audience that is diminishing day by day, because the old are dying and the young are now accustomed to Israeli music.

There was only one Arabic music ensemble in *Qol Yisrael* (Israeli radio); the ensemble originally consisted solely of Iraqi musicians most of them young graduates of the School for Blind Children in Baghdad. Salih and Dawud el-Kuwaiti continued to play and compose and sing in addition to their regular work to earn their living, outside the music profession. Music was part of their life, and they continued to play and sing to their last day. ●



<sup>1</sup> Joseph HORESH (b. c. 1680)  
(emigrated to Baghdad 1710 from Athens and Vienna  
family said to originate in Spain)

<sup>2</sup> Sh. Ezra KHLAIF (Treasurer of Baghdad Community)

<sup>3</sup> Joseph EZRA KHLAIF (b. ? 1736)

<sup>35</sup> Saleh HORESH (b. ? 1737)

<sup>4</sup> Ezra Joseph KHLAIF

<sup>36</sup> R. Eliezer HORESH  
(b 1765)

MASRY  
family

PEREZ  
family

SETTY  
family

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Ezra BAHER (d 1855)  
m dau of Menashe SHASHOUA

<sup>6</sup> ? Eliahu

<sup>7</sup> David Joseph EZRA BAHER  
(d Calcutta 1882)

<sup>8</sup> Meskel  
(d Calcutta)

<sup>9</sup> Nissim  
(d Calcutta 1856)

<sup>10</sup> Isaac

<sup>11</sup> Moshe

m(1) ...  
(from Basra)

m(2) ...  
(one child  
died in  
infancy)

m(3) Hannah  
dau of  
H. Abigedor  
EZRIEL

m(1) Mazaltob  
dau of Murad  
GUBBAY

m(2) Reemah  
dau of  
H. Abigedor  
EZRIEL

m(1) Habiba  
dau of  
Menashe  
ZUBEIDA

m(2) Simha  
dau of  
Sasson  
ZUBEIDA

Elias EZRA 12 (1830-1886)  
m(1) Rahma dau of David  
Aaron GURBAY

m(2) Mozelle dau of Sir Albart  
(Abdullah) SASSOON BART

Saleh EZRA 13 (d 1894) m Farha MOSES

Dinah 7.2 (1852-1931) m Raphael Aaron GURBAY

Ezra 14

Elia 15

Salka 9.2

Dinah 9.1 m Aaron Isaac ALTRARAS of Aleppo

Habiba 8.2 (d 1896)  
m Ezra Isaac SHIMON BENJAMIN

Farkha 4.3 (d 1887) m Salka Elia BARTER 29 (cousin) (for issue see husband)

Nissim Hai EZRA 16 m Mozelle Elias EZRA (cousin) 12.3

Mair 18 } m  
Ghala 10.1 }  
Salka 17 } [Note: Mair and Ghala were  
1st cousins as shown by names  
in their Ketubah 1885 (Mair  
David) and Military Tax 1892.]

Mair 18 } m  
Ghala 10.1 }  
Salka 17 }  
Khatoun 11.2  
Ghala 11.1 m Simon Sasson ZUBEIDA

Aziza 11.3  
Khatoun 11.2  
Ghala 11.1 m Simon Sasson ZUBEIDA

Messouda 11.5 m Sion Shammah AGASSI

Zubeida 11.4 m Saleh ELISHA (SASSOON)

Salka 18.3

Farkha 18.2 (1890-1911) m Moshe Sasson SCHAYER

Salka 18.1

Rahba 34

Shua 33

Victoria 9.6 m ... CHAYO

Maurice ALTRARAS 9.5 m Simha BSEBBAH

Nissim Napoleon ALTRARAS 9.4

Isaac Jacques ALTRARAS 9.3 m Simha GURBAY

Heckel 32

Elihu 31

Salka 29 (d 1897) m(1) Farkha 4.3 (d 1887) dau of

Nissim (cousin) m(2) Sumra ... (no issue)

Heckel 28

Menashe 27

Hannah 13.2 (d 1901) m Elius Haim Hildai SALOMON

Rachal 13.1 m Benjamin JOSHUA (no issue)

Joseph Haim EZRA 26 m Sophie ...

Hannah 12.8 m David GURBAY (no issue) (1st cousin)

Rachal 12.7 m Edward (EZRIEL) ELIOTT

Luna 12.6 (died young)

Dina 12.5 m Maurice GURBAY

(Ezra) Edward ESMOND 25 m Valentine Deutsch de la MEURTHE

Alfred Aaron EZRA 24 m Mariel dau of Frederick SASSOON

(Sir) David EZRA 23 (1871-1947) m Rachal dau of Solomon David SASSOON (no issue)

Salka 12.4 (maybe from 1st marriage)

Mozelle 12.3 m Nissim Hai EZRA 16 (cousin) (for issue see husband)

Flora 12.2 m Simon Hai Abraham NATAN

Hannah 12.1 m Joseph Simon Haim ISAAC

Heckel EZRA 22 m Rahma Sasson HECKEL YEHUDA

Joseph EZRA 21 (b 1857) m Rachal MOSES

Mozelle  
Elias EZRA (b 1887)

Avri, Mair, Datus, Ati

Sasson, David, Montecat, Sami

Sasson, Isaac, Clementine

Sasson, Kochka, Iana, Sarina

Sofia, Lily, Sasson, Simone

Joshua, Montecat, Lutf, Naam

Najibe, Shakir, David

Aziza, Joshua, Marcella, Nir

Edwin ELISHA m Paula

David ELISHA m Franca

Charlotte m Meir COHEN

Clara m Ephraim SHAMASH

Eva m Abraham BASHI

Sasson m Nadia DELLAL

Simon m Lily COHEN

Louise

Regina m Moise EZRA

Rachal

David SCHAYER m Lilia dau of David HORESH (HORESH no 56)

Marcella m Raouf PILBOUT

Yvonne m Ezra AMBAR

Juliette

Joseph ALTRARAS (b 1900) um

Aaron ALTRARAS (b 1904) um

Ochavie

Edgar ALTRARAS m Yvonne DE PICCIOTTO

Moise ALTRARAS

Leon ALTRARAS (1895-1974) m Linda ANZURUT

Hannah (1885) m Obadiah Aaron Obadiah COHEN (cousin)

Nissim (1883) m Rachal ARAKIE (cousin)

Joseph (1881) m Hannah GARDEN (cousin)

Edward (1879) m Seemah COHEN (cousin)

David (1878) m Sippach GARDEN (no issue)

Elias Stas EZRA (1877-1938)

Sally (GURBAY), Seemah (COHEN)

Farkha (ARON), Dinah, Ramah (LEVEROY)

Hildai, Solomon, Moses

David EZRA, Charles EZRA, Polly

Elias Joseph EZRA m Ette ARAKIE

Betty

Ethel (1905-1961) m Ralph SASSOON

Lulu, Dina, Sybil

Alicia, Ruth

Mozelle

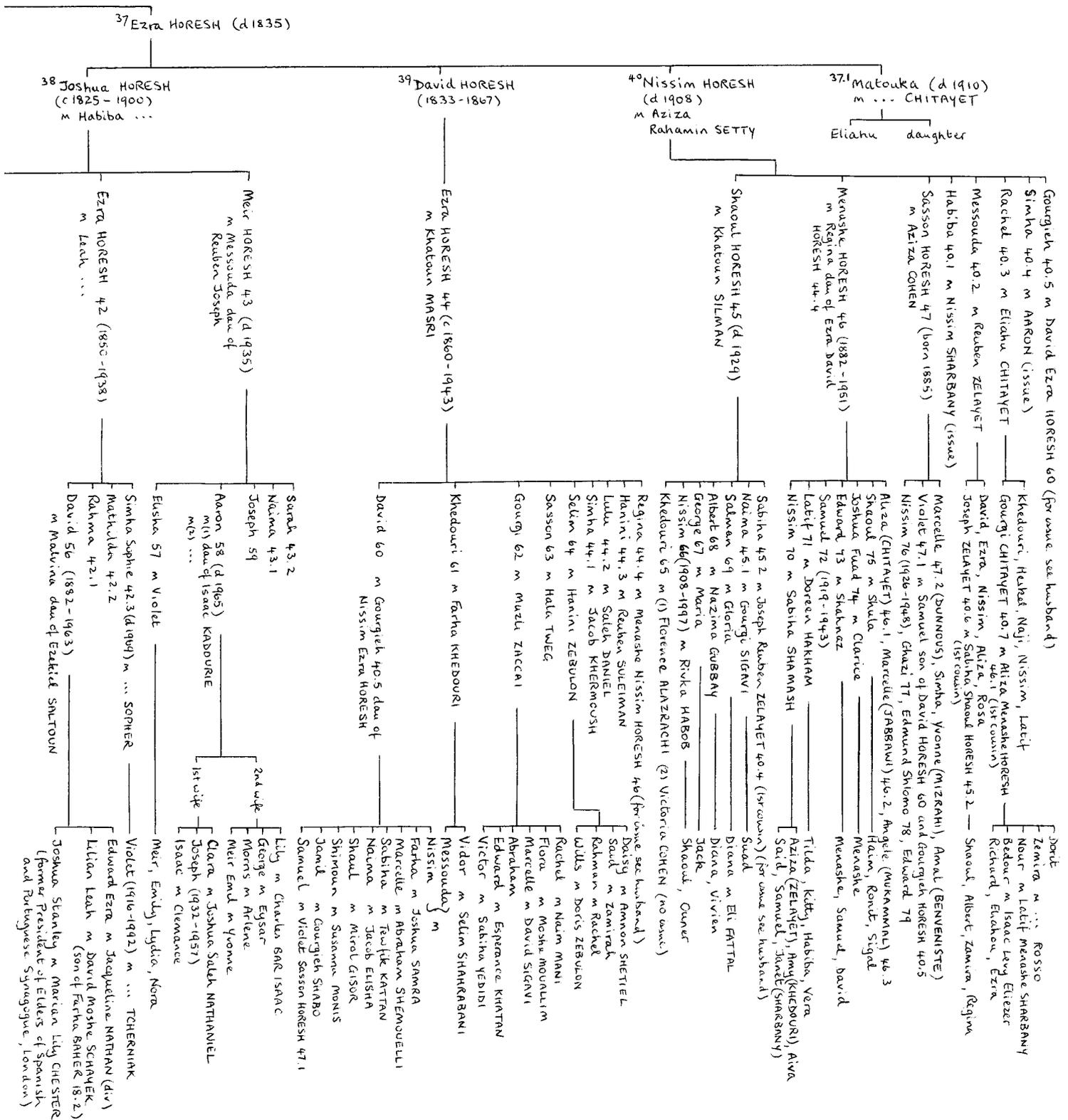
Elias EZRA (b 1887)

Note:

In the Military Tax Register of 1892  
the name appears as HIRSH וִירְשׁ

# Horesh - Baher Family Tree

## Descendants of Sh. Ezra Khlaif



Based on information from the archives of Naim Dangoor and from Nissim Shaoul Horesh, Edward Menashe Horesh, Joshua Stanley Horesh, Esmond D. Ezra, and David M. Schayek

Chart prepared by Lydia Collins

## PRESIDENT CLINTON'S KIPPUR'S PRAYER LAST YEAR

Sent in by **Richard Moshi**

It is important to me that everybody who has been hurt know that the sorrow I feel is genuine - first and most important, my family, also my friends, my staff, my Cabinet, Monica Lewinsky and her family and the American people.

I have asked all for their forgiveness. But I believe that to be forgiven, more than sorrow is required. At least two more things; first, genuine repentance, a determination to change and to repair breaches of my own making. I have repented.

Second, what my Bible calls a broken spirit. An understanding that I must have God's help to be the person that I want to be. A willingness to give the very forgiveness I seek.

A couple of days ago when I was in Florida, a Jewish friend of mine gave me this liturgy book called Gates of Repentance. And there was this incredible passage from a Yom Kippur liturgy, and I would like to read it to you:

"Now is the time for turning.

The leaves are beginning to turn from green to red to orange.

The birds are beginning to turn and are heading once more toward the south.

The animals are beginning to turn to storing their food for the winter.

For leaves, birds and animals, turning comes instinctively.

But for us, turning does not come so easily.

It takes an act of will for us to make a turn. It means breaking old habits.

It means admitting that we have been wrong, and this is never easy.

It means losing face. It means starting all over again.

And this is always painful.

It means saying I am sorry.

It means recognising that we have the ability to change. These things are

terribly hard to do. But unless we turn, we will be trapped forever in yesterday's ways.

Lord help us to turn from callousness to sensitivity, from hostility to love, from pettiness to purpose, from envy to contentment, from carelessness to discipline, from fear to faith.

Turn us around, oh, Lord, and bring us back toward you. Revive our lives as at the beginning.

And turn us toward each other, Lord, for in isolation, there is no life.'

I thank my friend for that. I ask you to share my prayer that God will search me and know my heart, try me and know my anxious thoughts, see if there is any hurtfulness in me and lead me toward a life everlasting.

I ask that God give me a clean heart, let me walk by faith and not sight.

I ask once again to be able to love my neighbour - all my neighbours - as myself, to be an instrument of God's peace, to let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart, and in the end, the work of my hands, be pleasing. ●

From **The Times**



*President Bill Clinton greeted by Major General Yair Itzhaky on the American President's recent visit to Jerusalem.*

*Major General Yair Itzhaky (Sehaik) is the son of Mrs Daisy Itzhak Shohet, the daughter of Khedhoury Shohet (known as Khedhoury abu leblanjoo) in Baghdad - Iraq - Daisy is my late wife's cousin. 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.R. in politics, science and the history of the Middle East. He is now the Police General in the Jerusalem area.*

**S. H. Sassoon**

**London**

**Naim Dangoor writes:** Khedhoury abu leblanjoo taught me book-keeping after I finished my secondary education at Shamash School. I prepared for him a colourful diploma which he then began to award to all those who finished his book-keeping course. ●



*The above is a photograph taken at the wedding of our son Gil to Karen, daughter of Rena and Yoave Mani which took place in March at the "David Intercontinental Hotel."*

*Left to right: Rouben Dangoor; the bride; the groom; Dalia d. of Salim and Habiba Fattal; our sons, Yaron (soldier) and Liran (illustrator and administrator).*

*This is a souvenir for all our friends and family all over the world, who couldn't take part at this occasion. ●*

**Dalia & Rouben Dangoor**

**Tel-Aviv**