

# *The* SCRIBE

## JOURNAL OF BABYLONIAN JEWRY

PUBLISHED BY THE EXILARCH'S FOUNDATION

ISSN 14 74 - 0230

www.thescribe.uk.com

ISSUE 75 - AUTUMN 2002

Established 1971

**A Happy New Year 5763 to all our Readers and Friends**



**C**ongratulations to Her Majesty The Queen on her Golden Jubilee. Queen Elizabeth II has reiterated her pledge to serve the country all her life.

With the rise in life expectancy, which

is causing a serious pension crisis, if Her Majesty exceeds the age of her late mother, Prince Charles may have to ascend the throne with the help of a walking stick!

Lesser mortals, however, must not cling to the reins of authority before handing over to the next generation, but must be content to continue in healthy and happy retirement. ♦

# Thoughts & Afterthoughts

By Naim Dangoor

Those who tell America, in the wake of 11 September events, to ask why it happened, and advise her to revise foreign policy, especially her support for Israel, try not only to justify that act of war but also to require a reward for it. ♦

## The Babylonian Captivity as an example

The Russian Orthodox Church is saying that the 70 years of Communist rule was like the Babylonian Captivity. Just as the Jews were delivered because they kept the Sabbath and the Commandment in exile, Russians have been saved because many had stuck to their faith. ♦

From *London Jewish News*

## Let's be more Palestinian

Israel must now abandon the policy of giving away land in the hope of saving lives, which hasn't worked, and adopt the Palestinian policy of risking life and limb to save the land. The recent Likud vote not to allow the creation of a Palestinian state is a step in the right direction. ♦

## Palestinian Refugees

I recently heard on the Arabic Spectrum that a House of Lords ruling in 1951 said that Palestinian refugees who fled Israel in 1948 can consist only those who were actually living in Israel and left the country. It cannot include their children or spouses. The Arabic lawyer on Spectrum commented that if that was still the legal position then there would be only a small number of Palestinians who can claim to be 1948 refugees. We don't hear this fact from any other source and we are always made to fear that UN Resolution 194 gives right to 1.5 million Palestinians to claim Right of Return and/or compensation. ♦

19 March 2002

The Rt Hon Mr Jack Straw, MP  
Foreign Secretary  
Foreign & Commonwealth Office  
Whitehall

Dear Mr Straw

I am unfortunately unable to attend with the delegation of Sephardi Jews visiting you Wednesday at 1 pm, though my son, David, will be there.

I wanted therefore to mention some important points I would have liked to make had I been present.

British government policy is that UN Resolution 194 is still applicable. This requires the return of the Palestinians to Israel proper, which was the main cause of the failure of Sharm El Sheikh.

After the establishment of Israel, many Palestinian Arabs fled mainly on the advice of Arab governments who wanted them out of the way and were confident to bring them back in triumph. Shortly thereafter, there was an exodus of similar numbers of Jews from Arab countries to Israel and it was widely recognised at the

time by the powers and indeed by the Arab governments themselves, who pressured their Jews to leave for Israel, that there was thus a logical and desirable exchange of populations. But while Israel absorbed its refugees after many years of hardship in transit camps, the Arabs deliberately left theirs unsettled, although they had all the money to settle them, and kept them as a political weapon and a lever against Israel in their continuing effort to defeat the Jewish state.

Israel alone cannot solve the Palestinian problem. It is a regional problem, if only because of the involvement in it by all the neighbouring countries.

To those who say that Zionism is the root of all the trouble in Palestine, the reply is that Arab imperialism is the root of all the trouble in the Middle East, which is the home also of 20 million Kurds as well as Armenians, Assyrians, Maronites, Turkomen and oppressed Shi'ites. ♦

Naim Dangoor

## Jewish Care Dinner



Jewish Care is one of the top charities of Britain, expending some £45 million annually on the welfare of British Jews.

Above Naim and Renée Dangoor at the 2002 Campaign Dinner in the Great Room, which raised £1.7 million. ♦

# The Arabs and the Abars

Taken from *The Scribe*, No. 17 - January 1986

It is very probable that Arabia was the home of all the Semitic races and the starting point of Semitic culture, in which case the Sumerians, the Phoenicians, the Jews, the Assyrians and the Babylonians could all be classed loosely as "Arabs". But it is more apt to class the Semitic peoples as Arabs and Abars, the Arabs being those who stuck to their homeland and stayed behind under all conditions, and the Abars being those who emigrated in search of a better environment and kept moving to look for better conditions. The present Arab-Jewish conflict is the outcome of these two contrasting strategies. It can be said of the Jews, "qui va à la chasse perd sa place" – "He who goes out hunting loses his territory". Recognising this danger the economics of the Torah, by the 50 year jubilee system, jealously tried to let the nation retain ultimate ownership of the land. I find it strange that a conqueror has to acknowledge previous titles to land. When the Arabs conquered the Middle East they claimed ownership of all land by conquest. Israel should do the same and make sure, through land taxation, that the nation cannot lose ownership of the land. The Jewish people lost their homeland in the past more because of emigration than as a result of military defeat. This pattern has now been resumed in Israel.

Arabia has been claimed as the real scene of many of the earlier episodes of the Bible, and it seems certain that the earlier Jewish authorities recognised their kinship to its inhabitants.

The tradition of Monotheism, which is the basis of Semitic culture, goes all the way back to the historical Adam (as distinct from the mythical Adam) who lived some 8000 years ago. Adam was literally the father of civilisation because he discovered the wild wheat and started agriculture that obliged mankind to live in settled communities.

Adam was a great leader and a prophet. He and his successors were very likely the authors of the first chapters of Genesis. Through Adam were established knowledge of the One God, the principle of free will, crime and punishment, man being created in God's image, the Sabbath, man's title to

this earth, etc. Adam most probably lived in East Africa at the end of the last Ice Age and moved to Arabia when the Red Sea was still a lake.

The early episodes of the Bible were not taken by the Hebrews from the Babylonians or vice versa but were ancient traditions handed down from Adam to Noah to Abraham. The Monotheism of Adam remained alive even while Semitic nations had lapsed into idolatry. The Bible tells us that up to the time of the Tower of Babel mankind spoke one language. We can infer that they also had one religion – the religion of Adam.

This historical analysis is meant to show that Semitic nations and tribes migrated within a well defined area of the Middle East bounded by Turkey to the North and Iran to the East. That whole region does not belong exclusively to the Arabs but equally to all the peoples of the area, including the Jews.

## Naim Dangoor writes:

The word 'Arab' derives from the Hebrew meaning 'blend' or 'mix with' (the land) vis 'erub'. The word 'Abar' derives from the Hebrew word 'to cross over'.

The ancestor who started the migratory movement for better conditions was named Eber ('to cross over'). He was seven generations above Abraham.

Abraham is often referred to as 'the Ibrî', in the mistaken belief that he got this title for having crossed over from Ur to Canaan. However, the true interpretation of Abraham 'the Ibrî' is that he was a descendent of Eber. Eber settled on the eastern coast of Arabia near present day Oman. At a recent graduating ceremony at the University of Oman, we noted that many graduates carried the surname of 'al-Abri' which obviously refers to a distant ancestor by that name.

Israelis must now emulate the Palestinians by risking life and limb in defence of the homeland, instead of some migrating to greener pastures at the first sign of trouble.

## Scribe:

So who is right in the end: the Arabs who consider themselves a product of the land and feel attached to it, come what may, or the Abars who want to

feel free to roam about from place to place in search of greener pastures? The human race is slowly moving in the latter direction, of which the Jews have been the fore-runners. For instance, suddenly there was a million Moslems in Britain, as a million Englishmen in Asia, a million Israelis abroad and so on. But as long as the world is divided into national territories, a people will put their survival at risk if they don't maintain a territorial base.

Are the Jews a nation or are they religious communities? They are both a nation as well as religious communities and neither faction can tell the other what they are. A Jew who feels he is only part of a religious group cannot prevent another Jew who feels he is part of a nation.

What of the future? Where do you draw the line? If national boundaries were abolished, then America would be swamped by the Chinese and Europe would be overrun by Africans. A possible arrangement would be to remove the national barriers but introduce a system of national dividends to serve as a handicap for a number of generations for newcomers! ♦



Dear Mr Dangoor

Thank you for your letter and for forwarding your correspondence with the Foreign Office.

We are indeed in troubled times and we are most appreciative of the efforts of individuals such as yourself who fight for Israel's cause. I would like to thank you for your continued awareness in the fight against complacency and your support, solidarity and friendship with the People and State of Israel. It is your actions that will ensure that Israel's voice is heard in these difficult times.

Israel continues to be committed to a fair and lasting peace that will bring prosperity and security to all peoples of our troubled region. ♦

With best wishes.

**Dr Zvi Shtauber**

**Ambassador of Israel, London**

The Arabs have forfeited their right to lead the Middle East

# PAX ISRAELITA

After eighty years of failed Arab attempts to destroy her, Israel is now entitled to impose her own solution for the problems of the whole region.

## Middle East is not divisible

**Middle East Confederation –  
The path to stability  
Condensed from a paper by  
Myles Robertson,  
commissioned in 1983**

The purpose of this project is to speculate about certain aspects of “the Middle East problem” – though there are several problems – beyond the conflicts of the 1980’s.

One way of decreasing the number of conflicts and of reducing the tensions which plague the region would be to develop the processes of federalism, that is, for states to join together for mutual benefit. Hopefully they could do this on the grounds of economy, shared interests and for the progress of all the units which make up the federation.

The central assumption of this paper is that present policies will change radically; as a result Middle East government will undergo re-organisation and re-structuring in response to regional demands and altering world circumstances.

A change of approach is needed and federation is one way to achieve this.

The following present-day states are the core of this study on the future for federalism – Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Syria, The Gulf States and to a lesser extent, Saudi Arabia. From a variety of Arab, Israeli and European sources the paper examines the issues from four viewpoints:

- (i) Minorities of the region and their prospects
- (ii) The federal idea in principle and practice
- (iii) Some present examples
- (iv) Possible models

## The Minorities

Minorities are the people who stand to benefit most from federation, hence their importance in this study. The “mosaic of peoples” as they have been termed, which collectively comprise a large part of the population of the region as a whole, are

often referred to by Western observers as “minority” peoples (the term is indefinite but has become the standard means of reference).

More often than not, forces beyond their control have denied basic rights to those ethnic communities seeking autonomy. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries attempts to establish a satisfactory sense of identity have been frustrated by external powers, political backwardness and military repression.

Under imperial Ottoman administration the millet (nation) policy granted to communities a juridical autonomy in their internal affairs, religious institutions and supervision of education. On the whole this policy succeeded in producing a system capable of managing though not always benevolently, a multi-ethnic empire. But the feudal structure of the system proved too rigid and incapable of adapting to the nationalist challenge that emerged even before the Ottoman collapse at the end of World War One.

The dissolution of Ottoman power by Kemal Ataturk and the rise of Kemal republicanism was followed by a period of harsh persecution of minorities: The Armenian people were deported en masse from Anatolia (1915-20) and suffered heavy loss of life in the process; the Greek population was expelled from Asia Minor. Both groups became refugee communities elsewhere in the region.

Great Power conferences after 1918 briefly raised hopes among the former subject peoples of a re-organisation along autonomous lines. In particular the Treaty of Sevres (1920) promised the Kurdish and Armenian nations that they would receive independent homelands, as did a joint British-Iraqi declaration in 1922 which recognised Kurdish rights to “form a Kurdish government within Iraqi frontiers”.

Such hopes were short-lived. The Turkish War of Independence (1920-22) and the dictates of British political and strategic necessity forced an altogether different course to be pursued in practice. Their legitimate status unrecognised, their claims overruled, the minorities

found themselves once again as subject peoples of a divided region.

For example, in part of Arabia various unrelated ethnic communities were arbitrarily amalgamated in 1921 into the Transjordan Emirate.

“Greater Syria” was another interesting case of artificiality. The term originally applied to the countries now known as Jordan, Israel, Lebanon and Syria itself. After World War I “Greater Syria” had been reduced by half and was given to the French as a mandate. They met so much armed resistance that they sub-divided the area into Lebanon and Syria to make it more easily controllable.

The British, to exercise command over resources in the oil-rich Mosul district, added it to the districts of Baghdad and Basra in Iraq. They also split up Iraq for administrative purposes, a process which put the Jews of Baghdad under the brutal bureaucrats of the Iraqi civil service. These bureaucrats hated the Jews and organised violence against them. Shops were wrecked and looted, bombs were thrown and members of the community were murdered in the streets. In June 1941, 600 Jews were massacred in Baghdad and in 1950 an Iraqi law virtually forced the survivors to leave within a year.

In re-drawing boundaries arbitrarily and artificially and by failing to protect minorities, the Powers created great problems. Their re-organisation was not merely geographical but political. **While holding ultimate control, the Imperial powers found it useful to support the Arab peoples as the basis of local power. Consequently Arabism and pan-Arab nationalism expanded at the expense of the less-organised and less-powerful ethnic ideologies, such as the Jewish communities.** The inter-war years, 1918-1939, were periodically disturbed by armed clashes provoked by the nationalist aspirations of powerful Arab elements. Clearly it was into the hands of these activist factions – an amalgam of religious leaders, bureaucrats, army officers and middle-class traders – that control was destined to fall after the

...colonial powers had relinquished authority.

The post-war (1945) rise of military and authoritarian regimes backed by revolutionary ideologies intensified control by the central state power. All potentially divisive forces, such as minority aspirations, were ruthlessly suppressed. Even previously tolerated communities were encumbered by new restrictions, as were the Copts in Egypt. Many were banned from citizenship, had property confiscated and were forbidden to use their own language and practise their own customs. Others were forced to live in ghetto conditions or driven into exile. Such was the fate of the Jews of Iraq and the Christian Assyrians of north-east Syria and of Iraq. The Armenians of Syria and the Greeks of Egypt chose to emigrate rather than endure the continued oppression, while others turned to armed struggle to assert their claims. The Egyptian Copts, though numerous, simply endured their near-persecution.

No generalisations can be made about minority groups within the Middle East. Each ethnic group's situation is a product

of particular national circumstances and not that of some transnational trend.

## The "State" in the Middle East

In the geographical area termed the "Middle East" the idea of "statism" is still in a state of evolution, because many of the countries have only recently achieved independence from the colonial powers. Their idea of territorial sovereignty, while strong in some quarters, is not irrevocably established. Professor Elazar of the Jerusalem Institute for Federal Studies has said, "...the élites have bought the Continental notion of "state" in toto, but the mass has not." The idea of the "state" exists in constant tension with three other main forces: ethnic or national consciousness, Islam, and social change. As the relative influence of these forces towards each other has fluctuated from state to state, so the fortunes of minorities have varied.

Many of the "problems" of the Middle East are minority problems. The root of the difficulties of identity and stability was cogently evaluated by Professor Ben-Dor of the Shiloah Institute, Tel

Aviv, who argues that "to be tolerant towards a minority one really needs a state majority." He means that the majority need not then fear the minority. The theory that tolerance must follow does not necessarily hold true – the Sunni Muslims of Egypt are in an 8-to-1 majority over the Copts but widespread intolerance exists. There is a further difficulty – that of defining which groups constitute the majority in any particular Middle Eastern state. A classic example is Lebanon. The last census was held in 1932 so nobody knows how its population is made up.

It follows that it is just as difficult to decide under these circumstances which groups are in a minority. By using "minority" you created a problem - use national groups (ED). Professor Ma'oz of the Truman Institute emphasises this point. "...It is very important to bear in mind that each country has in its own way a unique situation." ♦

See also PAX ISRAELITA, the editorial of *The Scribe* No. 45, November 1990, reproduced on page 13.

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## Bombay Reminiscences

by Percy S Gourgey, MBE

I appreciate the reference to my dear late Mother, Hannah, as being a founder-member of the League of Jewish Women (and WIZO) in Bombay before the War, in an article by Sarah Manasseh in the recent issue of *The Scribe*.

While her late Father, Albert, founded Habonim in Bombay in 1935, together with Solomon Ezra, still happily with us and living in Jerusalem with his family, others involved in that early period were my elder Sisters, now in London, Sara's Mother, Rachel, now living in Israel and other members of the Ani family, and Jack Japeth now living in Israel after retiring from the Indian Navy with the rank of Commander. As a very young boy, together with my dear late twin Brother, Archie, I was among the first group of six young boys to have started Habonim in Bombay.

In 1943, as Captain of the then Zionist Water-Polo team, I helped to form the Maccabi Sports Club in Bombay of which the founder was the late Mr Gershon Starosta, from Russia, who settled in Tel Aviv after the War. Following my service in the Royal Indian Naval Volunteer Reserve as an Officer in the War, I became

Honorary Secretary of the Central Jewish Board of Bombay, in 1950, and Associate Editor of *The Jewish Advocate*, the journal of the Bombay Zionist Association.

There were many others of the Baghdadian/Babylonian Jewish community in Bombay, now settled in Israel and elsewhere who, together with their Bene-Israel fellow Jews, played an active part in the affairs of the vibrant Bombay Jewish community and, indeed, in public affairs generally. ♦

## Impressions of Zionist Congress 2002

by Percy S Gourgey, MBE

Having just returned after attending the 34th World Zionist Congress in Jerusalem earlier in June, I have three main impressions of it.

Firstly, while the substance of the debates and discussions at the various sessions were thought-provoking, their organisations left something to be desired. Secondly, the main speakers from the Executive and the Government did not appear to grasp the true nature of the hostility facing Israel at this most critical phase of her history. While the extremist

Muslims – there are moderates who fear to make their influence felt – engage in acts of terror, including the ghastly suicide bombing, they are motivated by making Islam the dominant religion in the world because they believe it is superior to all others, especially the preceding monotheistic religions of Judaism and Christianity.

Hence it is not only Israel that is being attacked, but in Kashmir Pakistanis attack Indians, in the Philippines which is a Christian country, the Muslims in the south want a break-away state, in Indonesia, East Timor, Nigeria, Sudan and elsewhere, Muslims attack Christians. Arafat started the age of terrorism in 1968 in hijacking an El Al plane to Switzerland, followed in 1969 by the IRA, the Baader-Meinhof gang in Germany and others. Thus terrorism must be fought not only on the military front, but also in the ideological and educational spheres in this era of globalisation.

The third impression I have is most positive, when we went to Ben-Gurion airport to greet new olim from Russia, Ukraine and Argentina and we felt that this was what Zionism and Israel are really about – wholly inspiring. I am pleased to say my remarks were applauded by Congress delegates. I was honoured by the World Zionist Organisation as an Honorary Fellow for my services to the cause, and also by the World Labour Zionist Movement. ♦

# Istanbul



Taking a holiday in Istanbul after finishing *The Scribe* No. 74

From left: Eileen Khalastchy; Renée and Naim Dangoor

The picture was taken on the terrace of the Çırağan Palace, one of the old Royal Palaces that has been converted into a six star luxury hotel. ♦

Istanbul is the only city in the world that is situated astride two continents – Europe and Asia, separated by the straits of Bosphorus which connects the Mediterranean and the Black Seas. Modern historians believe that one of the main floods of Antiquity took place in the basin of the Black Sea when it was a lake and its water level considerably lower than that of the Mediterranean. Then, one day the pressure of the higher water broke into the straits and raised the level of the Black Sea by some twenty metres, destroying all the cities and settlements around its shores. That may well have been Noah's flood since the Bible tells us that his Ark finally rested on top of Mount Ararat in south-eastern Turkey. In fact, the remains of a very large wooden boat are still visible on that mountain today.

However, there was one difficulty in accepting that story since the Black Sea receives more fresh water from

European, Russian and Turkish rivers than does the Mediterranean from its rivers – a fact which should have made the water level of the Black Sea higher than that of the Mediterranean. But it appears that the Mediterranean has been constantly replenished from the waters of the Atlantic since that ocean broke into the Straits of Gibraltar a million years ago.

To confirm our findings we asked the British Admiralty in which direction the water flows through the Bosphorus and were readily told that it flows from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea.

During our visit there we asked the guide the same question and were given a more detailed and interesting answer: there are two currents in the Bosphorus flowing in opposite directions. A top current of sweet water flows from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean and a lower current of salt water flows from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea.

This put the whole situation in proper perspective.

During its ascendancy, the Empire of the Ottoman Turks was very liberal and tolerant of other traditions and nationalities thus, when they finally occupied Constantinople in 1453 after a long wait, they did not change its name but kept the name of Constantine the Great, the Emperor who had made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. But in its declining years, the Ottoman Empire became irritable and intolerant and became known as the sick man of Europe. The Great War of 1914-1918 stripped it of most of its possessions, restricting it to the Peninsula of Asia Minor.

After the Revolution of Kamal Ataturc in 1923, Turkey has traced for itself a new future in the politics of Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Turkey will play an increasingly important part in the destiny of the region. ♦

# Confiscated Wealth: The Fate of Jewish Property in Arab Lands

by Itamar Levin

## Summary

Over the past fifty years, hundreds of thousands of Jews have emigrated from various Arab lands. In most of those countries, all that remains of a once flourishing Jewish community is a handful of indigent Jews – a pitiful remnant. Those who left all share a common memory of the loss of livelihoods, property and savings. The Jew who emigrated legally from Iraq in 1950, the expellee forced to leave his home in Egypt in 1957, or the Jew who escaped from Syria in 1991 – all of them can tell of houses, furniture, books, religious objects, clothes and businesses which were left behind.

The majority of these emigrants eventually arrived in Israel. The World Organisation of Jews from Arab Countries (WOJAC) estimates that of the 800,000 Jews who fled Arab lands since 1948, 600,000 emigrated to Israel. For many years, most of them were forced to live in abysmal conditions in its earlier years. Some, if not all, of that hardship might have been avoided had the immigrants been permitted to bring their property along with them. Under the conditions in which Israel found itself immediately upon its establishment – faced with the absorption of 650,000 new residents, a number identical to its entire population – each Egyptian pound, Iraqi dinar or

Syrian lira would have made a significant difference. Today, as the Palestinian Arabs press their claims for compensation for properties abandoned in the War of Independence, Israel too should advance the claims of its own citizens who lost all their property, both movable and immovable, having been forced to leave it behind in the various Arab countries from which they fled.

## The Author

Itamar Levin is deputy-editor of the Israeli financial daily Globes. Since April 1995, Levin has played a major role in the media exposure of the search for dormant Holocaust-era assets. He is the author of *The Last Deposit* (Hebrew), which was published by Hed Artzi in 1998.

## Naim Dangoor writes:

Apart from the physical assets that the Jews from Arab countries left behind in their countries of origin, the Jews are entitled to a share in the wealth of those countries to which they had made a great contribution towards their development and prosperity. Such a claim must form part of any compensation obtained from Arab countries. A Resolution to this effect has been passed by the first WOJAC Conference held in Paris in 1975. ♦

so-called “Arab” countries. I enclose a copy of my telegram to Dr Kissinger in December 1973 (which I also sent to Mrs Meir and Mr Dayan while he was in Washington) on the subject.

PLO must not be equated with Israel but only with Jewish refugees from Arab countries and even then perhaps not on an equal footing. For while Jewish refugees are genuine, Palestinian Arab refugees were largely created and kept in artificial ways. They also have the freedom of the big wide Middle East which is denied to the Jews. It has been said that you are a quarter of a century late in launching this campaign, but I believe that your initiative is very timely in relation to the Geneva conference. One must remember that Palestinian Arabs also took a long time to organise themselves. And while we stand to challenge the Arab claims we must not be intimidated by the terror and blackmail which Arabs throughout their history used to further their greed.

H.E. Dr Zvi Shtauber  
Ambassador  
Embassy of Israel  
London

Dear Zvi

Peace with the Palestinians must be global – not only Syria and Lebanon should be included, as Secretary Colin Powell indicated, but also Iraq.

As a member of the Babylonian Jewish community that was glorious and substantial, I wish to stress Jewish connections with Iraq and to emphasise the lessons of history of 2,500 years; that there can be no peace for Israel unless Iraq is brought under control.

Fortunately, the limelight will soon move onto that country and if Saddam is removed, as surely he will be, any conference to establish a new regime in Iraq must include Jewish representatives.

The Arabs must not be allowed to claim the countries of the fertile crescent as their own, since that region has been and continues to be the home of many nationalities; Jews and Kurds, Assyrians, Turcomen, Druse, Maronites and others, all of whom should be encouraged to strengthen their presence there. In particular, some of us should be allowed to return to Iraq and rebuild our community there.

With kind regards. ♦

Yours sincerely

**Naim Dangoor**

## From our Archives

10 June 1975

Dear Mr Ben Porat,

I have been reading with great interest (in *The Times* and other papers) reports of the convention which you recently held to launch the campaign for the rights and claims of Jewish refugees from Arab countries. I have also read in the Tel Aviv publication *BRIEF* a report of your article in *MAARIV* of May 25 in which you outline the demands, both political and economic, of Jewish refugees.

While I congratulate you on this timely and historic move I can assure you that I and other members of the community heartily endorse and support your demands.

I have always stressed that Jewish rights in the Middle East are not confined to Israel or to Palestine, and that we have vested rights and interests in most of the

It would perhaps be preferable that the leadership or the figurehead of the campaign be in the Galut. There is a ready-made historical office, the Exilarch, which can be revived and built up for this purpose. If Israel so wishes I am willing to play the part. In this I have the support of many of my colleagues. My doctrine would go beyond Zionism and PLO and would ask for equal rights (of whom the Arabs are the latecomers) as the only means to ensure lasting peace and prevent the wars that have characterised the history of the Middle East and ruined its lands and peoples. Any American or U.N. aid to the Middle East must be channelled through a regional board representing all the communities of the region and whose funds must be supplemented by payments from oil and other natural resources. ♦

With best wishes.

**Naim Dangoor**

# The Tercentenary Celebrations of Bevis Marks Synagogue

On 5 December 2001 British Jewry in general and the Sephardi community in particular celebrated the Tercentenary of Bevis Marks, the first synagogue after the Restoration to be built by the Spanish and Portuguese Jews congregation which was opened in 1701 in the City of London.

After the service in the presence of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, a sumptuous reception was held at the Guildhall which was attended by 500 dignitaries and leading members of the community.

At the reception when Mr Naim Dangoor was talking to the Prince, he admired the embroidered coat worn by Mrs Dangoor and according to the Middle Eastern tradition of Noblesse Oblige it was incumbent on Naim Dangoor to offer the coat, or at least a similar one to the Prince.

Thus, on 10 December he addressed the following letter to the Prince of Wales presenting a similar new coat:

10 December 2001

His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales  
St James's Palace

Dear Charles

Your visit last Wednesday to Bevis Marks and to the Guildhall was a memorable event that will remain indelible in the minds of all who were present.

On that occasion you graciously noticed my wife's gown and I have great pleasure and honour in presenting to your Royal Highness a similar gown for your lady for all occasions, which please accept as a souvenir of that gathering and as a Christmas gift.

I have the honour to remain,

Yours sincerely

**Naim Dangoor**

I greatly appreciate seeing a copy of the Prince's letter. No doubt the Prince was greatly pleased to be given the green light by the Exilarch. ♦

**Sylvia Kedourie**

**London**



This page:

Top : Renée and Naim Dangoor in conversation with Prince Charles

Bottom left : Renée Dangoor wearing the admired coat

Bottom right : Picture of the coat presented to the Prince

Opposite page : Reply from Prince Charles





HIGHGROVE HOUSE

13th December, 2001

Dear Mr. Dangoor,

I cannot tell you how touched I was to receive your incredibly generous present and your very kind letter the other day. That exquisitely embroidered gown has been deeply appreciated, I can assure you, and Camilla has asked me to send you her warmest possible thanks for such a wonderfully thoughtful gesture. I have a feeling the coat will be worn on many occasions and whenever I see it it will remind me of your most unexpected generosity...

It was a great pleasure to meet both you and your wife at that splendid occasion to mark the Tercentenary of Bevis Marks and I so enjoyed meeting a large number of people associated with that uniquely special synagogue.

This comes with my most heartfelt thanks and warmest good wishes.

Yours most sincerely

Mandy

# Durban Racism

**From: Mr Clemens N Nathan**  
**Joint Chairman, Consultative**  
**Council of Jewish**  
**Organisations**

I hoped you would be interested to receive copies of the seven keynote pamphlets that the CCJO has commissioned to promote debate at the ongoing UN Conference on Racism, August 31-September 7 2001 in Durban, where these papers were well received.

The series of essays include contributions from distinguished academics and promoters of Human Rights. We are particularly honoured to publish Prince El Hassan of Jordan's call for people of all faiths to reach out across the religious divide and build on their common values in the fight against racism.

As an organisation, we have worked throughout our history to promote the cause of Human Rights and we hope these pamphlets will help to focus minds on this goal both in Durban and its aftermath.

## Enclosures:

Racism, Xenophobia & Discrimination – Humanity's need for a new ethical Code of Conduct  
*His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan Bin Talal*

Perceptions of the Other: Lessons from the Jewish Christian Dialogue  
*Dr Edward Kessler*

Judaism as a source of Human Rights  
*Professor Asher Maoz*

Slavery & Piracy – The Case for Reparations for Slavery  
*Professor Geraldine Van Bueren*

Racism & Xenophobia in Virtual Russia  
*Dr Stella Rock*

Unease in the Global Village: German language racism on the Internet  
*Rebekah Webb*

The European Race directive: A bridge so far?  
*Ferne Brennan*

## Reply:

Many thanks for your letter and enclosures. It seems to me that the Jewish people have become an endangered species and we should apply to the United Nations for protection, like the elephants of Vietnam.

Dear Naim

I fully agree with you that we are now "an endangered species". The depression which my delegation had at the UN Conference against Racism in Durban was beyond belief.

I had never imagined that the Palestinians could mobilise all the Black Marxists and make a parade of over 10,000 people there with the worst German Nazi propaganda which I thought was dead and buried. What shook us more than anything else was that whilst all these things were taking place, including the destruction of any meetings of the Jewish UN groups discussing anti-Semitism, let alone Israel, was that our friends, the other non-Governmental organisations mostly just stood by and did nothing. At least some of them rejected the motions which were passed and which fortunately Mary Robinson threw out. It shows that one has very few friends at every level in world affairs.

This is why I constantly encourage to highlight how Jews care about other people's human rights. We have a fairly good track record going back to Moses - and probably even earlier! It does not seem to help in this situations. I am sometimes wondering why they can't find someone else to attack and not us.

I do cherish The Scribe and above all, your wonderful sense of humour.

At the Centre for Jewish Christian Relations at Cambridge where I am Chairman, we have now 100 students learning about Judaism from all over the world. The Russian and Polish students are finding out that Judaism has a great deal to offer them, particularly those from the Russian Orthodox Church who are quite difficult to deal with but I believe that only by dialogue do we stand the slightest chance of things improving for the next generation.

**Clemens**

## Reply :

I share your frustrations with our situation in the world.

God may have better plans for us in the future. In the meantime I console myself by thinking that, as Chosen People, our role is to suffer, for God, the wickedness of mankind. ♦

# Ethnic Cleansing

The Arab delegates to the Durban UN conference who accuse Israel of ethnic cleansing should have been asked why no Jews remain in Arabia – one-time home to prominent and numerous Jewish tribes? Why only 42 elderly Jews remain in Iraq of an ancient and glorious community numbering over 150,000, once described by King Faisal as the backbone of Iraq's economy? Why Jews were persecuted and hounded in most Arab countries until they were forced to leave? Who has been ethnic cleansing – Israel or the Arabs?!

Isn't it ironical that the Palestinians have to agree to recognise the Holocaust when they themselves had a big hand in it. Palestinians' mufti, Amin Husseini, who spent the war years in Berlin, made sure that no European Jew could escape the death camps.

To those who say Zionism is the root of all the trouble in Palestine, the answer is that Arab imperialism is responsible for all the trouble in the Middle East.

Were the Israeli delegates so tongue-tied that they couldn't say any of these things?! ♦



## Nobel Winners

**A**RAB/ISLAMIC - 1,200,000,000 Muslims (or about 20% of the world's population)

Literature: 2      Peace: 2  
Chemistry: 2      Medicine: 2

**J**EWISH – 14,000,000 (or about 0.02% of the world's population)

Literature: 10      Peace: 8  
Chemistry: 22      Economics: 13  
Medicine: 44      Physics: 31

**SOURCE:** Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., Chicago III, Britannica Book of the Year, 1999)

Admittedly, though, the Muslim world dwarfs the Jewish world in the number of terrorists, suicide bombers, slave traders and religious leaders calling for "holy wars". They should spend a little more time on education, and less time on blaming the Jews for all their problems. ♦

NYCAT <http://www.nycat.org/>

# Interest-free Monetary System

The Rt Hon Michael Howard, QC, MP  
Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer  
The House of Commons

Dear Mr Howard

You may remember we met some time ago at No. 10.

If Labour has achieved success by building on Conservative foundations, the Tory Party would do well to consider some radical ideas to outdo what might become a stagnant Labour ideology.

A case in point is my idea of an interest-free monetary system that could become the “in” thing for the 21st century.

I enclose herewith correspondence with the Treasury and additional notes for your perusal, and would be happy to answer any queries on the subject.

Some of the billions of interest charges that the community will save can be channelled to pay for the NHS.

Yours sincerely

**Naim Dangoor**

3 December 2001

Dear Mr Dangoor

Many thanks for your letter of 28 November enclosing copies of your correspondence with the Treasury. In the Conservative Party we have embarked on a comprehensive review of our policies and I am grateful for your contribution to the debate. We are not, I'm afraid, in any position to pre-judge the outcome of that review at this stage, but your ideas will be carefully considered.

Thank you again for taking the trouble to write. ♦

**Michael Howard, QC, MP**

## Lending without Interest

by **R B Yehezkael (Haskell)**

Here in brief are some ideas from my paper:

This article describes a dream, which is inspired by the words: “If thou lend money to My people, even to the poor with thee, thou shalt not be to him as a creditor; neither shall ye lay upon him interest.” (Exodus 22:24). This dream is a response to an economic nightmare we experienced in Israel, not so long ago, and from which we must learn.

There were years in which prices increased by 25% every month or two, and penalty interest rates reached about 1760% per annum. I clearly remember seeing a sign on a shop selling car accessories warning – “deferred payments bear interest of 4% a day”.

During those years, three zeroes were removed from the currency – remember the lira and the shekel before the new shekel. Sadly, there was a state of economic collapse, and tragically, some committed suicide because of escalating debts.

This dream is also a reaction to an old nightmare in which the Jew, and in particular the Jewish moneylender has been portrayed as a villain, and persecuted. Let us hope, that with God's help, these nightmares never return.

In spite of all this there were things to be proud of during those years of high inflation. The “Gemach” for example, continued to give interest-free loans. Also, I remember a radio programme where people phoned in to make contributions. Instead of money, some gave “a day”, “a week” whilst a friend even contributed “a month”. Contributing time had become more meaningful than contributing money, which was collapsing.

These events somehow gave me the idea of interest-free linkage to the aver-

age wage or income, which will be explained in the following.

## Linkage not interest

We are forbidden to take interest on loans. On the other hand it is unfair to the lender if inflation erodes the value of his money. In order to deal with this problem, debts can be linked. By “linkage” we mean that the debt and debt repayments rise and fall in proportion to some index, e.g. prices, wages, foreign currency, etc. It is proper to ask which formulae for calculating indices and which methods of linkage are reasonable from both a “Torah” and scientific viewpoint.

## Wages not Prices

An index formula should be both accurate and stable. “Stable” means that unrealistic prices, which do not result in a significant amount of sales, should have little or no effect on the value of the formula. These matters are particularly important when debts are linked to an index formula. The issue of accuracy is both a scientific and Halachic requirement.

We have used a computer to simulate test situations where the true average index value is known. We observed that the formula for measuring wages was accurate in all our tests, whereas the formula used for measuring prices was accurate only when there was no correlation between price and quantity.

We also noted that the formula used for measuring wages has good stability characteristics, whereas the formula used for measuring prices is far poorer.

For these and other reasons, linkage to prices is not a good choice. Linkage to wages seems better but under what conditions would this be halachically acceptable?

When lending to the needy, it is correct in my opinion, not to use linkage; neither to take interest. ♦

His Excellency Mr Vicente Berasategui  
Ambassador  
Embassy of Argentina

Your Excellency

I am writing to offer my services in connection with solving the endemic monetary problems which Argentina is going through. I would be willing to travel to Buenos Aires if necessary. Of course there will be no charge for my help or expenses.

There is no point in linking a currency to

gold that you do not possess, or to dollars that you do not have. In the age of barter, the source of money was the money lender or the central bank, who had the gold or the hard currency. We are now in the age of credit where paper money need no longer be linked to gold or to hard currency. The source of this promissary paper money (I promise to pay the bearer 100 Pesos) is the consumer. A switch to consumer money is the right solution for the monetary crisis that your country is going through.

Promissary money must be issued, not in the name of the lender or the central bank, but in the name of the consumer as the borrower. This kind of money, issued in the name of the borrower, would automatically be free of interest, thus saving the community the heavy burden of interest charges. The allocation of interest-free credit money is a matter for discussion. ♦

Yours sincerely

**N E Dangoor**

# A Solution for the Middle East?

A friend of mine has reminded me of a letter I had sent to the American Ambassador in London in March 1991. On the eve of the Arab summit in Beirut, conditions are still so much the same that I offer my formula as a practical solution to the endemic Middle East problems, solving the Palestinian and the Iraqi problem together in one go.

This was my letter of 1991:

12 March 1991

H E Henry E Catto  
United States Ambassador

Your Excellency

Jews from Arab lands hold the key to any successful resolution of the Palestinians' problem, which must be viewed in the context of the wider Arab-Jewish settlement of the Middle-East.

Since 1948, and even before, Jews in Iraq, Syria, Egypt and other "Arab" countries had to leave their ancient homelands because of discrimination and persecution. They now number over 2 million, having settled mainly in Israel but also in the UK, Europe, the USA and Canada. While Israel has integrated its refugees, the Arabs have deliberately kept theirs in squalor for political reasons.

The Middle East conflict is not between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs but, as is being slowly appreciated, the conflict is with the neighbouring Arab countries that relentlessly waged war on Israel, incited the Palestinians not to come to terms with the Jews, financed terrorism, and rejected all United Nations' resolutions.

There can be no peace in the Middle East unless these same Arab countries are made parties to an eventual settlement, bearing their share of the refugee problem and the cost of their settlement in their own areas.

The Jews from Arab countries are the *quid pro quo* of the Palestinian Arabs – the other side of the coin. And, in any future negotiations, if Israel is going to represent the Jews from Arab lands, then the neighbouring Arab countries should also represent the Palestinians. If, however, the Palestinians are going to have a separate voice in a regional peace conference or dialogue then Jews from Arab lands must also have a separate representation.

The trouble in the Middle East goes back to the end of the First World War and the break-up of the Ottoman Empire. Mainly through the influence of Colonel Lawrence and other Arabists in the British Foreign and Colonial Offices, the Arabs were given more than they deserved or were entitled to, in complete disregard of the rights and interests of the other nationalities of the region. To consolidate their ill-gotten gains the Arabs have acted wildly and irresponsibly – culminating in Saddam's eight year war with Iran and his aggression on Kuwait. To the credit of American and British leadership Saddam was stopped in his tracks before he and his confederates could hold the world to ransom and plunge it in a new dark age. There must be an overall solution to the problems of the Middle East.

The solution must be global, for there can be no peace in one corner of the Middle East while Lebanon slides to a slow death; while millions of Kurds cannot attain autonomy; while non-Arab minorities in Iraq remember their massacres and their stolen lands; while the Shia majority of Iraq are oppressed; while Arabs control five million square miles of territory and non-Arabs are denied any territory; while some Arab rulers pocket most of the oil wealth and Israelis keep tightening their belts. These petrobillions have made of Iraq a dangerous aggressor and of Kuwait a target for aggression.

The solution must be global, for there can be no peace for the Palestinian Arab refugees while the material and political rights of Jewish refugees from Arab lands are ignored. The Jews have an historic right to a share of the Fertile Crescent – its territory and its wealth – indeed superior to that of the Arabs. As to Resolution 242, this was firmly rejected by the Arabs who must not now be allowed to play a game of Heads, we win – Tails, you lose.

To the PLO, who say they want to establish a free, multi-racial, democratic, secular and progressive Palestine, we say we want to establish a free, multi-racial, democratic, secular and progressive Middle East. To those who say Zionism is responsible for all the trouble in Palestine, we say that Arab imperialism is responsible for all the trouble in the Middle East.

An outline for a Middle East peace plan can be the following:

1. Israel to be confirmed within her present borders.

2. The refugees in Gaza and the West Bank, nearly half of their Arab population, to be settled in Jordan which becomes the Palestinian state. Any Arabs who do not wish to live under Israeli rule can also go to Jordan-is-Palestine. Under pressure from President Truman a million Jews were allowed forty years ago to leave Arab countries and go mainly to Israel. This was to be the first leg of a reciprocal exchange of populations that would establish peace between Jews and Arabs. But only a trickle of Palestinian Arabs were allowed to replace them. The exchange of populations must now be completed. King Hussein to be "punished" by offering him the throne of Iraq. His grandfather, King Abdulla, was meant to become King of Iraq.

3. Kurdish rights to be implemented by returning Mosul and Kirkuk to Turkey and by giving autonomy to the 10 million Kurds within the Turkish Republic. Turkey's good behaviour for the last 70 years and her membership of Nato warrants this confidence.

4. A reduced, mainly Christian, Lebanon to be created from Junieh, north of Beirut, to the border with Israel, with the rest of old Lebanon going to Syria.

5. The security structure in the Middle East to include Israel.

6. The United States and Great Britain (with some lesser participants) to replace OPEC by forming the Petroleum Central Selling Organisation (PECSO) to acquire the right of marketing oil worldwide at say \$30 a barrel of which \$20 goes to the countries of origin. Germany and Japan must not continue to make hay in the Allied sun. All the countries of the region including Israel, Jordan, Syria, Egypt and Turkey to share in the \$20.

I am, Your Excellency,

Very truly yours,

**Naim E Dangoor**

on behalf of Iraqi Jews in the United Kingdom. ♦

# PAX ISRAELITA

From the editorial of *The Scribe* No. 45, November 1990

In recent weeks, Middle East politics have been shifting like the quicksand of the desert.

Saddam now fancies himself as an Arab and Moslem messiah - a latter-day Nebuchadnezzar - and dreams of standing at the gates of Jerusalem to lead the Jewish people (God forbid) into another captivity in his rebuilt Babylon, as did the other Nebu. 2,558 years ago. (The rape of Lebanon and Kuwait are previews of what Arab extremists have in store for Israel).

Will history repeat itself?

Like a good teacher, History only repeats itself if the lesson is not learned. What then is this lesson that we have to learn?

In the Middle East, the lesson of the last 3,000 years has been that the Fertile Crescent, the cradle of civilisation and the birthplace of monotheistic religions, is too vulnerable to invasion and that if the Jews want to have a lasting presence in that region, they must have a say in the affairs of the whole area. Any attempt to hold only a small part has ended in failure.

Since time immemorial, the Fertile Crescent was never united in freedom but was overrun by various empires, one after another. For 400 years, Ottoman rule brought relative peace and quiet in the region. A feature of their system was the millet concept whereby local communities enjoyed self-rule or autonomy.

After the two World Wars, ill-conceived Arab regimes became the inheritors of the region and have made a mess of it. By denying the Jews and the Kurds their right to a national homeland, by persecuting the Assyrians and Armenians, by trying to swamp the Lebanese Christians, by refusing to deal with the problem of Palestinian Arab refugees, by squandering the immense oil wealth of the region for the last three decades, by Iraq's waging a futile war against Iran for eight years, by Iraq's brutal invasion and destruction of Kuwait, by their use of poison gas and other chemical weapons, by indulging in terrorism and hostage taking - the Arabs have forfeited their right to lead the Middle East. Their greed was their undoing.

The civilized world suddenly woke up to the fact that it is not Zionism but Arab imperialism that poses the real threat to the Middle East and indeed to the whole world.

How then shall the Middle East be run?

The United States and her allies are assembling a motley force of 500,000 men, 2,000 tanks and 800 planes to contain Saddam and, hopefully, to topple him. This effort is proving too costly and threatens the world with recession. Israel has all this force and more, and Israel is permanently there. Israel is most suited to be the trustee of the Middle East. It is dangerous to leave the destiny of the Middle East and possibly

of the world exclusively to combinations of Arab or of Moslem countries.

America has asked Israel to keep a low profile in the present crisis but wishes to retain Israel's might in reserve and use it as a last resort if things do not go well for the allies in the coming war.

The consensus among Israelis is that they don't want to suffer one casualty if they can help it. We all prefer to die in bed, but this is the hour of destiny when the whole Middle East will be in the melting pot. Can Israel afford to stay out of the game? Will Israel wait till she is attacked by Saddam?

Israel must choose her own moment to strike at Saddam. She would be amply justified in doing this in view of

## The Daily Telegraph

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TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 1992

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Mid-east confederation needed

SIR— The only effective way to avoid breaking up Iraq into three parts once Saddam Hussein has been neutralised or defeated (report, Aug. 20) is to create a Middle East confederation which would include that country with Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait and Israel.

This should be the ultimate aim of the peace talks which were to resume in Washington yesterday.

Such a confederation could use the region's immense oil wealth for its advancement. It would also be powerful enough to save its individual countries from large expenditure on arms while leaving it strong enough to repulse threats from all directions.

Since ancient times, the region has been cursed by having a collection of aggressive but largely equal peoples who could be united only by outside conquerors.

The roots of Iraq's modern dilemma go back to the Cairo Conference of 1921 when Churchill, then Colonial Secretary, decided to give the country

over to Arab rule without regard to its substantial minorities. After the death of King Feisal in 1933 the Arabisation of Iraq started in earnest: the massacre of the Assyrians, denying the Kurds any measure of autonomy and systematic persecution of the Jews, an educated, industrious and enterprising minority which had lived in Iraq 1,000 years before the Arab conquest of the country.

The virtual expulsion in 1950-51 of the Jews of Iraq, a third of Baghdad's population, was a disaster for the country because they had been an important moderating influence.

The rulers of Iraq then embarked on aggressive adventures that led to the eight-year war with Iran, the occupation of Kuwait and the subsequent intensified persecution of the Kurds and the Shias.

When will Saddam's perplexed opponents wake to this important possibility, which has long been ignored?

NAIM DANGOOR  
London SW7

طمعهم قتلهم

...Saddam's repeated threats. Israel happens to be in a unique position to take the lead in this direction. Secretary of State James Baker has expressed the view that Israel's involvement would not unite the Arabs against America. On the contrary, moderate Arabs would see in Israel's action the value of her presence in the region in defence of justice and freedom.

Moreover, it is generally agreed that once the fighting is over, all foreign forces will leave the area. Israel can then take over policing the region in co-operation with her moderate neighbours.

Jews and Arabs always worked together on the personal level. Such co-operation, given the chance, would also prove successful at the state level. In any case, it has been declared that the security structure envisaged for the Middle East will include Israel, who should be prepared to take the leading role in this future plan.

Pax Israelita can be the key to peace in the Middle East. Having seen the savage behaviour of the Iraqis with Iran, with the Kurds and in Kuwait, moderate Arabs are ready to embrace Israel with open arms.

But before lasting peace can prevail, all the chronic problems of the region have to be resolved. To do that we have to go back to the first World War and eliminate the misdeed, of Lawrence of Arabia and others that gave the Arabs more than they deserved or were entitled to.

The events following the defeat of the Ottoman empire in 1918 have to be reviewed and revised on the following lines:

- 1) Kuwait's sovereignty and regime to be restored.
- 2) Iraq to pay compensation for the damage done, Iraq's punishment to fit Saddam's crimes. Saddam's Babylon must be destroyed - an edifice to a bloodthirsty despot.
- 3) Iraqi leaders and officials to be tried for crimes against humanity and International law.
- 4) The Iraq/Iran 1975 Algiers border agreement to be confirmed and recognised by the United Nations.
- 5) Iraq, under a new regime, to get the two disputed islands to relieve her dependence on Shat-al-Arab waterway.
- 6) Mosul and neighbouring provinces, where Kurds predominate, that were wrested from the Ottoman empire after the 1918 armistice, to be returned to Turkey together with small border areas from Iran and Syria.

Autonomy for the 10 million Kurds to be granted in these areas within the Turkish republic. Turkey's good behaviour for the last 70 years and her membership of NATO warrants this confidence.

7) Turkey, in turn, to cede Kars and Ardahan to Soviet Armenia as a token of atonement for the massacre of 1.5 million Armenians in 1915.

8) A reduced, mainly Christian, Lebanon to be created from Junieh, north of Beirut, right down to the border with Israel, with the rest of old Lebanon going to Syria.

9) Jewish historic rights in the Middle East to be recognised and implemented and Israel to be confirmed within her present borders. That area represents only two per mil of Arab lands and with new immigrants coming in, Israel cannot afford to cede any territory. In any case, the Arabs had rejected all partition plans and these have become invalid. Israel went into Gaza as a result of Egypt's aggression and went into the West Bank when, against Israel's advice to King Hussein, Jordan entered the Six-Day War in 1967

10) The problem of the Palestinian Arabs must be solved by the Arabs themselves, just as Israel absorbed the Jewish refugees from Arab lands. Jordan to become a state for moderate Palestinians, enlarged by a tract from Saudi Arabia. Palestine was partitioned in 1922 and Transjordan became Arab Palestine.

11) King Hussein to become King of Iraq. His grandfather had this ambition 70 years ago.

12) A declaration that no outside Power shall be allowed to penetrate or interfere in the region.

13) In thus re-shaping the region there will have to be large population transfers to ensure stability and to avoid future conflicts. Iraq has demonstrated this is feasible by the transfer of thousands of Kurds from the north and now by moving thousands of Iraqis to Kuwait.

14) The oil wealth of the Middle East has to be regulated - first, by enlarging OPEC to include not only the exporting countries but also the main oil importing countries; secondly, to keep the oil prices at a steady realistic level; thirdly, only a basic part of that price to go to the countries of origin, with the balance spread wider afield to Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey and the new Kurdistan.

In the next century the world will be

even more dependent on Arabian oil. In treating oil reserves as an international asset, one is reminded of the Californian gold rush of 1848 when a large and prosperous farming estate was ruined by the sudden discovery of gold on it that brought thousands of prospectors from far and wide to dig for the precious metal. The owner of the farm went to Washington to seek federal protection but was told that one man's rights cannot be upheld against so many others. He was given instead a substantial pension for the rest of his days.

While it may not be necessary to pension off the Saudi and Kuwaiti rulers and other oil sheikhs, they should not, on the other hand, be allowed to hold the world community to ransom for a commodity that was discovered, is extracted and needed by other countries.

15) In a final settlement between Israel and the neighbouring countries, Jews must be allowed to travel, reside and work anywhere in the region. Israel should be given reparations for the 40 years of senseless wars to frustrate the existence of a Jewish state.

16) Terrorism and hostage-taking must be recognised and treated as acts of war and democratic governments shall gradually replace the despotic regimes in most Middle Eastern countries. ♦



## A Regional Solution to the Middle East

The Middle East requires a regional solution. Prime Minister Sharon cannot proceed from where Ehud Barak left off, as Robin Cook vainly wishes, according to his statement on Radio 4. He can only succeed by following a complete change of strategy.

Israel alone cannot solve the Palestinian problem, which must be regarded as a regional problem. All the Arab countries that waged successive wars on Israel and emboldened Arafat in his latest stance must contribute to a lasting settlement.

Fortunately, the new Bush administration appears to have accepted this reality.

**Naim Dangoor**

The above letter appeared in the *London Jewish News* and *The Jewish Chronicle* in February 2001 and its contents are still pertinent. ♦

# Ezra Belboul – One Hundred Years Young

**E**zra Belboul has achieved the magic age of 100, an important milestone hoped for by most people.

Mr Belboul is still in good health, walks every day to the Israeli Defence Ministry where he continues his unpaid voluntary work. He was awarded in 1947 the honour of MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire). ♦



Right : Ezra Belboul (Lev) received by His Excellency the President of Israel Moshe Katzav on the occasion of his 100th birthday. On the right is his wife Mazal.



The historic photo above shows Ezra Belboul (indicated by the arrow) at the 1928 conference between King Faisal of Iraq and King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud of Arabia on board a British warship.

To Professor Raphael Loewe:

I am writing for your help to correct a mistake in the Bible, or rather to cancel an erroneous correction.

In Psalm 127 we read,

כִּן יִתֵּן לִידִידוֹ שְׁנָא

(ending with an aleph) but is corrected in Hebrew Bibles to read שְׁנָה (ending with a hé). In the King James English Bible the Hebrew word שְׁנָא with an asterisk is translated 'sleep'. In Bar Ilan Bible it is translated as 'tranquility', but in many other Bibles it is paraphrased as 'asleep' or 'while sleeping'.

I maintain that 'while sleeping' is the correct meaning of שְׁנָא with an aleph at the end, and that שְׁנָא with an aleph at the end is not an error but a construction of the word שְׁנָה 'sleep', similar to such constructions in Arabic.

etc. قِيَامًا صَعُودًا ذَهَابًا آيَابًا

Twenty five centuries ago, Hebrew was no longer the spoken language of the Jews, and they became ignorant of some of the refinements of the Holy Tongue.

It seems spoken Hebrew is now still too young for people to appreciate such variations, especially as most Jews now relate to Western languages rather than to Arabic.

Do you think we could bring this to the notice of the 'powers-that-be' to remove the asterisk from that word from any future publications and to use that construction as part of the Hebrew grammar?

Naim Dangoor

Reply:

I write to thank you for your very kind letter of 25 March, and trust that since then you have had an enjoyable Pesah. It was a great joy to my wife and myself to have so many friends around when celebrating our golden wedding: God has been bountiful to us.

Concerning your question regarding שְׁנָא in Psalm 127,2. There are 3 aspects to this, namely (1) the spelling, (2) the grammatical construction, and (3) what meaning (or possibly alternative meanings) (2) permits. I deal with these in turn.

1 (a) As you know, Hebrew normally represents a final ã vowel by ה whilst (late) Aramaic and Arabic

do so by ܐ . But occasionally biblical Hebrew does the same, possibly through unconscious change by Aramaic-speaking scribes.. Thus at Jeremiah 23, 39 we have:

נְשָׂא

which clearly means forgetting as does the foregoing נְשִׂיתִי and has no connection with נָשָׂא = deceive. In post-biblical Hebrew there is much more fluctuation: thus you will find the name Akiba spelled with either aleph or hé at the end, probably due to local differences in spelling convention.

(b) The Massorah, which (in the 8th – 10th centuries) provided running notes to preserve accurate transmission of the biblical texts, states at Ps. 127,2 that this is the only instance of the word שְׁנָה = sleep being spelled with aleph. Our printed texts retain this note in abbreviated form. All printed Hebrew bibles (except for some 20th century scholarly editions) descend from the 2nd rabbinic bible printed in Venice in 1524-5, the editor of which had late manuscripts only at his disposal. An 18th century survey of the sort of MSS that he will have used records eight (out of several hundred) as spelling the word שְׁנָה with hé (it would be without comment). We ought not, therefore, make too much of the abnormal orthography.

2. You correctly observe that biblical Hebrew, like Arabic, uses the (unindicated) accusative case to indicate an external state referring to action, e.g. Leviticus 19, 16

[לא תלך] רכיל

[do not go about] as a tale-bearer. In Micah 2,3

[לא תלכו] רומה

[go not about] in haughtiness, the abstract noun would parallel your proposed understanding of שְׁנָה, but I find this strained; to express the sense "he gives to his beloved [whilst he is] sleeping" I would expect the accusative not of the noun = sleep but of the participle = sleeping, i.e. in Hebrew שְׁנֵהוּא not שְׁנָה as in Arabic na'ima

3 (a) When we come to semantics, I see an insuperable difficulty, since the verb יָתַן = he gives is left without an object: What is it that he is supposed to give to his beloved whilst asleep? It is not permissible to fudge matters by translating יָתַן not as gives, but as "is generous, bountiful towards", since Hebrew has several words to express this sense, in particular גָּמַל. Thus, an Arabic translation of the Psalms which I have just

taken from my shelves translates יָתַן literally by , يعطي

not (وفر) يفر

(b) Jewish tradition, from the Targum to Psalms onwards, generally treats שְׁנָא as the object of the verb, "he gives his beloved sleep". Thus Abraham Ibn Ezra, "He, i.e. God previously referred to, gives his friend sleep. cf. Ecclesiastes 5, 11, sweet is the sleep of the labourer". Rashi, who did not always focus on linguistic rigour as rigorously as does Ibn Ezra, construes the text on your lines although reaching a completely different result, and he arbitrarily introduces פְּרִנָּה (wherewithal of livelihood) as object of the verb. He writes: "he gives, i.e. God provides the wherewithal of sustenance to one who denies his eyes sleep in order to study the Torah שְׁנָא לִידִידוֹ one who keeps his eyes far from sleep" (This last is so free a flight of fancy as to expose its author to the charge of irresponsibility towards his own terms of reference). But Rashi's commentary has always been so popular that I suspect his exegesis may have been regarded as giving a green light to those who want שְׁנָא to mean "whilst asleep", and develop the notion in a sense diametrically opposite to Rashi's own understanding of it.

There is, however, one Jewish commentator, Menahem Me'iri, born in Provence in 1249, who understands the verse very much as (I think) you wish to yourself. I slightly abbreviate what he writes:

"It is vain for you, etc: The verse means, it is vain for you people who from the early morning onwards apply yourselves to your work and stay up late, hard at it deep into the night, with the result that you eat your bread at the price of painful toil; because He gives etc, i.e. all that profit which you have gained through your industriousness He gives to his beloved asleep, i.e. to one in whom He takes pleasure he gives it in "sleep", i.e. rest, without his having to toil for it. The aleph in שְׁנָא is in place of hé. The point is not to disparage industriousness and praise indolence, which no intelligent man would do, but rather to inculcate that one ought not repose all one's confidence in industriousness, reckoning that what he gains is achieved by sheer sustained application, but one should rather realise that it is God who has extended to him his grace in this manner". This is very nice, but I fear that its arbitrary treatment of יָתַן (see above, 3(a)) prevents one from endorsing it in the sense of

...maintaining that that is what the author of the psalm himself intended to say.

I hope that this is all clear.

**Second letter to Professor Loewe:**

Thank you for your comprehensive and scholarly reply to my enquiry about the word "shena". Allow me therefore to state my lay opinion on the subject:

1. The spelling with an aleph is not a mistake, but deliberate.
2. The intended meaning of this word is most probably not 'sleep' but 'while sleeping'.
3. My purpose in highlighting this word is to revive its form in current Hebrew literature.
4. The apparent absence of an object to the verb "give" should be assumed as being "in the mind of the poet".
5. The word "Ezra" is also spelt with an aleph ending, to indicate a male name.
6. It is praiseworthy that biblical text were transmitted from generation to generation without attempting to correct what may be thought to be an error. ♦



**From our Archive:**

The Jewish Chronicle – August 9 1974

**Great Rabbi**

**M**r Yigal Allon, the Israeli Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister, has written an exceptionally warm letter about "Dispersion and Liberation", a book published by the Gedula Synagogue Committee, Ramle, Israel, and edited by Abraham Twena in memory of a famous Chief Rabbi of Iraq, Rabbi Ezra Dangoor.

This courageous Chief Rabbi, who was born in 1848, and members of the Dangoor family played an outstanding role in the life of the Iraqi Jewish community. The development of the Zionist movement within the Iraqi community, which is also described in the book, owned much to the example and teaching of the Chief Rabbi.

Chief Rabbi Dangoor was once asked by King Feisal if there were any Zionist Jews in Iraq. He replied that every Jew prayed three times a day for the Shchina (Divine Presence) to return to the land of Zion and that Judaism was based on worship of God as well as the return to the Promised Land.

**Scribe:**

The answer is brief and to the point. ♦

# Ecclesiastes

with a new Judaeo-Arabic translation and two commentaries

by the Late Hakham Ezra Reuben Dangoor

Chief Rabbi of Baghdad

Published by The Exilarch's Foundation, London  
Printed by Mechon Haktav, Jerusalem  
2002 – 5762



Above: Late Chief Hakham Rabbi Ezra R. Dangoor, Baghdad

can strengthen their own ethical and spiritual endeavours. But the work should also prove of linguistic interest to scholars, for two reasons. First, Rabbi Ezra Dangoor wrote lucidly in the rabbinic Hebrew of centuries old Jewish tradition. Occasional features prove that he was not ignorant – he could scarcely have been – of the westernising influences which pervade the modern Hebrew that was making rapid strides from about 1920 (he regularly received publications from Palestine and Poland), but he felt no need to resort to them; and it is evident that he could handle the traditional language for all purposes without imposing on it such categories as the contrasted sacredness and secularity which are, for the most part, misleading where Jewish life and thought are concerned.

Students of Arabic will welcome the publication of the author's own translation of the biblical text of Ecclesiastes which corresponds to his own exposition. Jews from Baghdad have an Arabic distinguishable from that of the general Iraqi population, and use it in two forms – one spoken, and the other written. The fully vocalised evidence for the latter which is afforded by this Arabic translation constitutes a valuable addition to the corpus of source material available for study.

**Naim Dangoor writes:**

These two commentaries on Ecclesiastes by my late Grandfather Hakham Ezra Reuben Dangoor have been preserved in manuscript by his family since his death seventy two years ago. I consider it a particular honour and privilege to be able to see them through the press, as he would have wished me to do, and it is my hope that their availability in print may, thanks to his exposition, contribute towards a wider and enhanced appreciation of both the insight into human nature, and the ethical values, which koheleth set out to teach. ♦

**FOREWORD**

by Professor Raphael Loewe

**T**he author of these commentaries on Ecclesiastes, Rabbi Ezra Reuben Dangoor (1848-1930), had established in 1904 a Hebrew press, from which numerous works of a religious nature were issued. The commentaries here presented, which survive in manuscript, are now made available in print at the initiative of his grandson, Mr Naim Dangoor of London.

The work is of interest from several points of view. Although written in Hebrew, it was clearly intended not primarily for scholars, but with a popular readership in view (hence the provision of the commentator's own Arabic translation of the text of Ecclesiastes itself), and it limits itself to exposition in terms of conventional Jewish piety and ethical ideal.

The readership at which the author aimed still survives, and will find much in his exposition which is timeless and

**Copies of this book can be obtained on request from :  
The Exilarch's Foundation,  
4 Carlos Place,  
London W1K 3AW**

# Silas Aaron Hardoon (1851-1931): Business, Politics and Philanthropy in Republican Shanghai, 1911-1931

by Chiara Betta

University of Indianapolis,  
Athens (UIA)

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## Hardoon and Trade Diaspora of Baghdadi Jews

“Salih Harun” or “Saleh Haron”, then Anglicised as Silas Aaron Hardoon, was born to a poor Jewish family in the city of Baghdad in 1851. Five years later the Hardoons left the ailing Ottoman empire and, like other Jews of the Baghdad area, searched for fortune in Bombay. Once they arrived in the city they found protection under the wing of the local “Baghdadian Jewish trading community” that was headed by David Sassoon, a merchant-prince, renowned philanthropist and the scion of Baghdad’s most eminent Jewish family. Hardoon attended a charitable school funded by Sassoon and, as an adolescent, he joined the firm D. Sassoon & Co., which supervised a large commercial empire. In 1868, after his employers had noticed his remarkable business acumen, he was sent to Hong Kong to gain experience of the Chinese market. However, six years later he was, for some unknown reason, suddenly dismissed. Penniless, he took a third-class deck passage to Shanghai where the tiny local community of Baghdadi Jews helped him to secure a badly paid job as rent collector and godown watchman at the local branch of David Sassoon, Sons & Co.

Most importantly, Baghdadi Jewish communities of Shanghai and Hong Kong represented individual “nodes” of the trade diaspora of Baghdadi Jews which extended from London to Shanghai and operated under the aegis of the British Empire. As a result of their ancillary position to the British, Baghdadi Jews, who lived outside the Ottoman empire underwent a notable process of Anglicisation after the middle of the nineteenth century. They discarded their traditional dress, adopted English tastes and manners and lived a culturally hybrid lifestyle in westernised domestic spaces. Hardoon himself wore Western dress, spoke English, though with a thick Arabic accent, drank whiskey and took on the British passion for gardening.

## From Rags to Riches

From the first moment Hardoon moved to Shanghai, he could foresee the exceptional development of the city’s foreign settlements, areas administered by foreign municipal councils, which blossomed into a westernised metropolis by the beginning of the twentieth century. Thanks to his commercial shrewdness he quickly rose among the local ranks of D Sassoon, Sons & Co and secured exceptionally profitable real estate deals on behalf of his employers. At the same time he also invested his own savings in land and constantly acquired pieces of property which yielded him good rents for re-investments in other lots.

By 1882 Hardoon switched his interest to the cotton market. He left D Sassoon, Sons & Co and established a cotton brokerage, a venture that failed within a short time. In 1886 he then resumed his career as real estate developer at E D Sassoon & Co, which had been established by David Sassoon’s second son Elias David in 1867. In less than a decade Hardoon, who was in charge of real estate investments and also of opium dealings, was appointed partner and was in effect one of the firm’s most valuable assets. His entrance in Shanghai’s commercial elite was then marked by his appearance in 1893 as a member of the



The Hardoon Building - now the Shanghai Exhibition Centre

Shanghai club, Shanghai’s leading British club.

Whilst working for E D Sassoon & Co Hardoon continued to invest all his savings in real estate in the International Settlement. Since he constantly lacked liquid capital he raised cash for real estate investments by mortgaging his properties and also by dealing in opium, a legal commodity between 1858 and 1918. Thus in Chinese Shanghai Hardoon was known as a dealer of *tu*, a word that meant both land and opium. By 1911, when he finally left E D Sassoon & Co, he owned large land assets in the Central and Western districts of the International Settlement and was in the process of acquiring properties on Nanking Road, which became Shanghai’s most fashionable commercial thoroughfare within a few years. As a result, prices of properties along the road skyrocketed prompting Hardoon to become one of Shanghai’s wealthiest men.

## “Going Native”

At the beginning of the Republican period Hardoon was not only Shanghai’s main real estate tycoon but also the only prominent foreign merchant who had established close and intimate ties with the Chinese socio-cultural milieu. Since his arrival in Shanghai Hardoon had, in fact, undergone a notable and gradual process of cross-cultural adaptation in the Chinese environment and, as a result, had absorbed Chinese patterns of behaviour and had adopted an increasingly Chinese lifestyle.

The main force behind Hardoon’s increasingly close relationship with Chinese society was his wife Luo Jialing (Liza Roos) (1864-1941), a Buddhist Eurasian – possibly of Jewish origin<sup>1</sup> - who completely identified with her Chinese background. She was a staunch Buddhist, believed in ancestor worship, used only Chinese medicine and appreciated Chinese popular culture. Since she did not have natural children she manipulated the Chinese traditional family system and at the turn of the twentieth century she adopted a number of Chinese children in order not to turn into a “hungry ghost” after death. She also set up

<sup>1</sup> A Shanghai Jew, M Myers maintained that Hardoon had revealed to him that Luo Jianling’s father was a French Jew.

...her own lineage trust, Luo Chunjiatang. As a result Hardoon enjoyed access to Chinese kinship networks which he readily exploited to foster his position in Chinese society. It should then be added that after 1919 the Hardoons also adopted together foreign children who were brought up according to the Jewish faith.

Luo Jialing, who combined an innate cleverness with a hugely manipulative personality, exerted a strong influence over her husband. In 1898 she convinced Hardoon to give hospitality to the Buddhist monk Huang Zongyang (1865-1921) who, within a short time, became the Hardoons' main advisor. Most importantly, in 1903 Huang introduced the Hardoons to intellectual circles during the Subao case which marked the emergence of the revolutionary anti-Manchu movement in Shanghai in 1903-4. Huang also designed the Aili Garden [Aili huayuan], a traditional landscape garden that became the Hardoons' main residence around 1909. Within its secluded walls the Hardoons hobnobbed with Chinese dignitaries, fostered Buddhist activities and, as will be shown below, also established neo-traditionalist enterprises. Not surprisingly, Shanghainese, especially the petty urbanites [xiao shimin], gossiped in local tea houses about the mysteries of the Aili Garden, which were exposed in popular literature of the Mandarin Ducks and Butterfly genre.

On April 1, 1912 Yuan Shikai was appointed President of the Chinese Republic; he had persuaded the last Chinese Emperor to abdicate voluntarily. Hardoon, who did not hold any sympathy for Yuan, maintained a low profile in the Chinese political arena. He resumed an active role only in the months that followed Yuan's death in June 1916 when eminent personalities of the anti-Yuan camp organised sumptuous banquets in the Aili Garden. These gatherings, like other similar events held in Hardoon's residence, refined Hardoon's perception of the Chinese political arena and at the same time helped him to expand his ties within prominent Chinese circles. More specifically, such banquets prompted Hardoon to form exchange relationships which helped him to navigate and remain afloat in the Chinese political arena in the following decade. ♦

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## A Universal Symbol for the Red Cross

The International committee of the Red Cross recognises the associated services of only of the Red Cross, the Red Crescent and the Rising Sun, but has been unable to sanction the Israeli service of the Star of David because of members' opposition. They have however stated that an attempt is being made to introduce a single International symbol for all the countries of the world, in which case there would be no need to have a separate Star of David.

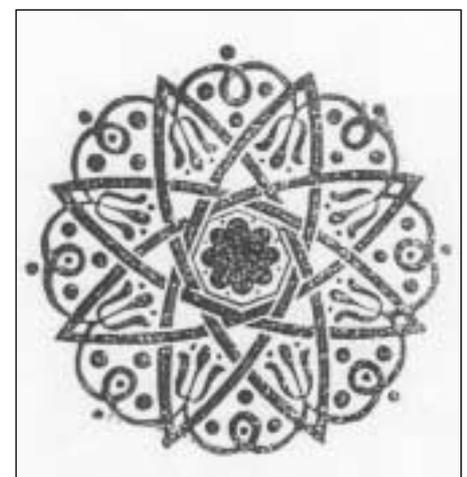
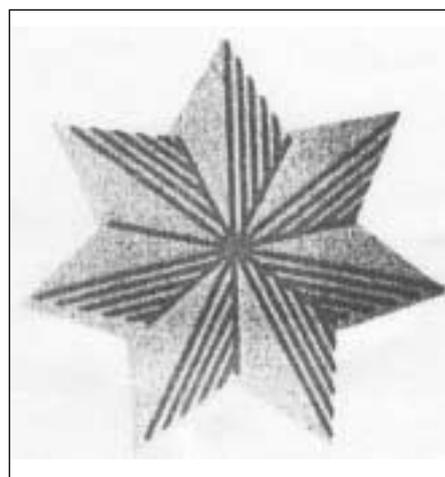
On the above basis we think that the ideal symbol would be a 7-pointed Star of Adam with the view of the Northern Hemisphere occupying the centre. This view of the world is in fact the Emblem of the United Nations Organisations. The 7-pointed Star of Adam which represents the seven days of Creation as stated in the Bible, also represents the seven day week which was introduced at the dawn of our civilisation and which has become universally accepted by all mankind as the ideal division of the year. Although there are different calendars for the months and the year, the seven day week remains unchallenged and attempts by the French Revolution and the Russian Revolution to change it to ten days or five days never succeeded.

To call it the Star of Adam is appropriate because Adam is considered the inventor of agriculture 9000 years ago and thus the Father of our present civilisation. ♦



Above : The 7-pointed Star of Adam as the proposed Emblem of the International Red Cross

Below : Alternative Possibilities



# The Sassoon's Return Visit to Baghdad

In September 1910, Mrs Farha Sassoon and her children undertook a trip from Bombay to Baghdad via Basrah.

In the last issue (*The Scribe*, No. 74) we published excerpts from the English diary kept by Farha's daughter Mozelle (1884-1921). We publish in this issue excerpts from the Hebrew diary (Massa'e Babel) kept by Farha's son David Solomon Sassoon (1880-1942) translated into English by Rabbi Aharon Bassous, which compliments the previous diary.

## Thursday - 4th Ellul, 8 September 1910

Early morning we left Bombay by the steamboat LAKO run by a British company.

## Shabbat – 10 September

Arrived at Karachi. We exited our cabins to breathe the fresh air as for the last two days we suffered from seasickness. As it was Shabbat we remained the whole day on the boat.

## Monday - 12 September

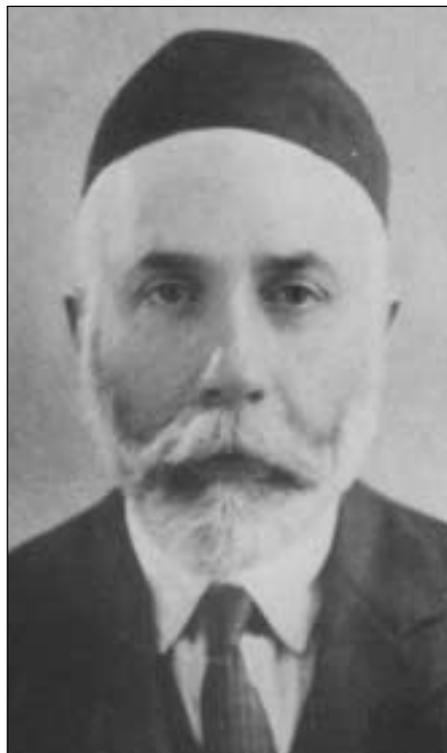
At 10.30am we anchored at Muscat and the third captain shot twice in the air in honour of the Imam of Muscat and Oman, Sultan Feisel. This city will never be forgotten, as it was like being in a fiery furnace. It was told to us that when the temperature reaches great heights the inhabitants of the city lie down on the roofs of houses and water is poured on them like one water's plants. A few years ago Jewish businessmen lived here and there was a Synagogue, but they are no longer here and the Synagogue is destroyed.

## Wednesday – 14 September

We arrived at our next stop Bushire in the Persian Gulf, at 10.30am. Here we remained for seven hours and I wanted to go into town very badly but due to quarantine regulations I was not able to. This was due to the fact that there was a plague in Bombay and in such circumstances there is a quarantine. In the afternoon the heat increased. Some Persian servants came on the boat to buy soda water for their European masters who live in the port since they do not drink the local water as it is not healthy. I was not able to receive any information about the Jews here except for the fact that they are greatly oppressed by the Persians.

## Thursday – 15 September

At 10.30am we arrived at Muhammera, the last port in Persia. Before we left Bombay Mr. Sason Aaron Bassous wrote to his friend Kasim the Mayor of Basra to help us to avoid the quarantine which all the travellers from Bombay have to keep.



Author of the Diary Massa'e Babel David Solomon Sassoon (1880 – 1942).

A short while after we put down anchor the private boat of Kasim arrived to take us to the port. A member of the Health dept arranged that all our suitcases would be removed from the boat to four smaller boats. In twenty minutes we came ashore and we went straight to the quarantine camp where we remained for the rest of the day. This was to complete five days after travelling from Karachi as the Persians keep only a five-day quarantine as opposed to the Turks who keep ten days. The porters unloaded our packages and placed them in a closed room. We had a cold lunch and since it was not possible to buy European bread we made do with the local bread which was made in the form of wide thin cakes.

At 5.00pm the customs official, a Jew, came and we paid him the necessary money depending on our class of travel. At 5.50pm the doctor arrived and after giving us a certificate that we had fulfilled all our obligations we took our packages onto a large boat which was tied onto the steamboat travelling to Basra. A short while later we heard a loud noise,

which was the sign for the Moslems to break their fast as it was the month of Ramadan. The sailors started to hurriedly swallow their food since from sunrise they had not eaten, drunk or smoked. The moon was shining very brightly and the river looked beautiful. At 10.00pm we came to the port of Basra and stopped outside the palace of Kasim the Mayor. His second son Jamil came to meet us and we came to the palace.

He, Kasim, displayed great hospitality to put up such a large group of people as ours. We entered our rooms at 1.00 am, but were not able to sleep due to the noise made by the large number of chickens in the yard which carried on the whole night. In addition many stray dogs were barking under our window. Nevertheless we were grateful to the Mayor for his kindness.

## Friday, 16 September and Shabbat, 17 September

The morning was very cool but as the day passed the heat became very great. I woke up early to go to Synagogue through narrow dirt streets and crossed the river on the bridge. Eventually I hired an old cart driven by a pair of white horses through the market place and streets lined with small restaurants. Suddenly we stopped and I was forced to get down since the path became too narrow for a cart to pass through. I was forced to carry on by foot till I reached a crowded street in which was Slat Bet Kharmoosh. This synagogue and the other three in town were rebuilt on the site of older synagogue buildings, since the buildings here are built of dried earth and do not last long due to dampness and the low quality of the building materials. This synagogue was a place of worship as well as a school where about 320 boys and girls were taught elementary Hebrew, Bible, and Ayn Yaakob (stories from the Talmud). The older children received instruction in French and Turkish also. When I visited, there were only about half the pupils as from the month of Iyar till Elul, all parents who are able to, leave the city to live in tents because of the great heat and the lack of water in the river, which attracts flies and malaria, and other diseases are rampant. This synagogue was built in 1907 by Aaron Jacob Kharmoosh and Meir Ezekiel Gareh in memory of their daughter/wife who had died in 1904. Close by is the great synagogue.

I also visited a small synagogue called Slat Bet Hibub, which was built in 1898. From there I went to a fourth synagogue which is situated in the Fowl market and called accordingly Slat Sook el-Jeej. There was a genizah in this synagogue which I went up to with great difficulty but did not find anything special. All the Sifrei Torah are in wooden boxes covered with gold and silver, the work of Jewish craftsmen. Each synagogue has sedakah boxes nailed to the walls designated for the grave of Rahel Imenu, Yehezkel Hanavi, Ezra HaSofer, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai and various charities. The spiritual leaders of the community are Hakham Judah Abdallah and Hakham Ezra Shochet but there is no yeshiva in the town and to my regret the Jews here do not keep the Shabbat properly. Their number is about 1500. The trade of the town is chiefly indigo, silks, linen and metals imported from India and Europe and is largely in the hands of the Jews. They also export horses, dates, sheepskin, and Turkish and Persian products. The Jews of Basra also own extensive plantations of dates and I saw them busily occupied in supervising the sorting and packing of the dates in millions of small card boxes and cartons for shipment to all parts of the world. The export of horses is busiest in October and November. It was told to us that the ships leaving Basra are packed with about 200 horses, leaving passengers closeted in their cabins for the duration of their journey. Since we planned to return to Bombay in the beginning of November this was not cheerful tidings. These horses are sent to Moslem merchants in Bombay who train them as hunting horses and racing horses.

I was able to buy some manuscripts but not old ones. One of them has special interest and is called Megillat Paras, which is read on the day that is called the day of the miracle. This is the story as recorded in the scroll.

In the year 1774, the Persian armies besieged Basra. At that time Suleiman Pasha, a lover of Israel and an upright man, was the Wali of Basra and the Saraf Bashi, Jacob Aaron, was the leader of the Jewish community. Together they defended the city against the enemies with great courage but after a siege that lasted for 13 months, they finally opened the gates to the Persian army on the 27th Nissan 1775. Suleiman Pasha, his family and household and Jacob Aaron his wife and children were sent as prisoners to the Shah in Shiraz. The Persians robbed, pillaged, captured women, etc and caused a lot of harm. At that time there was in

Basra a Rabbi from Hebron called Yaakob Haim Elyashar who had come to Basra to collect donations for his community. He ordered the Jews to gather in the synagogue and to pray special prayers, which he arranged. Eventually the General of the Persian army was poisoned by his own troops and died on the 13th Adar 1776. This led for the departure of the Persians from the city on the 2nd of Nissan and this day was fixed by the Jews as a day of rejoicing like the days of Purim, from year to year for all generations. The above-mentioned Rabbi composed for them songs and called them Megillat Paras and instituted that they should read this Megillah yearly on this day in the synagogue in the morning service as they read the scroll of Esther on Purim.

We left Basra for Baghdad after Shabbat travelling by steamboat belonging to a Turkish company. With great difficulty were we able to find porters to carry our baggage to the boat as in the month of Ramadan the Muslims do not do much work.

#### Tuesday, 20 September

At 7.00 am we reached al-Qurna where the Tigris and Euphrates unite. Tradition has it that the Garden of Eden was here! We rested for 10 minutes. Continuing on our journey to Baghdad we passed in the afternoon a building which is traditionally the grave of Ezra HaSofer or al Ezair in Arabic.

On the outside the grave looks like the dome of a mosque and is covered with glazed blue tiles. We went inside to visit. On entering the tomb we were in a large

chamber leading to the synagogue and grave. Before entering the building we were told to remove our shoes. On top of the grave is a large tomb made from wood. Every Jewish visitor lights a lamp and says: I am lighting this lamp in honour of our master Ezra the scribe, after which he circles the grave and kisses it. Many give money for someone to bless them at the grave. Even non-Jews come to pray here, as the grave is holy in their eyes.

The main time for visiting is between Pesach and Shavuot. Jews come from Basra, Abushire, Baghdad, etc. On the two days of Shavuot it is absolutely crowded. The visitors stay in two buildings built especially for them and are charged a small fee. Mozelle the wife of Eliyah David Joseph Ezra from Calcutta rebuilt one of the buildings in 1883. It cost her 4000 Rupees.

The order of prayers at the shrine of Ezra HaSofer for the Festival of Shavuot are as follows:

On the night of Shavuot they gather in the synagogue for the public auction of Misvot. The first one is buying the merit to put a Parochet on the grave. After which is the sale of four Rimonim (bells) to be placed on the four comers of the grave. Afterwards a special blessing is made for each person who wants to donate money to sedaka. The Arvit service is then commenced. When the service is completed they all go to the grave of the saddiq and sing various songs clapping hands in great rejoicing, Afterwards they go to have their meal.

After the meal they read in the two houses for visitors the special



The Shrine of Ezra Hasofer (The Scribe) on the river Tigris

...Tikoun of this night. It is divided into sections and each portion is then auctioned and that portion is then read loudly by the one who bought it. The readings are completed about two hours before sunrise. They then sing some more songs till the time for Shachrit arrives. Before Shachrit they sell the reading of the various parts of the service and before the reading of the Torah the various Aliyot are sold. The money from the sales is used for the upkeep of the houses for the visitors and to support the pupils of the Yeshiva.

Originally, the custom was to read by the grave the book of Ezra from a scroll, but this custom has stopped since Rabbi Yosef Hayim printed a book called Mamlchet Cohanim where he made a special order of readings and prayers to be read at the grave.

### **A Visit from Baghdad to Hillah, 27 Heshwan – November 1910**

Mr Menahem Saleh Daniel and his brother Sasson made all the arrangements, which took a long time since we had to have horses, prepared at different stages of the trip. In practice we were their guests throughout the trip. Without doubt one cannot find greater generosity than what they revealed throughout the journey. On the day of our departure many people came to wish us a safe journey and that our prayers at the grave of the prophet Ezekiel will be accepted (Maqbula). To our good fortune the weather was fair with slight rain which prevented the dust from flying around. We left the house by foot at 2.00 pm and passed through a crowded shopping area. Kurdish porters carried our belongings. After crossing the bridge we met our hosts and carriages. Many friends gathered there to escort us on our journey. Our group was made up of 16 persons including the servants plus 2 guards riding on horses.

Sasson Effendi as he is known here and his son Saleh accompanied us in their private carriage pulled by a pair of horses in the lead.

Family Sasson travelled in the second carriage and some friends in the third carriage. Finally the servants with the entire luggage went at the rear in two carriages.

We left at 2.30 pm in the direction of Mahmudiyah. After 30 minutes we crossed the Car Bridge. The ruler opened this bridge with great celebration on 20 January 1898. We had to pay a toll of 1/4 megidi for each carriage.

We arrived at Mahmudiyah at 5.45 pm



Entertained at Hilla. Seated : Rachel Sasson (Lady Ezra); Sason Daniel Effendi; Farha Sassoon; Mrs Hayim; Jacob Hakham Saleh Somekh; near Farha Sassoon on the floor, her daughter, Mazeltov. Standing behind, fourth from left: Saleh Sasson Daniel with two policemen and servants.

at a hotel called Khan for persons and animals. We saw two empty rooms on two sides of a courtyard, one for the men, the other for the ladies and the carriages in the courtyard. The rooms were very dirty and the servants spent a fair time cleaning them, probably for the first and last time. The night was cold and all our covers were still not enough to keep us warm. Some horses entered our room during the night since the door had no locks or bolts.

### **28 Heshwan, November**

We wanted to carry on our journey at 3.00 am in the cool of the morning but were not able to do so because during the night there was a big storm which made the road impassable. We were thus forced to spend the day in the Khan.

### **29 Heshwan, November**

At dawn on the following day we carried on travelling slowly because of the difficult path. We met a caravan of Persians on their way to Karbala. We made two short stops one at 9.30 to give food to the horses and another at 2.15 pm to have lunch under the sky. The night was quickly approaching and we were concerned we would spend the night in the desert but to our great fortune we saw the Baghdad gate at Hillah at 8.30 pm. It was like after a bad dream. We crossed the bridge as the town Hillah is built on both sides of the Euphrates. Mr Ezra Menahem Saleh Daniel invited us to his house and we remained there for three days in great comfort.

### **Hillah**

Hillah is a very small town surrounded by a wall built not in very good fashion from bricks taken from the ruins of ancient Babylon. The colour of the water is so bad that one is frightened to drink. To the north and south, the city is surrounded by date palms.

In the company of Mr Moshe Sussa, the superintendent of the business of Ezra Daniel in Hillah, I went to visit the town. While in Baghdad I did not visit the schools of the Alliance (Kol Yisrael Haverim) for well-known reasons, (since they encouraged the pupils to distance themselves from Judaism). Here, without my knowledge, they brought me to the school, which was a branch of the Alliance school in Baghdad. I saw a very strange spectacle. In one of the classes the pupils were learning Tenach bare-headed, from a teacher with a long beard, turban and long coat.

The number of Jews in Hillah is 500 persons and they have two synagogues. The first is called the big synagogue not for its great size but because it is larger than the small one. I found a stone tablet on a small well in the big synagogue. It turned out to be a tombstone dated 1232. The land of Babel is not stony and thus such a tombstone is a rarity in these parts. It would be required to bring it from a distance of 10 days journey at least. This shows the importance of the person buried. It was found by Arab farmers 4 1/2 hours distance from Hillah 120 years ago, and was brought to Hillah by a Jew named Shikuri who had it put in the

...synagogue by the Hechal. Twenty years ago when they rebuilt the synagogue it was placed in its present position where I found it and subsequently bought it.

The second synagogue was built by David Sasson in 1862/3 and is named after him. It is near the big synagogue. At the entrance there is a plaque which reads that David Sasson built this synagogue and a condition was made with the community of Hillah that half the proceeds of the synagogue should go for the upkeep of the Yeshiva of our master, Yehezkel Hanavi.

The Tebah is very large in this small synagogue. Nearby is a very big tree said to be over 100 years old.

The order of the prayers is as in Baghdad. The Jews are very poor and oppressed by the Sheikhs. Till a few years ago the Jews had limited rights. They had to wear a red patch on their outer garments. They were not allowed to ride on a donkey or horse in town. They were not allowed to walk in the streets on a rainy day in case they would splash water on a Moslem. They were not allowed to wear green – the holy colour of the Moslems. If they would, the Moslem would take it from hi and give him a good beating. When they walked in the streets they had to keep a good distance away from the Moslems in case their clothes would touch and defile them. They were not allowed to touch the fruit or vegetables in the shop before buying and if they did touch anything it was considered defiled and they had to buy it. They were not allowed to build their houses higher than the Moslems or to build a balcony over the streets because a Moslem could not walk under a Jewish house and other similar restrictions.

On Shabbat morning the 2nd Kislev – December we went to the David Sasson synagogue where I was given to read the Maftir. The Parashah was read in a Sefer Torah donated by my great grandfather Sheikh Sassoon.

I saw the two houses of Menahem Sliman Daniel, which are now in a very forsaken condition, also the spot where an Arab shot him in 1890. The office of the Daniel family is here from where they run their land business. In these days the working on the land is not successful, as the Euphrates has changed course causing a detrimental effect on the area.

#### **Shrine of Yehezkel Hanabi**

At 5.00 pm we arrived at Elkifi a small village by the Euphrates. When we arrived there was a funeral procession

going to the Cemetery. It was the aunt of Sasson Effendi the sister of his mother who passed away yesterday in Hindiyah at the age of ninety. We went straight to the grave of Yehezkel Hanabi. We arrived just in time to pray Minha and we prayed in the synagogue next to the grave. In my opinion the lovely building over the grave is extremely old, built from very big stones said to be the work of King Yahoyakhin. Above the doorway was a plaque dated 1809/10, which has inscribed on it – ‘this is the tomb of our master Yehezkel the prophet, the son of Buzi the Kohen, may his merit shield us and all Israel. Amen.’”

The room with the grave is very high and has flowers painted on the walls and the names of important visitors to the grave. It is mentioned that my grandfather David Sassoon repaired the building in 1859. The grave is very large: 12 feet 9 inches long, 5 feet 3 inches wide and 5 feet 1 inch high. It is covered with a decorated Parochet, which was sent by David Sassoon from Bombay. It is also written on the walls of the visit of Menahem Saleh Daniel to the grave in 1897/8 and his donation to redecorate the grave. Nearby, is another room, which has 5 tombs of Geonim.

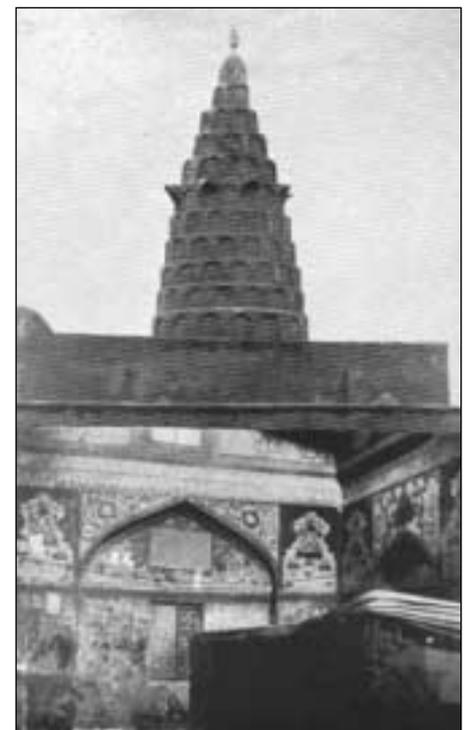
In another part of the courtyard is another room in which is buried Saleh Menahem Daniel, between the graves of two Sadikim who without a doubt are also Geonim. He was the father of Menahem and Sasson Daniel. Hakham Yosef Haim made the words on his tomb. Saleh Daniel spent his last years in Elkifi because his desire was to be buried there. When he became very ill he was carried to the doctor in Hillah for treatment and died there but he was subsequently brought back to Elkifi to be buried in the grave that he bought in his lifetime.

Since our intention was to leave early morning, I spent the remainder of the evening in search of manuscripts. In the synagogue are 16 Sefer Torahs in silver cases. However, I did not find books or a library, neither did I see or hear about a Sefer Torah which was said to have been written by the prophet Yehezkel. Binyamin of Tudela mentions such a Sefer Torah, which is read from only on Yom Kippur. In my opinion he should have said a scroll on which was written extracts from the book of Yehezkel, some examples of which I found here. They are read at the grave by visitors. Apart from these scrolls I bought some other scrolls but these are just transcripts from the book Mamlechet Cohanim by Hakham Yosef Haim.

This holy shrine was really nearby to us. This happened in 1860 at the time of the rule of Mustafa Pasha in Baghdad. Two influential Moslems claimed that the tomb belonged to Moslems on the pretext that only mosques have minarets. The Ministry of Holy Sites instructed to list it as Moslem property and this caused great suffering to the Jews. Hakham Sasson Smouha the Hakham Bashi of Baghdad and the Dayanim, together with the help of Saliman Daniel, objected to this and a special Minister was sent from Constantinople to investigate the matter and he ruled in favour of the Jews. Sir Moshe Montefiore's name is also mentioned in this connection for his support in this matter. In the village lived one hundred and fifty Jews. The time for visiting the grave is from the middle of Iyar until the beginning of Sivan. There are the Khan hotels by the tomb, one donated by a Yaakob Semah in 1844/5. The house of the Daniel family is close to the tomb. From the roof we enjoyed the wonderful sunset and the beautiful view.

#### **4th Kislev – December 1910**

We woke early to pray Shahrit. The group travelled back to Hillah except for Ezra and Saleh Daniel who agreed to wait for me and accompany me back to Hillah. I decided to remain until I had photographed the place, especially the internal view of the tomb since this had never been done previously. After I completed this job we then travelled back to Hillah arriving at the Mashad gate at 6.30 pm. 📷



The Exterior and Interior of the Shrine of the Prophet Ezekiel at Kifil on the Euphrates

## Shrines of Sadikim in Bavel

In Bavel there are four known shrines of great men.

1) The prophet Ezekiel in Al Kifl – a distance of seventeen hours by caravan riding on animals or eleven hours by cart pulled by animals till Hillah. From Hillah till the village Kifl six hours riding on animals. (According to Haham Yosef Hayim in 1908).

2) Ezra HaSofer, as described above.

3) Yehoshua Cohen Gadol – near Baghdad. Baghdad is built on the banks of the river Tigris, mainly on the eastern bank where the Jewish Quarter was. On the western bank was the Quarter where only Moslems lived. About one mile from this settlement was the grave.

4) Sheikh Yishak Gaon – died in 688 CE. Buried in Baghdad in the Jewish Quarter. ♦



## The Root of Evil in the Middle East

The cause of the recent spate of terrorism was neither Islam nor Israel. The cause is the surplus oil wealth that finds its way, willy-nilly, into the hands of adventurers (Nasser, Saddam, Arafat, Farrakhan or Bin-Laden) bent on conquest.

The arch-terrorists of today are not desperate, oppressed minorities fighting for a cause. The aim of Palestinian fighters is to conquer and then to liquidate the State of Israel. In 1967 the Arabs had all that they are pretending to be fighting for. They also rejected all reasonable offers of a peaceful solution ending with Ehud Barak's generous offer. Saddam wants to dominate the Arabian Peninsula and beyond. He stockpiles biological and chemical weapons to spread terror in the region, while starving his own population. Bin Laden wants to topple the Saudi regime and had enough money to employ German technicians to plan his spectacular attack on New York and Washington.

Solution? The Security Council, now in happy unanimity, should appropriate all the mineral wealth of the world and distribute it in a responsible manner for the benefit of all mankind. Unfortunately, the surplus oil wealth has also been used to influence the media into spreading pro-terrorist propaganda. ♦

## The Staff of Life

by Naim Dangoor

From *The Scribe*, No. 14 – 1984

*Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who bringeth forth bread from the earth.*

Although the Bible starts with the beautiful and moving story of the creation of the universe and the creation of time, Genesis is essentially the story of civilisation which, by definition, started when man settled down to develop agriculture not so long ago. The historic Adam, therefore, was the discoverer of wild wheat which started agriculture and as such Adam is the father of civilisation. Agriculture was a great turning point in the evolution of the human race which until then subsisted on hunting and gathering. In keeping with ancient tradition Adam is honoured by naming him as the First Man, the progenitor of the human race. Bread itself is accorded a unique place of honour at our tables, having a special blessing, and by treating it as sacred. The full grace after meals is recited only when bread has been eaten with the meal.

The aphrodisiac quality of wild wheat prompted the story of the Fall which is often associated with the dawn of sexual awareness. In fact one of the opinions in the Talmud states that the forbidden food that Adam ate in the Garden of Eden was wheat.

The story of Cain and Abel shows the subsequent struggle between the two factions – the old hunter and the revolutionary farmer. Indeed the story of the Garden of Eden was the usual yearning after “the good old days” whenever people embark on a new venture or a new way of life.

At the end of the Ice Age as the glaciers continued to retreat, the fauna that had been an important food supply for the hunters of the Old World became extinct. Mankind became more numerous and more active and craved for a new source of food. Adam's cereal was the answer and in search of suitably watered fields man had to move north where at the earliest known village of Jarmo in the Kurdish foothills and Jericho in Israel, the first farming communities were established many thousands of years ago. Today, two-thirds of the food calories consumed by the human race is provided by cereals.

Bible commentators are puzzled why the generation of Adam was allowed only fruit and cereals but that after the Flood, meat was allowed. In the early days of agriculture all animals were still wild and meat was hard to come by. The place of Noah in the march of civilisation is that he domesticated animals. This is graphically illustrated by the story of the Ark and the zoo that went into it. Noah is likewise honoured by naming him and his family as the sole survivors of the Flood. ♦



## Rivers of Babylon

by Khaled al Qeshtaini

Translated from an article in an Arabic daily appearing in London

Imagined in previous articles the close attachment of Iraqi Jews to their ancient homeland, and as I mentioned in a recent lecture, this loyalty and nostalgia that they have for Iraq is due to the fact that Iraq and not Palestine is the historic birthplace of the Jewish people. It was in Ur that Abraham lived as head of a large and powerful tribe where he developed and propagated his belief in the One True God; it was in Babylon that the greater part of the Bible was recorded and where the Talmud was developed and became the foundation of Judaism.

Nothing can illustrate better this close relationship between the Jews and Iraq than the story of Sara Manasseh who was born and raised in India of Baghdadi Jewish parents, not having set foot in Iraq but continues to speak Arabic, as is practice of most Iraqi Jews living for generations in diaspora.

Sara Manasseh devoted her life to the study of Baghdadi Jewish folklore and singing for which she obtained a Master's degree in London and went on to form a group called “Rivers of Babylon” singing in Hebrew and Arabic the traditional melodies of Baghdadi Jews reflecting the musical talent of that community which after all was the foundation of Iraqi music.

I was fortunate to attend a musical evening at a North London centre where I listened with admiration to the harmonious outpouring tunes of their songs.

I could not help coming to the conclusion that, rather than politics it is art and especially music that manages to bring communities and nations together. ♦

# The Jealousy of God

*The three monotheistic religions are in bitter conflict. Jasper Griffin wonders whether the ancients were not wiser with their polytheism.* Ten years ago, Soviet communism collapsed. The familiar Cold War came to an end. The West might have hoped that the world would no longer contain a powerful and implacable enemy. But Nature, once again, showed that she abhors a vacuum; and into the gap left by the end of secular ideology stepped the struggle between religions. Islam, Judaism and the Christian (or post-Christian) West found themselves everywhere involved in conflict, bitterness and bloodshed: Orthodox Christians versus Muslims in Yugoslavia; Protestants versus Catholics in Ulster; the rage of the Islamic world against Israel; terrorists, religiously inspired, destroying the World Trade Centre; good old-fashioned wars of religion in Sudan, in Nigeria, in Indonesia; the list is long, and it could be extended. And we cannot fail to notice that it is above all the great monotheistic religions whose followers behave in this way.

It is difficult, at this point in the history of the world, to remember that exclusive belief in one God is a plant of late and rare blooming. Monotheism is hammered home insistently by the religions with which we are familiar, those called by Muslims the Religions of the Book; those, that is to say, which grow from the root of the Old Testament. The very first commandment given to Moses on Mount Sinai is 'Thou shalt have none other gods but me!' Christians and Muslims have inherited that exclusive claim, and they make it with the same fervour as the Jews; although the God whom each group proclaims does indeed look somewhat different.

The ancient Hebrews were surrounded by peoples with very different religious ideas. We hear most about the Philistines. We hear of Moloch, to whom the Canaanites 'made their children pass through the fire' in the grisly ritual of child sacrifice, evidenced on sites from Lebanon to Tunisia by the discovery of the jars that contain the childish bones. We hear of Dagon, whose image fell on its face when the Philistines were injudicious enough to place in his temple the temporarily captured Hebrew Ark of the Covenant; Dagon was found in the morning with his hands and head cut off. We hear of Baal, whom his prophets, challenged to a public trial by Elijah, vainly called upon to manifest himself Elijah made merry at their expense:

*Either he is musing, or he is gone aside [i.e., to relieve himself], or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awakened.* The end of the story is, of course, the discrediting of Baal and, equally of course, the massacre of his priests:

*And Elijah said unto them, 'Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. 'And they took them; and Eljah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.*

There could be no pussyfooting question of tolerating other religions. As Elijah shouted to the people at the start of the showdown, 'How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, follow him.' And the people, we read, 'answered not a word'. Many of them, we suspect, would have liked to have it both ways; but that option was not on the table. When you played it with Yahweh, this was a zero-sum game.

Later on, it was the Greek gods with whom the Hebrews had trouble. Judaea fell under the rule of a successor kingdom to Alexander the Great, like everybody else in that part of the world, and King Antiochus made a determined effort to get this tiresomely different community to practise the cult of the Greek deities like civilised people, and (while they were at it) to worship him, too; he declared himself a god manifest, epiphanes. Predictable result: the revolt of the Maccabees and an explosion of nationalism and monotheism. By and by the Romans tried something similar, with the same result. Refusal on the part of the Jews to tolerate worship either of Jupiter or of the emperor meant that Rome used repression and force, and that meant revolt; and that, in the end, meant the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, and the loss, for many centuries, of the national home.

We are so accustomed to monotheism that we take it for granted. Only Hinduism, in the modern West, seems to present a radically different aspect, and that, with its gods and goddesses, and even with animal forms, like elephant-headed Ganesh, seems exotic and rather quaint. That is the result of the astonishing ascendancy and supremacy of the three religions which derive from that of the Hebrews, which have defeated and replaced the religions of the heathen, and which now wage war on each other; sometimes without hostility, but often with great cruelty. It follows that we think

it natural that a religion should be exclusive and intolerant of all others. It is perhaps well to be reminded that religions have flourished in the world which have been, in precisely this respect, very different. In Japan, for instance, Buddhist and Taoist temples stand side by side in harmony. 'And tell me,' I was asked at such a complex site, 'about those people in Northern Ireland: aren't they all Christians?'

## Naim Dangoor writes:

This article is a bit superficial. The idea of monotheism – The One True God – which may have started with Adam, cannot allow other Gods at the same time.

However, I maintain that The One True God is the Sole God in His own creation.

In an environment of infinity and eternity, there may well be - in fact, there must be – other Gods – more or less capable, in their own creations.

The limitations of God of the creation in which we live is obvious in that this creation is short of being a paradise. ♦



## The Truth About Palestinians' Origin

**T**he Arabs have become so emboldened in their aggressive stance against Israel, that they now claim, and many of them believe, that 1) today's Palestinians are descendants of the original Canaanites; 2) that the Jewish presence in Canaan was a passing phase – here today, gone tomorrow; 3) that there never was a Jewish or any other temple on Temple Mount; 4) that the Jewish homeland is Iraq and not Palestine.

### What are the facts?

The million people that Moses led out of Egypt 3,500 years ago were mainly Canaanite migrant labourers with a nucleus of Israelites who had all been enslaved by the Egyptians, (that is why Moses had trouble with some of their rowdy elements).

All these people spoke the language of Canaan which in due course became the Hebrew language that we know today.

The Palestinians are descendants of the Arabs who came at the Moslem conquest in the seventh century. If they were the descendants of the original Canaanites they would be speaking Hebrew today and not Arabic! ♦

# Letters to the Editor

## Story of Jacob Atrakchi

My name is Charly; I am the son of Jacob Atrakchi who was killed in prison in Baghdad on November 1968. By accident I found your website, and I saw that you did "Azkara in Memoriam" for the Jews who were killed in Iraq in January 1969.

I started looking for my father's name, Jacob Atrakchi, but unfortunately I didn't find it. I don't know from where *The Scribe* got the names.

This is how they arrested my father. We lived in Basra – the southern city of Iraq - about 20 Jewish families lived there. It was Friday morning, 4 October at 6.30 after the Jewish holidays (Rosh Hashana and Soucot). Three civilian people knocked at the door asking to enter. They claimed that they were from "Istechbarat" - Intelligence - and looking for Yacov Atrakchi. (You have to remember: Friday is a holiday and there is no school for us - I was 11 years old). I remember that I woke up at the crying of my mother Albertine, my grandmother Lulu, my grandfather Shimon and my grandmother Sabiha. They begged the man not to take my father to prison. The three people sat in the salon and soon another two army people entered with a mine detector looking for something. We didn't know what happened and what they were looking for. The senior man (fat one) started telling us not to worry: "We will take him (my father) for two hours only - just asking some questions and he will return back".

He also started telling us "Look how nice you are living here, unlike the Palestinian people - I just returned from the eastern border (Iraqi army joined the Jordanians in the Six Day War and fought at the eastern border), the Palestinians living in the camps with no water; I also suffered from the Israeli aeroplane bombing".

After the army people finished checking and found nothing, they left our home by taking my father with them and this was the last time I saw my father, still the senior man saying don't worry he will be back soon (my mother gave my father a small bag with clothes and a towel etc., and still begging the senior man to leave without my father).

We didn't know what to do. We had a servant called Abas; my grandfather told him to go to the police and ask what happened with Jack Atrakchi. After one hour he returned back and told us that they took him away to Baghdad.

We didn't hear from him until one day we hear on the radio "The Iraqi government captured Israeli spy network and we will put them on trial". After some days we started hearing the sessions of the "spy network trial" which most of them were Jewish people. At the trial they accused my father Yacov Atrakchi as the communication man with radio transmission (at this point we realised why they brought a mine detector to our home".

These were a dark age of our life. We were afraid to go out from home; in some cases when we went out to school we supposed to go back home early because they (the authority) are following us. This trial took about two months and almost every day we heard on the radio these sessions of the trial and found how they were liars. We heard the voices of all people except my father's voice. After these two months we heard that they sentenced nine Jewish people by hanging. At this time they claimed that Yacov Atrakchi ran away from the prison and they sentenced him to death in absentia.

One day we heard from Yehezkel Zilkha (brother of Najji Zilkha who was hanged) that he saw my father at the prison of Baghdad, and that it is impossible somebody can run away from there.

After some days the authority came and took our car, closed our office; they sent us from our home claiming it was part of the spy network money. Meanwhile we lived at my grandfather's home. My mother decided to run away from Iraq (we were seven children) and on August 10 1971 we arrived in Israel.

Unfortunately one of my brothers Albert was killed in Cairo, Egypt while serving at the Israeli Embassy. ♦

**Charly Atrakchi**

**Israel**

charly@aquanet.co.il

## Return to Iraq

I enjoyed very much the recent historical article about the diary of a Jewish lady who re-visited Baghdad some 100 years ago.

I have been actively writing on the net for several years about the necessity of the return of the 400,000 Iraqi Jews to Iraq from Israel, but I was very disappointed by the directions of your magazine, which still believes that Israel is a good and right thing. Jews in Europe have developed a much better understanding about Israel and its duty in this world. Facts are by now clear to every wise Jew that this project was a trap rather than a solution, customised by the same non-believers in Christianity, with non-believers in Judaism (Zionists) to serve some post with business set-ups than any religious base. I wish that Iraqi Jews be more aware of the big plot that European Jews started to realise. Many balanced articles were written about the 1941 Farhood. Closing eyes on those and stopping right at any event without giving it a second thought is very disappointing.

I do not see why should you mix between Israel and Iraqi Jews. Israel is currently 60% non-Jewish by population. Iraqi Jews are simply Iraqis. ♦

**Sumerian**

sumerian100@yahoo.com

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## By the waters of Babylon

I am the editor of *The Jewish Observer*, Los Angeles. I am putting together a small piece on The Jews of Babylon and ran across your website and hence the above-referenced article. Although I cannot offer any financial contribution for its use, our readers, I feel, will be better educated and enlightened as to the history on Babylonian Jews, so with your permission, may our paper use the article?

In the interim, if you care to visit our website, it is located at:  
www.jewishobserver-la.com ♦

Thank you.

**Liz Reuben**

*The Jewish Observer*, Los Angeles

## Questions about the Exilarchs

**M**y name is Brandon Curtis. I was just curious if it would be possible to get a copy of the genealogy of the Exilarchs of Babylon as far back as you have records. I have back to Exilarch Hanini David dating around 590 c.e. My family history is very important to me and I would like to learn more about those that came before me. Any information would be much appreciated. Thank You.

**Bcurbs@aol.com**

**Scribe:**

Please send your records beforehand. ♦

**I** have been researching the Davidic descent of the European Royal Families for many years. Zuckerman claims that Machir is Natronai. However the old Jewish sources say that Machir's father was the Exilarch Judah. He is also known as Zakkai ben Ahunai. His brother was Gershom ben Judah who was called Girart de Vienne in the chansons. Their sister called Bertrade was the mother of Charlemagne. Their mother Sussannah was known as Blanche fleur.

**Athol Bloomer**

bloomerlaw@bigpond.com

**Scribe:**

All this has now been superseded by the modern Exilarch declaring himself as such. ♦

**I** am currently in the midst of writing a book in Hebrew on the Davidic dynasty; a panoramic look at the Davidic Kings, the Exilarchs of Babylonia and the Patriarchs of Israel. Any info you have on the subject would be much appreciated.

**Yoel Weisberger**

**Scribe:**

The line of Babylonian Exilarchs came to an end in 1270 following the destruction of the Abbasid Empire by the Moguls 12 years earlier. However, the office has been revived 700 years later in 1970 by Naim Dangoor in the new dispersion of Babylonian Jewry.

The office is backed by The Exilarch's Foundation, a charitable establishment, to which Mr Dangoor has endowed £25 million.

Please refer to Issue No. 74 (now in its 31st year) on [www.scribe1.com](http://www.scribe1.com) where you will find [correspondence between David Hughes, a reader and the Editor, relating to this subject.](#)

After 100 or more generations the genes of David are so diluted that they become universal and meaningless. None of the old family trees claimed today can be said to be authentic without any reasonable doubt.

**2nd letter:**

The book I am currently working on will focus on the history and genealogy of the House of David beginning with King David until the last of the Judean Kings (Part 1), a look at the Exilarch's and the Nesiim in Judea (part 2). Finally a look at the latter day Davidic families. Another section will deal with the gentile royal families who claim Davidic descent such as the British Royal house as well as the Ethiopian Royal family (which claims descent of Menelik, son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba).

I am not trying to represent any particular point of view (other maybe than to show the fulfillment of the Biblical promise that the House of David shall never wither). The book is meant for scholar and layman alike. I am actually currently in touch with Susan Roth who heads an organisation whose purpose is to gather all the descendants of David together <http://www.davidicdynasty.org> I am also in touch with Yosef Dayan, a member of the Davidic Dayan family of Syrian Jewish origin.

About my own Genealogy, I have discovered that my family is descended of Rabbi Jonah Teumim Fraenkel, a renowned Polish Rabbi who was descended of Rashi (who was of the seed of Hillel the Prince). I am also descended of the Bohemian sage Rabbi Lowe the elder who was directly descended of Rav Sherira Gaon who wrote in his famous Igeret that he is of the family of the Exilarchs and of the seed of David. I hope to list my entire genealogy on my website sometime in the near future.

I would appreciate if you can send me any materials that may aid me in my research. ♦

**Yoel Weisberger**

**T**hank you for your copy of your correspondence with the BBC. Protests such as yours from individuals are truly necessary and most valuable in our fight against the bias of organisations such as the BBC.

**Jo Wagerman OBE**

**President – The Board of Deputies of British Jews**

**Scribe:**

The correspondence appeared in *The Scribe* 74, page 13. ♦

**M**y name is Aric Lapter. I'm 25 years old, a racing driver from Tel Aviv, Israel. I intend to be the first Israeli racing driver ever to get to Formula One. I would like to invite you to visit my web site:

<http://www.aric.20m.com>

I was wondering if you could write about me in your journal and in that way helping me to find sponsors for my racing? ♦

Sincerely yours

**Aric Lapter**

[aricfl@hotmail.com](mailto:aricfl@hotmail.com)

**I** read the article "Jewish Role in Iraqi Music" in "*The Scribe*". I am writing for permission to re-publish it in <http://musicalconfrontations.com/mcb121000000.htm>

If you wish to publish some other articles on music in the Musical Confrontations, I'll be very glad. Naturally I'll make a link to "*The Scribe*". ♦

**G Schachiner**

[editorial@musicalconfrontations.com](mailto:editorial@musicalconfrontations.com)

**T**he *Scribe* is all that is left of our Iraqi Diaspora. ♦

**Sami Sourani**

[samisourani@hotmail.com](mailto:samisourani@hotmail.com)

## Corrida in Baghdad!

Every Summer Spanish cities put up a strange kind of sport called Corrida in which a large number of bulls are let loose in the streets chasing a large crowd of young men running before them. The bulls mean no harm and would only attack people who interfere with them. I was reminded of a similar incident that I experienced in Baghdad eighty years ago, when I read an article about it in an Arabic book "Baghdad in the Twenties" by Abbas Baghdadi.

In 1921 King Feisal newly installed as King of Iraq was living in temporary accommodation in the Saray of Baghdad when Jewish schools sent their boy scouts in their hundreds to offer greeting to the King.

At the same time a buffalo cow was providing milk for the Royal residence and run amok at the noise of the singing and clapping of the children, who in turn became frightened. There was pandemonium when the children and their masters started fleeing in all directions. I noticed Albert Heskell Basri, a relative older than me who protected me until order was restored when the buffalo was shot.

The following year Feisal moved to the refurbished country house of Shaoul Shashoua on the road to Adhamiya which became the Royal Palace for the next ten years where he stayed till 1927 when the whole estate was flooded by the River Tigris and the King had to move again to another Jewish estate, that of Senator Menahem Daniel near the South Gate of Baghdad.

### Abdullah Dangoor

#### London

#### Naim Dangoor writes:

I remember making a similar visit in 1923 in the company of all the Jewish boy scouts to pay homage to the King in his new Palace.

In 1924 I attended a Boy Scout Jamboree in the Qushla in the company of my grandfather who was Chief Rabbi. We were seated in the front row, a few seats away from the King.

The reason why I am against bull fighting is that when the bulls appear in the arena, they are not in a fighting mood; they think they are going to play a game. After repeated provocations and stabblings, they fall down feeling cheated. Apart from cruelty to animals, bullfighting is not an honest sport. ♦

## Memories from David Cohen



David Cohen(right) with Mr Yitshak Navon (left) and Dr Mansour Nourallah (centre).

I have the pleasure to introduce myself to your good person and thank you for *The Scribe* card duly received. *The Scribe* is a highly interesting magazine for me to read. As such I am enclosing herewith a US\$20.00 cash note in payment for the copy of the coming "Rosh Hashanah" issue.

The undersigned is a past member of the Histadruth Management Body, also a member in the "WOJAC" management organisation. At "WOJAC" Congress held in Paris in 1975 and at the "WOJAC" Congress held in London at the year 1983, I had the pleasure to meet you in person (if you remember) in my capacity as a member in the aforesaid organisation.

My engagement in the Histadruth was for a long time, during which I befriended prominent personalities in the Israeli Government and in particular, I mention Mr Yitshak Navon was so intimate that he graciously agreed to have a photo with me and with the late Dr Mansour Nourallah (a good friend of mine); in the left side of the picture the ex-President, Mr Yitshak Navon appears, in the midst the late Dr Mansour Nourallah and at the right side appears the undersigned. The late father of Dr Mansour Nourallah, the late Dr Nourallah who died in Baghdad in the year 1953, was a very well-known person in the Baghdadi society for his kind and helpful attitude to the sick, poor and needy persons who used to flock to his clinic throughout the period of his life.

Dr Nourallah, who was a very sociable person, wrote a lot of his experiences and memories which happened to him in his life, covering jokes and short stories. His son, the late Dr Mansour Nourallah, gathered all these memories of his late father and printed them out in a book which I take pleasure in sending you under separate cover a copy of. I hope you'll enjoy reading it.

In Israel, the late Dr Mansour Nourallah, who was attached to the Histadruth Organisation, followed his father's tradition. He was highly esteemed and loved by the Iraqi community, who used to attend to him for medical treatment.

In view of the foregoing, I would be highly obliged to you if you will insert the attached picture, a historical one, in your coming "Rosh Hashanah" issue of *The Scribe*, and thank you so much in advance for this favour.

**David Cohen**

**Bnei Brak, Israel**

#### Reply:

Thank you for your letter which is receiving attention.

The current issue (no. 75) will soon be on the internet at [www.thescribe.uk.com](http://www.thescribe.uk.com) and a print-out will probably be available later this year, a copy of which will be sent to you. Thank you for the book of jokes which appears to be the same as the original I had many years ago. ♦

## Update of the Dangoor Family Tree

I was very pleased to see the Dangoor family tree, and I am certain it was a tremendous project to complete. While reviewing the family tree I noticed that only my uncle Shaul was noted as a descendant of Haron. My father, Jacob and my Uncle Haim were omitted. Here is my update of this section of the family tree, which will include the grand-grandchildren of Haron Dangoor.

### Update of the family tree:

# 68 Haron had 3 Sons as follows:  
#137 Shaul, Haim and Yakob  
Haim had one son Miki (died in a car accident in May 1996)  
Yakob has one son -Isaac (that's me)  
I have two sons Joseph and Moshe. ♦

### Isaac Dangoor

#### Los Angeles, California



I used to receive *The Scribe* regularly. I received a postcard that it has gone online. Please keep me informed of future issues.

I have been coming to London every couple of years, working for Chemical Abstracts Service. I have been visiting Samir and Gracy Tricot and Latif and Samira Balass. I love seeing my classmates from Frank Iny, Sabah Gabbay, Emil Cohen, Eli Timman, etc.

My son, David Bernstein, is the Director of the American Jewish Committee in Washington DC. He came across this site of Jews from Baghdad 1960-1970 vintage. I graduated from Baghdad University, Kuliya Al-Aloom in chemistry. I was first in my class. It was mighty hard to get a visa to the U.S., but somehow I was very lucky. My brother had graduated from Al-Hikma Univ, so he was established here. I left Iraq Oct 10, 1963. My mother came to live with me in 1971. I married an American and have not looked back, neither do I want to look back at some of the terror we endured.

Now, I feel as if I had not escaped! The damn long arm of the terrorists have reached our tranquil country. I hope we Americans can finally give a blow to these bastards. ♦

**Amira S. Bernstein**

**Ohio, USA**

abernstei@cas.org

## The Custom of Tashlich

I recently was in Bombay for the high holidays last year. I have a question regarding the practice of Tashlich for the Baghdadi community there. As I observed, the congregation went to the gateway of India and recited the appropriate prayers, then the Hazan waved a white handkerchief in the air rather than the typical emptying of one's pockets using breadcrumbs. My question is, where does this practice originate? What was the practice back in Baghdad?

I am currently writing an MA thesis on the full High Holidays practices of the Bene Israel and Baghdadi Jews in Bombay, so any information you can provide would be greatly appreciated.

**Yale Needel**

### Reply by Dr Sara Manasseh:

From what I understand about the Baghdad tradition in India: our custom is not to throw breadcrumbs as we follow the opinion that we may not feed the fish in the sea on Yom Tob. Many Hassidim are of the same opinion and do not do it either.

Also, I understand that we would simply wave the bottom of the jacket (near the front, where the pockets are) symbolically, but without actually emptying them out.

I have not heard about the custom regarding the handkerchief.

I hope this is helpful. ♦

**Dr Sara Manasseh**

www.saramanasseh.com

## Jerusalem – Al Kuds

Mr Arafat and other Palestinian officials deny a Jewish relationship to Jerusalem. That is contrary to the facts:

Jerusalem is never mentioned in the Koran. Jerusalem is mentioned in Jewish prayers three times daily. It is mentioned every time a Jew eats, and on every happy occasion, as when a child is born, and particularly at weddings when a glass is broken by the groom to demonstrate our sorrow for the ancient destruction of Jerusalem.

The Moslems pray towards Mecca even when they are in Jerusalem. The Christians never pray towards Jerusalem. No other religion in the world prays towards Jerusalem or for Jerusalem. No other religion or nation took an oath "if I forget thee Jerusalem let my right arm wither, let my tongue get stuck into my throat if I forget thee".

The name, "Al Kuds" is a Hebrew name, taken from the Jewish name for Jerusalem "Ir Ha Kodesh" (the Holy city). Ha Kodesh has "Ha" as an article (in English "the") and in Arabic "Al" and "Kodesh" which means "Holy" in Hebrew and was adapted as "Kuds" in Arabic. The reason the Arabs adopted the Hebrew name "Al Kuds" is that the first Khalif after the prophet Mohamad, Abu Bakr Al Saddik, who was a Jewish convert, (Saddik is a Hebrew name which means righteous) ordered Khalid Ibn Al Walid to liberate Jerusalem from the Byzantines at the request of the Jews and thus he called it Al Kuds as he was accustomed to call it in Hebrew. ♦

**Professor Heskell M Haddad**

**New York**

## Ambulances for Israel

From its single ambulance in 1930, MDA now has a fleet of over 700 modern lifesaving vehicles serving the whole of Israel. Most of the ambulances are attached to MDA First Aid Stations with other stationed in villages, kibbutzim, major public places and isolated border settlements.

MDA aims to provide an ambulance for every type of medical emergency. In addition to the standard ambulances, there is a fleet of Mobile Intensive Care (MICU) vehicles. These are for the treatment of heart attacks and serious road traffic accidents with one specialised neonatal intensive care unit for the transfer of premature high-risk new-

borns. In addition, there are also 25 mobile field dressing stations which are deployed in major disasters and 20 bloodmobiles for the collection of blood donations in the field.

Standard Ambulance: \$ 56,800 ea  
4x4 Standard Ambulance: \$ 61,600 ea  
Bullet-proof Ambulance: \$180,000 ea

### Scribe:

We are informed by Magen David Adom that American Ambulances are preferred to British-made because of uniformity with other Ambulances in service in Israel and also of spare parts being more readily available in Israel. ♦

I have discovered - and read - with great excitement your on-line magazine, *The Scribe*. Is it available in "hard copy"? For my part, I am Jewish but not Iraqi, although I have been very influenced by "input" from certain Iraqi & Iranian sources and would like to deepen my understanding of Iraqi tradition, especially with a view to following it myself, so far as I am able. Is there anywhere I might obtain tapes (especially of davening, etc) or any other useful material?

At present, I am living - with my wife & children - in North Manchester, which - as you probably know - is heavily Charedi/Ashkenazi. However, I'm told that somewhere in Manchester there is - or was - an Iraqi community, although nobody I have spoken to here in the "North" seems to know much about it....

I would be extremely grateful for any help or suggestions you might be able to offer, and, once again, congratulations on such an excellent publication!

**Michael Paysden**

**Reply:**

Thank you for your comments on *The Scribe*. You could contact -

Manchester Congregation of Spanish & Portuguese Jews.,  
18 Moor Lane  
Salford  
M7 0WX

Tel No: 0161 792 7406

**Further enquiry:**

Thank you for your reply.

I am already familiar with "Sha'arei Tefilla", the shul in Moor Lane that you refer to, and I sometimes daven there.

However, although the shul officially follows the "Florentine rite" of Italy, its nusach is heavily shaped by a mixture of influences from Morocco & Gibraltar, together with a generic "Anglo-Ashkenazi/Sephardi" mood. This is not meant as a criticism, but you will be well aware of the differences in pronunciation and general nusach that will exist between this shul and an Iranian or Iraqi shul that has not become too "anglicised".

So far as any knowledge of other communities is concerned, I'm afraid that the general mood of Manchester is to have little interest in anything that does not directly affect it within a tiny geographic limit. Each "group" keeps to itself. There

is no point in my asking members of Moor Lane about Iraqi material.

I have already attempted this path. Believe me, there's no point.

I am not contacting you out of total ignorance. I genuinely wish to obtain more material regarding Iraqi nusach and I would be grateful if you could help. I am not looking for generic "Sephardi" material. I have no need to.

**Michael Paysden**

michael@fireimage.demon.co.uk

**Reply:**

You could try:

Babylonian Jewry Heritage Centre  
OR YEHUDA  
83 M Ben-Porat Avenue  
Or Yehuda 60261  
Israel

Tel No: 00 9723 533 9278

They have tapes, cassettes and videos which may be of interest to you. ♦

————— ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ —————

**T**hank you so much for sharing with me your thoughts about Adam.

Your ideas make a coherent and convincing story that accords reasonably well with the scientific evidence. If I understood you correctly, it all started about 10,000 years ago, at the end of the last Ice Age, when men migrated from Africa to Aden.

In Aden, they first started to cultivate wild wheat, to herd animals and to live in settlements. This marked a distinct surge in cultural and technological progress that culminated in the building of cities and the invention of writing about 5,000 years ago.

When water became too scarce in Aden to support the growing population, men migrated up the two opposing coasts of the Arabian peninsula. This accords with old traditions picked up by the pre-Islamic Arabs.

Looking back to the heroic age, early men called its leader Adam, and gave him the title of the first man. This was echoed by the Torah when it describes God as breathing the breath of life, or a soul, into Adam.

I hope that is a fair summary. ♦

**Lucien Gubbay**

**London**

I am unable to read on-line or download and print the recent issue of "*The Scribe*". I felt a real loss when you decided to discontinue the printed journal and opted for internet publishing. We spent hours trying to print the last issue and failed miserably but who can really sit in front of the computer screen and read 83 pages? I can understand that the cost of producing and mailing the journal became prohibitive and I, for one, would be very happy to take out a subscription and send in dues. It is well worth it.

You have done a remarkable job at bringing us together through the printed journal. I consider it to have a priceless historical value in the tradition of our oral teachings and relating our unique experiences.

It is also a great source of pride for our Baghdadi Jews who have picked up their lifes' threads and continue to flourish all over the world. Not to mention a glorious testimony for our community.

**Samira Galler (née Balass)**

**New York**

**Reply:**

It is not a matter of printing cost; we have to move with the times.

As well as the internet download, we offer a colour print-out version. The cost of a print-out is £10 or US \$20 which includes postage and packing. Cheques should be made payable to "The Exilarch's Foundation" and sent to:

The Scribe  
4 Carlos Place  
Mayfair  
London  
W1K 5AW  
ENGLAND

Mr Dangoor feels that the service which *The Scribe* gave on behalf of the Baghdadi Jews has come to an end. The material has become history and does not need to continue. As far as providing a medium of communication between members of the community worldwide, this can be done much better by means of the internet.

**Second letter:**

I am delighted to receive my computer print-out of *The Scribe*. Thank you ever so much for all you do...

Yeteeek Eeefee ou La-Yechleek

May God give you strength, protect you and keep you. ♦

## Who was behind the Holocaust?

I read *The Scribe* occasionally, after having come across it on the Internet. I usually find it to be insightful. In this issue, however, you make a claim that seems very extreme:

"I can go further and say that the Second World War was engineered or manoeuvred into being by the oil interest of the West in order to get rid of the Jews of Europe in the mistaken belief that they would thus save the vast oil reserves of the Middle East from falling into the hands of a new Zionist state populated by East European Jews who were regarded as Communist sympathisers." (page 20, issue 73)

Were you just saying this for effect, or do you actually believe this? Do you really think that the Western nations felt threatened enough by Zionism to a) condone genocide of the European Jews and b) host a World War? Do you have any evidence of

this, or is it instinct that leads you to make this claim?

I am curious to hear your reactions.

**David Sussman**

**Reply:**

We believe in it and it is not for effect. The evidence is everywhere – the White Paper of 1939 that stopped Jewish emigration to Palestine, the refusal to accept Jewish refugees by all the countries of the world (except Shanghai), the Mufti's secret double agent intrigues with Hitler, the sinking of refugees trying to reach Palestine, the refusal to bomb the death camps, the delay in opening the second front, Britain's post-war continuing anti-Jewish policy. If you want to research for more concrete evidence please do so. ♦

## Britain and the Holocaust

You have provided in page 11/issue 74, "Was Britain Actively Involved in the Holocaust?" An introduction to the complexity of the affairs of the British Government with some of your remarks regarding the Holocaust.

There is a big wisdom in the saying: "Life must be lived forward, but can be understood backwards". I would like to mention that in the preface to his World War II Memoirs, Sir Winston Churchill told of a conversation with President Roosevelt in which he was asked to suggest what the war should be called. Churchill replied that it should be called the Unnecessary War, for "there never was a war more easy to stop than that which had wrecked what was left of the world from the previous struggle."

**Edward Yamen**

**Naim Dangoor writes:**

Why then was this Unnecessary War allowed to take place?

## Calcutta Synagogues

Last week I toured Magen David and Beth El in Calcutta. It was hard to find caretakers but finally (in both cases) I was able to have a tour. Caretakers are old Muslims who only speak Urdu but they are loyal and quite knowledgeable. It appears the two buildings are used alternate weeks. Magen David is an absolutely magnificent structure – in light of the age and size of the Calcutta community, what will be the fate

of these magnificent buildings in a few years? It would be a shame if they were lost. As both are in quite good condition, would I be correct in assuming there are trust funds for maintenance? ♦

**Gary Richmond**

**Vancouver**

gary.richmond@shaw.ca

## Kadoorie Family

The Kadoorie family are trying to discover their antecedents and how they came to arrive in China during the late 19th Century. You have the most marvellous photos of that era but you may not have any records to throw light on the family's background.

It is thought that there were 7 Kadoorie brothers in Baghdad of whom 2 remained behind while the others left for India. Ezekiel, the oldest, it is thought joined David Sassoon in Calcutta in 1870 before asking 3 younger brothers to join him over the next 10 years. Moses (possibly Silas Moses), Elly (Eliezer) and Ellis.

Elly left for Hong Kong - aged 15 - arriving there on 20th May 1880. After several years with the Sassoons (E D Sassoon & Co) mainly in the Northern Treaty ports, he borrowed \$100 from Ellis and set up the broking firm of Benjamin, Kelly & Potts in Hong Kong.

If you can add anything to this, we would be most grateful.

**Frances Mocatta**

**London**

**Scribe:**

In 1959 the graves from the four Jewish cemeteries were transferred to an international cemetery in a western suburb of the city.

With the on-set of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), gravestones were uprooted, some smashed, and other removed entirely. The sites of the cemeteries became parking lots, parks, and a cement factory. Only four Jewish graves remained undisturbed – those of deceased luminaries Sir Elly Kadoorie, his wife Lady Laura Kadoorie, Charles Aharon, and Yosef Sasson – in the famous cemetery that also houses Soong Ching Ling, now the Soong Ching Ling Memorial Park.

The Kadoories need not only to look to the past but also to look to the future and establish a sumptuous Iraqi Community Centre in London to commemorate their name. ♦

I salute you on your latest issue 74, and I enjoyed the pointed communication you have sent the BBC regarding their infamous programme.

**Fred Chitayat**

**Montreal**

Fred\_Chitayat@srtelecom.com

## The Bondage in Egypt and Anti-Semitism Today

How and why did Jews happen to come under the bondage of Egypt? Also, why the century after century of persecution? What started the whole thing and why does it continue to this day; this whole anti-Semitism thing?

Patricia Stone

### Answer from the Editor:

Your enquiry consists of two questions – the bondage in Egypt and anti-Semitism.

### The Bondage in Egypt

The River Nile provided Egypt with a more or less reliable source of irrigation but it needed labourers to bring the water up from the river. Canaan, on the other hand, was mainly irrigated by rain-water which was not labour-intensive but the trouble there was the droughts that occurred from time to time.

In years of famine many people migrated from Canaan to Egypt where there was a sizeable migrant community in the Delta, in the north of the country. When Jacob and his tribes went to Egypt in a period of famine they too settled in Goshen in the Delta region. At that time Jacob's son, Joseph, was the Viceroy of Egypt. It was he who turned the Hebrews and the rest of the population into slaves of Pharaoh! Whenever Jews attain high office they become plus royalistes que le roi – more royalist than the king. And so it was that Joseph hatched up his 14 year plan to cover the grain market, filling up the stores in the 7 years of plenty, and selling the grain at exorbitant prices in the 7 years of famine. Such an activity is illegal nowadays but in those days it was deemed to be very clever. At the end of the 14 years all the people of Egypt had sold first their cattle, then their land, then themselves, in order to get sustenance.

After Joseph's period was past, a new nationalist Pharaoh (Ramesis I) who started the 19th dynasty came to the throne. He released all the Egyptians from slavery but kept the Jews in bondage for many years until the end of the long reign of Ramesis II and the coming to the throne of his son, Mer Nephtha, when Moses returned to Egypt and demanded from Pharaoh "Let my people go". The rest is history.

### Persecution and Anti-Semitism

"How odd of God to choose the Jews" goes the rhyme, and some answer by saying it is not so odd as those who choose a Jewish God and spurn the Jews.

Jews liked to believe that the Holy One, Blessed Be He chose us from amongst all the nations just like that, and this is reflected in all our blessings. However the Talmudic Rabbis who became more mature in Babylon, did not like the idea that the Jews were chosen as an act of favouritism without any merit, and they advanced the theory that the Torah was first offered to the nations of the world who rejected it when they read the small print! It was only then that the Almighty turned to the fledgling nation of Israelites and offered them the Torah. They asked how much it cost and when told it was free they all said together, we will take it, without bothering to read the small print.

What was then in the small print? It was the conditions that as Chosen People we have to suffer for God, the wickedness of mankind. For mankind is wicked. We are in paradise and we have made a mess of it. But who can blame us, who are created in God's image? It is as simple as that and the result is that the sufferings we undergo from anti-Semitism is no doubt the result of the wickedness of mankind.

What is the evidence that the Torah was first offered to the Gentiles? At one time Pharaoh Akhenaton, influenced by the tradition of Joseph, introduced monotheism into Egypt by making the sun disc, which is the undisputed source of all life, as the one God but he was overthrown by the powerful Egyptian priesthood. However, it appears that Mer Nephtha was himself inclined to monotheism. That is why he saw Moses several times and it appears that at these meetings Moses tried to convince the King to accept monotheism but he was again ruled out by the powerful priesthood. When Moses finally said goodbye to the King telling him we are going to worship our God, the King told Moses "Bless me also".

How odd of God to choose the Jews? It is not so odd.

The Jews chose God.

Slaves we were to Pharaoh in Egypt and slaves we remain, to a Higher Authority. ♦

## Buddhist Statues

I always enjoy *The Scribe*, and I should like to thank you for producing it. The articles are invariably fascinating. However, I do not think your comments on the destruction of the Buddhist statues in Afghanistan are helpful (*Scribe* 74, p. 28). I do not think that simply because the statues 'offend the followers of monotheism' they deserve to be destroyed.

There are many things we can choose to find offensive if we take certain texts too literally, or are feeling intolerant - pig farms, churches, different branches of the Jewish religion, for example - but we do not destroy them. We recognise that peace and tolerance are ends in themselves. Anyway, I question whether the statues are offensive to us at all. The Buddhists do not worship them, any more than we worship pictures of our family. [Some of our sages consider any representations of the human form to be offensive!]

You are correct to say that Buddhism is thriving: one reason that it is enjoying popularity amongst many people is that it is a philosophy of acceptance and tolerance. ♦

Ronnie Horesh



## The Taliban

from Elchanan Pels, Jerusalem

I saw an article about the Taliban in the Israeli weekly *Mekor Rishon* 12.10.2001.

I found the apparent connection to the Jewish people most interesting. 12 million people divided into 60 tribes and sub-tribes. A book by the late President Ben Zvi and the research of Rabbi Avichail shed interesting light on this subject.

Many use the name Israel. Some of the tribes call themselves Efraim (Ha'afri), Reuven (Rabani), Asher (Ashri), etc. They grow sidelocks (in Kedusha) – have a talit with fringe they use for prayer, Brit Mila on the eighth day – Mikve for women of Nida, "Yibum", Chuppa, Shabbat is called AL HAFTA = Holy Day. They light candles on Friday evening, drink wine (forbidden by Islam), on Shabbat they don't work or cook.....They have Yovel (50 years). They say "we were Jews – when Moshiach comes we shall return to the Holy Land and be Jews." ♦

# Hazon Yeshaya: Hot Meals To Israel's Neediest

It was a cold, rainy day in November in the beginning of the winter. Rabbi Abraham Israel was crossing a main street in Jerusalem. A young woman, partially disabled, was trying to cross the street unsuccessfully. Rabbi Abraham helped her to cross the street and took her home. When they reached her apartment, Rav Abraham was utterly shaken. The apartment was hardly fit for a human being to live in. Realising the situation, Rabbi Abraham left the apartment and returned a short while later with a hot meal. It was her first hot meal in a long time she said, thanking him profusely. The woman also told him that she had friends who were worse off than her.

This spurred Rabbi Abraham to action. The next day, he organised a free soup kitchen. Word of the hot meals spread. Those friends had friends of their own who, in turn, had their own friends. And all of them seemed to be in the same destitute circumstances. It didn't take very long before several hundred meals were being served every day.

The people who receive these meals come from the four corners of the world: North Africa, Turkey, America, Ethiopia, the former Soviet Union, the Moslem Asian republics, and the Holocaust survivors of Europe. All are unquestionably in need of help and Rav Abraham thought to himself that he would provide it as long as God gives him the strength and sends charitable people to provide the means. There are charedi and non-religious "customers" at Hazon Yeshaya. Of course the

meals are all under the Badatz hechsher and distributed with the proper dignity.

As if he didn't have enough worthy recipients, he was asked one day to provide meals to destitute orphans and to abused children. He looked at his bank account, an overdraft that seemed to approach the national debt; he looked at his resources, stretched to the very limits, and undaunted he said "yes". Knowing that it would be difficult if not impossible to meet such a request, as not a "gush" would be available from government sources, he went ahead anyway. Not only did he add these young people to the ever-growing list of those to be fed, but also every month he organises a Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebration at the Kotel for those youngsters who would not otherwise celebrate their entrance into the age of adult responsibility.

Today, Hazon Yeshaya serves over 700 hot meals daily and is deeply in debt. As the economy in Israel worsens and the number of "clients" rises, help is needed.

Donations to be sent to

Hazon Yeshaya,  
13 Alfrandri Street,  
P O Box 57270,  
Jerusalem, 91571,  
Israel.  
Tel/Fax: 972 2 500 2627  
hazon-yeshaya@barak-online.net

Yeshaya is a recognised charity in the United States, England and Israel. Please visit website: [www.hazon-yeshaya.com](http://www.hazon-yeshaya.com)

Dear HH The Exilarch

Shalom!

With much gratitude to the Al-Mighty and with great pride, we celebrated recently the Bar/Bat Mitzvah of 54 wonderful children as seen in the photograph (below left).

These children came from Afulah and Gan Yavneh. We started the day by praying at the Kotel (the Wailing Wall); then we gave them a tour of Jerusalem, followed by a luncheon in a banquet hall with delicious food, music and gifts. No words can adequately describe the joy these kids had. Something that will no doubt accompany them throughout their lifetime.

A second group of 52 children will celebrate in September.

The credit goes entirely to you. Without your financial assistance, we would never be able to help the unfortunate in Israel, who in essence are our brothers and sisters. Please accept the gratitude of the thousands who are receiving our assistance day in and day out.

**Abraham Israel  
Hazon Yeshaya  
Jerusalem, Israel**

**The Exilarch's Foundation is financing an additional programme being carried out by Hazon Yeshaya, of offering rice and lentils cooked in oil at half the cost price to all comers. ♦**



## The Dangoor River

At a recent visit to Chad by Colonel Qadhafi, he discussed with Chad's President Idris Daby the need for closer co-operation between the two countries and for achieving the unity of the whole African continent. Qadhafi said, Chad has a great potential for the production of oil, in addition to that Chad is a fertile land and includes water. We are going to establish a project on the Dangoor River which came from Central Africa to the Sharry River to connect the two rivers together for a distance of 50 km. In this the pipes of the Great man-made River in the Great Jamahiriya will be used in order to allow the water to reach to the Chad Lake, which is required in order to change its water to avoid any damage to it. ♦



Children supported by Hazon Yeshaya celebrating their Bar/Bat Mitzvahs

## Morris S Chitayat



September 12 1920 – January 27 2002

By a Friend

Morris travelled with his family over three continents before settling in Canada in 1963 with his wife Claire and daughters Liza, Sandra and Nicole. In fact he left Iraq in time to escape certain danger due to a new and oppressive government in power which was bent on discrediting and punishing Jews and their known friends in the "old regime".

He quickly settled into his new surroundings in Montreal and delighted in the company of his new friends and associates. He always showed them deep respect and consideration and knew the pleasures and rewards of loving and giving. His adventurous spirit led him and Claire to travel extensively all around the world and to enjoy his continued passion for photography.

Meanwhile, because of their roots, both Morris and Claire were quickly connected with the works of the "Canadian Friends of the Alliance Israelite Universelle" and the Committee for the Advancement of Human Rights of which Rene Cassin, a Nobel Laureate, was President.

His loss was greatly mourned by his devoted family and his community. He will be fondly remembered by all those whose lives he touched. ♦

## Exhibition of work by Edward Hillel in Manchester

Your website is marvellous. Thank you for the devoted work you continue to do for our community.

As suggested to me by several of your readers, I am enclosing a Press Release about my upcoming exhibition at the Manchester Art Gallery.

God bless.

**Edward Hillel**

ehillel@mindspring.com

**Edward Hillel**

**Coming Soon...**

**13 July - 1 September 2002**

**Opening: 11 July, 2002 6 - 9 p.m.**

Edward Hillel's project *Coming Soon...* is an intimate installation which deals with ideas of memory and landscape. The subject of the project is an area of Manchester called Little Ireland, once a hugely important mill site where 40,000 poor people lived and worked during the Industrial Revolution and beyond. Little Ireland, and more specifically the Dunlop Factory at the heart of the site, is now about to be turned into exclusive loft apartments by the city's property developers. Using photography, video and found pieces from the area, Edward Hillel captures a moment in time between the past and the future and is both local and universal in its themes.

The installation will consist of an evocative combination of photographs and video projections of the Little Ireland site and the abandoned Dunlop factory in its last days before conversion, along with displays of found pieces such as rusty factory wheels salvaged from the site. An audio soundtrack recreates the sound of the factory.

The project aims to give a flavour of the Dickensian, labyrinthine nature of the factory and to portray a little of its fascinating history, which spans some 200 years and influenced the likes of Marx and Engels to develop their ideas on the working class and the theory of communism. On a local level, the Gallery hopes to run a reminiscence project with older people who have had connections with the site in the past and will be invited to see the project to use the art as a starting point to trigger their memories.

An accompanying publication will feature the artist's photographs of Manchester and the abandoned production site.

Edward Hillel was born in Iraq and divides his time between Montreal, New York and Paris. His multi-disciplinary work is exhibited and published widely and includes photography, video, audio, objects and installations. In 1999, Hillel was awarded the German Critics' Association Visual Arts Prize after presenting four exhibitions in Berlin and an installation in the Museum of Modern Art, Weimar.

For further information and images, please contact Kim Gowland, Manchester Art Gallery on Tel 0161 235 8861 or email [k.gowland@notes.manchester.gov.uk](mailto:k.gowland@notes.manchester.gov.uk) ♦

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## Sixty Generations Roots to Babylon

I found the article mentioned in the subject line on-line at your web site (<http://www.dangoor.com/73page112.html>). I share this same genealogy, down to generation 28, Raymond V Berenger; from there I am descended from all three of Sancha's sisters. But Raymond V Berenger, Count of Provence is descended from both of Theuderic-Rabbi Makhir's children, William of Gellone, and his sister Bertha of Autun.

I would be very interested to see a copy of the Babylonian Haggadah you offered to Annessa Lynn Huff. You told her she could find on page 91 the earlier generations of Exilarchs and on page 90 all the previous kings to King David. This is what I would most like to see. A single reference, *Royalty for Commoners*, lists the lines of the Exilarchs back from Makhir to Jehoiachin (Jeconiah), King of Judah and lists sources for his information. I would like anything that might corroborate the information from that source. Could you also translate the word Haggadah for me please?

Thank you in advance.

**Jim Fina**  
Arizona, USA

**Reply:**

Your information has been noted. The word "Haggadah" means narration (of the story of Passover).

If you would like to send us your address we can send you a copy of the Haggadah, which is priced at \$8 including postage. ♦

# Yahya Kahn

General Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan was born at Chakwal in February 1917. His father, Saadat Ali Khan, was actually from Peshawar. After finishing his studies at the Punjab University, Yahya Khan joined the Indian Military Academy at Dehra Dun. He was commissioned in the Indian Army in 1938. During World War II, he performed his duties in North Africa, Iraq and Italy. After independence, Yahya Khan played a major role in setting up Pakistan Staff College at Quetta. During the war of 1965, he commanded an infantry division. He was appointed Commander-in-Chief of Pakistan Army in 1966 with the rank of General.



In 1969, when the situation went out of Ayub Khan's control due countrywide agitation, the President decided to hand over power to the Army Chief, General Yahya Khan. Yahya Khan immediately after getting powers declared Martial Law in the

country on March 25 1969 and assumed the title of Chief Martial Law Administrator. He terminated the constitution and dissolved National and Provincial Assemblies and Governments. On March 31, he also became President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Unlike other military rulers who ruled Pakistan, Yahya Khan was not interested in prolonging his rule. Immediately after taking charge of the country, Yahya Khan started looking for options through which he could hand over power to the elected representatives. On March 29 1970, through an Ordinance, he presented an interim constitution: The Legal Framework Order. The Legal Framework Order was actually a formula according to which the forthcoming elections were to be organised. It goes to the credit of Yahya Khan that the first General Elections in the history of Pakistan were held during his regime. ♦

## Afghan Origin

sent by Ghani Khan

Descendants of the tribes of AFGHANA. Pakhtun, Pashtun, Pathan, Pukhtoon etc are some other names for Afghan. Their language is Pashto. They are descendants of Hazrat Ibrahim (ABRAHAM).

When I was a teenager I used to go to Mahabat khan jumat in Peshawar. After prayers we would sit with tablighi jumat. I still remember when I asked a spingeray from tablighis: was there any prophet among pashtuns, the old man answered yes of course: Khalil khan (Abraham), Isaac khan (Isac), Israel khan (Jacob), Yousaf khan (Joseph), Musa khan (Moses), Isa khan (Jesus), they were all Pashtuns (Hebrews).

I thought "Baba jore da churso suta walae da, Zaka gaday waday wai". I could not believe he was telling me something very important. I thought all prophets were Arabs, at least that's the Arab propaganda to get respect and call themselves sayyid and exploit Pashtuns. In fact the real children of prophets are Pashtuns. All these prophets spoke Hebrew not Arabic and they were not Arabs at all.

In Hebrew Abraham sounds Afroim ,

Avram , Afram etc.( In Pashto we use words zar-ghan etc (which can be explained as goldlike or from gold, etc).

Afr-ghan (meaning from Abraham) gave origin to Afghan. (Also Hebrew is ibrani - ibran-afghan and ibrani-ifghani (Pashto).

The holy book of David (Hazrat Daud) was Zabur (the Psalms), and hence Pashtuns use words Zaba-language or tongue or promise (the message or promise of God to Abraham and his descendants, zabardast- fantastic, Zabul-a region in Afghanistan. (Many words are used in Pashto -spinzar, srazar, sanzarkhel, zartasha, zamina, zarina, zarghon shah, zarghona, zahra, zanana, etc)

Today some tribes use word jaba instead of zaba.

The name of Abraham's grandfather was TERAH and father was AZAR. Abraham lived in Babul and the king at that time was Nimrod.

When Hebrews settled down in Afghanistan they named different regions to represent their history eg.

NB! (At that time this region was called khurasan meaning kha urasan-meaning we got here safely).

TERAH (Grandfather of hazrat Ibrahim) and JAMROD, NIMROZ (nimrod), AZAR

## List of Pathan Presidents

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan  
 Syed Ameer Ali  
 Ali Brothers  
 Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk  
 Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk  
 Aga Khan  
 Liaquat Ali Khan  
 Muhammad Ali Jinnah  
 Allama Iqbal  
 Fatima Jinnah  
 Begum Shah Nawaz  
 Begum Viqar-un-Nisa  
 Choudhary Rahmat Ali  
 Chaudhary Muhammad Ali  
 Feroz Khan Noon  
 Khawaja Nazimuddin  
 Ghulam Muhammad  
 Muhammad Ali Bogra  
 I. I. Chundrigar  
 H. S. Suhrawardy  
 Iskander Mirza  
 Zulfikar Ali Bhutto  
 Yahya Khan  
 Sheikh Mujibur Rehman  
 Muhammad Ayub Khan  
 Gen. M. Zia-ul-Haq  
 Muhammad Khan Junejo  
 Ghulam Ishaq Khan  
 Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi  
 Benazir Bhutto  
 Sardar Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari  
 Malik Meraj Khalid  
 Mian M. Nawaz Sharif  
 Muhammad Rafiq Tarar  
 Gen. Pervez Musharraf

(father of Hazrat Ibrahim). Srazar, spinzar, zarghona, zarghonshah, zarmina, zartasha, azara - another word for Afghans. Afghans living in district hazara in NWFP. Word Hazara is mistakenly used for Mongols in Afghanistan. When real azara migrated to Hazara, abbotabad, Gilgit and Kashmir areas, the areas they came from were taken by Chengez army and those mongols came to be known as Hazaras in Afghanistan. While real azaras are living in pash-tunkhwa, most of them speak hindko but they are real Afghans. Also Gilgit are Gilzai. Kashmiris are also Afghans (kasi is a Pashtun tribe, mir is a Pashto word e.g mirali; it's actually kasimiris-kashmir. You will be astonished to know that Butt living in punjab and kashmirs are actually buttkhel Afghans (buttagram, buttkhela etc). No matter what language they have adopted during process of assimilation they were and are Afghans.

Yasrab (Yathrub) was a big Israelite city later named Madina in Arabic. The present 10 or 20 million Jews are only a small tiny portion of a huge Hebrew family. ♦

# The Crisis in Kashmir

## Why the squabble over Kashmir?

Kashmir, or the state of Jammu and Kashmir to give it its full title, has been a flashpoint between India and Pakistan since Partition in 1947, when British India was divided into two states, one of which – Pakistan – was created to provide a home for India's Muslim population. More than 60% of Kashmir's 12 million people are Muslim, but the Hindu prince who ruled Kashmir at the time nonetheless ceded it to India. It is now the only Muslim majority state in India.

## Why did Kashmir have a Hindu ruler?

Kashmir had been under Muslim rule for three centuries when it was annexed in 1789 by the Sikh chieftain Ranjit Singh. Then, in the mid-19th century, after the Sikhs had lost two wars to the British, they offered up Kashmir in lieu of war reparations. The British promptly sold the state for seven and a half million rupees to the Hindu Raja of neighbouring Ladakh and Jammu. Srinagar, the state's capital, became a summer resort for Britons wishing to escape the heat of the plains and indulge in a little hunting and fishing.

## What did the maharaja do at the time of Independence?

The princes of the princely states – 600 princedoms covering about a third of the subcontinent – were in theory allowed to choose which country to join. In practice, most simply signed up with the country to which they were geographically closest. But Kashmir adjoined both Pakistan and India, and in August 1947 its playboy Maharaja, Hari Singh, was still undecided. He seemed to prefer the idea of Kashmir standing alone as a neutral "Switzerland of Asia". In the weeks after Partition, Muslim farm workers – aided by Pathans from Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province and supported by sections of the Pakistani government – rose up against their Hindu landlords. This ragtag army advanced towards Srinagar, murdering, raping and looting wherever they went. The Maharaja fled and the new Indian government led by Jawarhalal Nehru, himself a Kashmiri Hindu by descent, sent troops into Kashmir to put down the revolt, prompting Hari Singh to sign the instrument of accession which handed Kashmir to India.

Most of the state came under Indian control, although the remote north-western

third around Gilgit known as Free Kashmir became part of Pakistan. In January 1949 a UN-brokered ceasefire came into effect establishing what became known as "the line of control" and the presence of international peacekeepers who have been there ever since. The two countries went to war over Kashmir in 1965-66, and clashed again in the 1971 war which resulted in the creation of Bangladesh out of what was once East Pakistan. In 1972 India and Pakistan consented, under the Simla Agreement, to negotiate over Kashmir's future, but no progress has been made since then, Hari Singh, meanwhile, died in exile in Delhi in 1961 after squandering his last years indulging a fondness for drink, tobacco and horses.

## Have Kashmiris ever been asked what they want?

No. One of the UN's key conditions in 1949 was that a referendum should be held in the state, and Nehru was quick to declare that Kashmir's fate would be decided by its people – but no referendum has taken place.

## How have the Kashmiris reacted?

As a result, dozens of militant Muslim groups have sprung up, some wanting independence, others to join Pakistan. The latter were encouraged by Pakistan, which set up training camps and gave the militants some of the huge weapons surplus left over from the Afghan war against the Soviets. Ever since then, both armies have been shelling each other relentlessly across the line of control and Kashmir itself has been racked by violence perpetrated by separatists and by the 600,000-strong Indian security forces. Around 20,000 people have lost their lives. What began as a nationalist uprising has effectively become a terrorist struggle in which outsiders – mainly Pakistani and Afghans – have become heavily involved.

## Would most Kashmiris favour joining Pakistan?

Most pundits believe that the majority of Kashmiri Muslims have no desire to join Pakistan, which they resent for turning a nationalist rebellion into a religious crusade. Instead they would probably settle for peace within India if the near-total autonomy that existed in the immediate post-independence years were to be restored.

## Why is a settlement so elusive?

Because for both countries Kashmir has become a touchstone of national virility. It would be political suicide for Pakistan's General Musharraf to be seen to go soft on the issue, since it is the one subject that unites his country. Politicians in Delhi, on the other hand are terrified that the loss of Kashmir would fuel semi-dormant secessionist movements across the country.

## Does the West really need to worry about Kashmir?

It is no coincidence that the Kashmir issue has blown up again now that the Americans are getting the better of the war in Afghanistan. Kashmir is not separate from the war against terrorism, it's part of it – a place where Muslim extremist groups, many of them sympathetic to al-Qa'eda and many with their numbers probably swelled by Taliban remnants, see a chance to make mayhem. If the West is serious about waging war against terrorism, it cannot afford to ignore Kashmir.

From The Week 12.1.02

24 May 2002

His Excellency Mr Ronen Sen  
Indian High Commissioner  
High Commission of India  
London

Dear Your Excellency

I am writing to express our deep sympathy with India's suffering at the hands of Pakistani terrorism concerning Kashmir.

Kashmir is an integral part of India and does not belong exclusively to the people who happen to be living in it, even if there is a Moslem majority in that province. There are more Moslems in India than there are in Pakistan and it is unthinkable that wherever they may happen to be in the majority, they can ask to secede from Mother India. The Late Mahatma Gandhi failed to keep India intact and this is the result.

Pakistan commits terrorism against India and then asks to negotiate regarding Kashmir. Diplomacy cannot be the servant of terrorism. Your suffering is similar to Israel's problem and to the problems of other peace-loving countries.

With best wishes for a speedy and favourable outcome of your dilemma. ♦

Yours sincerely

Naim Dangoor

# Breaking the Cup at a Wedding

by Hakham Rabbi Ya'aqob Menashe

Q What is the source for the Hathan (bridegroom) breaking the cup after the marriage ceremony, *by throwing it against a wall*?

A. In the Babylonian Talmud it is written that Mar the son of Rabina held a wedding for his son. He saw that the Rabbis were becoming very merry, so he brought a precious cup worth four hundred zuz and broke it in front of them and they became serious. Rab Ashi held a wedding for his son. He saw that the Rabbis were becoming very merry, so he brought a cup of white crystal and broke it in front of them and they became serious. The reason being, that as long as the Bet Hamiqdash (Temple) has not been rebuilt, we must remember the destruction of Jerusalem in our celebrations. And this is the origin of breaking a cup at a wedding.

There are different opinions about whether the cup should be of glass or earthenware, such as porcelain. In either case, the purpose is to remind us of our sadness that Jerusalem has not been rebuilt. In regard to this, I would like to comment on the following:

When the cup is wrapped in a napkin and trodden on, the guests do not see it and the purpose of breaking it, which is to sadden those present, has been defeated. (Obviously one should not stop those who have this custom from doing it their way as is explained in Mekor Ha-Hayyim). An additional problem is that since the "cup" is covered and taped no one sees what is inside. And almost invariably, the caterer has placed a burned out light bulb inside instead of a cup. **I have even had cases where I have asked the caterer to bring me a cup to break instead of the light bulb, where the caterer absolutely refused.** Apparently the cost of a cup was not included in the tens of thousands he charged for the wedding!

In his holy work **Ben Ish Hai**, Hakham Yoseph Hayyim, a"h, writes that the custom of the land is to break a small glazed porcelain cup and he mentions a few reasons for this. One is based on the writings of the Rama and another is that one may be concerned that **when the cup is thrown against the wall to break it**, glass would shatter more dangerously than porcelain. He adds that this is the custom and may not be changed.

I would like to add that those who understand the reason for breaking a cup will realise that this is a sad moment during the ceremony. In fact, our custom is for the Hathan (bridegroom) to say quietly "I will place Jerusalem above my rejoicing" when he throws it against a wall.

From the Newsletter of Midrash Ben Ish Hai

## Scribe:

The origin of the custom is the Biblical injunction in Psalm 137 to remember Jerusalem above our chief joy. Breaking a cup at the wedding is meant to be a sad moment and not a moment of celebration as some guests start clapping at that act.

The correct procedure is to put a glazed coffee cup unwrapped inside a small wooden box and the Hathan breaks it with his foot. ♦

## Secularism and Jewish Survival

A t a recent Conference on the Balance of National Strength and Security, Professor Moshe Kaveh made a passionate plea for recognition of the legitimacy of secular Jewishness and called on secular Jews to reclaim their Jewish identity.

His was one of several prescriptions for ensuring the survival of the Jewish world raised at the gathering organised by the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya.

A session was devoted to what was described as another strategic asset of Israel: the Jewish world. Kaveh argued that the key for Jewish survival lies with secular Jews.

"The majority of Jews in Israel and abroad define themselves as secular from a cultural point of view", he said.

Secularism is a serious conviction for some Jews, as well as an existential condition for a great many more. Secularism in Jewish life must be appreciated and supported as a potent source of motivation and identification.

"As an Orthodox Jew and the president of the largest university in Israel," Kaveh went on, "I recognise that there are areas of life, especially in matters of public policy, in which religion has left a vacuum ... We have failed to introduce Jewish cultural content that will maintain the Jewish identity of secular Jews and bring about a more unified Jewish people." ♦

# Rabbi Zimbartoot

by Edward Yamen, Milano

I thank *The Scribe* for bringing into my mind the name of Hakham "Zimbartoot". Regarding the statement, attributed to him, which was equally known to me, as mentioned in your issue 74, page 63, if perused to a reader of the present, he would hardly believe that an offensive statement of the kind could be uttered by a Rabbi at any time and at any place. Surely the time was different, tolerance prevailed all over and a strong will to live in peace, regardless of religion was dominant.

Besides all that, the person under reference was so special and amiable by all, Muslims and Jews, being a good-hearted man and well-known of having a witty skill in cracking jokes of all kinds up to a degree that he was given the liberty to cross the bounds of good taste as a "privilege", enticing him to speak his eloquence freely and without any inhibition whatsoever, which was called at that time "AMAN WA RAI" which means more or less: "absolute freedom of speech"! So, things went like that with him, undisputed, as it seemed.

Before concluding, I want to clarify that in his era people felt more strongly the warmth of a friendship in the willingness to share enthusiasms and knowledge and lived in that adoration.

Regarding the name "Zimbartoot" it does not seem "his real one" and behind how he got it, there was a story which is as follows:

While he was a Yeshiva student in Baghdad reciting a passage in the Talmud amongst his teacher and companions he mispronounced a word which went his way in the passage. The word was 'SEMARTOOT' or if you like, 'SMARTOOT' which literally means a worthless piece of cloth. It seemed that his bad pronunciation made it change into "Zimbartoot" instead.

From that moment onwards, his companions started to use it as a nickname which replaced his personal one until now. "What is in a nickname" is always funnier than "What is in a name"!

Was the mispronunciation, kind of a joke? The reader's guess is as good as mine. ♦

# Books

## **The Divine Drama: The Old Testament as Literature**

by John Dancy

Publisher: The Lutterworth Press

ISBN: 0 7188 2987 5 800 pp

Price: £19.99

Reviewed by Daniel Dangoor

The title of the book 'The Divine Drama' immediately gives away the angle at which John Dancy wishes to approach his subject. A headmaster by profession Dancy's work is a culmination of the experience he had in trying to teach the Old Testament to 'intelligent six formers'. Through his experience he found it best to approach the Old Testament as one would any great work of literature, 'what matters is the text itself: all else is secondary'.

The book is set out in such a manner so as not to lose the enthusiasm of the reader. Dancy isolates 30% of the Old Testament and 15% of the Apocrypha with which he refers to in a very easy to grasp, logical manner. In neatly breaking down the Old Testament Dancy makes the book very digestible and easy to dip in and out of.

By attempting to make the book accessible to a wider audience than just 'scholars and believers' Dancy is sure to keep the text unassuming, choosing to celebrate the tragic nature of the Bible rather than using his book to moralise. His obvious intrigue and enthusiasm for the subject comes across in his approach. This is demonstrated in his introduction where he sets the bible in its historical context by intricately describing the origins of the Hebrew language, Hebrew storytelling and Hebrew poetry.

In approaching the Old Testament in his own particular fashion Dancy does run the risk of offending the fundamentalist Christian or Jew. It can seem presumptuous to refer to only parts of the bible (the word of God) while disregarding others and that it is inappropriate to treat the Bible as a work of literature. However, these questions and others are something that Dancy covers in his appendix and it is clear that he treats the issue seriously and in a sensitive manner.

Dancy does not wish to preach to the converted but tries to come up with a

book, which uniquely targets a broader educated reader. The book works on many levels and appeals from those who simply want an introduction, to those who want a completely different take on the Old Testament. A good book from which the reader can take what they desire. ♦

## **Desperate Journey**

by Freddie Knoller and John Landaw

Published by Metro Publishing Ltd

ISBN 1-84358-028-4 Price: £17.99

Freddie Knoller was an ordinary Viennese schoolboy when, on the 9th November 1938, a hurried telephone call from a friend warned his family. "The Polnische Temple is on fire!" Soon his apartment building was full of Brownshirts. There was a scream and a neighbour plunged to his death in the courtyard below. From that night Freddie's life, like the life of every other Jew, changed forever.

David and Marja Knoller made arrangements for their three sons to leave Austria. Freddie, a mother's boy, fled the advancing German invasion and began a journey which was to lead him from Vienna to Belgium to Vichy France, and from there back into danger because, in an act of foolhardiness inexplicable even to himself, and with only a badly forged set of papers, he journeyed to Paris, the city of his dreams but now under occupation.

But somehow, the naïve schoolboy not only survived in occupied Paris – he flourished. Passing himself off as a loyal Aryan from Alsace, he lived by escorting Nazi soldiers around the red-light district, growing in confidence as he pocketed commissions, wheeling and dealing.

Finally, Freddie's luck ran out. Following a brush with the Gestapo, he left Paris and joined the Resistance but was eventually arrested.

He survived Auschwitz and the Death March and endured several months in Dora-Nordhausen before being liberated from Belsen in April 1945, two days before his twenty-fourth birthday. He was later reunited with his brothers.

Both Freddie's parents perished.

The adventures of Freddie Knoller was published in brief in *The Scribe* issue No. 72 of September 1999. Apparently, this acted as an incentive to publish the full story of what he went through in the seven years from 1938 to 1945. ♦

## **Look Up and Dream**

by Robert Rietty

Foreword by Chief Rabbi Professor Jonathan Sacks

Published by Valentine Mitchell

Reviewed by Percy S Gourgey, MBE

This book contains a series of well-told events, fascinating in content, about how the hand of the Almighty is discernible in the daily round and common task. It illustrates the truth of the phrase, "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform". The miracles are not spectacular, like the crossing of the Red Sea under the leadership of Moses our greatest Prophet, with the guidance of the Almighty, or the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai for the eternal benefit of mankind, but seemingly ordinary occurrences accompanied by a humble prayer on the part of those involved. They lead me to the thought that the Almighty is speaking to every man and woman all the time, if only he or she will listen – and pray.

The Almighty has given men and women Free Will, the far-reaching implications of which are not fully appreciated. Free to choose to obey His commandments, "virtue brings its own reward", or reject them and the devil take the hindmost. It is comparable to a brilliant light shining at the entrance of a forest illuminating the path ahead with its pitfalls to avoid, or taking a chance and making one's own way ahead hoping for the best! Surely prudence – and common sense – dictate the former way.

The author, a famous actor, but like me, served in the Armed Forces of the Crown during the Second World War – and doubtless at moments of peril and loneliness one turns to prayer. In the forests of Burma there was a striking phrase coined by American soldiers fighting the ferocious Japanese Imperial Army: "You don't get atheists in foxholes!" It brings to mind the admirable proverb – "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight thy path".

The author fittingly dedicates his book to his wife, Tina: "As the years go by I realise more and more that – no matter what the problem - You are the answer", to stress the greatest blessing of the Almighty - a good family life as the font of fine achievement. ♦

## Al Em Haderech

by Shoshana Levi  
Self-published in Hebrew

Reviewed by Ilana Avissar

In her book, Shoshana Levi describes in great detail the trials and tribulations of her generation, the young generation of the Babylonian diaspora, before and after the aliyah to Israel.

She was born to the Shebairo family, a direct descendant of Hakham Sasson Ajmi (a great expert in alternative medicine in his time in Baghdad). The Shebairo family was in fact the Shapiro family, from the town of Sefat in the land of Israel.

Two members of the family travelled to Iraq to conduct business but they married Babylonian wives and stayed there for good. In Baghdad, the name *Shapiro* became *Shebairo*.

Initially, through the life of her family, she in fact succeeds to paint in lively colours the life of the Babylonian Jewry before the establishment of the State of Israel. She describes their habits, their food, their games, songs, places of learning and worships. For example, how the Babylonian Jewry tried very hard to marry their daughters at a very early age (three generations earlier one of the daughters of her family was engaged at the age of eight. She was seated on pillows so as to look older than her age.) She describes how the young generation of males in her family were hidden in covered holes in the ground so as to escape conscription to the Turkish army in the First World War. After an early happy and tranquil childhood, worry and uncertainty started to creep into her life. When she was ten years old Israel gained independence and the hostility to the Babylonian Jewry increased to a dangerous level. Her father and grandfather were interrogated by the Iraqi police because they received a letter from an uncle in Israel. As a result all their assets were frozen. Fear engulfed them as the rest of the Jewry were obliged to give up their citizenship and emigrate to Israel wearing their best clothes and taking with them only 20 kg of belongings. Further in her book, Shoshana describes her and her family's absorption difficulties in Israel.

The cultural shock started with spraying with DDT their best clothes that they wore to celebrate their arrival to the Holyland. Then came the difficulties of communication in the Absorption Centre, "Shaar Aliyah", the food that they were not accustomed to, the lack of hot water and the adverse sanitary conditions of the place.

As a result she and her younger brother were taken by their uncle to the Kibbutz. There they were faced with another shock - of religious kids which have to live in a secular society and also the humiliation of discriminating the young new immigrants from the rest of the veteran kids of the Kibbutz.

Shoshana also conveys in her book the pains and difficulties of living in a transition camp (Ma'abara) compared with the comfortable life of her friends and her family in Baghdad.

She also conveys vividly her life in the army, her soldier Yemenite boyfriend who became her husband and the father of her two daughters, the tension and the difficulties of a marriage between two different Jewish communities in Israel. Then she describes painfully the agony and the anguish of a widow and a mother of two young daughters after her husband fell in the Six Day War.

And most painfully for her was the fact that the authorities in Israel did not treat the war widows honourably and did not look properly after their material and cultural needs. This fact made her dedicate her life to the fight for the rights and the well-being of the war widows of Israel.

In summary, it's a most interesting, informative and impressive book. It is worthwhile reading. ♦

## The Talmud

## The Internet

## A Journey Between Worlds

by Jonathan Rosen  
Publisher: Continuum – London and New York  
132 pp Price: £10.99

In his extraordinary personal meditation on the relationship between the ancient, continuing tradition of the Talmud and the expanding world of the internet, Jonathan Rosen blends memoir, history and literary reflection. In the loose, associative logic and vastness of each, he discovers not merely the disruption of a broken world but a kind of disjointed harmony. In the same way that the Talmud helped Jews survive after the destruction of the Temple by making Jewish culture portable and personal, the all-inclusive Internet serves a world that is both more uprooted and more connected than before.

Searchingly, and with hope, Rosen explores the territory between doubt and belief, the past and the present, the present and the future. ♦

## Books Received

### Blue's Jokes

Ancient and Modern Sacred and Profane

Told and re-told by Lionel Blue  
Hodder and Soughton  
164pp Price: £6.99

### Description of Egypt

by Edward William Lane (1801-1876)  
Edited and with an introduction by Jason Thompson  
The American University in Cairo Press  
588 pp

Description of Egypt, now published for the first time, was the product of Lane's first research trip to Egypt from 1825-1828.

Comprising nearly 300,000 words and 160 illustrations, it recounts his travels through Egypt and Nubia.

### Vera

The amazing autobiography of Vera Chesno at the age of 94.

With contributions from Irène Noah and Aubrey Rose  
Lennard Publishing  
288pp Price: £12.99

### The Sabra

The Creation of the New Jew  
by Oz Almog  
Translated by Haim Watzman  
University of California Press  
313pp

### Unholy War

The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism

by David I Kertzer  
Macmillan  
355 pp Price: £20.00

### Free Will and Illusion

by Saul Smilansky  
Clarendon Press - Oxford  
www.oup.com/329pp

### The British Century

A photographic history of the last hundred years

by Brian Moynahan

# The Mufti and the Fuehrer

by Joseph B. Schechtman

Published by Thomas Yoseloff 1965

Reviewed by Linda Dangoor-Khalastchi

The Mufti is, of course, Haj Amin el-Husseini the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and the Fuehrer, Adolph Hitler.

Between 1920 and 1948, Palestine was governed by Britain under an international mandate stipulating that that country was to become a Jewish national home. During these years, the most dominant and influential figure in Palestine was that of Haj Amin el-Husseini, an ardent Arab nationalist fiercely opposed to the creation of the Jewish state in Palestine.

From his early days as a teacher and a writer in a local Arab paper, he displayed a passionate hatred of both Britain and the Jews, rousing his audiences to ardent anti-British and anti-Jewish animosity.

In 1920, he instigated the Jerusalem pogrom for which he was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment by the British. However, he fled to escape punishment, and it would be true to say that the British turned a blind eye to his anti-Jewish leanings as long as he was not challenging their rule in Palestine.

Curious strokes of good fortune always accompanied him throughout his life, not least when the first British High Commissioner in Palestine, Sir Herbert Samuel (a British Jew who did not want to appear too pro-Jewish), rescued him from oblivion by first pardoning him and later appointing him Mufti of Jerusalem. Elated by his unexpected success, el-Husseini promptly bestowed on himself the even higher title of "Grand" Mufti of Jerusalem.

The Appointment took place in March 1921 and the rigid rule adopted by Haj Amin in his new capacity as the religious head of the Palestine Moslems was never to mix with Jews. The second Jewish Pogrom occurred soon after, in May of the same year. The Arab press was full of anti-Jewish propaganda and the publication "Protocols of Zion" appeared frequently rousing the masses to a new pitch of violence. (It is worth noting at this point that these very same hate-generating tactics and propaganda are still being used by the Arab press today, brainwashing the Moslem world, and, unfortunately this has also spread to the Western press who have globalised the anti-semitic message.)

Back to the Book.

Joseph Sechtman recounts the different stages in the Mufti's charmed and lucky career.

In 1937, in addition to conducting and provoking violent anti-Jewish riots, the Mufti becomes a menace to the British Mandatory regime and has to flee to Lebanon first and later to Baghdad where he holds high-level negotiations with Axis leaders and where he orchestrates the pogrom against the Babylonian Jews through his abortive Iraqi pro-Axis coup of 1941. Over 400 Jews were killed and countless others were injured or raped whilst his mob controlled the streets of Baghdad in the first two days of June. With the collapse of the coup, the Mufti escapes to Berlin where Hitler set up a special office for him.

Living amongst his European masters, he continues his Arab propaganda with zeal. An Arab brigade and a Moslem Legion were formed to fight along side the Nazis. In Croatia, he drew on the Moslem population to recruit the "Jihad Warriors" into the Waffen SS.

Sechtman writes "There is direct evidence as to the Mufti's influence in the implementation of the physical destruction of European Jewry." He quotes Dieter Wisliceny: "The Mufti was one of the initiators of the systematic extermination of European Jewry and had been a collaborator and advisor of Eichman and Himmler in the execution of this plan....He was one of Eichman's best friends and had constantly incited him to accelerate the extermination measures.....I heard him say that, accompanied by Eichman, he had visited incognito the gas chamber of Auschwitz....."

Sechtman goes on to say that the Mufti repeatedly suggested to the various authorities he was in contact with, above all to Hitler, Ribbentrop and Himmler, the extermination of the European Jews. This, he considered, a comfortable solution to the Palestine problem. In a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1944, the Mufti calls the attention of the German Minister to the constant attempts of the Jews to emigrate from Europe in order to reach Palestine and he, point blank, asks him to take the "necessary steps to stop the Jews from emigrating...and in this way, your Excellency would give a new practical example of the policy of the naturally allied and friendly Germany towards the Arab Nation."

It is hardly accidental that the systematic physical destruction of European Jewry by Hitler roughly coincided with the arrival of the Mufti to Germany. Up to mid-1941 the official German policy vis-a-vis the Jews was that of forced mass emigration. The scheme of wholesale physical extermination began only after the Mufti's arrival. The formal decision to annihilate the Jews who had survived the ghettos, forced labour, starvation and disease, was taken in January 1942, two months after the Mufti's arrival in Berlin. There is no doubt that his indefatigable campaigning against the emigration of Jews to Palestine instigated the Reich's ban on emigration and helped shape the "final solution of the Jewish problem."

Up to 1945, he built up a world-wide propaganda network of anti-Allied activities which included espionage. Luck was on his side again when, with the fall of Germany, not only did he manage to escape standing trial by the victorious Allies, but spent eight months in a charming villa in Paris under French "protective custody" before fleeing again, this time to Cairo where King Farouk gave him asylum. Britain had asked the Jewish Agency not to touch him. From these comfortable surroundings, he was able to continue his hate propaganda and renewed preparations to liquidate Jewish Palestine.

The ambivalent attitude of the British government towards the Mufti raises many questions. The French authorities were to hand him over, in 1945, to the British authorities to be tried as a war criminal. Yet, the British government proved to be surprisingly unenthusiastic about any action to secure his extradition.

When asked as to what steps had been taken to bring the Mufti to trial, Foreign secretary Ernest Bevin told the Commons that the French government had "not so far agreed to the request of the British government to hand over Amin Al-Husseini" This, of course, was an outright lie. The request had never been officially formulated. I say of course because, firstly, it would be in keeping with Bevin's pro-Arab (or should I say anti-Jewish) leanings, but, secondly, and most importantly, because the British were protecting him as they had "something" to hide. And this "something" could very well have been that the Mufti was a British agent, working with their Governors in Palestine, since both

...parties shared the same views with regards to the emigration of European Jews to Palestine.

This proposition is not as outrageous as it seems. For reasons best known to itself, the British government chose to ignore the abundant evidence against the Mufti, and as if this was not enough, it later officially absolved him of the charge of being a war criminal on a point of law. An American writer, Edgar Ansel Mowrer, wrote of him: "... As a murderer, this man ranks with the great killers of history. As an enemy of the United Nations, he was surpassed only by Hitler. In the evil of his intentions, the Mufti equalled Hitler."

Sechtman's book is a serious and thoroughly documented biography of a man who was in the forefront of most major political events in the Arab and Moslem world. Unfortunately, his vitriolic hate and xenophobic legacy have now been taken over by the PLO, Hamas, Hizballah and others.

#### Scribe:

Up to the point that the Holocaust was organised and managed by British agents and that the delay in D Day by nearly two years was to give Hitler the opportunity to liquidate Europe's Jewry more completely. ♦

## The Essential Jewish Cookbook

by Judy Jackson

Published by Lorenz Books

ISBN 0-7548-0668-5 Price: £6.95

Reviewed by Anna Dangoor, who has just graduated from the University of Nottingham with first class honours in Physics.

Whether you're a fan of cooking, or as in my case, a big fan of eating, this book is a delight. Judy Jackson has put together a comprehensive guide to the finest foods that Sephardi and Ashkenazi cooking has to offer.

Just flicking through the book is enough to make ones mouth water, as every page is full of colourful step-by-step pictures showing each stage of preparation, and the sumptuous end results.

This clear and simple way of presenting the recipes makes the book accessible to even the clumsiest of cooks. For someone like me who usually runs for cover at the first sign of a cookery book, it was fantastic to feel that even I was only a few simple steps away from delicious hummus and falafel, potato latkes, or even cholent, (I can't wait to try that one on my house-mates!)

As well as the clear step-by-step instructions, I found the 'Cook's Tips', which accompany many of the recipes, particularly helpful. These give handy suggestions on ways in which the dishes can be varied, and general advice on the method of cooking. I also enjoyed the introductory pages which give a brief background into the types of ingredients used in Jewish cooking, and the traditional foods eaten at festivals.

Being at university one does begin to crave that good old homemade Jewish cooking, and I was glad to see that all my favourites, such as stuffed vegetables and turkey schnitzels, were included in the book. The diverse range of recipes Judy has included also means that there are a whole host of unfamiliar delicious-looking dishes, in case you fancy trying something new.

So if like me you believe that unwritten Jewish commandment 'thou shalt eat well!' then grab your matzo meal, sling on your apron, and reach for this book. ♦

## Yizkor Books

The British Library is home to one of the finest collections of Hebrew manuscripts and printed books. Among the printed material the *Yizkor books*, memorial volumes of great relevance to Holocaust studies, have been the subject of a bibliography which has taken several years to compile.

Memorial volumes – *Yizkor books* – devoted to Central and Eastern European Jewish communities began appearing soon after the end of WWII and have continued to be published to this day. According to literary sources, about 1000 memorial book titles are known to have been published since 1944 to the present.

### The Project

Work is currently under way on a bibliography which will bring together for the first time, the entire collection of memorial books held in the British Library. This would be the first bibliography of its kind to be published in this country. We are aiming at completing and publishing the bibliography ahead of the national Holocaust Memorial Day in January 2003.

We thank The Exilarch's Foundation for your interest and support of our project. ♦

**Ilana Tahan**  
The British Library, London  
Hebrew Section

## Mufti Asks Ban on Jewish Emigration as Gesture to Arabs

Taken from *The Scribe*, No. 31 – February 1989

Berlin, July 27 1844

To the SS and Minister of the Interior, H. Himmler, Berlin

Reichsführer:

In my letter to you of June 5, 1944, I referred back to our conversation in which I reported to you on the inclusion of Jews in the exchange plan of some Egyptians living in Germany.

I asked you, Reichsführer, to take all the measures to prevent the Jews from going. These measures would also be in accordance with Germany policy in general, especially with the Declaration of the German Government on the occasion of the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration on November 2, 1943, which stated "that the destruction of the so-called Jewish national home in Palestine is an immutable part of the policy of the greater German Reich" and

that "the National Socialist movement, since its inception, has inscribed on its banner the battle against world Jewry", as you, Reichsführer, said in your telegram on the same occasion.

In the meantime, I have learned that the Jews, nevertheless, did leave on July 2, 1944, and it is to be feared that further Jewish groups may leave Germany and France under the plan for exchanging Palestinian Germans. This exchange of Germans would encourage the Balkan countries to send their Jews to Palestine too. Furthermore, after the Declaration of the German Government, such a step would be incomprehensible to the Arabs and Moslems, and it would create in them a feeling of keen disappointment.

It is for this reason that I ask you, Reichsführer, to do everything necessary to prevent the Jews from emigrating to Palestine, and in this way you would give a new practical example of the policy of the naturally allied and friendly Germany towards the Arab Nation.

Yours, etc. ♦

## Books Received

### Seven Dials

Cassell & Company  
The Orion Publishing Group  
304 pp Price: £16.99

Photographs researched and edited by Sarah Jackson and Annabel Merullo, whose previous collaborations include the highly acclaimed *The Russian Century* and *The Chinese Century*.

### Gershom Scholem

A Life in Letters, 1914-1982

Edited and translated by Anthony David Skinner  
Harvard University Press  
547 pp Price: £23.95

### Unfolding the Orient

Travellers in Egypt and the Near East

Edited by Paul and Janet Starkey  
Garnet Publishing Limited, UK  
318 pp Price: £35.00

This collection of papers has its origin in the conference "Travellers to Egypt and the Near East" held at St Catherine's College, Oxford in July 1997.

### Desert Travellers

from Herodotus to T E Lawrence

Edited by Janet Starkey and Okasha El Daly  
Printed by The Association for the Study of Travel in Egypt and the Near East  
(ASTENE)  
327 pp

### The Vatican and the Holocaust in Italy

Under his very Windows

by Susan Zuccotti  
Yale University Press  
400 pp Price: £11.99UK U S \$16.95

Pius XII, the head of the Roman Catholic Church during the Second World War, did not speak out publicly against the destruction of the Jews. This fact is rarely contested, nor can it be. Evidence of a public protest, if it existed, would be easy to produce.

## Books of Interest

### Flowers in the Blood

by Gay Courter  
Signet-Penguin USA  
August 1991 633 pp Price: US\$5.99

In October 1858, Leah Judah, a member of Calcutta's tightly-knit, Arabic-speaking, Baghdadi Jewish community, was murdered by a jealous suitor. Heskell Shurbani and Nissim Gubbay were arrested for the murder. This best-selling novel is based on the memoir of Leah's daughter that came to light after her death.

The book is interspersed with Judeo-Arabic words and expressions such as:

**infaqsit ayn elraa** (may the evil eye be destroyed)

**Khull el Kaskeen yeksegh qerrabetu** (strong vinegar breaks its jar)

**Kililileesh** (ululation)

**deqqaqa** (drummer)

**Taghqa** (fright)

**abdaluk** ("beloved")

**Khadhba** (application of henna)

**mashti** (inspector of virginity on wedding night)

**byadh-el-wetch** (the honourable proof of it)

The book also abounds in familiar names: Musa Chachag, Nissim Sadqa, Hakham Shlomo Twena, Isaac Shuker, Shmuel Mussliyah.

Shalom Aaron Cohen, who came from Aleppo in 1798, is considered the founder of Calcutta's Jewish community. Soon afterwards, the Sassoons and other Jewish settlers began to flood into India, mainly from Baghdad, fleeing from the harsh rule of Daud Pasha in the early 1800's. David Sassoon managed to escape after he was arrested by Daud Pasha who supported his rival Ezra (Rahamim).

India, a land of many religions, welcomed the Jews. Here they could live in perfect freedom. To correct a trade imbalance with China, opium began to be exported in large quantities to the Chinese who used it as a cure for many ills. This "flower trade" brought about a boom and created immense riches as prices remained lucrative because Chinese rulers refused to legalise opium – the same situation that prevails nowadays in the West.

This well-researched novel depicts in rich detail the culture and customs of

Baghdadi Jews living in Calcutta. It tells the sweeping tale of Dinah Sassoon's extraordinary quest for love and justice.

Gay Courter is the author of three other best-selling novels: *The Midwife*, *River of Dreams* and *Code: Ezra*.

Taken from a previous issue: *The Scribe*, No. 52 – January 1992 ♦

### Hitler and the Holocaust

by Robert S Wistrich  
Weidenfeld & Nicholson-London  
322 pp Price: £12.99

The German mass murder of six million Jews during the Second World War was the most horrifying event of twentieth-century history. This illuminating book provides new answers to the "big question" of why Hitler's Holocaust happened. The book explores the fateful interaction between Hitler's salvationist based on racial myth, the long tradition of Christian and secular anti-Semitism, the social upheavals in German society and the technical advances of modernity.

In this vividly written account, Professor Wistrich analyses the apocalyptic nature of the Nazi German racial project, the pan-European scale of collaboration in mass murder and the indifference of the western allies, the Vatican and the Christian churches to the tragic plight of the Jews.

We believe it was more than indifference: Pius XII gave Hitler the green light for the final solution and the West welcomed the Holocaust to get rid of Central and East European Jewry for fear both of Zionism and of Communism and for diverting the German war effort. ♦

*"We give advice by the bucket,  
but take it by the grain"*

**William R Alger**

*"To profit from good advice  
requires more wisdom than to  
give it"*

**John Churton Collins**

*"People don't lack strength; they  
lack will"*

**Victor Hugo**

## A History of Writing

by Steven Roger Fischer

Publisher: Reaktion Books

352 pp Price: UK £19.92 US \$29.95

From the earliest scratches on stone and bone to the languages of computers and the Internet, *A History of Writing* offers a fascinating investigation into the origin and development of the world's writing. After surveying the first stages of information storage – knot records, pictographs, message sticks or boards, coloured pebbles – Steven Roger Fischer focuses on the emergence of complete writing systems in Mesopotamia in the fourth millennium BC and its many reflexes in Egypt, the Indus Valley, Canaan, Anatolia and the Aegean.

Having traced the rise of Phoenician and its effect on the evolution of the Greek alphabet, a process that generated the West's many alphabetic scripts, Fischer turns his attention to the writing systems of Asia, presenting a detailed exploration of Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean and Japanese.

An analysis of the Americas' pre-Columbian writing is followed by a close look at the evolution of handwritten and printed scripts in Western Europe, from the Middle Ages through the invention of printing to the technological innovations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

### Scribe:

The most important development of writing was the invention of the alphabet some 4,000 years ago. The book does not cover adequately that phenomenal revolution and tries to attribute the development of the first alphabet to the Egyptians.

We believe that the first alphabet was the Hebrew alphabet invented by none other than our Patriarch, Abraham, in the course of his frequent travels to Egypt. He ridiculed the stupidity of the hieroglyphic writing and devised the sixteen letters of consonants based on the human speech. The names of all these consonants derive from the Hebrew language. ♦

The plumber finished his work and presented his bill to the GP who was surprised at the high charge: "with all the time I spent to become a doctor, I don't dare charge as much as you do". "I sympathise with you", retorted the plumber. "I was a GP once myself".

## The Social History of the Jews of Hong Kong

What used to be a small, distant outpost of the Diaspora has now become the hub of Jewish life in the East and South-East Asian region. It is therefore highly appropriate that an in-depth study of the social history of Hong Kong Jewry has recently begun.

The study has been prepared by Dr Caroline B Plüss, D. Phil., Oxon who graduated in Sociology, Political Sciences and Anthropology from Lausanne University, Switzerland. She then won the Berrow Scholarship from Lincoln College, University of Oxford, England where she obtained a doctorate in the Sociology of Religion. Currently, Dr Plüss, is a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Centre of Asian Studies. The University of Hong Kong, and a Research Fellow of the Jewish Historical Society (JHS) of Hong Kong.

In the process of gathering the resources for this research and writing project, Dr Plüss has uncovered, and gathered together a wide variety of materials that have never before been readily available to researchers in one body of collected materials which has been published as an Occasional Paper of the JHS of Hong Kong. ♦

### Some Arabs have to go

Our future relations with Arabs is one of disengagement rather than integration. Some Arabs have to go, so that we can establish good relations with them at arm's length. Churchill used to say that Arabs unwilling to live under Jewish rule should migrate to strictly Arab countries.

Jews and Arabs are not natural enemies but natural allies. Their qualities complement each other's. Jews and Arabs always worked together at the personal level. They can also do so at the state level.

The Psalm "By the Rivers of Babylon" contains a cryptic phrase explaining why our ancestors wept in their captivity. Al Arabim betokhah – because of the Arabs that infiltrated into our country. We must not allow the present-day Arabs in Israel to cause us to weep again. ♦

(*The Scribe* No. 47 – March 1991)

## Ben-Gurion's warning to the Allies, July 1944

From Edward Yamen  
Milan

Here is a part of Ben-Gurion's address, reported by the daily "*Davar*", 13 July 1944 which can be selective in recognising facts better than a research or any study:

"It is our duty that we raise our voice in a loud and bitter scream: What have you done to us? Not they – cruel, bloodthirsty beasts that the Nazis are. With them we have no common language or rapport – they are outside the pale of humanity. But you, what have you done to us, you freedom-loving peoples, guardians of justice, defenders of high principles of democracy and of the brotherhood of man? What have you allowed to be perpetrated against a defenceless people while you stood aside and let them bleed to death, never lifting a finger to help, never offering succor, never calling on the friends to stop, in the language of punishment which alone they would understand? Why do you profane our pain and wrath with empty expressions of sympathy which ring like mockery in the ears of millions, who are being daily burnt and buried alive in the Nazi hell centres of Europe? Why have you not even supplied arms to our ghetto rebels, as you have done for the partisans and underground fighters of other nations? Why did you not help us to establish contacts with our ghetto rebels, as you have done in the case of the partisans in Greece and Yugoslavia and the underground movements elsewhere?"

As a matter of fact the War Cabinet on British rescue policy left policy unchanged: it was best defined by Deputy Prime Minister Clement Attlee on January 1943. When asked in Parliament "what action has been taken ...in regard to the massacre of Jews", Attlee answered: "The only real remedy for the consistent Nazi policy of racial and religious persecution lies in an Allied victory; every resource must be bent towards this supreme object." How very true; but in the race between VE-Day and Auschwitz, the latter prevailed. When victory had finally come, Europe's Jewry had turned into ashes. ♦

## The Israeli-Turkish Entente

by Professor Efraim Inbar  
Director of Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies at Bar-Ilan University

The new unprecedented degree of closeness between Israel and Turkey has become a significant feature of the contemporary international dynamics of the Middle East. Efraim Inbar's *The Israeli-Turkish Entente* is the first comprehensive study that explains the timing of the entente, its present substance, and its impact on the regional environment.

The book argues that the entente with Israel was part of a re-orientation of Turkey's foreign policy as a result of the emergence of a new international constellation, following the demise of the Soviet Union. While it was free to adopt a more assertive foreign policy than before, Turkey perceived itself encircled by areas of instability and threatened by dangerous neighbours. Relations with Israel were considered useful in facing Turkey's new challenges. While no classic military alliance, the Israeli-Turkish entente renders each side military benefits. The partnership is useful in dealing with a variety of common challenges, such as the adversary relationship with Syria, the security risks emanating from Iraq and Iran, particularly concerning weapons of mass destruction; Islamic extremism; the future of Central Asia. Turkey and Israel also share a problematic relationship with Europe and suspicions of a resurgent Russia. This alignment strengthens the peace process between Israel and its neighbours, which is predicated upon a strong Israel, deters radical states, such as Iran, Iraq and Syria and enhances the influence of the US in the region.

Finally, the book evaluates the resilience of the new Israeli-Turkish entente in light of domestic and international constraints and argues that despite the potential limitations, the common interests are likely to make the entente durable. ♦

## Benjamin Ben-Eliezer



Born in Iraq, Benjamin Ben-Eliezer made aliyah in 1950 at the age of 13. As a young man he lived on Kibbutz Merhavia in the Jezriel Valley.

Having enlisted in the Israel Defence Forces' elite Golani Brigade, he rose to the rank of Company commander. In the Six-Day War, he was wounded whilst commanding an elite reconnaissance battalion raid across enemy lines.

A member of the I.D.F. Military Mission to Singapore for three years, he went on to serve in the Yom Kippur War as Deputy Regimental Commander of Southern Command.

In the 11th Knesset, General Ben-Eliezer was a principal member of the Labour and Social Affairs Committee, and since then has held many positions of key importance.

He was appointed as Minister for Construction and Housing following the elections of 1992.

General Ben-Eliezer is now Head of the Labour Party, Defence Minister and Deputy Prime Minister. ♦

## Should marriage be abolished?!

*Hard is life without a wife, but worse still with only one!*

The Bible tells us Genesis 3:24:

*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*

This is the ideal arrangement that is followed even by some birds and animals. A lifelong relationship with their spouses. But in the real world things have been different.

Before Europe was overrun by Jewish ethics through the advance of Christianity, marriage was little-known and people would simply fornicate, leaving the woman to hold and care for the baby. Marriage was introduced for the benefit of the woman to protect her and enhance her status. But monogamy was introduced for the benefit of the average man to prevent wealthy and powerful men from cornering the best women.

The present system served both the man and the woman, as well as the children who, in particular, were assured who their parents were, and the husband-to-be satisfied of the paternity of his family. The law considers him to be the father anyway even if he was not. But medical and scientific advances now offer better safeguard through DNA tests, and the woman can get rid of unwanted pregnancies by various safe and easy methods. When a husband can go to jail for raping his wife, then we can say that the institution of marriage has outlived its usefulness. Marriage should be relegated to the domain of a private agreement made-to-measure to suit the requirement of the couple regarding finances, bringing up of the children as well as the duration of the marriage.

The people of Iran have for centuries practised this kind of marriage to the extent that a traveller can enter into a marriage contract with a bride, say, for six months. ♦

*"It is easy to take liberty for granted, when you have never had it taken from you"*

Dick Cheney

## Wedding Anniversaries

The wedding having taken place  
We have anniversaries to celebrate;

The first one being of *Cotton* -  
Is not likely to be forgotten

The second is of *Paper* -  
We must not let gaiety taper

The third of *Leather* -  
May be heavy weather

Fourth, of *Wood* -  
If we only understood

Seventh, *Woollen* -  
Baby's pullin'

Our tenth is *Tin* -  
Let's keep off sin

Our twelfth of *Silk* -  
No more mother's milk

*Crystal* for our fifteen years -

*China* after twenty clears -

Our twenty-fifth is *Silver* bright -  
And thirty, *Pearl*, old age in sight -

In forty years, it is a *Ruby* -

Fifty, *Gold*, for all our duty -

Sixty, *Diamond* glistens brightly -

We do not take this Anniversary lightly  
With each and every year gone by  
We are made conscious of how time does fly



Carole Basri  
New York

Dear Carole

I recently played the tape which you kindly gave me about the Jewish community of Baghdad. It was certainly most interesting and I wish to congratulate you on your effort. It records the remnant of our community which has vanished from Iraq but now survives in pockets all over the world. The story that you recorded is a splendid historic exercise which shows the interest you take in our roots.

By the way, it is not correct to think that my grandfather was appointed Chief Rabbi by the Ben Ish Hai; he was in fact elected by the Rabbinical Council.

It was a great pleasure meeting both you and your mother during your short stay in London.

Best regards from Renée and Naim. ♦

## Opening of the new offices of the Board of Deputies of British Jews



At the opening of the new offices of the Board of Deputies of British Jews at 6 Bloomsbury Square, London WC1. Left to right: Rabbi Dr Abraham Levy; Naim and Renée Dangoor ♦

## Tuberous Sclerosis sufferers received at Downing Street



Tuberous Sclerosis is a debilitating genetic condition which can result in uncontrollable epilepsy, autism and severe learning disabilities.

A tea party was hosted recently at 10 Downing Street to mark the 25th anniversary of the Tuberous Sclerosis Association.

The above picture shows Cherie Blair with Joe Moshi (right) who is a TS sufferer and brother Ben, together with another TS sufferer. ♦

## Ketchri – A love story between the rice and the lentils

by Ilana Avissar

Every Wednesday at two o'clock  
I go down, and search in the stock  
I look for red lentils and rice  
To make a meal that will be nice.

I pour one cup of lentils into a pot  
And add two cups of rice - not a lot  
The rice 'til now was all alone  
And the lentils were as hard as stone.

Soak in water for half an hour  
And then give them all a nice shower  
Now both become soft and clean  
As beautiful as they never have been.

The rice saw the lentils suddenly  
No more will he be sad and lonely  
The lentils are round and start to blossom  
As they see the rice tall and handsome.

Both close their eyes and smile with delight  
Can not tear from each other their sight  
To them I add tomato sauce, salt and pepper  
On them I pour three cups of hot water.

They warm up nicely on a high fire  
And drink the water with desire  
After the water is completely gone  
Almost dry, they are left alone.

The rice says: Hello Sweet Miss!  
And gives her a lovely long kiss  
We lower the fire and simmer them slowly  
For five minutes to cook totally.

We then fry oil, cumin, garlic and onion  
And mix in to give taste to this union  
Now together they happily live  
A delicious meal to us they give.

The love between them has given us joy  
By mixing in yoghurt we doubly enjoy  
Our meal is great, tasty and very good  
It is called *Ketchri* and is an Iraqi food.

### Ingredients:

2 cups rice, 1 cup red lentils, 1 teaspoon salt, 1/4 teaspoon black pepper, 3 cups water, 4 teaspoons oil, 15 pieces of garlic finely cut, 1 teaspoon cumin, 1 onion cut into squares and fried, 11/2 spoons tomato purée. ♦

## 'Beith Blahem' – Meat Patties with eggs



### Ingredients:

1 lb minced meat or chicken  
6 medium potatoes half boiled and grated or very finely cut  
1 bunch spring onions finely chopped  
1 small onion finally chopped  
1 cup parsley finely chopped  
6 – 8 eggs or more if necessary  
Salt and pepper to taste  
1 teaspoon allspice (optional)

### Method:

Mix meat or chicken, potatoes, spring onions, onion and parsley together. Then add the eggs and mix well. The mixture should be soft but not watery.

In a frying pan, heat a little oil on high and then reduce heat to medium. Drop spoonfuls of the mixture into the hot oil and flatten a bit with the back of a spoon to make round patties. When one side is cooked, turn it on the other side to cook. Remove when ready and put on kitchen paper. Repeat until all mixture is fried. It makes about 40 patties.

Serve with pickles and parsley with pitta bread. ♦

Photo from 'Iraqi Cooking' by Pascall Peres-Rubin

*The Scribe* is published and printed by:

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