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A Happy New Year 5762 to all our Readers and Friends



Our babylonian Heritage - The Shrine of Ezra the Scribe in Southern Iraq on the bank of the Tigris. In the 5th century B.C.E., the Prophet Ezra Ha-Soffer recorded the Bible, changed the Hebrew alphabet to the current square script, introduced the Synagogue as the place of worship in lieu of the Temple and later led an aliyah to Jerusalem.

It was said of Ezra that if the Torah had not been given to Moses, he would have been worthy to receive it.

It would be desirable for a delegation to be sent to Iraq to inspect our Jewish shrines all over the country.

Thoughts & Afterthoughts

by Naim Dangoor

After Auschwitz All European Culture is Trash

The Holocaust represents a seismic fault-line in the history and culture of Europe, and, as such, it augurs a major future quake which would rank very high on the Richter scale.

Nineve of old saved itself by undergoing a complete and sincere repentance, but the nations of Europe are not willing to change their ways. Anti-Semitism, now in the guise of Anti-Zionism or anti-Israel is on the increase. One reason for this state of affairs is that no proper punishment was meted out to fit the crime of the genocide of the Holocaust.

It's not too late to do so now to punish our enemies. But who are our enemies, seeing that the perpetrators themselves are either dead or dying?

All those who deny the Holocaust, or commit Anti-Semitism, or commit ter-

rorist acts against Jews are indeed our enemies and must be regarded and treated as if they themselves took part in the murder of the Six Million.

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He who sacrifices his principles for material gain will, in the end, lose both his principles and his material gain.

**

Faith goes further and deeper than reason, but Faith must not contradict reason. Religion must adjust to scientific discoveries.

**

Some people sow their wild oats at the start of their careers; others do so at the end of their careers. Both approaches are equally valid, it is all a matter of priorities.

Man's Godly Attributes

99% of what we attribute to "God" is due in fact to the momentum of history and geography. In short, the momentum of nature – the momentum of creation, if you like. (Kismet - Fate).

The other 1% is attributable to the God within us. For when we were created in the image of God we did not only get the outside form but God gave us a spark of love, a spark of justice, a spark of genius, a spark of wisdom, a share of His attributes and it is this God within us that we are trying to assert.

Israel means "one who struggles with the momentum of nature. Islam means to submit to the momentum of nature. Our destiny is to become Gods.

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Racism is terrorism. The proper way to deal with it is by counter-terrorism. ♦



Lord Rothschild, President of the Institution for Jewish Policy Research, organised a fund-raising last June at 11 Downing Street, official home of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to which 130 guests attended. The above photograph shows The Rt Honourable Gordon Brown, MP Chancellor of the Exchequer (on the right) listening attentively to Naim Dangoor's pet theory of interest-free money. The Chancellor has already introduced a basic national dividend which can easily be linked to the working of an interest-free monetary system. Mrs Renée Dangoor looks on with amusement. ♦

My Thoughts on Israel

by Naim Dangoor

For nearly 2,000 years we have been praying and hoping for the return to Zion. Our generation has been privileged to witness the rebirth of Israel. I therefore often ask myself, what are we doing here? Why are we not back in Israel? The answer lies in the difference between religious Zionism and political Zionism.

From the early days of the Galuth, Babylonian Rabbis came to the conclusion that Israel needs a Mashiyah to make a radical change in its structure. It was no use reviving Israel with the old diseases that killed it on two previous occasions. Ezra's reforms made the Galuth under the Torah self-sufficient and deferred 'sine die' the need for a Mashiyah. Jesus opposed the Pharisees and Mohammed, claiming that he came to revive the pure religion of Abraham, arose as a direct reaction to the spread of the Talmud. Jewish circles not within the Babylonian orbit widely opposed the Talmud and accepted Mohammed as a Gentile Mashiyah, such as the Jews of Arabia and the Jewish exiles in Afghanistan and Kashmir (the Pathans).

It is said that history repeats itself. In fact, like a good teacher, history only repeats itself when the lesson is not learned. So what are the problems that a Mashiyah has to solve? And where did we go wrong?

Firstly, that Eretz Yisrael by itself is too small as a viable homeland for the Jewish people. While Israel is our national home, the whole Middle East is our regional home. For a long time the Jews did occupy Hejaz and parts of the Yemen. The Hebrews came from Arabia in the fourth wave of Amorite migration around the peninsula through Kuwait and Iraq and thence to Canaan. All this shows our historic connections with all parts of the region. Israel should aim for a kind of confederation, based on the communal autonomy that was applied by the Ottoman Empire. In a sense Israel's strategic frontiers are on the borders of Iran and Turkey.

Secondly, that Israel must not be caught in superpower politics. The defeats of 586 BCE and 70 BCE were the outcome of involvement in the struggle

between Egypt and Babylon and between Rome and Persia. Today, Israel's dependence on American Jewry which, in every way, is the modern counterpart of the Babylonian Diaspora could embroil the Jewish State in America's problems.

Thirdly, economics. It is said that Israel is a nation of rich people in a poor country. The rich are the moneylenders and those who are fortunate to own land and property. Have the prophets not denounced again and again the economic system whereby the rich get richer and the poor get poorer? As we see today, this is particularly dangerous in a country such as Israel.

But the Torah forbade usury, i.e. interest on money. Moslem banking is an artificial way to get around usury. The correct way is an interest-free monetary system, whereby money is issued in the name of the borrower and not in the name of the lender.

Likewise, the Torah forbade freehold titles in land – "And land must not be sold in perpetuity" – and commanded the Jubilee system which means in modern terms, index-linked leasehold tenure with rent reviews every fifty years. It would ensure that the land of Israel remains forever in Jewish hands.

Fourthly, relations with the Arabs. Why did we weep then and why are we concerned today? Perhaps the next three words of the psalm can give the answer - Al Arabim Betokha (because of the Arabs who were there). What is the sense of offering full employment to Arabs in Israel or who come to Israel, while neighbouring Arab countries import labour from India and Far East and while many Israeli Jews are forced to emigrate? Perhaps to their detriment, Jews never tried to drive out natives from Israel. It was the Arabs who applied such a policy so that by massacres, conversions and forced emigration they made Arabia 100% free of Jews until now.

The Arabs accuse Israel of being expansionist but it is the Arabs themselves who have been expanding since the rise of Islam.

Fifthly, Aliyah.

At the inauguration of the

Commonwealth Jewish Council last year, Francis Pym who was Foreign Minister remarked in his speech that it was no longer true to say that the sun never sets on the British Empire. But that it is true to say that the sun never sets on the Jewish Diaspora. The Diaspora can be looked upon as Israel's Empire. There is no need for Israel to swallow up the communities of the Diaspora one after another. In the absence of a Mashiyah, Diaspora Jews want by and large to stay put. The Diaspora has no desire to liquidate itself. However, under proper conditions many more Jews would want to immigrate to Israel. In the meantime there is a case for encouraging half-Aliyah whereby Diaspora Jews can establish permanent second homes in the Holy Land.

Israel needs millions more people. But these can be produced from within and would cost Israel less than immigrants. The national dividend can be tailored to encourage large families.

Sixthly, a Mashiyah will give us a moral uplift and may also develop our religion to realise the vision of Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah when the whole world accepts and submits to God's rule.

We must realise that the new Israel is part of a changed Middle East.

But even in the absence of a Mashiyah we should do our utmost to facilitate his job.

Two thousand years ago, only the Jews worshipped the One True God. Now three-quarters of humanity submit to the God of Israel. Single-handed, Mohammed created a new monotheistic religion on the lines of the Revelations to Abraham and Moses, having today two billion followers all over the world. Islam does not conflict with Judaism but confirms it. We should have no difficulty in acknowledging that there is no God but Allah and that Mohammed was his missionary. The conflict started when Mohammed tried to convert the Jews, and the Jews rightly refused because they already acknowledge God. Just as Christian-Jewish enmity started not because of the baseless accusation of "deicide", but because Jews refused to convert to a paganised Christianity. ♦

To those who say Zionism is responsible for all the trouble in Palestine,
We say Arab imperialism is responsible for all the trouble in the Middle-East.

Shlomo Hillel in London

Last May, former Knesset speaker Shlomo Hillel paid a ten day private visit to London with his wife Temima and their daughter Hagar who was researching old documents at the Public Records Office at Kew.

Baghdad-born Mr Hillel emigrated with his family to Palestine in 1934 at the age of eleven. He returned to Baghdad on an Iraqi passport in 1946, staying there for one year. He was again in Baghdad in 1950 to negotiate the mass immigration of the Jews of Iraq in the historic Operation of Ezra & Nehemia.

During his stay, a reception was held in his honour at the Mayfair headquarters of the Exilarch's Foundation when he was welcomed by leading members of the Iraqi Jewish community.

Following is Naim Dangoor's welcoming speech:

It gives me great pleasure to welcome to our midst Babylonian Jewry's favourite son, the honourable Shlomo Hillel, Cabinet Minister, Speaker of the Knesset, Chairman of Keren Hayasod, who was the prime mover of the historic operation Ezra and Nehemia in 1950-51 by which most of the Jews of Iraq made the Aliyah to Israel for which we were waiting for generations and centuries.

Shlomo was recently awarded the Freedom of Jerusalem and I take this opportunity to extend to you our heartiest congratulations for this well merited honour.

I would like to take this auspicious

opportunity to express, if I may, my thoughts on the endemic Middle-East problems.

Israel is accused of occupying Arab land, and of persecuting and oppressing Palestinian Arabs. What are the facts?

Since 1948, a hundred new nations came into being and are now living in peace and security, while the Jewish state remains a festering sore. Where did we go wrong?

Forget about the Balfour Declaration which became a dead letter soon after it received the smudged signature of its author. Forget about political Zionism which managed to uproot the Jews of Europe and of Arab countries but failed to completely repossess our ancient homeland.

To understand and evaluate the Arab-Jewish problem of the last eighty years, we must realise that it is not simply a conflict between Israelis and Palestinians as, unfortunately it has been narrowed down to become. In fact, it is a wider, regional problem. But Israel has managed to drive herself into a corner, allowing the Arabs to proclaim, "what is ours is ours, and what is yours is also ours".

With the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War, the Arabs were given all the benefits in the region.

In particular, Iraq was not entirely Arab, but was given over to Arab rule to the exclusion of the other nationalities, especially the Jews and the Kurds.

Turkey ruled the Middle-East for 401 years under a successful millet system of

autonomous communities which was changed over arbitrarily to a number of nation states to suit the ambitions of the imperialists' conquerors.

Alarmed by the news that Iraq was going to be given to Arab rule, the Jews of Iraq petitioned to become British subjects. But the petition was turned down. Among the petitioners are the following: President of the Jewish Lay Committee - Shaul Hakham Heskell

Acting Chief Rabbi and President of Religious Council -

Hakham Moshi Shamash

Yehuda Zelouf

Menahem Daniel

Sasson Khezzam

Murad Djouri

Yehouda Y Noonoo

Sion E Dangoor

A H Elkebir

Abraham Hayim (Shabander)

Shaoul Shashoua

Abraham Haim (Aqerib)

For 2,500 years the Jews had a prominent position in Iraq, a thousand years before the Arab invasion, a position which was maintained throughout the Persian, the Abbasid, the Mongol and the Ottoman Empires. For all that period of twenty five centuries the head of the Jewish community in Iraq was the Exchequer of the Empire ... a position which continued to the early years of modern Iraq in that the Minister of Finance and pillar of the government was Sir Sasson Heskell. 🖱



The above picture shows left to right:

Renée Dangoor - David standing (reading his father, Naim Dangoor's welcoming Speech, who is sitting next); Shlomo Hillel, Abdullah Dangoor; Doreen Dangoor; Maurice Khalastchi; Menahem Barukh; Eliahou Abraham; David Khalastchy; Abraham Fattal

[Photograph by Eileen Khalastchy]



The honourable Shlomo Hillel receiving the Freedom of Jerusalem from Mayor Ehud Olmert

...When Miss Bell once asked the Iraqi Prime Minister Abdul Rahman al-Naqib a certain question about Iraq, he replied, I don't deal in politics; please ask Sasson Effendi" (who was present).

The last Ottoman report on the Vilayet of Baghdad gave the number of Jews as 80,000 out of a total population of 202,000, which included Moslems, Christians and Kurds.

Under the self-determination principle, Ottoman Jews in Iraq, Syria and Palestine, should have been allocated at least 20,000 square miles, which is greater than the total area of Israel and the so-called occupied territories.

Trans-Jordan was part of the Palestine Mandate and its separation in 1921 should have been regarded as the national home of the Palestinian Arabs, who with Zionist money went over and bought lands cheap there and prospered.

In the early twenties, Jews and Arabs were considered natural allies. Thus when King Feisal made an official visit to the Jewish Community in Baghdad in 1924 he asked my grandfather, Chief Rabbi Hakham Ezra Dangoor, if the Jews of Iraq were Zionists. To the satisfaction of Feisal, my grandfather replied... "We are all Zionists since we pray three times a day for the return to Zion".

Where do we go from here?

Israel frittered away all the gains of the Six Day War. That was the time to finalise the Palestinian problem.

It seems to me that there can no longer be a negotiated settlement with Arafat that the Jews could afford to make and the Arabs would accept in the long run.

There can only be an imposed settlement on the basis that Israel would cover the whole of Palestine West of the River Jordan, and the Arabs including Israeli Arabs who now call themselves Palestinians in Israel, should be given autonomy of people, but not of land based on the Ottoman millet system, which in fact is what the Albanians are now demanding in Yugoslavia. Arafat, is of the Hussaini family, which is of Albanian origin, a nephew of Amin Husseini, the notorious Mufti of Jerusalem who met Hitler in November 1941, when he assured him of Arab support for Germany in return for not letting Jews get out of Europe which also suited British policy with regard to Jewish immigration to Palestine.

Palestinians often ask why should they suffer for what Hitler did to the Jews. The answer is that they played an important part in the Holocaust. The Arabs, who were on the side of Hitler, received all the benefits of World War II while the Jews, who were on the side of the Allies, are still struggling for a coastal strip of rocky territory.

The principle of land for peace must apply to Syria. She must give away the whole Golan for the sake of peace with Israel.

There is no room for a separate Palestinian state.

Israel should apply the Biblical Jubilee fifty year system all over the country to ensure that the land of Israel will remain forever in the hands of the Jewish people.

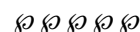
Arabs have proved themselves unable and unwilling to live at peace with Israel.

Ashkenazim should not be afraid to put forward the right of Jews from Arab countries, to support Jewish claims in the region, especially in the important matter of the exchange of refugees.

The problem of the Middle-East is regional. We only ignore that to our peril.

The exile to Babylonia was to demonstrate that the Middle-East is one region. There can be no peace in Israel unless Iraq is pacified. Like a good teacher, history will keep repeating itself until the lesson is learned. Saddam has rebuilt Babylon and is training an army to liberate Palestine. Why are we waiting?

Dear Shlomo, in conclusion, I believe that you can still play a big part in shaping the future policy of Israel. ♦



Jews expelled from Arab Countries left behind \$30bn in assets

TEL AVIV (January 3) - Jews who emigrated from Arab countries between 1922 and 1952 left behind an estimated \$30 billion in assets, according to former internal security minister Moshe Shahal, who chairs a world organization of Jews from Arab countries.

Shahal told a news conference in Tel Aviv that the organization was raising the issue to balance the claims of Palestinian refugees in the peace negotiations. He maintained that Jews should also be compensated for having been exiled from Arab countries, including Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.

Shahal said that a political settlement with the Palestinians should take into account that some 850,000 Jews once lived in these countries. Many were stripped of their assets and expelled in the aftermath of Israel's establishment in 1948, or due to the rise of Arab nationalism in the 20th century.

In all, some 600,000 Jews emigrated from Arab countries, while other Jews of Middle Eastern origin emigrated from elsewhere.

Shahal said his organization planned to submit a report about public Jewish property in Arab countries, on the basis of affidavits submitted by people once involved in community affairs in those countries.

In his statements after the Camp David summit in July, US President Bill Clinton mentioned the need to resolve the issue of Jews in Israel and abroad who became refugees due to Israel's founding. ♦

Israeli Statistic

The latest economic figures for the State of Israel show that the Jewish State of Israel is one of the leading five nations in the world in technology. The gross national income reached 110 billion dollars. Israel's export amounts to 40 billion dollars. The average income per capita was 18 thousand dollars.

Israel's budget for 2001 is 60 billion dollars "which nearly equals the budgets of all the Arab countries".

Before World War II there were 20 million Jews and two million Moslems in Europe. Now the figures are 20 million Moslems and two million Jews.

According to Mr Ben-Porat there are 305 thousand Iraqi Jews in Israel and elsewhere. Although this figure appears too low, considering that they were over 160 thousand fifty years ago. However, a close scrutiny reveals that the correct figure is not even 305 thousand. The latest official statistics in Israel show that Jews of Iraqi origin number 252 thousand. Add to that 20 thousand in the United States, 8,000 in the UK, 2 thousand in Canada, 2 thousand in Australia and the Far East, we have a total of only 284 thousand!

According to former President Navon, the average number of children for a Jewish family in Israel is only 1.6, not enough even to replace the previous generation, whereas the Palestinians are doubling and re-doubling their members every generation. Add to that, that a million Jews have already left Israel, we can see that there is going to be a serious demographic crisis in Israel in the years to come. But according to Mr Navon, Jews prefer quality to quantity, by which it means that Jews prefer a television, a computer, a motor car and a freezer to more babies.

Just before the Six Day War, Israel was going through a crisis not dissimilar to the present day situation. Jews were leaving the country in great numbers in search of greener pastures, and the joke was that a large notice was affixed at the Ben Gurion airport that the last person to leave, let him please switch off the lights! Let us hope that the present situation will also end up in a political triumph of the magnitude of the Six Day War. ♦

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Quote...

Ability is of little account
without opportunity

Napoleon Bonaparte

From : Dr Zvi Shtauber Israeli Ambassador - London

Dear Mr Dangoor

I would like to thank you most sincerely for sending me a copy of *The Scribe*. The issues raised in the *Journal of Babylonian Jewry* present an important insight into Diaspora and indeed Israeli life.

I note that this year sees the 30th anniversary of your publication. May I take this opportunity to congratulate you and wish you every continued success in the future of *The Scribe*.

**

Dear Mr Shtauber

Many thanks for your most kind letter and for your good wishes on the occasion of *The Scribe's* 30th anniversary, which I was not mindful of!

Allow me to welcome and congratulate you in your position as Israel's Ambassador, not only to the Court of St James but also to the Jewish communities of the United Kingdom. I hope to have the opportunity to liaise in matters of mutual interest. I recall I was sitting next to you at the meeting with Prime Minister Ehud Barak early last year, when I noted your sympathy for the rights of Jews from Arab lands.

I feel sorry that Israel now finds herself dealing with the growing Palestinian problem all alone, having released, in practice, all Arab countries from any responsibility in this regard.

A Palestinian peace settlement, especially as regards refugees and compensation, can only be achieved in a Regional context to involve all countries that went to war against Israel. Egypt and Jordan who are enjoying bilateral peace treaties should also be involved in a Regional peace settlement.

**

It was a great evening yesterday, for Israel and for the Bonds.

Syria has inadvertently walked straight into my trap by declaring that there will be no separate peace deal with Israel, but only one jointly with the Palestinian negotiations. This is a welcome development that should be acknowledged and endorsed by Israel. It makes the peace negotiations a regional matter which can impose on Syria the principle of land for peace, i.e. Syria has to cede the Golan Heights if she wants to make peace with Israel.

Moreover, history has taught us that there can be no real peace for Israel unless Iraq is tamed. 2,500 years ago Nebuchadnezzar was subdued by King Cyrus. Luckily the United States is willing and eager to tame Saddam, the latter-day self-proclaimed Nebuchadnezzar, and this process should really take place within the Middle East peace settlement. There are a number of other problems like the Kurds that could be solved under the same umbrella.

Labour's announcement to join the government of national unity is a good starting point.

Naim Dangoor

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Dear Naim

Just a quick note to thank you for your fax and interesting article "Where did we go wrong" of 10 July, we hope to be able to use this in our information work.

Once again, I would like to thank you for your continued help and solidarity with Israel at this most troubling time.

Dr Zvi Shtauber

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Mr Eli Yerushalmi
Minister Councillor for Public Affairs
Embassy of Israel

Dear Mr Yerushalmi

It pained me to hear this morning the BBC Radio 4 interrogator questioning the Israeli spokesman about Israel's army incursion into PA territories and "assassinating" suspected terrorists, instead of arresting them and bringing them to justice. His reply that Israel has no power to enter and arrest people inside Palestinian areas does not sound satisfactory.

When I was an officer in the army (i.e. the Iraqi army) we were taught the doctrine of "Hot Pursuit" which allows a State to enter a neighbouring State in pursuit of an enemy and dealing with that enemy in a warlike manner. It seems to me this is what Israel has been doing legitimately. This is what Turkey is continuously doing in Northern Iraq.

Is there a vacancy for me in the Cabinet? ♦

Naim Dangoor

WOJAC

1 February 2001

Dear Mr Dangoor

13 November 2000

It is with pleasure that we are informing you that the General Assembly of WOJAC, in its meeting of 3.10.2000, elected the Honorable Moshe Shachal, former Cabinet Minister and Member of Knesset, as Chairman of the Presidium of the Organisation. Advocate Moshe Shachal immigrated to Israel from Iraq, served as Member of Knesset for 29 years, as Deputy Speaker of the House for ten years and was in office as Cabinet Minister for 12 years with four governments - as Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, Minister of Communication and of Minister of Internal Security; he also fulfilled the role of Permanent Observer at the Council of Europe and as Permanent Representative at the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Currently he is head of one of the leading law firms in Israel.

We hope to convene an international conference in the course of the year 2001, with the participation of the representatives of WOJAC worldwide, in order to outline the policy and ways of action of the Organization in Israel and throughout the world concerning the claims of the Jews originating from Arab countries for their property that was confiscated and expropriated when they left their countries of origin due to persecution and threat to their life and safety. The Organisation will claim compensation on behalf of the Jews originating from Arab countries worldwide for suffering, oppression and the loss of communal and private property abandoned in their countries of origin.

The Organisation will appeal to public opinion in the United States and the rest of the democratic world and demand that the rights of Jews from Arab countries be ensured and realised.

Tel Aviv, Israel **Shimon Avizemer**
Secretary-General

Copy: The Honorable Moshe Shachal,
Chairman of the Presidium
Mr Oved Benozair, Chairman of the
World Executive

Dear Mr Shachal

First, let me congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the Presidium of WOJAC, especially after WOJAC first decided to fold up and put the organisation into liquidation. Now that WOJAC has now come back from the cold I, as a member of the Presidium, feel a bit confused. Please let me know what the aim is in reviving WOJAC, who is financing this revival, is it going to be a tool of the Israeli government to cancel the claims of the Palestinians? If so can that set-off include the property of Jews from Arab countries who never went to Israel? If not, who is going to look after the claims from Jews of Arab countries who never went to Israel?

I have been in touch with Judge Avraham Sofaer regarding such claims but now the whole matter is again in the melting pot. Where do we go from here? Are our claims going to be in millions or in billions? Whom are we going to claim against?

Kindly let me know in order to satisfy my curiosity.

Naim Dangoor

Reply:

A New Lease of Life for WOJAC

Thank you for your letter of 13 November 2000.

I was asked by my good friends to be the Chairman of the Presidium of WOJAC after the last Camp David peace talks where the question of the refugees, from both sides, was included in the agenda, and President Clinton declared that all refugees, Arabs and Jews should be compensated.

We asked the Government of Israel, and the Jewish Agency, to support WOJAC and to finance its activities for the next year. ♦

Tel Aviv **M. Shachal – Adv**
M Shachal & Co Law Offices

I read with pleasure the latest issue of "The Scribe" and I want to congratulate you on both the design and the packaging.

I do want to call your attention, Naim, to the matter of compensation for property. Before I resigned as Co-Chairman of WOJAC, I approved the decision that was published and sent to the Foreign Ministry of Israel. If a situation should arise, wherein the State of Israel should agree to balance the claims of Jews from Arab countries against the claims of the Palestinians for properties left in Israel, then it is clear that compensation is due to Jews from the Arab countries, and that this compensation will be the burden on the budget of the State of Israel.

A second issue is that it is not true WOJAC is only interested demanding the rights of Israeli citizens. The opposite is true. WOJAC is concerned with all the people who have left property in the Arab countries, whether they are in Israel or in other countries.

Another thing is that it is most important not to create confrontations between the Jews from Arab countries and the Palestinians. The solution that I have proposed for the last ten years is that there should be an international fund that would compensate all those who have legitimate claims, whether they be Palestinians or Jews from Arab countries. The suggestions of former President of the U.S., Mr Clinton, is a wise one that would answer this need. That is, that eight wealthy countries, and in this I include the wealthy Arab countries and the State of Israel, would create a fund for this purpose.

I enclose a research paper by ITA-MAR LEVIN concerning Jewish properties in Arab countries.

Chairman of the Centre
Mordechai Ben-Porat

Scribe:

According to the research paper by Itamar Levin mentioned in the above letter, the top estimate of Jewish assets left behind in Iraq amounts to \$4 billion in today's value.

The policy of the Israeli government ever since 1951 concerning the Jewish assets left behind in Iraq is stated in Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett declaration at the Knesset on 19 March 1951 vis: "The government of Israel notifies the appropriate UN institutions, that we will reckon the value of Jewish property"

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...frozen in Iraq in making the account of the compensation we have undertaken to pay Arabs who have abandoned property in Israel."

The Jewish community of Iraq as a whole have also a right to claim a share of the wealth of the country they were forced to leave.

Naim Dangoor's reply to Mr Ben-Porat:

Thank you for your letter explaining the position of WOJAC, which we shall include in The Scribe.

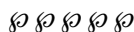
The question remains that if Jews from Arab countries are entitled to compensation from funds personally held by Israel, why do they have to wait until the whole generation is dead? ♦

Congratulations to Mordechai Ben Porat

Congratulations to Iraqi born Mordechai Ben Porat who was one of three recent recipients of the Israel Prize. The other two were, Yitzhak Shamir 86 and Abba Eban 86. Mr Ben-Porat was cited for his work in the Hagana and later risking his life while organising a wave of immigration from Iraq, which brought some 120,000 Jews to Israel from 1949-1951.

Later he served as head of the Or Yehuda local Council then as a Knesset Member and Cabinet Minister in the 1980's. Ben Porat, who also founded a centre for Iraqi Jewish heritage, was cited for having contributed to Zionist education, love and protection of his homeland.

Recently the Hahagana Street in Or Yehuda was re-named the Ben Porat Avenue in his honour. ♦



To Crack a "Nut"

To legislate against the ownership of hand guns in order to prevent ethnic crime, is a case of cracking a nut with a steam roller. A determined criminal can always get hold of his weapon. Nip the crime in the bud. Preaching ethnic violence should be treated as first-degree murder, carrying top penalties. This is the most correct way of treating racist nutcases who achieve widespread publicity by their crimes. ♦

From Kensington & Chelsea WIZO

Dear Mr Dangoor

I am writing to thank you most sincerely for your kind donation to our Summer Lunch and to tell you a little of why we are raising money for WIZO and where our money goes.

Over eighty years ago in 1918, the British Federation of the Women's International Zionist Organisation was created in Manchester and at that time Rebecca Sieff and her colleagues were eager to organise social and welfare services for the pioneers in Palestine. The underlying principles of WIZO remain as relevant to Israel today as they were in pre-State Palestine.

There are now in Israel today a WIZO network of 800 projects and services ranging from daycare centres, special schools, youth clubs and WIZO family centres. WIZO also plays a significant role in supporting the socially oppressed and with the mass immigration of the many poor immigrants.

The Kensington & Chelsea WIZO group was started over 40 years ago by an enthusiastic and energetic group of women, most of whom are sadly no longer with us. They decided to raise money and build their own Mother and Baby Home (as they were then called) for WIZO and with the help of money from husbands, parents and many friends, they were soon able to lay the foundation stone in Kiryat Nordau for the home which has now been in operation for well over 30 years. These Mother & Baby homes are now called Day Centres and The Kiryat Nordau Day Centre caters for poor immigrant children who are looked after all day, receiving food and care.

Unfortunately, we as a group can no longer fully maintain the upkeep for this centre, which is now under the general umbrella of WIZO, but our commitment to WIZO is directed to help in the general umbrella of WIZO, but our commitment to WIZO is directed to help in the general maintenance of the Kiryat Nordau Day Centre and we are happy to know that in our way we are participating with WIZO in helping with their many commitments in Israel.

It is with the generosity of people like yourself that make our efforts worthwhile and help us to continue.

Attached with our grateful thanks is our official receipt.

Jane Hodes
Treasurer

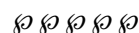
Dear Mrs Hodes

Thank you for your letter explaining the work of the WIZO and the various projects which you have undertaken, to make life easier for various people (which I presume includes Israeli Arabs).

I recently watched a television programme on cave dwellers in Mount Carmel 15,000 years ago – one cave was occupied by human s and the other by Neanderthals. The Neanderthals vanished from the surface of the earth because they did not reproduce sufficiently to replace previous generations. It is as simple as that.

Recently, former President Yitzchak Navon gave a talk at our synagogue when he explained to us that merely a quarter of Israelis now live abroad, another quarter being religious do not want to fight for Israel. The remaining Israelis are only producing 1.6 children per couple, while Palestinians and other Arabs are doubling and re-doubling every generation.

This is our problem and WIZO would do well to tackle this anomaly. We need quantity more than quality. It is a matter of life and death. ♦



I am very impressed with your online publication as well as your links page. I think it is wonderful that you are recording Iraqi Jewish history and current events. My father escaped Baghdad and came to the United States, and I am very interested in learning more about my Sephardic/Mizrachi heritage. I would also like to meet other Jews of Iraqi ancestry. Do you know if there are any online communities (such as email groups or web-based newsgroups) of Iraqi Jews? I would think that in these days of the internet it would be fairly easy to form an online community for sharing stories and meeting people. I would also like to know if there are any Iraqi Jewish organisations, either cultural or religious, in the Maryland or central New Jersey/Philadelphia areas. I feel somewhat separated from my culture due to living in a majority Ashkenazi Jewish culture. Any information you can provide will be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Yvonne Violet Shashoua
email: yvs@math.umd.edu

There is a site on the internet of Iraqi Jews which might be helpful:
<http://thesite2000.virtualave.net/iraqi-jews/index1.html> ♦

Questions and Answers

Question from Linda Dangoor-Khalastchi:

How can we reconcile the Jewish year 5762, said to be "to the Creation", with the claim of scientists that the universe came into being 15 billion years ago?

Answer by Naim Dangoor:

The rabbinic belief is that our civilisation is destined to last 6,000 years when it will come to a cataclysmic end, and a new sequence will start all over again! The explanation is that there have been many such phases before. There is, however, no biblical foundation to this theory.

The Book of Genesis deals with two distinct events – one is God's creation of the universe out of nothing for which the Hebrew word "bara" is used, and the second event is the creation of mankind from dust of the earth for which the Hebrew word "yatzar" is used. It records what could be remembered of the story of Adam's generations, inventor of agriculture, and thus becoming Father of our civilisation. The Jewish year is arrived at by adding together all that was remembered of the generations of Adam. However, the invention of agriculture took place, not 5672 years ago, but a little earlier, 9000 years ago.

It is notable that the Jewish year is denoted by Jews "layetsera" by which is meant "to (the creation of) Adam" in contrast to the latin term "Anno Mundi" meaning "to (the creation of) the world".

That figure 4004 BCE was worked out by Bishop Ussher who was obviously reading a Greek translation of the Bible. He gave creation as 6 pm on Friday autumn equinox, being the end of the week of creation rather than its beginning at the time of the Big Bang. The Hebrew Bible gives the day as morning to morning and not as evening to evening.

Further question by Linda:

Thanks for the information, but isn't it presumptuous of Jews to date our calendar to Adam as if he belongs to us exclusively, whereas he is supposed to be the Father of all Mankind?

Further answer:

Adam is mentioned only in the Jewish Bible and in no other contemporary or earlier source. Our Bible clearly shows Adam as the Father of all mankind which confirms our beliefs in the brotherhood of all mankind

without distinction of race, colour, creed or language, an idea that many reactionary people are unwilling to accept even today. This clearly shows the greatness of our traditions.

See Article "In the Footsteps of Adam" elsewhere in this issue. ♦

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Letter to the Editor Jewish Chronicle

Sir

MORE THAN ONE MOSES?

by Stephen Rosenberg

(J.C. 8.12.2000)

Rameses II was not the Pharaoh of the Exodus, as is commonly and erroneously supposed. The Exodus took place in the reign of his son, Merneptah, in the first year of his reign, when a general amnesty was proclaimed as was customary, which allowed Moses to return to Egypt from his exile.

There is no difficulty in reconciling the biblical narrative with historical dates: "Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph" (Ex. Chapter I:8). That refers to Rameses I, the nationalist king who started the 19th Dynasty and who imposed the harsh labour regime on the Israelites. "And it came to pass in the course of those many days, that the king of Egypt died" (Ex. Chapter II:23). That refers to the death of Rameses II after his extraordinarily long reign.

The Exodus took place in 1236 BCE and can be said to be 430 years from when the migrant labour of Canaanites and Israelites came to Egypt in 1666 BCE. In 1659 the Hyksos rulers invaded and in 1550 they were driven out. These events refer only to their rulers – the labourers stayed on.

The repeated encounters between Moses and Merneptah shows that the new pharaoh had a sympathetic ear to Moses' demands to "let my people go" but was overruled by the powerful priesthood. The young king told Moses on departing to bless him also, Ex. XII: 32. The Egyptian army chased the fleeing Israelites when it was realised the amount of looting that took place.

As far as Jericho is concerned that was another place and another time. ♦

Naim Dangoor

Going through my papers, I found a visa issued to my father in 1929 by the U.S. Consul in Baghdad. What intrigues me is how he managed to make the trip from Beirut to New York with no language skills other than Arabic. Once in the U.S. he had no difficulty as he was guided by his younger brother, Saul, whom he had sent to New York a few years earlier to manage the business office he had opened there.

As far as I can remember, he was a seasoned traveller. In his youth he covered the eastern coast of Arabia, with his father, on numerous trading voyages. They must have felt safe enough to make these trips. I recall his telling me that he once was asked by a local Sheikh to convert to Islam, as he, the Sheikh, wished to adopt him. He, of course, declined the offer and remained on excellent terms with them, particularly with Sheikh Mubarak Al Sabah, the founder of the present ruling clan of Kuwait, who had neutralised his brothers in order to retain the "Emirate" in his own line.

During the First World War, my father moved the family to Kuwait where he was, obviously, very much at ease. My mother became a close friend of the Sheikh's favourite wife, Um Saoud. Among the stories I remember is the one about Um Saoud telling my mother that she remembers being kidnapped, as a child, while she was playing in the street in a big city whose name she could not remember. She was brought up by her kidnappers and somehow ended up in Kuwait. Judging by the "European" features of her children, she was, probably from the Balkans. We remained friends with the Sabahs until the recent events made it difficult.

Such friendly relations between Moslems and Jews, was the norm until recent events soured them. I remember when I was returning from school in India in 1943, the ship I was on stopped in Bahrain to pick up the ruler, Sheikh al-Khalifa, who was on his way to Kuwait. Since I was the only Arabic speaking passenger on a British boat, I spent a lot of time talking to him. He showed what I can only call keen and all but fatherly interest in my studies and future plans. Once in Kuwait, Sheikh Fahad al Sabah, who was a close friend of my family, came on board to receive his visitor. I asked permission to take a picture of them, and they kindly posed for one. I find it very sad that such good relations had to end in the present bitterness. ♦

Montreal Naim S Mahlab

The Uniqueness of the Holocaust

Dear Dr Levene

I have gone through your thesis which you kindly sent us. In reply for your quest on the uniqueness of the Holocaust as distinct from other eruptions of genocides that have taken place since the end of World War II, the Holocaust was unique because...

- 1) It was not the result of a sectarian war between two communities, but the determined act of a western power which claims high moral values
- 2) The six million died as hostages for the free world in accordance with Hitler's threat in 1939

The reason why it took a long time for World Jewry to shout about the Holocaust is the appearance of Holocaust denials. It is becoming as if Neo-Nazi's will get away with this greatest crime in human history. In my view those who deny the Holocaust should be treated as if they took part in it.

The trouble with the activity of Holocaust education establishments is that they do not bring out these points. Unless they stress these values, any attempt to remember the Holocaust becomes meaningless, a) because not enough Jews are left to say it must not happen again and b) it has been happening again in other countries.

Naim Dangoor

National Holocaust Memorial Day

by Percy Gourgey MBE

I was very pleased to have attended the first National Holocaust Memorial Day event held at Central Hall, Westminster on 27 January 2001 – the day in 1945 when Russian troops entered Auschwitz to liberate the survivors of the largest Nazi extermination camp scene of the mass murder of 11/2 million people, mostly Jews.

It was addressed by Tony Blair, Prime Minister, and Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, amongst others. The Prince of Wales lit the first memorial candle on behalf of the nation. We heard speeches by Ben Helfgott and Roaman Halter, Holocaust survivors, and our Sam Freiman sat amongst other survivors. There were telling films of the poor victims of the Nazis, the war and survivor stories, readings by famous actors and actresses and other performances – all most moving.

I represent Sephardim on the Board of Deputies Yad Vashem Committee, and was hoping there would be reference to Sephardim, mainly from Salonika, who perished in Auschwitz. They were massacred there at the instigation of the notorious ex-Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini who drew Hitler's attention to their existence in the Balkans, in November 1941. Over 60,000 were taken from Greece despite the appeal from the Greek Orthodox Archbishop Damaskinos and other prominent Greeks who praised the patriotism of the Sephardi Jews.

However Bulgaria refused to allow the Nazi occupiers to take her Jewish citizens, showing countries could have resisted the brutal Nazis if they chose to do so. The ex-Mufti recruited Bosnian Muslims to join Rommel's Nazi Army in case it invaded Palestine under British Mandate in the Second World War.

On 15 December 1942 the House of Commons held a special session at the suggestion of Sidney Silverman MP, Chairman of the British section of the World Jewish Congress when news was received of Hitler's "Final Solution" plans drawn up at the infamous Wannsee Conference earlier that year, Prime Minister Churchill stated that the "German war criminals would be pursued to the ends of the earth". Unfortunately this was not done efficiently and many escaped together with post-war mass murderers in Cambodia, Rwanda, Iraq under Saddam Hussein (against the Kurds in 1989) and elsewhere.

But the Holocaust against the Jews was unique in that for the first time in history a supposedly civilised nation resorted to scientific, modern industrial and technological methods to exterminate populations under its control. Hence the value of this Memorial Day to educate future generations, so very necessary.

The Imperial War Museum Exhibition is well worth visiting for this purpose.

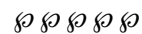
Scribe:

The reason why commemorating the Holocaust has become necessary is that after so many years it has become possible to deny the Holocaust and to consign to the realm of fictions, that in turn became possible because the perpetrators of the Holocaust were not punished properly.

If, at the end of the war a number of atom bombs were thrown on Berlin, in punishment and retribution for what the Germans did during the war, then that would have been a sufficient reminder of the inhuman crimes that nation had committed. In other words, the punishment metered out to German leaders did not fit the crime.

Unfortunately Israel agreed to keep quiet in return for the billions that Germany paid in reparations. Likewise, Israel agreed to Britain's request at the end of the war not to touch the Mufti, Amin Husseini, for his direct role in stopping European Jews from seeking refuge elsewhere, in order to prevent them from ending up in Palestine. During the war the objective of the Mufti and his Palestinian entourage were identical with those of the British Foreign Office. They both wanted to prevent Jews from reaching the Middle East.

It is not too late to take the view at all those who deny the Holocaust should be regarded as if they had taken part in it and should thus be punished accordingly. ♦



Holocaust Remembrance

"Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it". The term "Holocaust" which originally referred to the genocide of European Jewry by the German beasts, has now been appropriated by the rest of the world to cover minor outbreaks of genocide. Remembering the Holocaust may be of some use but it can also remind the extreme right what crimes can be committed with impunity.

In so far as the Jews are concerned, remembering offers no remedy. Racial and religious anti-Semitism are merely on the back burner because no proper punishment was meted out to our enemies for their previous crimes. But where can we find our enemies now? All those who say the Holocaust did not take place, all those who say Hitler was right, all those who say "Kill the Jews" should be punished as if they had committed the Holocaust themselves. ♦

Holocaust Remembrance Day, 27 January

On the occasion of the Holocaust Remembrance Day, 27 January, it should be recognised that the Holocaust was not merely a Jewish calamity, but that it had an international political dimension. I believe that the Six Million died not so much as racial victims, but as hostages for the Free World in the hands of Germany, for the following reasons:-

- 1) In 1939, on the 30 January, in a speech at the Reichstag, Hitler threatened that if World Jewry would again embroil Germany in another world war then all the Jews of Europe would be liquidated.
- 2) Before the war Hitler co-operated with the Zionists by allowing training camps in Germany for would-be olim to Palestine.
- 3) During the war, Nazi policy against the Jews did not follow racial lines. Karraite Jews were exempted from the provisions of anti-Jewish policy.
- 4) Arabs ranked below Jews in Hitler's racial catalogue, but Egyptians were granted the status of honorary Aryans.
- 5) Nazi policy followed religious lines after the Konkordat with Pope Pious XII in 1939.
- 6) At all times, Hitler kept attacking the Jews as capitalists and Communists.
- 7) The Holocaust also had a strong Palestinian dimension. Up to 1941, Hitler was interested in getting Jews out of Europe. In November 1941, Mufti Amin Husseini met Hitler and impressed on him the need of not allowing Jews to leave Europe and thus end up in Palestine, if he wanted to obtain Arab sympathy for his campaigns in Africa and the Middle East. This led to the Wannsee conference of January 1942 which sealed the fate of the Jews of Europe.
- 8) In 1944 the Jews of Hungary were openly held as pawns to be traded for transport lorries from the Allies.

Realising all the above facts would make it possible for the Holocaust to be remembered for what it is and for the Jews who perished in the Shoah to be honoured as having died for the Free World. ♦

Was Britain Actively Involved in the Holocaust?

In 1917 Britain issued the Balfour Declaration in order to bring the United States to join the Allies in the war against Germany, after the collapse of the Russian front.

But soon after the end of the First World War it became clear that Britain was opposed to establishing the Jewish National Home. The Palestine Mandate covered the areas west and east of the River Jordan and a happy solution could have been to develop Palestine for the Jews and develop Transjordan as the national home of the Arabs. But in 1921 Transjordan was given over to Emir Abdullah without conditions, leaving the Jews and the Arabs to fight over the rocky strip of Palestine.

In the run-up to the Second World War British policy was embodied in the 1939 White Paper which closed the door to Jewish immigration at a time when European Jews were badly in need of a safe haven. British policy was meant to gain Arab sympathy, but in fact Arab sympathy was solidly pro-Hitler throughout the war - witness the Rashid Ali pro-Nazi revolt in Iraq in April 1941.

Historians attach little importance to that event but in fact if it had succeeded Russia would have been cut off from Allied aid and the war would have taken a different course. Britain defended Iraq on the island of Crete where after heavy losses the sole German airborne division was destroyed. Crete was surrendered only when Iraq was safely in British hands.

British policy after the war regarding the Jewish National Home was the same. Survivors of the death camps were turned back and were forcibly disembarked in Germany.

It is therefore reasonable to conclude that British policy was the same during the war.

After the establishment of the State of Israel, British officers led the Arab forces that attacked the Jewish state and were paramount in delineating its frontiers.

As a student at London University in the early thirties, I was tormented by the ease with which Hitler was allowed to re-arm Germany. My own teenage guesses at the time were either that Britain wanted to achieve a decisive end to the earlier war with Germany or that a new European war was organised solely for the purpose of murdering the ten million Jews of Europe. In the event, my second guess proved correct and the Holocaust was the only lasting outcome of World War Two.

The nagging question remains, therefore - Is it possible that the British government was actively involved in the murder of the Six Million?

After the collapse of the Rashid Ali revolt, ex-mufti Amin Husseini who was in Baghdad, fled to Iran and thence to Italy and Germany where he met Hitler in November 1941. Throughout the war he influenced Nazi anti-Jewish policy and made certain that Jews were prevented from getting out of Europe. He persuaded Hitler that Jews leaving Europe would end up in Palestine and that would anger the Arabs.

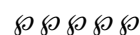
The mufti's objectives coincided with those of Britain - witness the sinking of the Struma in 1942 with the loss of 800 Jews.

The question arises; was there secret contacts between the Mufti and British agents? The mufti was afraid to leave Germany after the war, but was given safe conduct by Britain through France and thence to Egypt and Beirut. It is possible that Israel was advised not to interfere with him.

All along Britain was obviously afraid that the Zionists would take over the Middle East and displace Britain in its vital sphere of influence.

The indications are strong and the leads must be plentiful. The time has come to research this episode of the twentieth century to put the record straight.

Britain's sympathy with the Palestinians and hostility to Israeli governments continues unabated. Printing a monograph on the subject would be financed. ♦



They knew about the Holocaust

In the BBC television programme "Young Elizabeth", it was said that King George VI, among others, became fully aware of the Holocaust early on but it was decided that "the news was too terrible to publicise". One is unable to make sense of that statement except to conclude that the British Foreign Office wanted to hush up the news as it suited their policy of preventing Jews from reaching Palestine.

It is well-known that allied planes overflew the death camps on several occasions but made no attempt to disrupt the proceedings. ♦

The Struma Affair

by Edward Dangoor

I was amazed to read first in the Jewish Chronicle and then in The Scribe the abracadabra story of The Struma as related by Joel Ives. Is he that innocent or ignorant about the true story or is he acting in order to promote his book or articles.

The facts about the Struma is that it was torpedoed by a British submarine to avoid receiving in Palestine the 800 refugees it carried. Had it not been for the one witness who escaped by miracle and reached the Turkish shores, the boat would have been lost and forgotten.

The witness repeated, once and again, in his testimony that the sinking was consecutive to an explosion by bomb or torpedo.

Contrary to what is related in the article the witness was taken care off by the Turkish authorities who accepted his version of the story.

In another scene of this episode was the special session of the committee of the Jewish Underground Forces who had special entries to the High Commissioner's office in Cairo when they came across and copied or photocopied the message sent by the High Commissioner to a British submarine to torpedo the Struma. A special court was convened and Lord Moyne, the High Commissioner was sentenced to death.

All these facts came up in the Cairo court as you will notice later on.

The execution of the sentence was entrusted to two special agents of the underground movement (tireurs d'elite) good shots, with instructions not to ever hurt any Egyptian.

The High Commissioner's office was not so well-protected and the two fellows easily had access to his office, shot the Commissioner and left on the bicycles they trotted in with. The alarm was given when the two fellows were cycling hard for safety when a passing Egyptian

policeman heard the alarm, was intrigued and followed the two youngsters and arrested them. They proved later to the court that they could have shot the policeman easily but they had their instructions to abide with. The Egyptian press for weeks and before the trial was sympathetic to the boys as was the majority of the population.

The most important Egyptian lawyer was committed to defend them (without charge) and everybody thought that the two would get away with imprisonment but this thought irritated the British and they had to find a machiavellian way to have them hanged.

A day or two before the sentence the Egyptian Prime Minister was assassinated and many saw the machiavelian hand of the British.

Consequently a sentence was passed and the two boys of 20 and 18 were hanged.

I knew the boy of 18 as he was from a family of Syrian origin. The Pessah before these events I spent with this family in Haifa with others.

Israeli sources also confirms that it was the Russians who torpedoed the Struma for political reasons.

Scribe:

Israel often found herself, because of her weak position, obliged to bite the bullet and accept a version of events which is different from the truth. At the end of the Second World War, Israel abstained from harming the ex-Mufti Amin Husseini because Britain gave him safe passage first to Egypt and then to Beirut. It is likely that Amin Husseini played a major role in preventing Jews from leaving Europe, a policy which was in line with British Foreign Office objectives. Another incident at which Israel had to keep quiet was the assassination of the

Israeli Olympic team. This was done by the German police, but the Israeli government had to subscribe to the version that it was committed by the Palestinian terrorist, in order not to sour relations with Germany which was paying massive compensations at the time. ♦

§ § § § §

Letter to the Holocaust Centre

Mr Stephen D Smith
The Holocaust Centre
Beth Shalom
Laxton
Newark
Nottinghamshire
NG22 OPA

Dear Mr Smith

I often wonder what is the significance of the Holocaust to non-Jews, and why do we want to spread news of the Holocaust far and wide? What has the Imperial War Museum to do with the Holocaust?

It has been said that Holocaust education will prevent it from happening again, but there are no millions of Jews left in Europe for a Holocaust. Moreover, genocide activities have been going on in the post-war period in Africa and in Asia.

I believe that the real significance of the six million Jews who were killed by the Germans during the war is that these people died as hostages for the free world. In 1939 Hitler threatened that if World Jewry would embroil Germany in another world war then he would kill all the Jews of Europe. He thus held the Jews as hostages for the free world and they should be remembered and honoured as such, not just as victims of a genocide. ♦

Naim Dangoor

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In Issue No. 72, page 26, Ramzi Loya, born in the late 1930's, wrote a letter to the Editor of The Scribe criticising the action or inaction of Hakham Sasson Khadoury during the rule of Al-Bakr.

In fact that was a very difficult period in the life of the Jews of Iraq and my late father did all that he could do in those difficult circumstances. He was powerless to do any more. ♦

Shaoul H. Sasson
London



The Struma

BBC Prejudice

Letter sent by Naim Dangoor to Sir Christopher Bland, Chairman of the BBC, Broadcasting House, London with a copy to The Rt Hon Mr Jack Straw, MP-Foreign Secretary-Foreign Office

I understand that you have taken the trouble of screening a programme against Ariel Sharon and his indirect involvement in the murder of some 800 Palestinians in Sabra and Shatila. An Israeli court of enquiry had already criticised Mr Sharon for his involvement which was regarded as indirect, and your programme was not really necessary.

Why don't you research and prepare a programme about the British Foreign Office's direct and profound involvement in the murder of six million European Jews in what became known as the Holocaust, to prevent them from reaching Palestine, to comply with the terms of the 1939 White Paper? Contact was maintained with the ex-Mufti of Jerusalem who spent the war years in Berlin.

One further evidence is the sinking of the Struma by order of Lord Moyne, with the loss of 800 lives. This would really be a worthwhile programme and an eye opener.

Reply from BBC Information:

Thank you for your letter of 25 June addressed to the Chairman to which I reply as follows:

I recognise that you feel the screening of Panorama - The Accused was not necessary. I would like to explain that Panorama - The Accused examined the massacre of at least 800 civilians in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila during the invasion of Lebanon in 1982. It analysed the role played by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, amongst others, who resigned as Israeli Minister of Defence following the Kahan Commission inquiry into the tragedy.

As Mr Sharon has now been elected Prime Minister of Israel, we therefore felt it to be appropriate to examine his political and military record, in particular as the Israeli Defence Minister who sent the Lebanese Phalange militiamen into the Palestinian refugee camps.

Panorama asked contemporary figures and international law experts whether, in the current climate of greater

international accountability for war crimes, they believed that Mr Sharon could be indicted for what happened. The programme also interviewed survivors of the massacre, Israeli officers who served in Beirut and members of the Christian Phalange which committed the atrocities, notably Elie Hobeika, the man accused of leading the militiamen in the camps. Mr Sharon was approached to be interviewed for the programme and his spokesman Dr Ranaan Gissen was interviewed on his behalf. A lawyer for Mr Sharon, Dov Weissglas, also appears in the programme.

The BBC has made numerous films about human rights abuses in the Middle East. Among them are a Correspondent film which was highly critical of Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority and a disturbing Newsnight film on the use of children in the front line of the intifada. We believe Panorama - The Accused to be an entirely legitimate look at a human rights issue and that it is a fair and balanced analysis of the role played by Ariel Sharon. I hope this clarifies the BBC's position.

Please be assured your comments on this matter have been recorded for the benefit of senior management and the programme makers. The BBC welcomes all feedback, as it helps us to make decisions about future programmes or policies.

Our reply to BBC/Mori Questionnaire:

To help ensure the BBC Information Department is giving you the service you need, we would like to have your views on:

Being courteous – *very satisfied*

Responding in a full and serious manner to my comments and/or complaint – *very dissatisfied*.

You did not reply to the second part of my letter, which I now request you to do, by referring it either to "Panorama" or to the proper department in order to investigate Britain's wartime role in the Holocaust."

Reply to the same letter also received from:

Foreign & Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

Dear Mr Dangoor

Thank you for your letter about the situation in the Middle East, which has been passed to this Department. Please find below a summary of the Government's position on recent events.

The Government is greatly concerned by the continuing violence in the region, and dismayed by the tragic deaths. In particular, it deplores the fact that the violence has led to loss of life among children and innocent bystanders. The UK supports the view of the UN High Commission for Human Rights that the protection of children must be an absolute priority for both parties.

The Government has consistently urged Israel and the Palestinian Authority to show restraint. Violent incidents in Israel and the Occupied Territories threaten to derail the fragile cease-fire. It is vital now for the parties to end the violence and to move ahead with full and early implementation of the recommendations of the Mitchell Committee report, which sets out a road back to the negotiating table.

The UK has played an important role in recent months. The Prime Minister met Israeli Prime Minister Sharon on 24 June and Foreign Minister Peres on 18 July and urged them to take urgent steps in parallel with the Palestinians to implement the Mitchell recommendations. Lord Levy has travelled to the region as the Prime Minister's envoy. Ben Bradshaw, the new Minister for the Middle East, visited the region in July. The Foreign Secretary has met Israeli, Palestinian, Syrian and Arab League leaders. He is in close touch with his EU and US counterparts and with the UN Secretary General.

The UK and the EU have serious concerns about the lack of respect for human rights in the Occupied Territories. Following its policy of constructive engagement with partners on human rights issues; the EU raised its concerns with Israel at the meeting on 21 May of the EU/Israel Association Committee. We will continue to raise our concerns, both publicly and in private at all levels, for as long as this remains necessary. ☛

...The Foreign Secretary has expressed deep concern over the demolition of Palestinian houses.

The Government deplores settlement activity in the Occupied Territories (including East Jerusalem). It is illegal under international law and a serious obstacle to peace. The recommendation of the Mitchell Committee is that Israel should freeze all settlement activity, including the "natural growth" of existing settlements. The EU raised the issue of Israeli settlements at a meeting with Prime Minister Sharon in Stockholm on 14 June.

The Government supports UN General Assembly Resolution 194, which calls for the right of return and compensation for Palestinian refugees. A permanent solution to their plight can only be achieved as part and parcel of the peace process and we continue to encourage and support the parties in their search for an agreement.

The Government is also deeply concerned about the humanitarian and economic impact of closures. Sustained closures continue to restrict the free movement of people and essential supplies between the Occupied Territories and Israel and other countries, as well as within the Occupied Territories. Economic hardship and unemployment can only fuel hatred and violence, and make a comprehensive settlement more difficult to achieve. We have expressed our serious concerns to the Israeli Government on political, legal and humanitarian grounds, and will continue to do so. The latest EU demarche to the Israeli government on humanitarian access was made on 29 June at the UN in New York.

The presence of international observers has been suggested as a means of contributing to stability in the region. The EU General Affairs Council on 16 July agreed that a third-party monitoring mechanism is needed in order to overcome any obstacles that might impede the implementation of the Mitchell recommendations. Foreign Ministers and subsequently G8 Heads of State took a similar view when they met in Italy (on 19 July and 21 July respectively). Our view is that to be successful any presence would require prior agreement by both Israelis and Palestinians.

The UK regards the status of Jerusalem as still to be determined in permanent status negotiations between the parties, and recognise no sovereignty over the city. Pending agreement, we recognise de facto Israeli control of West Jerusalem but consider East Jerusalem to

be occupied territory. Jerusalem has a unique religious and cultural importance for Christians, Jews and Muslims, and we attach great importance to ensuring access to Jerusalem and freedom of worship there for those of all faiths.

On the question of arms sales, the UK is guided by the consolidated EU and national criteria on Strategic Export Controls. We will not issue export licences where there is a clear risk that the equipment might be used for internal repression or adversely affect regional stability. We will not issue licences for equipment similar to that used in the Occupied Territories. We have no evidence that British-made equipment licensed for export since this Government came to office in 1997 has been used by the Israeli forces against civilians in the Occupied Territories during the recent violence. Since this Government came to office in 1997, no export licence has been approved for tear gas or rubber bullets.

The Government has called on Israel to use non-lethal force wherever possible. One of the Mitchell Report's recommendations was that Israel should ensure that the IDF adopts and enforces policies and procedures encouraging non-lethal responses to unarmed demonstrators. They should adopt tactics of crowd control that minimise the potential for deaths and casualties and should ensure that the stated values and standard operating procedures of the IDF instil the duty of caring for Palestinians as well as Israelis, consistent with the Ethical Code of the IDF. Israel has accepted the Committee's report.

UK involvement is practical as well as political. The UK's total assistance to the Palestinians, including contributions to UNRWA (the UN Relief and Works Agency) and via the EU, is generally around £25 million per year. In 1998 (the latest available OECD figure) it was £28.4 million. This year it will be substantially more.

Please be assured that the Government remains closely engaged in efforts to urge both parties to consolidate the cease-fire and build confidence, in the context of a renewed political re-engagement, aimed at an agreement based on United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, the principle of 'land for peace', security for Israel within recognised borders and an end to occupation.

Pat Phillips
Near East and North Africa
Department

Mr Dangoor's reply:

Dear Ms Phillips

Thank you for your letter dated 2 August stating British policy regarding the Middle East, which I am unable to accept and totally reject.

1. Her Majesty's government policy regarding the Jewish National home soon after the Balfour Declaration has been to harass Jewish immigration into Palestine and to create ill-feeling between Jews and Arabs. The problem you are talking about is not between Israelis and Palestinians.
2. It is a regional problem which came into being with the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire and the granting of all its Middle East territories to the Arabs. The Jews of the region had a right to a share of that territory which can be symbolised by the total area of Palestine.
3. In 1921 the late Winston Churchill gave Trans-Jordan to Emir Abdullah without any conditions. That was the moment of the partitioning of Palestine when Trans-Jordan should have become the National home of the Palestinian Arabs.
4. You spoke of occupied territory but you don't mention who you think it belongs to. In view of the fact that the Arabs of Palestine as well as the neighbouring Arabs refuse to live at peace with Israel, I consider that Israel is justified in claiming the total area of geographical Palestine, west of the Jordan.
5. You have the cheek to speak of the right of Palestinians to return to Israel and thus destroy the Jewish state from within. You seem to forget that in 1950 there was an exchange of population when a million Jews from Arab countries went to Israel in exchange for the million Arabs who had left Israel. Such exchange took place between India and Pakistan, Germany and Poland and many other neighbouring countries after the war. You must be living in cuckoo land if you think otherwise.
6. You speak of resolutions 242 and 338; these and other resolutions were totally and repeatedly rejected by the Arabs. How come now you want to bring them to life again?
7. You speak of "land for peace". Surely the Arabs have all the land – 10 million square miles of it against the Israeli's 10,000. Do you seriously and honestly believe that Israel should give some land to the Arabs?
8. You seem to think that when Palestinian leaders murder

...innocent Israelis by training and sending suicide bombers to supermarkets and nightclubs, that that is alright and is not against international law, but when Israel targets the perpetrators of these murders you condemn her action and say that it is against international law. Such hypocrisy does not fit the traditional character of the British people.

9. Regarding Jerusalem; you seem to think that divided Berlin should have been united, but united Jerusalem should become divided. As for freedom of worship to all faiths; when East Jerusalem was in Arab hands, Jews were not allowed to worship in their holy places and were driven out of their homes. There is perfect freedom of worship to all concerned in Israeli hands.
 10. There is strong evidence that Her Majesty's government played an active and direct part in the Holocaust and this is now being researched to bring to the surface what really is going on in your Foreign Office.
- Peace in the Middle East must be global and all the Arab countries that went to war against Israel have to step in and contribute in land, wealth, and other resources to solve the endemic problem between Jew and Arab. ♦

§ § § § §

**To Rt. Hon. Jack Straw MP
Foreign Secretary**

Thank you for your recent letter. Isn't it a shame that Great Britain, who promised the Jews to restore their national home in Palestine, should now be in the vanguard of those seeking to destroy it? ♦
Naim Dangoor

The world in a village

If we could shrink the earth's population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all the existing human ratios remaining the same, it would look something like the following...

There would be:

57 Asians
21 Europeans
14 from the Western Hemisphere, both north and south
8 Africans

52 would be female
48 would be male

70 would be non-white
30 would be white

70 would be non-Christian
30 would be Christian

89 would be heterosexual
11 would be homosexual

6 people would possess 59% of the entire world's wealth and all 6 would be from the United States

80 would live in sub-standard housing
70 would be unable to read
50 would suffer from malnutrition

1 (yes, only 1) would have a college education
1 would own a computer

When one considers our world from such a compressed perspective, the need for acceptance, understanding and education

becomes glaringly apparent. The following is also something to ponder...

If you woke up this morning with more health than illness...you are more blessed than the million who will not survive this week

If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation...you are ahead of 500 million people in the world

If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead and a place to sleep...you are richer than 75% of this world

If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace...you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy

If your parents are still alive and still married...you are very rare, even in the United States and Canada

If you can read this message, you just received a double blessing in that someone was thinking of you, and furthermore, you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world that cannot read at all

Someone once said: What goes around comes around

Work like you don't need the money
Love like you've never been hurt
Dance like nobody's watching
Sing like nobody's listening
Live like it's Heaven on Earth

Sent by Robert Khalastchy ♦

§ § § § §

Media Bias Against Israel

The world community must be made aware of how biased the international media, chiefly CNN, the BBC, the New York Times and almost all the French and the British media are towards Israel. It has been a longstanding fact of life, and we have almost become accustomed to it.

But on a recent visit to Europe, and the spate of serious anti-Semitic attacks, including the burning of synagogues (8 in France, with 26 more failed attempts, and attacks even in Britain!) have convinced me, and others I spoke with, that we are facing a much graver situation now. The media is not only waging a war on Israel, but on the Jewish people.

By presenting Israelis as wilful murderers of children it reawakens old atavistic anti-Jewish attitudes that in the past resulted in terrible tragedies. Urgent measures should be taken to counteract this media bias.

**Daniel Doron
Director**

**The Israel Center for Social &
Economic Progress**

email: ddoron@bezeqint.net

Scribe:

There is no doubt that Arab oil money plays an important part in swaying the sympathies of radio, television and the press. A massive budget is necessary to put matters right. This is not an easy task. ♦

I would like to know, according to the Shulhan Aruch, and what page, what are the requirements for women to have their heads covered by a hat.

Ida Prizament

1a200@netvision.co.il

Answer kindly supplied by Rabbi Abraham Gubbay:

The reference is in Shulchan, Orach Chayim, Chapter 75, sub-heading 2 ♦

Quote...

Our hours in love have wings,
in absence, crutches

Colley Cibber

Information Centre

The Ammunition Hill National Memorial Site and Museum in Jerusalem

Extracts from the Report sent by Gad Ben Ari, Director General

The Information Centre of the Struggle for Jerusalem, established two years ago thanks to a generous donation by the Dangoor family, contains a variety of material on the struggle for Jerusalem from the beginning of the 19th century to the present day.

The information is organised according to the following subjects:

Jerusalem from the beginning of the 19th Century until the British Mandate (1917)

The British Mandate (1917-1948)

The War of Independence (1947-1948)

The divided City (1948-1967)

The Six Day War

Jerusalem – the united City

Jerusalem – the centre for the Jewish people

Commemoration and memorial Values – in battle and in daily life

ACTIVITIES

Every week, schoolchildren, youth, families of fallen soldiers and visitors to the Memorial Site make use of the resources at the Information Centre. Students, researchers, tour-guides and the members of the public-at-large who are interested in the period are also served by the Centre and the number of its visitors is constantly growing.

The Information Centre is composed of three complementary sections:

THE STUDY LIBRARY – containing thousands of books, periodicals, brochures and flyers, some bequeathed by such notable personalities as Uzi Narkis and Motta Gur.

THE ARCHIVES – contain a collection of documents, photographs, newspaper clippings, maps, audiotapes and video-

tapes. Archive materials include soldiers' eyewitness accounts, materials from study days and other activities held at the site and so forth.

THE COMPUTERISED DATA BANK – is part of the Information Centre, but stands as a project on its own. The material in the library's other two sections in the process of computerisation and multi-media productions are being developed.

From The Ammunition Hill National Memorial Site and Museum

Dedicated to the Reunification of Jerusalem during the Six Day War, 1967

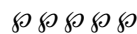
Thank you for the information you sent us about - The Scribe.

We made this information available to the visitors of our DANGOOR LIBRARY at Ammunition Hill.

We also sent the information to "Yad ben Zvi" - one of the important institutions in Jerusalem, which investigate the History of the Jewish communities around the world. ♦

Jerusalem

**Yoram Tamir
Director**



You carried a book review by Anna Dangoor on Jeffrey Pickering's Britain's Withdrawal from East of Suez (Read review). I would like to read this but am unable to locate it in the listings (Amazon, etc.) I would be grateful if you could confirm the publisher and publication date or the ISBN.

Barry Alexander United Kingdom
mailbox@barry-alexander.co.uk
Scribe:

The publisher for Jeffrey Pickering's book is Macmillan, 231 pp, priced at £42.50, 0333 69526 7

There is another book which may be of interest to you, namely: Demise of the British Empire in the Middle East

Britain's response to nationalist movements, 1943-55

Michael J Cohen and Martin Kolinsky, editors

212 pp, Cass., £39.50, 0714 64804 3 ♦

From the pages of history:

Moslem conquest of the Middle East

In the Byzantine state there was constant hatred between Christians and Jews and this intensified Jewish hope for help from Iranian side. In 556 Justinian faced a Samaritan-Jewish uprising in Palestine as also did Justin II in 578.

In September 610 when the Iranian army of Khusro II drew near Antioch, the Jewish community rose in rebellion but was put down. At Tyre & Acre the Jews attempted to support the invading army and suffered in retaliation. The invaders' route from Damascus to Caesarea passed through the heart of the Jewish settlements. Jews from all parts of the country joined in the struggle and Jewish support greatly facilitated the invasion.

In April 614 Iranian units and Jewish detachments stood before the holy city. Zachariah, the Christian patriarch organised the defence. The siege lasted 20 days. The victorious army massacred "60,000" Christian inhabitants and burned many churches. The Iranian general selected 37,000 skilled workmen for deportation to Iran. According to the eyewitness account of strategies, the Jews offered to ransom Christian captives if they would accept Judaism.

After the Iranian army left with the Christian captives, the Jews destroyed the rest of the churches in the city as part of their effort to "sanctify" it once again. They apparently renewed the sacrificial offerings.

Shortly thereafter the Iranians declined to extend to the Jews the right of self-government and of rebuilding the Temple and became hostile to them possibly through the intervention of Christian court officials in Ctesiphon in 617 they punished the Jews who had participated in the slaughter of Christians and forbade Jewish settlement in Jerusalem. Iran thus sacrificed the Jews in an effort to seek reconciliation and friendship with the Byzantine court. They permitted the Christians to rebuild the ruined churches. The Iranians may have been willing to leave Palestine in Jewish hands if they were numerous enough to control it but being a minority of 10% to 15% the Jews could hardly do so. As they would not agree to co-operate with the Iranians to restore normal conditions for all the population, the Iranians had to turn to the Christians for support.

Heraclius re-occupied Jerusalem in 627. When in 637 the Moslem armies invaded Palestine, the Jews there generally sided with the Moslem cause.

by Dr Jacob Neusner
A History of the Jews in Babylonia
Vol. V., Page 122 ♦

The Sassoon's Return Visit to Baghdad

A Diary by Mozelle Sassoon

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

On the voyage to Basrah, they were joined by Sir William Willcocks in Karachi, who built the Asswan Dam in Egypt.

On the way to Baghdad, they stopped at Ezair to visit the Shrine of Ezra the Scribe (Ezra Ha-Sofer).

Flora's daughter, Mozelle Sassoon (1884-1921) kept a detailed diary of the whole journey, which continues:-

Tuesday, 27 September –

Before entering Baghdad we saw the bridge of boats which opens and closes to let river traffic through. As we were going in the malam, we passed Aunt Hannah's house and saw her on the veranda with several members of her family, and her daughter Rebecca Daniel was looking through her binoculars. Lynch's Baghdad agent took us through two narrow lanes to our house, rented from Mr Fatoohi for £55 for two months. It seems that Mr Fatoohi went to Bombay for a

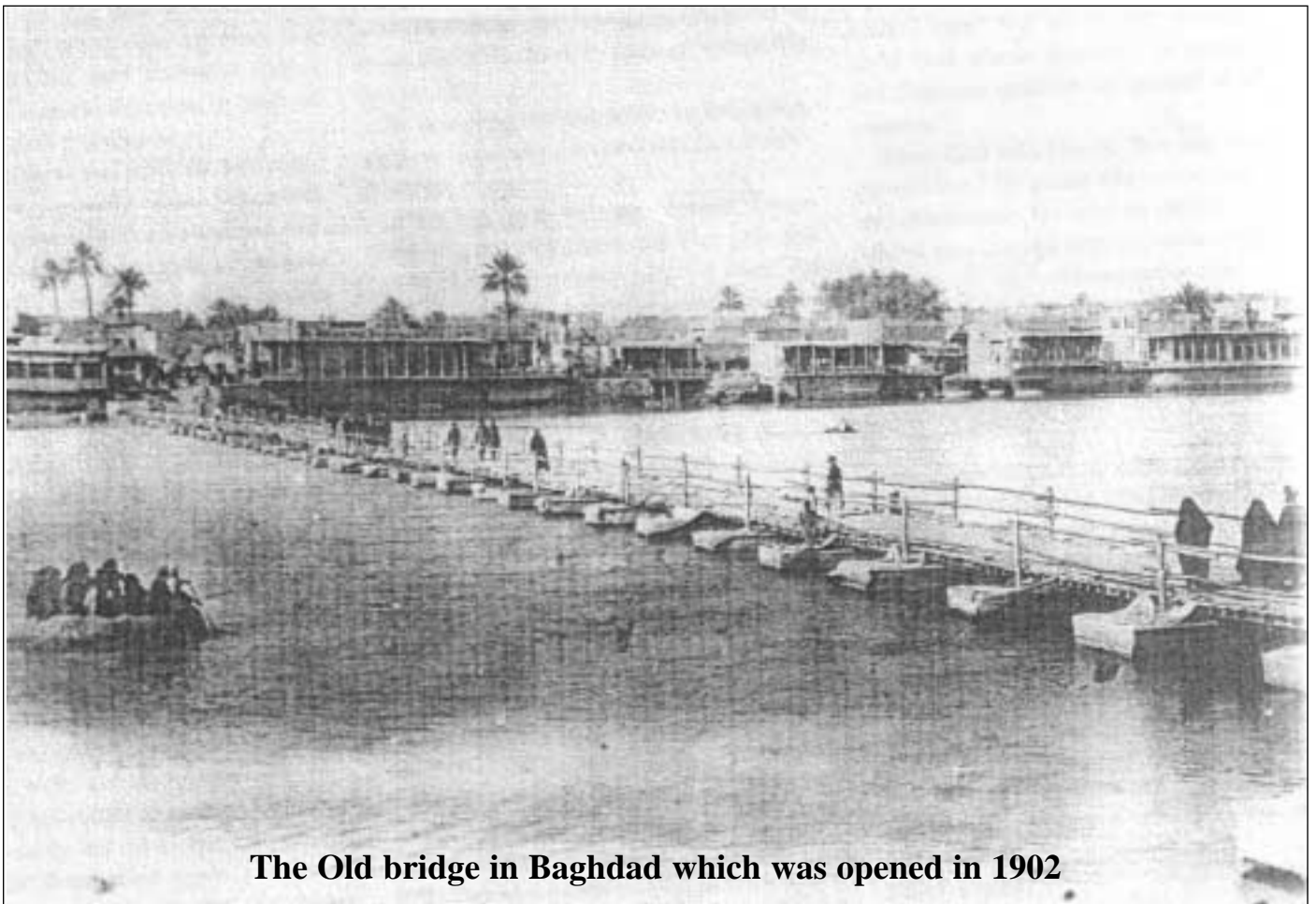


**Mozelle Sassoon
Daughter of Solomon and Flora**

change, and in his absence his son spent all their money in building this huge palace in very grand style. The drawing-room ceiling and the bedroom walls and doorways were elaborately decorated and coloured glass decorations were used in the verandas. The house costs £5,000 that made the poor father lose his reason.

Soon after we arrived, Hakham Nessim Ben Abu-Reuben arrived and the latter brought a tray with 12 cones of sugar of which we are told it is the rule to take one or two only and return the rest with one or two plates of sweets or other dainties. Aunt Hannah came soon after and lots of other visitors kept on coming the whole morning; among them Abdel Kader Pasha al-Khetheiry. He sent us a big Mosul earthenware chatty (Hebb) for purifying and cooling the water.

In the afternoon visited us Chief Rabbi David Papu, Hakham Moshe Shamash, Hakham Abraham Hillel, Hakham Yitshaq Abraham Mjaled. It was a wonderful group; they are all so handsome and all have snowy white hair, as well as Hakham Ezra Dangoor Hayyu and Hakham Yaacob Yoseph Hayeem and others. David Basoos has sent Ezekiel Saltoun to be our buyer of provisions (meswaqchi) and shohet for us. Mr Langridge, Lynch's agent, says one watchman will be quite enough and he will act as a servant, as Baghdad is quite safe and he can sleep at night. ☞



The Old bridge in Baghdad which was opened in 1902

Wednesday, 28 September –

A few visitors came very early. Among them Hakham Sasson Smooha Hayyu, a previous Chief Rabbi and Saleh Elyshaa. Meir Somekh, only surviving brother of Moreno (Stayee) Hakham Abdullah Somekh also called.

Thursday, 29 September –

We went to Midrash Talmud Torah School to examine three classes in Hebrew dictation and grammar. Hakham Ezekiel of the Alliance School looks after it all. The Chief Rabbi who presided at the examination was there as well as Hakham Sasson Smouha. Then we went on the balcony (Tarma) and saw the boys assembled in the courtyard, and David took a snapshot of them. They sang Turkish and Arabic songs and Hakham Ezra Dangoor made a Meshabairakh and Mamma promised them Turkish £20 for a poultry dinner for the boys. The children were all in new khaki suits given by the Wali, costing T£50 and we saw some suits being made there.

Today Hakham Abraham Dangoor and Hakham Ezra Cohen called.

At 6.30 we ordered a landau and drove to Bab-el-Shargee. Mr Saul E. M. Hayeem came as a guide. It was a drive through narrow lanes and bazaars, across awful roads full of holes and ditches, and dust was like a fog around us. Bab-el-Shargee (South Gate) is a big plain with some trees in the distance – and forms the Hyde Park or Bois of Baghdad. On the return journey we drove through Menahem Salman Daniel's bazaar – he used to let it and the government arranged with him that if he died without leaving any children that they would take it. He was the husband of Rebecca, Aunt Hanna's daughter. After he died in 1891 the bazaar was taken over by the government. After that we passed the Serai by an asphalt road, and many cafés, which are brightly lit up. Nearly everyman in Baghdad spends the evenings at the cafés. We had innumerable visitors again today. Abdel-Kader Pasha invited David to go for a drive with him tonight, so he met him near the café and went for a drive in the same hired landau that we had, and ended off at his house, where there were singing and dancing in the drawing room, by Jewish actresses and Mohamedean actors.

Friday, 30 September –

We got up very early and were ready to go to Yehoshua Kohen Gadole (Joshua the High Priest). We had to cross the river by balam, as the bridge was open to let the Hamidiya, (the boat we came on) to get through on its return journey. On the other side (Hathak-el-Sob) two landaus were awaiting us. We drove to the Shrine accompanied by Saul Hayeem through a dusty barren desert – just a quarter hour's drive. This building is quite small. We took off our shoes and went inside and we hooked on the tomb the covering that we brought with us and put as well the bells on each corner. We lit candles and David and Saul Hayeem read the Kaddish and David read the Hashkaba for Papa. We could only read Shama'a-na Yehushua around the dome; the rest was all effaced and the whole place was spoilt when the Turks took possession of it in 1891; but now the new Wali is going to give it back to them. On our way back, we passed Zobeida, Haroun-el-Rashid's favourite wife's tomb, which is pineapple shaped.

When we got back we found that D. Bassouses had sent us jeradeq and Shabbath bread. ☛



**Ship to shore transfer by guffa-a craft which was already obsolete at the time of Noah.
The river steamer is in the background.**

Courtesy of Freddie Khalastchy

Saturday, 1 October –

We got up early. David went before us to the Great Synagogue, where the service began at 5.30 and we got there at 6.30 accompanied by Ezekiel Saltoun, our steward, who had already finished his prayers at an earlier Synagogue. We were conducted up to the ladies' gallery behind the Tebah, where we had seats arranged for us by Mrs David Basoos. All the ladies were covered with their Ezzegh and Khwili and it was impossible to make them up; they all sit on the floor, and it is such a tight fit. They all crowded around us, and in the afternoon a visitor told us that it was not only to see us, but to study the latest fashions also. The gentlemen prayed in the open courtyard, without any roof, which they generally use in the summer, and behind is the covered Synagogue, which is used during the winter or when the service is going to be late and it will be sunny. The service was conducted by Hakham Ezra Dangoor himself, his Hazzanouth is considered the best in the country. The Synagogue was simply packed. There were 26 Hekhaloth. David was called up to the Sefer, (Saleh Elishaa

Sassoon gave his turn to him, as he always read it) and made a Meshabairakh of T £2 and they did the Hashkaba for dear Papa Solomon David Sassoon. Prayers were over at 7.15. Here the Hazzan reads the whole Parasha – only the Maftir is read by the Olé and all the Congregation join in the Haftara so that the principal reader's voice is not heard.

On our way back Mrs Basoos insisted on our stopping at her house for a few minutes. They showed us their Sirdab, where people spend the day during the great heat. It is a cellar. Sirdab is a compound Persian word meaning "cold water", it being the practice in these parts to keep cold water stored in cellars. Then we went to Aunt Hannah's house where we saw the white Luzina tray and a pair of anklets which was sent to her granddaughter by her fiancé on the occasion of their engagement.

It was a tremendous tray. I am sure it must have measured a few yards round and the Luzina was about 1/2 foot thick. We tried to move it a little but could not; it was such a deadweight, composed of sugar and almonds with cardamom. They tell us such a tray costs from T£4 to

T£5 and if a bride does not receive it, she feels hurt. It is then distributed and the friends and relations are thereby informed of the engagement. We then came home to breakfast, and soon after the influx of visitors began. More came after lunch. Mrs Semha Sasson Somekh of Amarah stayed on for tea and Habdala. After prayers Hakham Nessim Ben Abu Reuben stayed to dinner.

We slept on the roof for the first time. It was delightful and the stars looked beautiful. So we tried the Sardab and the roof on the same day. I had always wondered what sleeping on the roof was like.

The young ladies here do a lot of embroidery (broderie anglaise and raised embroidery chiefly) and also embroider by machine,

Sunday 2nd October –

After breakfast at 8 we went in two landaus to Muadham by such a dusty, shaking, bone-breaking drive through an immense desert. On our return we passed Uweina, which is the place where the milk come from, where they farm the cows, and we drove through Abu Sifein where the



Seated, Senior Rabbis of Baghdad

Most of them past or future Chief Rabbis who were entertained to dinner by the Sassoons.

Left to right: Yitzhaq Abraham Mjaled; Sasson Elia Moshe Halewi (Smouha); Abraham Hillel; Moshe Shlomo Dawid Shamash; Ezra Cohen; Shmuel Abraham Mjaled
Standing behind are their pupils

...poorest Jews live, and Henouni, the shopping area. We got back at noon very tired.

After lunch Hakham Yaacob and Hakham Yoshua did the Hettara for us.

At 6.15 Abdel Qader Pasha took us to the Wali Nazem Pasha, Turkish governor of Baghdad. We ushered ourselves into his presence on the Terrace. The Wali speaks only Turkish and French and the Arabic was translated by Abdel-Qader Pasha. The Wali is about 60 and has been only 5 months in Baghdad. He showed us the plans made by a French architect, Goddard, for a new gate for the Serai and other improvements thereabouts.

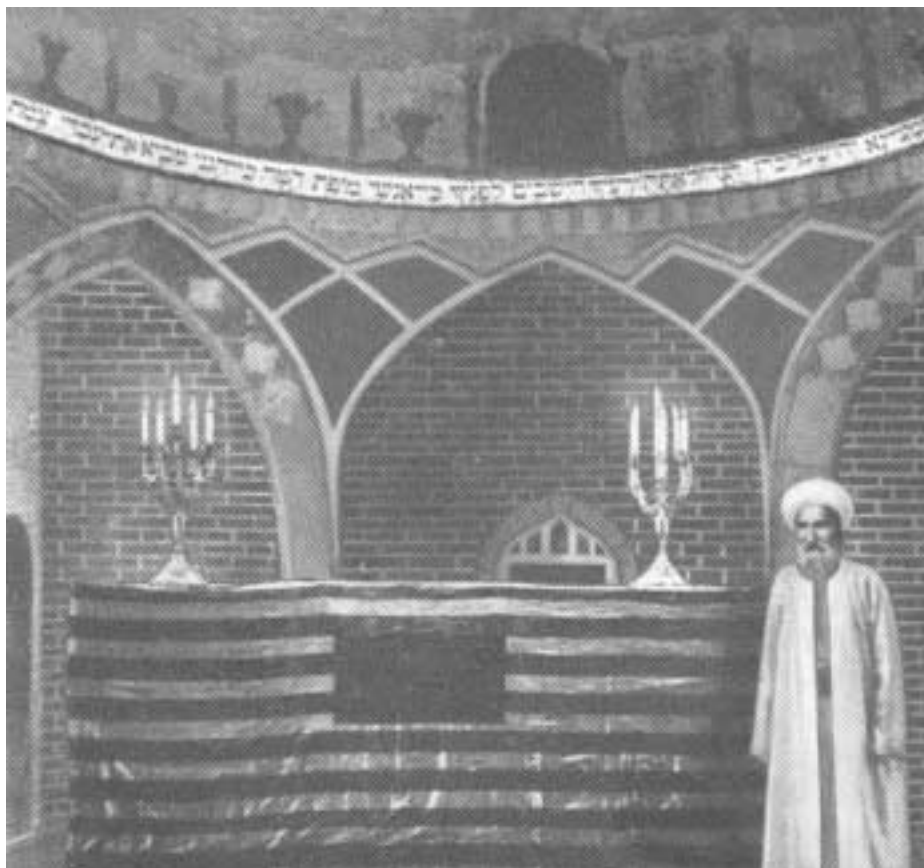
**Monday, 3rd October –
Eve of Rosh Hashana**

At 5.30 we all went to the Great Synagogue where we sat by ourselves in a Hekhal on a side. The prayers were read very quickly and not word by word as in Bombay.

At home we read Mishna before dinner. Mrs Basoos sent us holy-day bread and Saleh Elishaa Benjamin Sassoon sent us apple jam for Yehi Rasson and two bottles of old kiddush wine which we used tonight.

**Tuesday 4th October –
Rosh Hashana 5671**

We got up early and went to the Great Synagogue. Grandpapa, Sheikh Sassoon's Sefer was brought out as Sefer Rishon. It is contained in a beautiful chased silver case "Tiq", much tarnished with age. He dedicated it in the year 1793 and made a condition that it should be brought out first for Kol Nidre and every holy-day including the Festivals and Hol Hamoed and Shabbath Jethro, Beshallah and Weth'hannan and one of the direct descendants from the paternal side is to be called up to the Sefer and lights the Hanukkah in the Synagogue. Our family here have the original document in their keeping and it is signed by the Rabbis of those days. A few years ago, others, among them Sassoon Hayeem Moorad, wanted to do away with this time-honoured right and use their Sefarim, but this document was produced, and Hakham Yosef Hayeem also affixed his signature to it. (They say the scroll got worn out and has been changed). The descendants of Abu Reuben also have a right to sit in the middle Hekhal which is the principal one and where our ancestor



The Shrine in Baghdad of Joshua, the High Priest (said to be deuterio Isaiah) with Chief Rabbi Hakham Ezra Dangoor.



Chief Rabbi of Baghdad Hakham Dawid Papou at the time of the visit

...Sheikh Sassoon sat. As a rule Saleh E.B. Sassoon exercises these rights, and on this occasion he gave them all to David. When they started the school service, Sasson Moorad and others took his Sefer there. On our return we stopped at Mrs Basoos to give the crowd time to diminish and got home at about 10. David went to the Hathima to Saleh E. D. Sassoon's, quite near. They began at 11 and it lasted till 2. David came home for lunch and went back. During the afternoon many visitors called and stayed late. We read the Mishna.

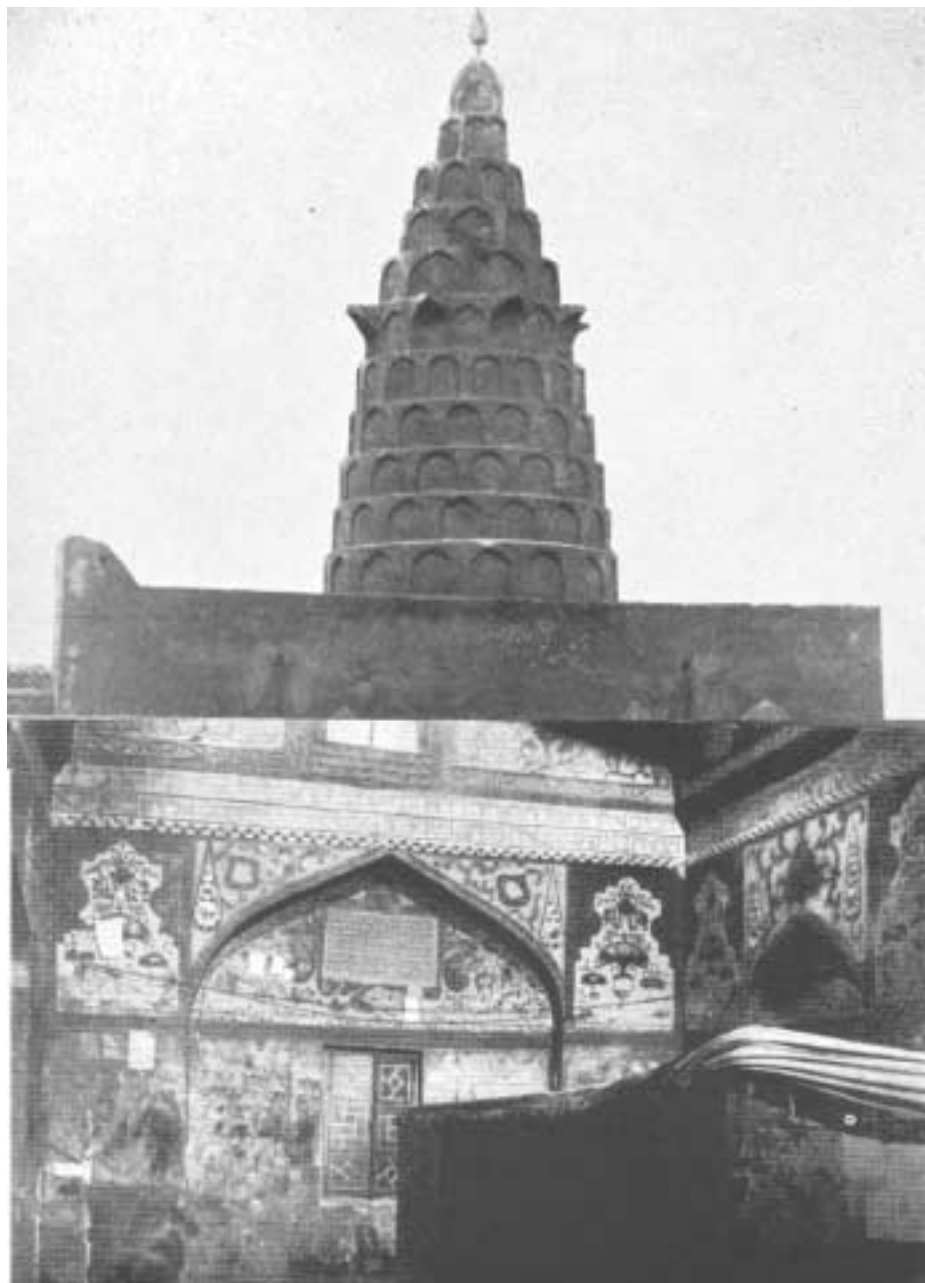
Wednesday, 5th October –

We all went to the School Synagogue today, which building was given by Grandpapa Sir Albert and has a wing given by Menahem Saleh Daniel. The gentlemen prayed in the open courtyard, which the children use as a playground. We sat on the veranda near the Chief Rabbi's wife. We got home at about 9. It seems on Rosh Hashana people do not pay visits, but we had heaps of calls, as they find us so "irresistible, tempting and charming" as Farha's sister said.

The Wali's A.D.C. called with the Wali's card, but stayed only a few minutes as the influx of ladies was so overpowering that he fled!

Thursday, 6th October –

This morning soon after 8 we all went in two landaus to the Bab-el-Wustani to see the Review of the troops in honour of the "Eed" at the end of Ramathan as the Wali's guests. We went and took our seats in a large tent, lined in red, yellow and blue. They brought sherbet and at about 9.30 we and the others (3 European men, some Arab Sheikhs and some Turks) went to a fenced-off enclosure, in front of which, the infantry, cavalry and the artillery marched past. There were 4000 soldiers among them there being 450 Jewish conscripts. These were all in khaki suits, with the Eguel on their heads, the kerchief arrangement hanging down, protecting their necks from the sun. They did not look well turned out and marched badly. Some of the Arab ponies were very fine, but did not look well-groomed. The band played some monotonous tunes the whole time. Rachel and the others remained outside walking about, and Mamma, David and I returned to the tent after the parade. After a little while the Wali Pasha came to the tent (he had been watching the review on horseback) and shook hands with Mamma and me



The interior and exterior of the Shrine of the Prophet Ezekiel



**The restored Shrine of Ezekiel, now in the hands of the local Moslems
Picture supplied by Mr Shaul Sasson**

...and salaamed all the gentlemen and then sat down, and the gathering dispersed after a few minutes. After the serving of rose coloured drinks. The Chief Rabbi had also come while the Parade was going on, with his son and when the Wali came he came forward to shake hands, but he only salaamed all round. An Arab Sheikh had been sitting near Mamma and talking to her and he told her that she is "like a queen; she has so much information and knowledge". Sheikh Saadon, who has come to Baghdad after 30 years, was there and had a seat of honour in the centre of the Assembly. He has two hundred thousand followers under his control and Sheikh Amir el Najd has two lacs (20,000), and they are both very powerful chiefs.

On our way back we called on Hakham Jacob and his mother (widow of Hakham Yosef Hayeem) at the family mansion near the Henouni and we saw many members of the family there. We asked Hakham Jacob to enquire if the Chief Rabbi was in and from there we went to call on him. He said he had nothing good enough to present to Mamma, so he would give her his photo as a souvenir. He has had it taken in full dress, and then he brought the coat to show us and put it on with his two orders.

Friday, 7th October –

Today we ate Za'arur which look something like cherries, but are very insipid. There is a saying – Ja el za'arur wa kassah el khairat (when za'arur comes it terminates the fruit season).

Today we were all asked for tea at the English Club.

Mrs Lorimer, the British Consul's wife, who was there, asked Mamma to her bi-monthly garden party tomorrow but we are not going. (I am writing this on the 9th of December, so after two months I cannot remember who dined with us).

Saturday, 8th October –

We got up at 5 – and we all went to the Alliance School Synagogue. The service was over at 7.15. After breakfast Mamma, Rachel, David, Diana and I began by calling on Mr and Mrs Menahem Saleh Daniel and Mr and Mrs Sasson Saleh Daniel at their large double riverside mansion. Mr M D has two orders from the Sultan Abdel Hamid and both the brothers are known as Effendia. They have a pretty garden, in which we saw oleanders (defla), roses, carnation trees and violet plants. Mrs Rebecca Daniel is

related to us. Menahem Effendi had come to see us some days ago on his return from Hillah and Mamma had a telegram from his son Ezra on Rosh Hashana. He knew us in Bombay in 1900. Mrs Sasson Daniel and her daughter Regina, a schoolgirl are very quiet, as also Mr Sasson Daniel. Mrs Menahem and Mrs Sasson were both in Arabic dresses with caps and scarves round the chin (Fez and Lachag), but the former had an abaya over her head also; it is the first time that I have seen it worn thus. It is customary for ladies of good family to wear an abaya indoors and an izzagh out

of doors. She is very particular and when she travelled to Europe and Egypt she had her cook with her and would not even eat the Shehita of several places. Once she went for her son's health and once for her husband's. We then went to Beit Abu Reuben which has an enormous courtyard and used to be the finest and largest house in Baghdad, but now it is in a sad condition, and quite void of its splendours. Grandpapa, Sheikh Sassoon, the Nassi, lived there over 100 years ago. A few branches of the family are living there now. We had met Meir Somekh on the way and Mamma told him to lunch



Entertained at Hilla. Left to right: Seated: Rachel Sassoon (Lady Ezra); Sasson 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.



The underground tombs of the Geonim

...with us today and he agreed, so today suddenly we discovered lunchtime that he had left after calling, and Mamma was so sorry that she had not told him again (after a few days when we got to know him better he told us he saw the fire in the kitchen and he could not understand and did not like to ask, so would not eat here, so Mamma explained to him that the Goy did it).

Mr and Mrs Yehouda Zelouf and their little girl , Flora, Hakham Sasson Smouha, Mr Elias Elishaa and Mr Saul E. M. Hayeem stayed to lunch here. During the afternoon we had a great many callers. In the evening Diana went for a boat sail with Hougui's and Moshi's families. After sunset, Rebecca Menahem Silman called and asked Mamma to dine with her tomorrow evening. Mamma tried to tell her that we could not come, but she would not listen, so accepted.

Sunday, 9th October –

The ex-German Consul called. He was charmed with the house and said he had no idea there was one like it in Baghdad. The headmaster of the

Alliance School called and related to us about his Babylon trip. He and 20 or 30 of the school teachers went with, and Mrs Menahem and Mr and Mrs Sasson Daniel as their guests. They went to Babylon and Kifil, the site of Ezekiel's Shrine. They had a delightful fortnight.

After a boat outing we went to Rebecca at 8 o'clock for a large dinner party, We waited a long time, and we did not know that Rebecca was waiting for us to say that we had rested sufficiently and were ready for dinner. At last we sat down at the table. There were some hired waiters and also a "party cook".

The menu was as follows:- soup, stewed fish (Shebbout), lamb cutlets and green peas, tomato mahashas, home-fed roast geese, rice pillau with raisins and almonds, gombo (okra or bamia) stew and green beans stew and roly poly pudding. Everything except the roast was made of mutton. It was a very long menu. There were several kinds of sweets and preserves and the fruit was very good. The plates were continually changed, even between the fruits. We all walked home after 11. They sent a num-

ber of lantern bearers with us besides our own men. Mamma told Rebecca it was a beautiful party and she must have taken so much trouble over it. She said she does not do a thing, the servants do everything in her house. The flowers on the table were very pretty.

Monday, 10th October –

Today we made return visits to many relatives and friends. In the afternoon we had more callers at home.

Tuesday, 11th October –

At 8.30 David went to see the Great Synagogue with Saleh Elishaa. He has asked them to allow him to dig under the brickwork to find some old records, which they buried there. They have agreed and he is to build up the mounds again. At 9 Rebecca came over to say that Abdel Jabbar Effendi, the greatest lawyer here, was coming to call and he arrived at 9.30, accompanied by Shaoul Shashoua and Yosef Shemtob. He, Abdel Jabbar is an Armenian. He went to Bombay



The British Residency in Baghdad with the gunboat "Comet" moored in front on the Tigris.

Painting by Renée Dangoor

...with Fatoohi our landlord, and before he had been there a week, the Turkish Government wired to him to return at once, as he had no business to leave without orders, because he has a Turkish title!

We drove to the Mosque of Sheikh Abdel Qader al Gailani in Bab-el-Sheikh. We walked through the courtyard, but couldn't get in to see the tomb because of the crowd. Then we visited the Izzagh factory nearby and ordered some abayas and ezzagh, hand loomed of silk and gold thread with various designs. At 5 we all drove to the British Consulate to tea with Mrs Lorimer. There was a difference of 6 hours and 20 minutes between the English time and the Turkish as the Turkish is always 12 at sunset and the English have the sunset today at 5.40. The house is very nice and is only built on three sides of the courtyard, quite modern and on the river. We went upstairs to the drawing room, and to our surprise we found a real English drawing room, such as we had not seen since leaving Bombay. After tea we went onto the verandas, which are very large, then we went on to the roof and were shown the

roof room where they used to keep the beddings during the hot daytime sun. They always sleep on the roof and enjoy it. There was an Indian soldier there, who was watching for the sunset, as he dips the flag every day at sundown at the sound of the bugle. The Comet, an Indian marine boat is stationed opposite. Mrs Lorimer said that Sir W. Willcocks had been relating our Basrah experiences to them. In the evening Jacob did the Kapparot for us on the covered veranda near the kitchen. There is a scarcity of white cocks this year and they are very expensive. Poor Meir Eliahou is very ill and the operation does not seem to have done him any good. He is so charitable and has done so much good. During his illness, when they carried him upstairs he gave T£5 mitzvah for every step; there were about 20-24 steps.

Wednesday, 12th October – Kippur's Eve

One piece of news is that Mr Strauss, the American Ambassador at Constantinople (whom Mamma met at Sir Samuel Montagu's dinner when

we were at the Grosvenor Hotel in June 1906) has abandoned his visit to Russia, having been refused a privilege passport, because he is a Jew, and receiving only the usual authorisation issued to Jewish merchants. They subsequently ordered a special permit, but Mr Strauss declined.

At the Great Synagogue they have a 110 years old Parokhet falling to pieces which has a complete plan of the future third Temple, which they bring out only on Yamim Noraim and Semhat Torah. Hakham Yosef Hayeem A.H. who died last year wanted it copied. I think David is going to buy it. On the eve of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur all the Jews visit the cemeteries after morning prayers and the poor people go to the different houses and beg. On the eve of Rosh Hashana though we distributed money they were so troublesome that today Jacob asked Abdel Qader Pasha to send a soldier to stand at the door.

At 9.30 Mamma, Diana, Rachel and I with Hakham Nessim Ben Abu Reuben (on the box) drove to see the Jewish Cemetery (David had another appointment). We felt very sad to see the



Tallisim (Bab-el-Tellesim) or (Bab-el-Westani), the tower of the ancient Baghdad rampart which was built by Abu Jaffar el Mansour the first founder of Baghdad in the year 730 A.D.

This tower was blown down by the Turks on their evacuation of Baghdad 1917.



Parents of Farha (Flora) Sassoon – Ezekiel Abraham Gubbay 1824-1896. He left Baghdad to Bombay in 1842 and married in 1853. Aziza 1839-1897 daughter of Abdulla (Albert) David Sassoon. Pictures taken at their wedding.

...shabbiness and struggling state of the whole place. The community go on working their way eastwards, although here is a vast plain westwards, which originally was the site of the old graves, for fear of exhuming any bones. The name is inscribed on the side where the head goes, and is kept covered with a brick, which can be pulled out when they wish to read the name. The graves are covered with bricks and mud; they are afraid to use stones or marbles, because the graves would be demolished and the materials stolen. The poor Jews – how different are the English and the Armenian cemeteries which have high boundary walls and cypress trees.

End of Diary

Ps...
See Notes on next page ➡



Solomon D Sassoon, 1875 late husband of Farha



Mrs Flora Sassoon in London 1910

NOTES:

On one occasion during the visits to Mrs Farha Sassoon, 6 Chief Rabbis, past, present and future sat under one roof. It is noteworthy that the visitors did not appear to having been offered the Masgouf Shabbout fish of which Baghdad is famous.

The Turkish pound was a gold Lira worth at the time 12 Indian Rupees or 18 Shillings. We greatly admire the scope and interesting details in the Diary of Mozelle (1884-1921). David Sassoon wrote his own diary which appeared in Hebrew in a book entitled (Massa'a Babel). ➡



The family of Saleh Elishaa (Sassoon)



"Yimma Hannah" (daughter of Yehushoua Gubbay, and cousin of Farha's father) surrounded by family members.

From right to left:

Standing: Naima Abraham; Muzli Yehuda; Saleh Yehuda; David Yehuda; Eliahou Yehuda; Khatoun Baroukh; Yehuda Shoua; Saleh Baroukh; Sion Baroukh; Yousef Yehezkel Sasson Zubaida; Farha Yehuda

Sitting: Aziza Baroukh; Yehuda Shoua; Seniora "Yima Hannah"; Yehuda Eliahou Yehuda; Habiba Eliahou Yehuda; Rahel Eliahou Yehuda; Muzli Baroukh; Yehuda Shoua; Abdullah son of Aziza; Naima daughter of Aziza; Muzli daughter of Aziza; Salman Abraham Eliahou Yehuda; Reuben son of Aziza; Semha daughter of Habiba; Menashe Abraham Eliahou Yehuda

Scribe:

In the short space of 40 years, the following momentous event happened in and around the region:-

- The First World War (1914-1918)
- The Russian Revolution (1917)
- The Balfour Declaration (1917)
- The Dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire
- The Dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire
- Iraq given to Arab Rule (1921)
- The emergence of 21 Arab countries, under Mandate
- The Turkish Republic adopts the Latin alphabet (1923)
- The rise of Nazi Germany (1933)
- The Second World War (1939-1945)
- The Farhud in Iraq, hundreds of Jews killed (1941)
- The Holocaust (1942-1945)
- The Independence and Partition of India (1947)
- The creation of the State of Israel (1948)
- The discovery of vast oil reserves in Arab countries
- The forced emigration of about a million Jews from Iraq and other Arab countries (1950)

In 1910, the safest way to travel from London to Baghdad would have been by sea to Bombay and from there to Basrah by local steamer and from Basrah to Baghdad by riverboat, totalling 5 weeks. In 1950, regular airlines took only 5 hours from London to Baghdad. ♦

Baghdad as a Jewish city

It has often been said that New York is a Jewish city. I think one can safely say the same about Baghdad of the first half of the twentieth century.

To have an idea of the city's demography and the position of the Jews in those five decades, it is enough to glance at these few facts of statistics:

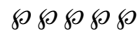
In 1904, the French vice-consul in Baghdad gave the number of Jews in the then Ottoman Baghdad vilayet as 40,000, out of a total population of 160,000.

In 1910, a British consular report estimated the number of Jews in Baghdad as ranging from 45,000 to 50,000.

In October 1921, a British publication quoted these population figures for the city as given in the last official year-

The Expelling of Nazem Pasha - The Wali of Baghdad

In March 1911, Nazem Pasha received an order from Istanbul terminating his appointment as Governor of Baghdad. There was a public outcry against this order and, despite a wave of strikes and hunger strikes in support of the popular Wali, Istanbul refused to rescind the order and he was replaced by a new Governor Yousef Pasha. ♦



The National Front

If members of the National Front want to demonstrate or parade they should be allowed to do so to their hearts content in one of the parks, but should not be allowed to demonstrate or parade in areas where people live or work.

N E Dangoor

**

Thank you for your letter of 19 April to the Home Secretary, concerning National Front marches. It has been passed to me to reply.

Your comments have been noted. ♦

Mr Stuart Moore
Home Office
Policing and Crime Reduction Group
Action Against Crime & Disorder

book of the Baghdad vilayet: total number of inhabitants, 202,200, of whom: 80,000 were Jews; 12,000 Christians; 8,000 Kurds, 800 Persians; and 101,400 Arabs, Turks and other Muslims.

A proclamation issued by the British military Governor in the early 1919's fixed the number of sheep to be slaughtered daily in Baghdad East (al-Risafa, the more populous half of the city) at 220 for Jewish butchers and 160 for Muslim and other butchers.

In the Baghdad Chamber of Commerce most of the members were Jews and the administrative council consisted of 8 Jews and 8 Moslems. ♦

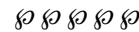
Nessim Rejwan
Israel

Elijah's Chair

The Brit Milah of the first grandson of Rabbi Dr Abraham and Estelle Levy, the son of Julian and Sian Isaac, was celebrated last February at the Lauderdale Synagogue to a gathering of over 200 guests. On that occasion the Chair of Elijah which was donated by the Smouha family was first used.

After the service and ceremony, a lavish breakfast was offered in the Montefiori Hall. Guests were presented with a copy of an English translation of a monograph on Benedictions by Rabbi Isaac Levy of Gibraltar which contains a genealogy of the Levy family going back to the year 1640.

We learn from the interesting chapters of this beautifully produced little book that Grace after Meals can be said in any language. ♦



Historical society of Jews from Egypt

P O Box 230445, Brooklyn, NY 11223
Fax: 718-998 2497

FROM OUR PREAMBLE

This organisation shall be known as HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF JEWS FROM EGYPT, and not of Egypt or of Egyptian Jews, but FROM EGYPT for the purpose will be to include all our co-religionists whose lineage have sojourned in the Jewish Communities of Egypt.

The aims of this society are to preserve, maintain, co-ordinate the implementation, and to convey our rich heritage to our children and grandchildren, using all educational means at our disposal to bring into being the necessary foundations.

Passover.....celebrating the birth of our people's Freedom from Egypt and so we learn; our fathers were slaves in Egypt, and if it wasn't for the Almighty's intervention we would have been slaves in Egypt until today.

Scribe:

The truth about Passover: Who made us slaves in Egypt? It was none other than Joseph as a result of cornering the grain market. The whole population of Egypt became slaves to Pharaoh. When a new Pharaoh arose (Rameses 1) he released the Egyptians but kept the Hebrews in their bondage. ♦

Destroying Idols

The move by Afghanistan's religious leaders to destroy the idols of Buddhism is to be applauded. They offend the followers of monotheism, worshippers of the one true God, Creator and Sustainer of our universe, especially Jews and Moslems.

So who is ranged against the courageous Afghan move? It is the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the fundamentalist regime of Iran, the puritan kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the supreme authority of Al Azhar Imam of Cairo. President Hosni Mubarak tells the Afghans that Egypt has not destroyed the pharaonic idols. But the followers of these idols no longer exist, whereas Buddhism is thriving. The tradition of destroying idols goes back to Abraham, ancestor of both Jews and Arabs.

What makes Afghanistan head and shoulders above the rest of Islam? It is the Jewish connection of the Afghan people. "The Afghans have a tradition that they descend from the lost Ten Tribes. They were carried away by Buktunaser. In the book (Taaqati-Nasiri) a native book, it is stated that at the time of the Shansabi Dynasty there were a people called Bani Israel who settled in Ghor, S.E. of Herat, and about the year 622 CE (the Hegra took place that year) converted the Islam by a person called Qais or Kish, who led some

Afghan nobles to Arabia to embrace Islam. Mohammed greeted him as "malik" (king) as he claimed descent through 47 generations from Saul. Qais died in 662 aged 87. All the modern chiefs of Afghanistan claim descent from him. The Afghans still call themselves Beni-Israel. Their claim to Israeli-tish descent is allowed by most Mohammedan writers. King Amanullah Khan once stated they were of the tribe of Benjamin." (Jewish Encyclopaedia).

Additional references: Afghanistan (Khorasan in medieval Muslim and Hebrew sources). Early Karaite and Rabbinite biblical commentators regarded Khorasan as a location of the Ten Tribes of Israel. Afghanistan annals also trace the Hebrew origin of some of the Afghan tribes, in particular the Durrani, the Yussafzai and the Afridi to King Saul (Talut). This belief appears in the 17th century Afghan Chronicle, Makhzan-i-Afghan." (Enc. Jud.)

Naim Dangoor writes:

Years ago I went to the Afghan Embassy in London to enquire if it was known that the Afghan Royal Family was of Jewish origin. I was told they will find out. Six months later the Royal Family was toppled and the exiled Afghan king still lives in Italy. ♦

Interfaith Conference Held in Moscow

Taken from:

Academic Response To Antisemitism & Racism in Europe (Arare)

Chairman: Professor Eric Moonman

An interfaith conference was held in Moscow last October and was attended by representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Congress of Jewish Religious Communities of Russia and the Council of Muftis of Russia, as well as from other religious communities functioning in Russia. Scholars from the United States and Europe also participated. Organised by a Russian group which promotes inter-religious dialogue and supported by the government and by the Federation of Jewish Organisations, the Conference was entitled "Search for Paths of Peace and Harmony: Common Responsibility of Christians, Moslems and Jews" and was held in the official residence of the

Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. The conference represents the first time that Jewish-Islamic and Jewish-Russian Orthodox dialogue was conducted within Russia on such a high level.

UNPRECEDENTED PUTIN GESTURE

In an unprecedented gesture to Russian Jewry, President Putin spent 90 minutes at the dedication of a Lubavitch synagogue which had been repeatedly bombed by neo-Nazis. The former KGB officer used the occasion to decry anti-semitism and to laud the revival of Judaism in Russia.

The hate crimes in Russia extend beyond the Jews. African diplomats in Moscow reportedly fear for their safety after being targeted by neo-Nazi skinheads believed to be working in co-operation with the KKK (Klu Klux Klan) and German extremists. ♦

Jewish Genealogical Conference

The 21st International Conference on Jewish Genealogy, the largest event of its kind staged outside the United States, has styled itself "London 2001". Some 1,000 delegates attended, including many of non-Jewish background, reflecting the ethnic mix of the speakers, and testifies to the recent explosion of interest in genealogy. The opening up of the archives of the former Soviet Union countries, advances in genetic technology, law suits over restitution of artworks and other property looted during the Holocaust have all contributed to the expanded nature and boundaries of genealogy.

More than 170 leading academics, historians and scientists from across the world addressed Europe's largest ever conference on Jewish Genealogy, which was held in London last July. Among the speakers were –

David Dangoor – Babylonian Jewry
(Read excerpts of this talk later in this issue)

Rita Bogdanova and colleagues –
Overview of the Holdings of the
Latvian State Archives

Lydia Collins – Sephardi Manchester

Professor Yitzhak Kerem – The Jews
of Salonika and Greek Jewish
Sources

Ilana Tahan – Jewish Genealogical
Resources in the British Library

as well as Stephen D Smith MBE,
founder and director of the Beth Shalom
Holocaust Centre

The Bible includes much genealogical material, attempting to trace the human family tree from Adam Harishon. Subsequent lists of who begat whom had to do with the need to trace land titles in Israel in accordance with the way the country was divided and allotted to the various tribes by Moses.

Visit the web page: <http://www.jewishgen.org/london2001>

Email: info.london2001@talk21.com

Write: London2001, PO Box
27061, London N2 0GT, England ♦

Babylonian Jewry

by David Dangoor

Excerpt of the talk he gave at the 21st Jewish Genealogical Conference, held in London last July

Babylonia was one of the main birthplaces of the Jewish people from its earliest times, as well as the place where the foundations of Judaism as we know it today were constructed. The area between the River Tigris and Euphrates, approximating to modern day Iraq, can lay claim to a greater part of our history as a nation and as a religion, than any other place. Not only was it from there that Abraham emerged as the founder of our people on his journey to Israel, but it was here that the Jews had autonomy for most time as a people for over 1,000 years, here that the Babylonian Talmud was created from where it formed the framework for rabbinic Judaism. It was in Babylon that the synagogue and the love of learning grew.

Our story starts in Ur, in southern Mesopotamia, where Abram's father Terah, the head of an Aramean Nomadic family escaped from there in the face of an annihilating attack by Elamite hords attacking Sumaria in about 1960 BCE. An attack in which Ur was destroyed. Terah made his way north with his family to Harran where he died. The succession fell to Abram, his eldest son. Unlike his father, a polytheist worshipping idols, Abram was a monotheist. He broke with idolatry, and turned to the service of the one and only God whom he recognised and by whom he was re-named Abraham. This was not a God restricted to one locality, but the Creator of Heaven and Earth, independent of nature and geographical limitation, and essentially an ethical God to whom justice and righteousness was of supreme concern.

Proceeding south along the eastern bank of the Jordan, he crossed into the land of Canaan to Shechem near Jerusalem. According to Josephus, Abraham was called "The Hebrew" in reference to his ancestor Heber mentioned in the Bible. The Hebrews appear again on the Mesopotamian scene over a thousand years later, when Nebuchadnezzar, the powerful Babylonian King conquered the Kingdom of Judah and captured Jerusalem in 597 BCE, and deported leading Jews to Babylon. After a rebellion by Judah, Jerusalem and the Temple

were destroyed in 586 BCE, and most of the inhabitants were deported.

When the last group of Jews arrived in Babylonia, they found two other groups of Hebrews already there. One group, there for only eleven years, were recent newcomers still learning to cope with a new life.

The other group were the descendants of those deported by the Assyrians in 721 BCE from the northern kingdom of Israel. However, unlike their predecessors, the later exiles of Judah did not assimilate, because they were more attached to their religious traditions. The prophet Jeremiah's advice to the exiles was: build houses and live in them, plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters, multiply there and do not decrease. And seek the welfare of the City where God has sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord for its peace, for in its peace you will find your peace.

This became the charter for all the diasporas.

Within 48 years of the destruction of Jerusalem, Babylon was conquered by the Persian King Koresh, Cyrus the Great. He allowed the Jews to return home and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. Forty thousand did, but the majority stayed in Babylon.

It was the policy of the Achaemenian rulers, from Cyrus down, to tolerate the cults of the subjugated nationalities throughout their empire. Jews in Babylonia worked mainly as farmers as they had in the Holy Land but they also worked as bakers and brewers, weavers, dyers and tailors, shipbuilders and woodcutters. There are records of Jewish blacksmiths, tanners, fishermen, sailors and porters. Street vendors eked out a modest living while men of commerce exported grain, wine, wool and flax, and imported silk, iron and precious stones.

It was at this time that the foundations of the synagogue were laid. The synagogue met the needs of the exiles in more than one sense. It was natural for those living near one another to meet on the days they did not work, the Sabbath, Festivals and Fast days. Without a Temple, they could not sacrifice, but they could sing songs which accompanied the sacrifices and which the scribes had preserved.

In the meantime, the Jewish commu-

nity in Babylon contributed much towards the rebuilding of the structures in Israel. The High Priest Joshua, thought to be Deutero Isaiah and the Prophet Ezekiel are buried in Babylon.

The Babylonian, Ezra the scribe gave Judaism the decisive impulse that eventually produced the Pharisee movement and the rabbinical system. He changed the Hebrew alphabet, and set himself to make the Torah the governing force in Jewish life. It is said of him that if the Torah had not been given to Moses, Ezra would have been worthy to receive it. His shrine (shown on the cover of this issue) stands in Southern Iraq.

In the year 331 BCE, the Achaemenians lost control of Babylonia when their armies were defeated by Alexander the Great in the Battle of Gaugamela near Arbil (Arbela). The Persian troops stationed in the capital Babylon surrendered without fighting and the Macedonian conqueror made a triumphal entry into the old Semitic metropolis. Alexander went on with his swift conquest all the way to India. Two years later he was back in Babylon where he was struck by fever and died there at the age of thirty-two.

Seleucus, one of Alexander's Generals, made himself master of Babylon, and the large Seleucid empire ruled Babylonia for just over two centuries to 126 BCE.

In 126 BCE, forty years after the Maccabian revolt in Israel, the Seleucid empire was driven out from Babylon by the Parthians, another Persian group, whose Arsacid dynasty provided 350 years of reasonably stable Persian rule, which though it had its ups and downs for the Jews, was generally a benign period. The Arsacids were concerned with fostering local support among indigenous populations and so made little effort to impose their culture and religion over them. Palestinian Jewry under the Hasmoneans, and Arsacid Parthia had a common interest in the destruction of the Seleucid Greek power.

At the beginning of the present era there were many conversions to Judaism all over the Middle East. In about 40 CE, in northern Iraq, the Royal Family and many of the people of Adiabene became Jews. It is estimated that there may have been as many as one million Jews around Babylonia at that time. ☛

...However, when in the year 363 the Roman Emperor Julian the Apostate offered Babylonian Jewry to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem if they turned against their Persian rulers, they refused.

Parthian reinforcement saw the establishment of a position called the Resh Galuta which is Aramaic for Head of the Exiles, or Exilarch. The holder of this position exercised government over all Babylonian Jewry and Jewry within the Parthian empire. The holders of the office traced their lineage back through the male line to King David and they passed the position within the family, mostly from father to son for 900 years.

During the Parthian rule the Exilarch had his own courts and prisons and collected taxes on behalf of his administration and the central government. There are even records of capital punishment being meted out. This autonomy continued during Sassanian rule, though the powers of the Exilarch were initially severely restricted until the Jewish government accepted State Law on certain matters such as land tenure and payment of taxes, summarised by the principle of *dina de malchuta dina* (secular law is law) which remains a basic Jewish principle even today.

Most of the fourth century saw Jewish persecution in Babylonia, with many killed, and children given to Mazdean Priests. Jews were even forbidden to light Shabbath candles. When the Sasanians embraced briefly the teachings of Mazdak which included the sharing of property and women, the Exilarch Mar Zutra II expelled the Mazdakites in the year 513, and declared an independent state which lasted seven years, until he was captured and killed in 520.

The idea grew among the Jews of Babylonia that knowledge was an important acquisition. The ignoramus was to be despised, and a man's standing in the community began to depend not so much on family and wealth as on intellectual endeavour and achievement. Young and old became interested in acquiring knowledge. A young man was counselled to sell if necessary all he possessed to marry the daughter of a learned man. Gradually Jews experienced a kind of cultural democracy. The synagogue had eliminated the priestly intermediary, and education made the Torah available to all. The Torah was read and explained on Shabbat, but since farmers lived some distance from synagogues, and could not travel on Shabbat, portions of the Torah were also read on market days, Mondays and Thursdays. In the Holy Land they

read the whole Torah over a three year cycle instead of the Babylonian one year cycle which has prevailed.

Great academies also grew in Nehardea, Sura, and Pumbedita, and while people such as the great Hillel the Babylonian used to go to Jerusalem to study, the centre of gravity of Jewish learning gradually shifted to Babylon. In 219 CE Rav returned to Babylonia and formed the Sura Academy. It was here that the Amoraim over many generations (about three centuries) did their work to explain or complete the Mishna. The word Gemara is from the Aramaic word completion.

The Gemara exists in two versions: the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud, but it is the Babylonian Talmud that has had the greatest influence on Judaism, as we know it. This is partly because it was focused more on issues important in the Diaspora, partly because the Babylonian community governed itself and so the rules had a direct relevance, and also because this resulted in more polishing of the work by repeatedly revisiting and explaining difficult passages. Also the tyranny of Rome in Judea had prevented the completion of the Jerusalem Talmud.

In 641 CE the Muslims conquered Mesopotamia with the help of Babylonian Jewry who had been suffering from Masdakite religious fanaticism. Such great help was given to the Muslims by the Jews that when the Muslims conquered Persia the two daughters of the Shah were taken by the Caliph Omar, who married one and gave the other in marriage to the Exilarch Bustanai. Muslims divided the world into two main domains; Dar Al-Islam (the domain of Islam), and Dar Al-Harb (the domain of war) but in between they introduced the concept of Dar Al-Sulh (the domain of conciliation) which belong to such peoples as Jews and Christians (the people of the Book) called *Dhimmi*s to whom toleration and protection was extended by treaty, in return for protection money called *Jezia*. The life of the Jews of Babylonia under Islam took a turn for the better, partly because of the affinity between the two religions.

What is more, the very expansion of the Muslim empire and the establishment in 762 CE of Baghdad as the capital of the Moslem world, and the seat of the Caliphate, opened up extraordinary opportunities for commerce as well as for the extension of the influence of the Babylonian academies.

As a result, one of the main activities

of the academies of Sura and Pumbeditha and one of the most significant functions of their heads, the Geonim, was answering queries coming from Jewish communities near and far. These answers were given in *Teshuboth*, *responsa*. The questions touched on the whole range of law and the plain meaning of a talmudic phrase or the order of prayers, or points of dogma or history. The answers were often read in public, in synagogues and schools, with copies made and carried to other communities. Subsequently a whole body of collected *responsa* literature evolved. Many of the remote communities of the diaspora survived on the intellectual guidance coming from Babylonia. Many Geonim in the four centuries after the Muslim conquest had a great reputation throughout the Jewish world. One notable among them was Sa'adia Gaon of Sura in the 10th Century who composed a Book of Seasons about the Jewish calendar, an Arabic translation of the Bible for the common people, and a philosophical justification of Judaism. Another notable Gaon was Samuel Ibn Al-Dastur who also had a daughter who was so learned that she taught the students, but had to do so from inside a building through a window, so the students below her could not see her.

During the period of Geonim, and perhaps in part as a reaction to rabbinic talmudic Judaism, a sect of Judaism called the Karaites based on a literal interpretation of the Bible (*Karaim* means scripturalists) was started in the 8th century by Anan Ben-David, a wayward elder brother who was passed over in the position of Exilarch in favour of his younger brother. On challenging this he was sentenced to death, but in prison was advised to offer a bribe and claim a new religion that accepted a place for Jesus and Mohammed and which had a different calendar. It gained many disciples over the following centuries and was the greatest threat that rabbinic Judaism had encountered for many centuries.

During the early years of Islam, the Exilarch as the temporal head of the Jewish community was shown great honour and respect by the Muslims. He would visit the Caliph every Thursday with a grand processional escort of Jews and non-Jews, and a herald in front of him would cry out; *Make way before our Lord, the son of David*. He would kiss the Caliph's hand and the Caliph would rise and place him on a throne beside him.

Though the Jews' experience of Islam was generally a very positive one they, like all non-Muslims, did suffer ☞

...when their rulers were of a more fanatical disposition. Distinctive and unusual clothing to humiliate them was occasionally the order of the day, as well as restrictions of freedom for non-Muslims. Also the Caliph Haroun el Rashid fought against the Khazars who had converted to Judaism and when he met military setbacks against them he took it out on the Jews of Iraq.

Afghanistan today probably gives an insight into the occasional lurches to fundamentalism that occurred from time to time.

Babylonian influence over other Jewish communities began to wane largely as a result of quarrels among Moslem people themselves and the weakening of the Caliphate.

Baghdad ceased to be the centre of the Muslim world between the 10th and 12th Centuries, but disaster was to strike with the conquest of the Mongols. In 1258 Hulagu, the grandson of Genghis Khan stormed the city. The majority of Baghdad's inhabitants of over 800,000 people (some say as high as two million) including the Caliph and his family was slaughtered and the city given over to plunder and flames, as was the Mongol way

Some accounts suggest that many Jews and other Dhimmis were spared, and thirty years later a Jew called Sa'ad Al-Dawla was made Governor of Iraq. Three years later he was assassinated and the mob turned the Jewish Quarter of Baghdad into a scene of murder and plunder. However two years later an economic crisis compelled the regime to turn to another Jewish physician financier for help. Rashid Al-Dawla's position as minister lasted for two decades but when his master died he was accused by his enemies of having poisoned him, and was executed in 1316.

In 1401 Tamerlane, the last and greatest of the Mongols, conquered Baghdad again with great loss of life including Jewish lives. The Mongol occupation of Iraq brought about the downfall of Babylonian Jewry as a force in the Jewish world.

After turbulent times and a succession of rulers, the Ottoman Sultan, Salim the Savage, took much of Mesopotamia in 1516, and in 1534 the greatest Ottoman, Sulaiman the Magnificent, entered Baghdad accompanied by a number of Jewish scholars and physicians. He is the one who encouraged Sephardi Jews, recently expelled from Spain to settle in his empire. He would ask how the King of Spain could call himself wise and

allow such an important and useful part of his population to leave. He was warmly welcomed by Baghdad's small Jewish community. The Ottomans were on the whole very favourable to minorities including the Jews, as they perceived the main threat to their rule would come from the majority populations.

The Persians re-conquered Baghdad in 1623. Fifteen years later, Sultan Murad IV laid siege to it. On the night before attack he went in as a beggar to survey. In the evening, he knocked at a Jewish door. Decided that a full loaf would be a good omen, he got full loaf and accommodation. The next day Murad captured Baghdad and later enquired what Mrs Parizat, who had given him lodging, would want as a present. At her request, the growing Jewish community were given a large piece of land to be used as a cemetery. After the Revolution of 1958 President Qassem appropriated the cemetery to build the highest tower in the world. He paid no compensation as the community had forgotten to register its ownership in 1930.

However later Sultans let power slip back to the local Pashas under whom the lot of the Jews deteriorated. Emigration took its toll, and during the 18th and 19th centuries plagues of fearful dimensions left the yeshivot half empty, the rabbinate crippled and the community much reduced. The result was the population of Baghdad is not likely to have grown much in the past five centuries. Indeed the Jewish population of the area of Babylonia in 1950 was about the same as it was 2,500 years earlier at the time when Koresh conquered Babylon. This is despite having been many times larger at certain intervening periods.

In 1917 the British entered Baghdad where the Jews of the district now numbered 80,000, among a population of 200,000). The Jews were soon concerned because the British intended to give the Arabs independence. They feared discrimination. Despite assurances from the British who appointed the Emir Faisal as the first King of Iraq, their minority position gradually resulted in handicaps which got worse when Faisal's son, Ghazi, took over. He was more stridently nationalist, and less of a statesman. Under the influence of Nazi propaganda, Jews began to find access to government jobs and institutes of higher learning restricted to them. Zionist activity abroad was creating a growing nationalist backlash at home, and Jews found themselves having to make numerous declarations of loyalty to deal with mounting hostilities.

A pro-axis government took power in the spring of 1941 with army support, and denied British troops access to military bases in Iraq. When British forces came in, this government fled, but the British stayed outside the capital for a few days while the mob set upon the Jews. About 180 were killed and many more injured in the days before a curfew was imposed.

A lull of a few years occurred, but with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and the poor showing of Iraqi troops against it, the Jews found themselves facing government victimisation and extortion with confiscation and fines following trumped-up charges. The few who left the country were required to pay huge deposits, and many started to leave illegally across the mountains. Eventually the government introduced a law allowing Jews to leave on the surrender of their nationality, and loss of their assets. It was declared that there was to be an exchange of populations with Palestinian refugees who were to occupy vacated Jewish houses. Two bombs went off, one among Jewish people and another in a synagogue. As a result when the massive airlift to Israel, known as Operation Ezra and Nehemia, took place in 1951, most of the Jews in Iraq got out with little more than the clothes they were wearing. By 1952 over 130,000 had left and only 6,000 remained. Since then most of those have also left by one means or another so that today, apart from about thirty very old Jews, no-one remains from the community that had flourished for thousands of years.

Today the Babylonian Jewish community is roughly estimated at about 300,000 worldwide, out of which about 280,000 are living in Israel. Outside Israel there are about 25,000, mainly in the US and UK.

Babylonian Jewish children were taught at an early age to memorise as much of their family tree as possible – at least to a well-known ancestor, who would remain a landmark for several generations that followed him.

The Bible's emphasis on genealogy was to do with protecting land titles.

Community positions, which once attained, were often held for life, featured in names. The President of a congregation was called Hazzan from Hazzanu (Governor), and that title became a surname for the person and for following generations of the family. The Treasurer was known as the Gubbay, and the Secretary was known as the Shamash. A number of Iraqi Jewish families bear the names Hazzan, Gubbay and Shamash. ☛

...Other surnames referred to places of origin e.g. Shirazi, Karkukli, Hillawi, Mandelawi, Basri, etc. or the profession e.g. Haddad (Blacksmith), Shoheit (Slaughterer), Kateb (Writer=Sofer), Baqqal (Grocer) and Saatchi (Watch repairer), or pedigree e.g. Cohen, Lawi, Nasi, Hakham or Siddiq.

However surnames were not used for much of the time until recently. Instead we used a pattern of first names with one or two distinguishing names threading the line.

Families confined themselves to only a few names which were then repeated in different patterns. Secondary branches established new patterns.

Unfortunately most of the ancient records of our community disappeared in the constant warfare that plagued that region. Perhaps genetic analysis in the coming years will reveal again some knowledge of general genealogical patterns.

In the last three centuries, extensive records were made and are still available. Useful sources of information have been for example the military tax that was levied by the Ottomans from the Jews and which was fully recorded. Some families can date their family tree back to the 17th Century. My own family records go back to around 1700. At that time there was a massive death toll in Baghdad from one of the plagues that decimated the population in that period. New rabbis were brought in, often from Aleppo. My father once came across a person in London who looked identical to a close relative of ours. He asked him his surname which turned out to be Danker, very close to Dangoor. The name apparently is carried by a number of Jewish people from a town in Latvia which was called Dankera, now called Gostini. So perhaps our family came to Baghdad from Spain via Latvia and Aleppo.

Efforts are made to preserve the history and traditions of Babylonian Jewry today. My father created a Foundation called The Exilarch's Foundation to keep alive many traditions of the community.

He has been publishing a magazine of Babylonian Jewry for thirty years with over 4000 copies distributed free all over the world. It covers a vast range of the culture of our community from history and family trees to poetry and literature, politics and current affairs, cookery and familiar proverbs.

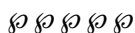
The Scribe is now available on the internet at scribe1.com.

The Exilarch's Foundation has also published a number of editions of the

Baghdadi Haggada which includes the translation in Arabic which used to be sung in full as part of the Seder, with the Arabic written only in Hebrew characters.

The Babylonian Jewry Museum in the town of Or Yehuda near Tel Aviv features a reproduction of an alleyway in the Jewish Quarter of Baghdad around 100 years ago. It also houses temporary and permanent exhibits and hosts educational activities, symposia for artists, etc.

There are associations in Israel of groups of Iraqi origin, for example the Association of Jewish Academics from Iraq which have published many books including a dictionary of the distinctive Judeo-Arabic dialect of Iraq. Apart from distinctive traditions and a distinctive dialect, Iraqi Jews used their own characteristic Hebrew script. ♦



The Hilda Sofaer Centre

Edinburgh House, our own Spanish and Portuguese Residential Care Home for the elderly, is a registered charity which was established in 1747 and is one of the oldest Jewish charities in the UK. It provides accommodation and care for Jewish men and women, with facilities for religious observance. The current building, situated in Wembley, was opened in November 1977. After many years of heavy use it required upgrading and refurbishment, to enable continuing the provision of the best possible levels of comfort and service, which the residents, families, carers, volunteers and staff alike so richly deserve.

The construction work commenced in January 2000, at a cost of £1,100,000. It could not be funded by the government or the local authorities and therefore an appeal to provide the funds was made to Trusts, Foundations and members of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews community, who gave significant support, and the balance was pledged by Elias Sofaer and his family in memory of his late wife Hilda, whose untimely death shocked the Community.

The whole complex therefore is being named The Hilda Sofaer Centre and comprises the refurbished Edinburgh House plus additional bedrooms and facilities as well as a conservatory and a new physiotherapy room. ♦

Regarding Hakham Shim'on Aghassi

(Issue 73)

by Edward Yamen - Milan

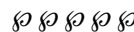


Hakham Shim'on Aghassi Z'L

I take pleasure in sending you herewith a valuable picture which I treasured for scores of years now, of the late Rabbi and which I find as a necessary complement to the article.

Pictures of those who are not anymore with us are fundamental for the sake of recognition, appreciation and identification.

It goes without saying that the picture of the Rabbi illustrates in a very clear way a man of significance and genuineness. ♦



The Mary Nathaniel Golden Hall of Friendship

The Mary Nathaniel Golden Hall of Friendship, The Jerusalem Foundation and the YMCA have inaugurated last July the restored auditorium at the YMCA, Jerusalem, in the presence of the representatives of the major donors and Mr Teddy Kolleck.

A concert was performed in the Mary Nathaniel Golden Hall of Friendship in her memory. ♦

Two outstanding cousins

by Saeed Bershan

BA Commerce & Economics



Saeed Bershan

I feel very blessed and humble to be able to claim two outstanding individuals among my close relatives. Let me share with you some insight into their lives. Both combine exemplary morals, with a high degree of intelligence.

I will first mention my Uncle Meer Basri, the author, editor, poet and historian. For nigh 75 years now his reputation as a scholar with a superb mastery of the Arabic language has brought him esteem in the foremost literary circles in Iraq. Indeed he has such an astute memory for events, dates and personalities, well-known authors continue to defer to him in writing their books. His prolific powers are legendary as he continues to pen down articles, poems and books – both in English and Arabic – he hasn't stopped since 1933 (he is 90 now). He is regarded by the Iraqi poets and men of culture as one of them. Here in London he still attends scholarly circles where he is feted by his friends the Arabs –indeed they refer to him in a reverential manner (Istath), while his repertoire of books are still being sold all over the world.

He has served the Community with honesty and benefited them in many aspects without any personal remuneration. He has made many speeches and written many articles in newspapers both in Iraq and London, and appeared on radio in both countries.

My other worthy relative is my second cousin on my mother's side. Although a highly successful businessman, Naim Dangoor has remained very

approachable. I can cite many instances of his kindness, to me and to others. His excellent education is reflected in his expert writing on many topics: politics (he has first-class and intimate knowledge of our history and has often argued them with high and mighty), religious tractates, philosophy and science. That is not surprising when you realise the breadth of his travels and experiences, his great family tree and the extent of his philanthropy, both here and abroad. He has been one of the unique Iraqi Jews who have made it his business to meet top everywhere, as well as the Royal family and, along with his wife, been photographed with every 'who's who' you can imagine.

He was instrumental in founding in 1969 The Iraqi Community Centre which has proved crucial in bringing together successive generations of our dispersed community. One of his greatest contributions to the Iraqi Jews all over the world was to publish, since 1971, "The Scribe", filling it with interesting articles and nostalgic pictures, available to everyone, without charge, never mind the effort and the expense. His far-sightedness and generosity led him to establish The Exilarch's Charitable Foundation in order to continue a paramount Babylonian tradition and dignity.

Because of him we acquired an organ to testify to our common heritage. Because of him we resuscitated our Baghdadi and childhood memories, in the process discovering a distinctive culture. Thanks to The Scribe various people have begun to contribute even more. For one man to have achieved all of this, he must deserve a righteous status evermore.

As it happens, those two affable gentlemen are first cousins in their own right as well as good friends, and I conclude my letter by wishing them both continued health and happiness. Would our community ever produce such geniuses again? I wish.... ♦

§ § § § §

Quote...

Forty is the old age of youth,
Fifty is the youth of old age.

Victor Hugo

Israel, the Vatican and Anti-Semitism

From Clemens N Nathan

Israel asked the Vatican's "immediate intervention" in stopping the rising incidents of anti-semitism around the world.

Last October, Israeli Secretary Yitzhak Herzog asked the Holy See, Archbishop Pietro Sambi, apostolic nuncio to Israel, to confront the recent wave of anti-Semitic attacks.

A statement from Herzog's office said the conversation followed a special Israeli Cabinet meeting held a day earlier on the subject of the attacks. Herzog, who also is the Secretary of the Committee Against Anti-Semitism and Chairman of the government's Inter-Faith Dialogue Forum, stressed the importance of taking a "clear and unequivocal stand against anti-Semitism".

Herzog referred to the 1994 agreement signed by Israel and the Vatican regarding the curbing of anti-Semitism. Full Vatican-Israeli diplomatic relations were established in 1994.

"The Holy See should take a leading role in challenging the spread of anti-Semitism around the world", Herzog said. "The Israeli government sees its role as ensuring that Jews are not threatened or harmed because of their religion and calls on the enlightened nations to meet this challenge."

Archbishop Sambi declined to comment on the conversation.

After the recent flare-up of Israeli-Palestinian violence, tensions ran high in some European countries, especially France, where there is a significant Arab immigrant population. Jewish worshippers leaving their synagogues in France were the target of stone-throwing, and attackers set fire to several synagogues. ♦

§ § § § §

I realise that we must move with the times and that the internet is now the best form of communication, but The Scribe on the internet cannot replace the pleasure of handling the magazine and turning the pages and reminiscing about one's childhood and youth.

Would it be possible to publish it at an economic price like other publications?

Ray Sopher

London

Scribe: A computer colour print-out can be sent to all interested readers by sending a cheque for £10.00 (within the UK) or US\$20 (overseas) to The Exilarch's Foundation, 4 Carlos Place, Mayfair, London W1K 3AW, England ♦

The Centre for Jewish-Christian Relations

Dear Mr Dangoor

I thought the enclosed article which the Centre for Jewish Christian Relations has sent out might be interesting for your magazine. I am Chairman of the Board of Trustees and we have done a great deal of work for improving Christian Jewish understanding at an academic level in Cambridge. The Centre is very successful. We have today over 100 students studying Jewish Christian text and working together in a most harmonious manner.

Clemens N Nathan **London**

Recent developments in the Roman Catholic Church are sending out the wrong signals, and friends of the Church are concerned.

Of particular worry is the doctrine of the Faith's declaration, *Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus and the Church*. The outward purpose of this declaration is to offer a firm riposte to theologians who relativize the Christian faith and the Roman Catholic Church. However, it has been criticised by many involved in intra-faith as well as inter-faith dialogue, because the tone of the document is so grudging and because it represents a step in a concerted attempt to overturn the dialogue of recent decades.

The tone of *Dominus Iesus* fails to reflect the deeper understanding that has been achieved through dialogue over the last 30 years.

No wonder an alliance of Protestant churches criticised it as ecumenically insensitive. It required the personal intervention of Pope John Paul who emphasised the Catholic Church's commitment to improving ecumenical relations at a meeting with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (which claim a total membership of 75 million Christians in 106 countries). The commitments of the Catholic Church to ecumenical dialogue is irrevocable, he said in a welcome clarification.

This declaration has appeared immediately after a series of events which have depressed friends of the Roman Catholic Church. Attempts to canonise Pius XII and the linking of beautification of Pius IX with John XXIII have caused grave concern about what is going on in the Vatican. The pairing of these two Popes is clearly a balancing act between liberals and conservatives. For many of us, Pius IX is remembered primarily for holding out against modernity as well as acquiescing in the kidnapping and forcible conver-

sion of a Jewish child. Another worrying development is the recent outburst by the Cardinal Biffi, Archbishop of Bologna, about a Muslim "invasion" of Europe.

I fear that these events, whilst separate, represent a concerted attempt to reverse the advances that emerged from Vatican II. If such attitudes prevail, they will cause untold harm not just to relations between the Roman Catholic Church and other churches but also with Judaism and, more worryingly, to relations with other major religions, sharpening the anti-Christian fervour of some of their fundamentalists.

For example, there has always been a tension between Christianity and Islam because of the latter's missionary emphasis and Muslims are now more likely to take up a position of conflict. Anti-Christian violence has in recent years broken out in parts of Africa and Asia. This is not limited to Muslim countries: even India (a country with history of tolerance towards Jews and Christians) has seen outbreaks of anti-Christian feeling. This was previously almost unheard of, and the call for active missionary activity and evangelising the religions of the world will surely increase the risk of a recurrence of such explosions of feeling.

Although *Dominus Iesus* does not discuss the Catholic-Jewish relations, it clearly has important implications. Judaism is obviously non-Christian, yet it is not a subset of "non-Christian religions" either. It is in its own category but I wonder how followers of other religions view this document? How can Catholics involved in dialogue assert with integrity that their dialogue partners are in a gravely deficient situation?

This declaration is not, as some have suggested, a helpful line drawn in the sand. It may be that we are just witnessing conservative figures in the Church battling for the Pope's ear during the twilight of this papacy; but some liberal Catholic theologians fear that something far more sinister is afoot: nothing less than a conspiracy to overturn Vatican II.

Over the last 40 years we have watched and welcomed the more ecumenical approach adopted by the Church: the current Pope, though a conservative, has taken massive strides to heal the historic rift between Catholicism and Judaism. We have grown used to a Catholic Church which spoke of its "deep and mutual respect" for its brothers and sisters in other Christian churches, let alone its

Jewish "elder brothers".

From the liberal end of the Catholic spectrum there is a deafening silence. It would be interesting to know what Cardinal Cassidy thinks about all this. The Pope's recent journey to Israel and the Palestinian Territories has demonstrated his personal commitment to religious tolerance and understanding. Can the same be said about the Curia?

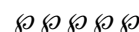
The dialogue between Catholics and Jews has deepened in recent years and the relationship has matured. The desire to create a sustained, positive relationship between us, the willingness to engage in authentic dialogue from our long and complex history, and the ability to give (and receive) criticism is part of an ongoing process (and should not simply be dismissed because it is a view which one partner does not like).

Dear Clemens

Thank you for your letter and enclosure which will be considered for the next issue of *The Scribe*.

The Vatican's declaration is a retrograde step. As a matter of fact I believe the trend should be in the opposite direction. Judaism has been regarded as the mother religion of Christianity and Islam, but I now believe that it is more correct to call all three religions as sister religions. There are elements both in Christianity and Islam that go far beyond the beginnings of our rabbinical religion and are all together on equal basis regarding our relationship. ♦

Naim



Map of Baghdad and Basra

I am writing my memoirs of my life in Iraq, and I need street maps of Basrah and Baghdad. I would very much appreciate it if you could tell me how I can get these maps. I have not been able to get these maps in the USA. My email address is... saubl1@msn.com and my mailing address is...

500 Manhattan Drive, B4, Boulder, CO 80303. My phone number is... 303-499-6193.

Shaul Basri

Reply:

The Babylonian Jewry Heritage Centre
83 M Ben-Porat Avenue
Or Yehuda 60261
Israel
email: babylon@babylonjewry.org.il

Consultative Council of Jewish Organisations

From: Chairman Clemens N Nathan

The Consultative Council of Jewish Organisations (CCJO) was established as an NGO (non-governmental organisation) at the United Nations in 1946 by Jewish organisations from both sides of the Atlantic to encourage the recognition of human rights for all people and to ensure the input of the Jewish ethical tradition in the development of international human rights law. The CCJO's first President was Rene Cassin, a principal drafter of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1968 in recognition of his work for human rights as a jurist, academic and statesman. The CCJO has been an active supporter of efforts to increase the effectiveness of the UN's human rights treaties and institutional mechanisms in the intervening decades. From the 1940s to the 1970s it was involved in the creation of the United Nations human rights instruments, which form the basis of the UN's human rights activities today. The CCJO's constituent organisations at present are the Anglo-Jewish Association, the Alliance Israelite Universelle, the American Friends of the Alliance, and the Canadian Friends of the Alliance.

As an NGO with special consultative status at the United Nations (as well as at UNESCO) the CCJO participates in Human Rights meetings, including the Commission on Human Rights and the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. It closely follows international human rights problems and developments, and has taken a particular interest in the establishment of an international criminal court. Recent CCJO briefings have been presented to various international bodies on subjects ranging from the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia to problems relating to laws dealing with the migration of workers.

Criteria for Papers

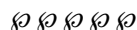
The CCJO is currently developing a new series of projects in furtherance of its fundamental aims. One of these is in connection with the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance to be held in South Africa in August 2001. Contemporary issues of racism and discrimination are arising that may not have

been adequately treated in existing instruments, and the effectiveness of current international machinery needs to be re-examined.

The CCJO wishes to encourage an innovative and dynamic approach to these issues, and for this purpose invites the submission of scholarly papers, 30 to 40 pages (double-spaced), on different aspects of racism and racial discrimination. The intention is not to promote any particular agenda, but rather to stimulate debate by presenting varied viewpoints.

The following topics are likely to be among those to be addressed at the World Congress:

- Religious freedom
- The scope and limits of restitution and compensation for victims of discrimination
- The treatment of racism and discrimination by the UN system
- Developments in the field of racism and discrimination in European law (EU and Council of Europe)
- Racism and the internet
- Refugees, internally displaced persons, asylum seekers
- Racism and the media
- Racism and the criminal justice system.



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Paul Bunn
Director, ISSN UK Centre
British Library - London



Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks invited Mr Shaoul Sasson to his home to congratulate him on his book in which Mr Sasson described his ordeals for one year in the hands of the Iraqi authorities.

The Chief Rabbi presented Mr Sasson with his latest book "Faith in the Future" inscribed:
To Shaoul Sasson

In admiration of your courage – which is a source of inspiration to me and to the Jewish people!

The above photograph shows them together at the Chief Rabbi's home. ♦

The Jews of Iraq

by Naim Dangoor

**Congress Bulletin Montreal
May-June 1971**

Hebrew Associations with Iraq go back to the time of Abraham who left Ur for Canaan by divine command around 1800 BCE because of religious intolerance. Both Isaac and Jacob took wives from the old country and eleven of Jacob's twelve children were born in Iraq.

The Jews appear again on the scene when, twelve centuries later, in 597 BCE, King Yehoyachin and 18,000 of the leading citizens of Judah were brought captive to Babylon. The people of Judah had been in two minds regarding foreign policy. The Hawks wanted to defend their country's independence. The Doves, led by the prophet Jeremiah, wanted to come to terms with the moderate King Nebuchadnezzar.

Eleven years afterwards Nebuchadnezzar came and razed Jerusalem to the ground, killed or dispersed the 4million inhabitants and took back with him 100,000 able-bodied men to dredge the silting irrigation canals of Babylonia, which is Southern Iraq, Northern Iraq, which depends on rainwater, is usually referred to as Mesopotamia. (The Jewish people have not recovered from that disaster).

Jeremiah had really very little interest in politics but he had a grand vision of establishing God's Kingdom on Earth. Nebuchadnezzar offered him safe passage to Babylon but he was not willing to face the bitter exiles. However, he sent them the following message which became in a way the charter of the Jewish Diaspora: "these are the words of the Lord of Host, the God of Israel: to all the exiles whom I have carried off from Jerusalem to Babylon: build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce; marry wives and beget sons and daughters... and seek the welfare of the City to which I have carried you off and pray to the Lord for it, for in its peace you will have peace". In Babylon the Diaspora became a way of life.

(In time the Babylonians came to treat their exiles well and the latter gradually took the position rather of colonists than of captives. Lands were allotted to them and they grew to love and own the soil they cultivated, some of which has remained in Jewish ownership until modern times).

In exile, the formula was – let us preserve the Torah so that the Torah will preserve us, a nation without a State of its own; and to hope that in time a Mashiyah will appear who will lead us back to the Promised Land. In 539 BCE the Persian King Koresh, Cyrus the Great, who is named in the Bible as Mashiyah, defeated Babylon and offered to repatriate the liberated Jews. But only 40,000 returned – the rest, about 80,000, encouraged by the Persians, stayed on to prosper in the rich land of the rivers, astride the main trade routes between East and West.

"By the Rivers of Babylon, there we decided to stay; we also wept when we remembered Zion."

The aim of the Persians was to create a buffer State. In Babylon, this Jewish buffer State retained its importance on and off for over 1,000 years. For example, in the year 363 CE the Roman Emperor Julian, who renounced Christianity, vainly tried to win over to his side the Babylonian and Mesopotamian Jewries in preparation of his contemplated invasion of Persia. He wrote to them, "When I have successfully concluded the War with Persia I will rebuild with my own efforts the sacred city of Jerusalem that you may glorify the most high God therein." But the community remained loyal to Persia. This loyalty had been a major factor in the disastrous Jewish war with Rome which ended with the destruction of the Second Temple.

It is interesting to observe here that in 1971 Iran celebrated the 2500th anniversary, a Jubilee of Jubilees, of Cyrus's Empire. As Israel was not going to be represented I offered to the Iranian Embassy to lead a delegation of Iraqi Jews to Persepolis to pay homage to the memory of Cyrus and his enlightened and tolerant rule. Teheran found it difficult to arrange this at short notice and we were invited instead to the reception at the Savoy Hotel which was attended by the Diplomatic Corps and other distinguished guests including members of the government, when I and twenty members of the community delivered to the Ambassador an illuminated scroll to commemorate the occasion. The Shah later expressed his appreciation and thanks.

The Babylonian Ezra gave Judaism the decisive impulse that eventually produced the Pharisaic Movement and the rabbinical system. He changed the Hebrew alphabet, started the synagogue

and set himself to make the Torah the governing force in Jewish Life. Seeing what happened to the Lost Ten Tribes, Ezra fixed Jewish priorities. Top priority is the preservation of the Torah. Second priority – the survival of the Jewish people and third priority – the establishment of a Jewish State. He was in a real sense the true founder of traditional Judaism from which also emerged Christianity and Islam. It is said of Ezra that if the Torah was not given to Moses, he would have been worthy to receive it. Centuries later, Hillel too went up from Babylon to Jerusalem. He was the first of the Tannaim who established the Oral Torah (Mishnah). His youngest and most famous disciple was Yohanan Ben Zakkai, the founder of the Yavneh Academy. This became the centre of Jewish life and thought after the national disaster and destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE.

At the beginning of the present common era there were many conversions to Judaism all over the Middle East. In Northern Iraq, the Royal Family and many of the people of Adiabene became Jews. It is said that Jews at that time constituted 20% both of the Persian as well as the Roman Empires. But after the fall of Jerusalem it was the Christians who made converts in the frontier territories of Mesopotamia. The earliest converts were Jews.. But wherever Rabbinical influence was strong among the local community as in Babylonia, there Christianity (and later, Islam) made little progress among Jews. Iraq remained within the Persian Empire for 1,000 years. Babylonia, covering Central Iraq, became practically an autonomous Jewish State headed by a hereditary Exilarch (Resh Galutha) descended from King Yehoyachin. The Exilarch had his courts and prisons and collected taxes, half of which went to Central Government.

At one time Babylonian Jewry numbered over one million and may have constituted the majority of the population. When the Temple was in existence they sent every year, about the time of Succoth, rich presents to Jerusalem in convoys, sometimes consisting of 30,000 armed pilgrims. It was ruled at that time that the prayer for rain should not be recited until 15 days after the conclusion of Succoth to allow the pilgrims to return. The Babylonian Diaspora retained

...its paramount importance from the 6th Century BCE to the 13th Century CE – a period of nearly 2,000 years. Its communal constitution, which served as a model to the whole Jewish people, was largely maintained until recent times.

"During our stay in Babylon we made ourselves thoroughly at home. As the Talmud records."

Indeed Babylonia became practically the Jewish Fatherland. Here were established the famous vast academies of Nehardea, Sura and Pumbeditha which later served as prototypes for the first European Universities of the 12th century. The Babylonian Talmud took 300 years to develop in complete freedom and was completed in 499. In its 2.5 million words the Talmud touches on every aspect of life. For instance, it discusses whether a person who is walking on a moving platform that is going in the opposite direction would be breaking the Sabbath if his position relative to the ground remained the same. Einstein admits that this gave him the idea for his theory of relativity.

Towards the end of Persian rule Mazdakite fanatics made life unbearable for the Jews who, in time, invited and gave decisive help to the Moslem conquest of Iraq and indeed of other parts of the Middle East.

Under the Caliphs of Baghdad the Jews paid a head tax and enjoyed religious and communal freedom. The authority of the Exilarch extended, as in Persian times, to all parts of the Empire and this office lasted until the 14th Century. Thereafter the community was headed by a local Nasi who, until recent times, was also always of the Davidic line. He was assisted by a Hakham. In 1849 both positions were united in a Hakham Bashi (Chief Rabbi).

To establish a Jewish Middle class in Europe Charlemagne had asked Harun al-Rashid to send Jewish teachers. These came with Rabbi Machir who was given by Charlemagne a Princedom in Narbonne and was known as King of the Jews. With the fall of Sa'ad Addawla, the Jewish Chancellor of the Mogul Empire, the Jews suffered terribly at the hands of the populace in the pogrom of 1291 and many were forced to embrace Islam, a process which was repeated on several occasions in Iraq and Persia.

Jewish fortunes started to improve after the Ottoman re-conquest of 1638, whose army included many Jewish officers and men. (Some sources say 10,000 Jewish officers and men out of a total army of 100,000).

After the Great War the Jews of Iraq were betrayed first by the Allies who handed over the country to Arab rule and then by the Arabs who, in a short time, proceeded to discriminate against the other national groups – the Kurds, Jews, Assyrians, etc.

For centuries the Treasury of Iraq was in Jewish hands. Under Ottoman rule the head of the community was ex-officio Treasurer (Sarraf Bashi) of the country. This tradition was continued in the early years of modern Iraq when Sir Sasson Hessel held the Finance Ministry in several governments. In the 1920's and 30's over 50% of the trade and finance was in Jewish hands but by the 50's this had dropped to less than 10%. From 1820 Iraqi Jews spread out to India, Australia, the Far East and Europe. The Rashid Ali pogrom of 1941 decided the community that there was no future in Iraq. In the mass emigration of 1950/51 Aliya Ezra and Nehemia and thereafter the majority left for Israel but the better-off went to Europe and America where there now are about 40,000, of whom about 7,000 are in the UK, including our brethren from India who have faithfully kept to the Baghdadian tradition.

The fact that our community was divided in this way does not relieve us of our responsibilities towards the needy who ended up mainly in Israel.

It is a pity that Israel does not make full use of the fact that thirty years ago there was an exchange of populations - the 800,000 Palestinian Arabs who left Israel and the 800,000 Jews from Arab countries who came to Israel. While Israel absorbed its refugees, Arab countries deliberately kept theirs in camps to be used as a lever against Israel.

Although the Jews arrive in Israel as Olim, they leave the Arab countries mostly under duress. ♦



The Late David Bershanpour

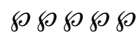
Remembered by a friend

David Bershanpour was born in Baghdad in 1918. He was a man of immense charm, charisma and a sense of humour. In England I got to know him well and found him, in the words of Rabbis, a man who loved peace and pursued it. He always provided me with advice in many different aspects of my work and his advice was sought after, since it was always sound.

He came to be highly respected in our community, and he always showed respect for others.

When an individual honours another it ennobles the giver more than the receiver. But above all else, his family meant a tremendous amount to him and he was the much loved husband of Louise and a loving father, and grandfather to Rhonda, Lydia, David and Daniel.

We mourn a good friend who went through life helping many people. ♦



Pharaoh and Kings

David Rohl has personally seen to it that we have 6 of his colleagues and co-authors with us – including major contributors to his 2 books, "Pharaohs & Kings", and "Legend". In addition to Egypt, we are also looking at Mesopotamia, Assyria and of course interesting subjects such as Santorini and Petroglyphs!

David Rohl is an Egyptologist, but as he works on the Timeline for ancient Egypt, the Old Testament cities and characters in the Bible really come to life more than ever before! (His first book, "Pharaohs & Kings" covers the time period of King David and King Solomon and works back through time, with Moses & Joseph. David's second book, "Legend: Genesis of Civilisation", covers the flood, and works back to the Garden of Eden).

I hope you will consider joining us – at least I want you to know that you are invited ♦.

Cannie McCraw

Texas

<http://www.egroups.com/ground/NewChronology>