

# *The* SCRIBE

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**A Happy New Year 5761 to all our Readers and Friends**



The procession of His Royal Highness The Exilarch on his weekly visit to the Grand Caliph of Baghdad, ALMUSTANJID BILLAH, accompanied by Benjamin of Tudela (12<sup>th</sup> Century) who wrote in his diary that the Caliph knows all languages, and is well-versed in the law of Israel. He reads and writes the holy language (Hebrew) and is attended by many belonging to the people of Israel. He will not partake of anything unless he has earned it by the work of his own hands. The men of Islam see him once a year.

In Baghdad there are about 40,000 Jews “dwelling in security, prosperity and honour and amongst them are great sages, the heads of Academies engaged in the study of the Law. At the head of them all is Daniel, The Exilarch, who traces his pedigree to King David. He has been invested with authority over all the Jews in the Abbassid Empire.

Every Thursday he goes to pay a visit to the great Caliph and horsemen, Gentiles as well as Jews, escort him and heralds proclaim in advance, ‘Make way before our Lord, the son of David, as is due unto him’. On arrival the Caliph rises and puts him on a throne, opposite him, which the prophet Mohammed had ordered to be made for him. He granted him the seal of office and instructed his followers to salute him (the Exilarch) and that anyone who should refuse to rise up should receive one hundred stripes.”

# THOUGHTS & AFTERTHOUGHTS

by Naim Dangoor

## REFLECTIONS ON THE HOLOCAUST

The murder of the six million Jews by Germany during World War II was not just an anti-semitic and racist genocide. Hitler was under the delusion that it was the Jews who were the enemies of Germany and who made Germany to lose World War I. In his attempt to re-ignite the flame of German aggression, he saw the Jews standing in his way. So, in 1939, as the signs of war were looming in the horizon, Hitler made the clear threat that if World Jewry and in particular American Jewry, shall embroil Germany in another World War, then Germany would exterminate all the Jews of Europe.

It is clear therefore that European Jewry were held hostages for the free world and, as often happens, hostage takings end up in tragedy. This is the significance of the Holocaust to the free world and this is the basis on which all people should commemorate and observe the massacre of 6 million innocent Jews by Germany.

Letter sent to The Rt Hon The Lord Janner, Chairman of The Holocaust Educational Trust:

Dear Greville,

When a Holocaust memorial was created in Hyde Park, I asked myself, "Why should Britain be involved in that crime, since Hitler's genocide never reached these shores?"

The explanation usually given is that the purpose of remembering the Holocaust is to prevent it happening again. This explanation fails on two counts. Firstly, there are not enough Jews in Europe for another Holocaust, and secondly, ethnic genocide has been taking place throughout the world regardless.

There is in fact another significance to the Holocaust which is overlooked. In 1939 Hitler threatened to kill all the Jews of Europe, if World Jewry would embroil Germany in another world war. He was thus holding the Jews of Europe as hostages for the free world in an attempt to achieve world domination.

The Six Million, therefore, died

as martyrs for the free world and should be remembered and honoured throughout the world as such.

Naim

His reply:

Dear Naim

Thank you for your interesting and important letter. Yes, I agree. The prime purpose of our Holocaust Memorial Day is precisely along the lines you suggest - together with our hope that by remembering what happened to the Jewish people, we may do something to prevent any future recurrence of this hideous tragedy.

Thank you again for writing and with best wishes.

Greville

Naim Dangoor's reply:

Thank you for your letter regarding my suggestion that the victims of the Holocaust should be treated as having died as hostages for the free world. In your reply you say that this idea is interesting and important, but you go on to say that "The prime purpose of our Holocaust Memorial Day is precisely along the lines you suggest".

I should be very grateful if you would kindly let me know how this idea is being presented by The Holocaust Memorial Day since I have never heard it mentioned that the six million were taken as hostages by Hitler at the beginning of the war, and that he put them to death to fulfill the threat that he made in early 1939. German treatment of the Jews is further demonstrated by the demand in 1944 for military trucks in exchange for saving the lives of the Hungarian Jews. When the free world rightly declined to give the trucks he sent 300,000 Hungarian Jews to the death camp.

## ADDING INSULT TO INJURY

**"And you who are attached to the Lord your G-d are all alive today"**

Jewish religious thinkers often try to find some explanation and justification for all tragedies befalling the Jewish people. Starting with the premise

that G-d cannot do wrong, they try to put the blame on the victims themselves. They say for example that it was the vain hatred among Jews that caused the destruction of the second Temple and that the laxity in Torah observance was the cause of the Holocaust. This is not acceptable and adds insult to injury. It also makes Hitler an agent of G-d's punishment on the Jews which is absurd. Our religious leaders have to think again and come out with a credible and meaningful explanation. Did the Allies know?

Recent revelations have shown that British and American intelligence were aware in 1943 that the German government ordered the military in Rome to round up the Jews of Rome and send them to the concentration camps, but the Allied authorities did nothing to alert the Jews and give them a chance to save themselves.

This is not surprising because throughout the war the Allies were very careful not to let Germany know but they were able to break its code. A day before Pearl Harbour, The State Department became aware that Japan was about to launch a surprise attack but decided to do nothing about it in order to continue to break Japanese secret messages throughout the war.

Moreover, the liquidation of European Jewry suited the wartime policy of the Allies in the thought that by letting Germany be busy with the Jews would detract her war effort. That is why the Allies refused to bomb Auschwitz and refused to publicise what was going on there.

The mass murder of ten thousand Jews a day was an open secret fully known to the media, diplomatic missions and the Church. I lived in Istanbul during the war and I could see from time to time Jewish refugees arriving from Europe with terrible stories.

I can go further and say that the second world war was engineered or manoeuvred into being by the oil interest of the West in order to get rid of the Jews of Europe in the mistaken belief that they would thus save the vast oil reserves of the Middle East from falling into the hands of a new Zionist state populated by East European Jews who were regarded as Communist sympathisers.

When I was a student at London

University in the early 30's, I was tormented by the case with which Hitler was allowed to re-arm and prepare Germany for a major war when he could have been knocked out by a feather in his early days.

My own teenage explanation at that time was - either that the Allies wanted to bring a decisive end to the First World War, or that the merchants of armament were again getting active to profit from selling their deadly weapons, or that the whole purpose was to liquidate the Jews of Europe under the cover of war. In the event, the last probability was the only concrete result came out of the Second World War.

## THE DILEMMA OF OVADIAH YOSSEF

Baghdad born, 80 year old, Harav Ovadiah Yossef has made a great name for himself as the highest authority on Halacha and the sources. He has become the rallying point of the Sephardi majority of Israel which gave his Shas party no less than 17 seats in the Knesseth which may become one day the largest party in the Israeli Parliament.

In his regular Saturday night radio programme, he recently had to answer the question - "Where was G-d during the Holocaust?" By taking a narrow view of this controversy Rav Ovadiah had only two options: Either that the Holocaust was an act of G-d, or that G-d does not take any interest in human affairs.

Rav Ovadiah was obliged to opt for the first option stating that the Holocaust was an act of G-d and was a punishment for the sins by these people in previous lives. This immediately caused a huge furore everywhere which obliged the learned Rabbi to retract his regrettable statement which still left an unpleasant impression all over. Some people saw in it an attack on Ashkenazim who were the main victims of the Holocaust. Others thought it would promote atheism. By claiming that the Holocaust was an act of G-d, he made Hitler and his Nazi criminals the agents of G-d.

Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks expressed the view that the Holocaust must remain a mystery. But how can the Chief Rabbi follow a mysterious religion which he cannot explain or understand? On the other hand, when the late former Chief Rabbi Lord Jacobovitz was asked

where was G-d at the Holocaust, the answer he gave was where was man at the Holocaust? This may appear to be an evasive reply but what Lord Jacobovitz was saying is that the Holocaust was not the act of G-d but the act of man which may mean if you like that since G-d gave man freewill, he takes no direct interest in the day-to-day events of history.

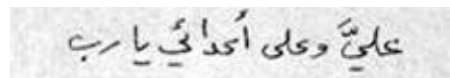
This fact can only be ignored at our peril.

## WHERE WAS GOD?

When I shall go to the Synagogue on Yom Kippur, when the gates of Heaven are wide open, enabling us to communicate directly with the Almighty, I shall ask G-d one question and then leave, "Where were you during the Holocaust?"

## THE SAMSON OPTION

Let me die in Palestine



It has become customary for all officers graduating in the Israeli Defence Forces to be taken to the fortress of Massada and made to swear an oath there that Massada shall not fall again.

That is a reference to the besiege of Massada in the year 70 by the Roman army who were unable for two years to take that hide-out of some 200 Jewish fighters. When in the end they occupied the fortress they found all the people there had committed suicide, rather than be tortured by their Roman enemies.

This has become known as the Massada option. But why should this be a model for the Israeli army? I prefer the Samson option when the hero of ancient Israel managed to bring the Palestinian Temple down and thus kill with himself thousands of the enemy.

Today, Israel is one of the strongest military powers in the world and should try to flex her muscle when dealing with her neighbours.

Barak or Mu-Barak? The Arabs have found Prime Minister Ehud Barak tougher than Netanyahu, knowing Israel's nuclear potential and military superiority, Mubarak has been calling for a nuclear-free Middle East hoping to achieve by a little hot air equality with Israel. But according to an Arabic proverb "You cannot fry eggs with hot air".

I thank you for telling my life story in "The Scribe"(No. 72, P. 38). I must say it was beautifully presented and I am proud to have a presence in the Sephardi community, which I love and admire.

London

Freddie Knoller

## BONANZA TO UK CHARITIES

How a Charity can receive £50 for every £10 you give away

The Finance Act of March 21 2000 contains a little-noticed sensational clause whereby a charity can receive £50 for every £10 one gives away. This is how it works:

If one holds a quoted share that has gone up £50 in value, one sells the share to the charity at cost price. The charity makes £50 and one loses £50 less tax equals £30. In addition one receives tax relief on the £50 the charity receives, equal to £20 thus losing only £10, while the charity receives five times that amount.

Donors should now make full use of this generous bonanza.

London

Naim Dangoor

The above letter appeared in the London Jewish News.

## NOTHING NEW

A long time ago, an enterprising grocer in Baghdad claimed that he invented a powder that can be used to get rid of mosquitoes which used to plague the city during the hot, dry summer months and was the cause of spreading malaria.

One Shabbath, an announcement was made as was the custom to inform the people about the new powder, adding that the direction for use would be announced as soon as a sufficient number of people had bought the packet of powder. Three weeks later the announcement was made of how to deal with the powder as follows: catch the mosquito then open its mouth and put a little of the powder in the mouth. It is guaranteed that the mosquito would die in a very short time!

Continued on following page

I remembered the above anecdote when I heard on the radio the other day that New York City had been infested with deadly mosquitoes, causing panic in the city, so that Central Park closed to the public. At the same time an American scientist announced his method in dealing with the epidemic: catch the mosquito and have it operated upon to change one of its genes so that it no longer remains a carrier of malaria and other diseases. Then release the mosquito in the air in the hope that other mosquitoes will follow suit!

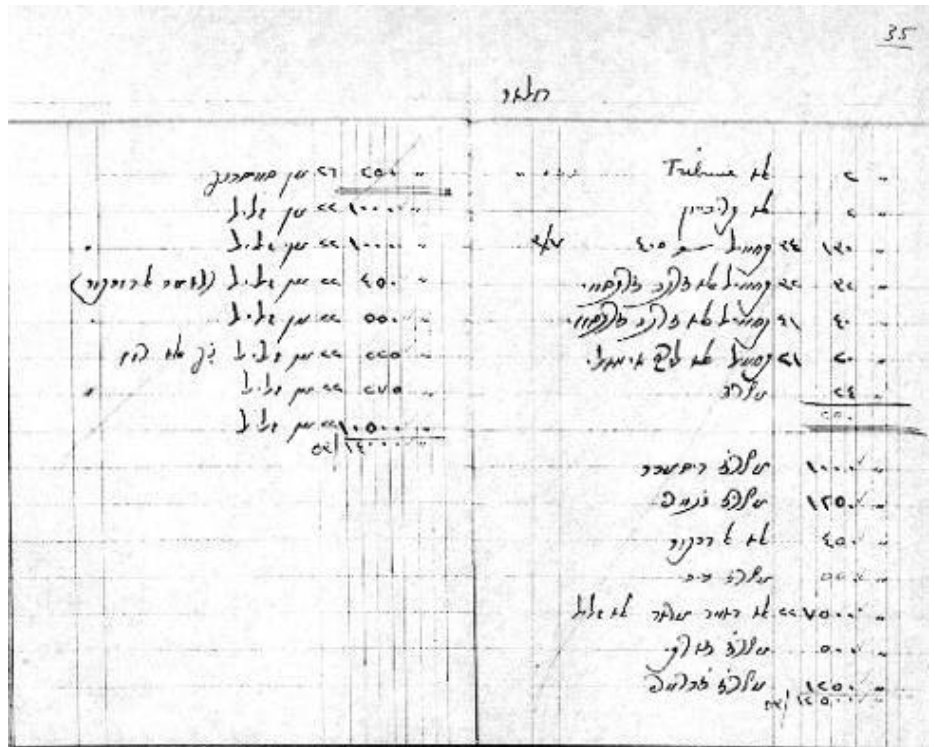
**KOSHER THIGHS**

The Jews have a capacity for creating problems for themselves, and Jacob was no exception. One night, while sleeping in the open, he felt a slight cramp in his thigh. As he was in the middle of an important dream, the reality got mixed up with the dream, as often happens, and he thought the angel had touched his thigh. Sure enough, he had a temporary limp when he woke up, and he came to believe that the Angel had touched his thigh. Thus it became a tradition that Jews remove (porge) the leg sinew of animals before cooking. It was not a commandment but merely a tradition. (A simple cure for cramps is to drink Indian tonic water).

Since the war, however, porging became unreliable and it was decided to discard the whole hindquarter of the carcass by selling it to non-Jews who could thus enjoy at reduced prices the best cuts of the meat - steak, kidney, etc., while driving kosher meat prices higher.

So far so good. But there has been a movement in Europe to ban Jewish methods of animal slaughter altogether, as inhumane because it did permit pre-stunning of the animal. The ban started in Nazi Germany; while forbidding the Jewish Shechita, wicked Germans, at the same time, slaughtered six million Jews. They proved themselves to be lower than animals.

Repeated attempts in the British Parliament to ban Jewish Shechita failed because it could not be proved that this method was not humane, but also because of the 2 million Moslems who could also be affected. So now the Anti-Shechita lobby want to try a new tactic. They wish to require Kosher and Halal meat to bear a label stating its method of slaughter. This will only affect Kosher meat because it would make it impossible to



50 years ago - on his long honeymoon travels with his wife Renée, Naim Dangoor was careful to keep a detailed account book of their daily expenditure. It is noteworthy that the entries were written in Judaeo Arabic, as shown in the page above. This form of writing was used in all his communications with the family, and must now be regarded as completely obsolete.

dispose of the hindquarters in the general food chain.

Jewish communal authorities are considering going to the Court of Europe on the grounds of discrimination. This approach is certain to fail: the Court cannot oblige anyone to buy the rejected parts of Kosher meat. What are the alternatives?

1. To sell the hindquarters to our Moslem brethren who would enjoy excellent shish-kebab at even lower prices.
2. To consider taking a rabbinic decision that Jacob's vision concerning the thigh sinew was just a bad dream and that all parts of kosher animal can be eaten.

If the European Court has any sympathy on us let it remove the total ban on shechita that is now in force in many European countries.

Please if possible send us any copies of The Scribe you can spare. We are in Jewish sheltered accommodation in Manchester. We had two copies late last year and since not heard from you.

May we wish you all the very best and go from strength to strength with your wonderful magazine.

**TOTAL ECLIPSE**

In our offices, we have a handyman whose job it is to replace used electric bulbs. He goes around, carrying a ladder, and looks up to see which light bulb needs replacing.

At the rare total eclipse of the sun, last August, as the moon slid to cover the sun's disk, a most poignant scene was the sight of our handyman outside my window with his ladder under his arm, looking up in the direction of the darkened sun, as if thinking "Do I have to climb the ladder to replace that bulb?"

Some Ladder! Some bulb!

**NOTE:** Until recently, electric bulbs used to go off very frequently, and the long-suffering British public never complained. Since Britain joined Europe, specifications have been noticeably improved.

Religion goes further and deeper than reason, but Religion must not contradict our G-d given Reason.

Religion must adjust to scientific discoveries.



## THE DANGOOR SYNAGOGUE



In March 2000 an agreement was signed between the Spanish and Portugese congregation and the Exilarch's Foundation for the construction to establish within the main synagogue complex the Dangoor synagogue in memory of the late Khatoun and Eliahou Hakham Ezra Dangoor.

The Dangoor synagogue, seating over 100 worshipers, is intended to be used for weekday morning and evening prayers and for children's services on Shabbath, as well as Thursday Barmitzvah and Sunday Batmitzvah services. The Dangoor Synagogue is part of a major development costing £1 million.

The above photographs show Mr Lucien Gubbay, President of the Elders with Mr Naim Dangoor, Head of the Exilarch's Foundation at the signing of the agreement at the offices of the Foundation, taken below the portrait of Hakham Ezra Dangoor, Chief Rabbi of Baghdad in the twenties.

## The opening of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (painted between 1925-1927)



The painting shows The Earl of Balfour addressing the 7,000 people present at the opening of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem on Mount Scopus on 1st April 1925. Among the dignitaries present were the British High Commissioner Sir **Herbert** Samuel, Field Marshal Viscount Allenby, Chaim Weizmann, Ahad Ha'am, Chaim Bialik, as well as representatives from many governments, universities and academic institutions worldwide.

# JEWISH ASSETS IN ARAB COUNTRIES

Abridged from *Jerusalem Report* September 1999

After the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948, and the wave of Arab nationalism and decolonisation sweeping the Middle East, the Jews of the region were uprooted and most made their way to Israel, abandoning assets ranging from modest family homes to prosperous businesses, as well as communal property like schools and synagogues. Since then, a wall of war and enmity has separated them from those former assets. Nevertheless, these families, many reduced to working-class status, have always hoped that with the advent of regional peace they would be able to claim their rightful inheritance.

Except that now incensed Sephardim in Israel and abroad are claiming that the Israeli government - with neither the legal nor the moral authority to do so - is getting ready to bargain away those personal inheritances. In a trade-off for the Palestinians' dropping their gigantic property claims against Israel, they say, is preparing to waive future Jewish claims to assets in the Arab countries - assets worth billions, maybe tens of billions, of dollars.

Work on the register of Jewish assets in Arab lands began toward the end of the Netanyahu administration. But it is quietly continuing under Ehud Barak's government - as a way of countering, a similar project by the Palestinians, begun several years ago, to list assets left behind by Palestinians in Israel in 1948. And although individual would-be Sephardi heirs contacted by The Report are horrified by the equation, and dismayed too at the prospect of countries like Iraq, Syria and Libya getting off the hook, several Sephardi organisations are co-operating: "We are performing a service for Israel," says Leon Levy, president of the American Sephardi Federation.

For their part, Palestinian officials insist that they have no intention of reducing their demands for financial compensation from Israel because Jews lost assets in the Arab world. "There is no linkage here. Israel has to negotiate directly with Lebanon, Morocco, Egypt," says Daoud Barakat, the Palestinian Co-ordinator of Refugee Negotiations. "I don't represent those countries."

Says Bobby Brown, who deals with Diaspora affairs in the Prime Minister's Office, "An injustice was committed to the Jews from Arab countries, and for 50 years we've been saying that it's not the right time to deal

with this issue. But in a month, or a year, we will be sitting with the Palestinians ..... and negotiating. The issue of restitution will come up. The Palestinians are going to say, 'You owe us X-amount.' That's the moment that the Jewish side must say, 'There was a war. We also have claims. And these must act as a counterbalance.' We have to find a rough justice on both sides."

Sephardi activists in Israel fume that their community is going to be short-changed by the government for a second time: A generation ago, their parents were settled in remote development towns, and condemned to second-class status, from which many of them are still trying to escape. Now, they fear, the government is playing big brother again, seeking to use their inheritance for its own ends.

"The government will evaluate the property of, say, the Iraqi Jews and then use it to counterbalance the Palestinian claim."

"The property of the Jews of the Middle East is not a matter for the State of Israel," says Yehouda Shenhav, an associate professor of sociology and anthropology at Tel Aviv University, himself of Iraqi descent. "They are manipulating me for an ulterior motive," says Shenhav.

For Jews from the Middle East and North Africa who live outside Israel, the notion is even more absurd and untenable: How dare the Israeli government, which cannot conceivably assert that it represents them in any way, they ask, try to usurp their property claims?

Some Israeli officials have argued over the years that, since the government spent billions absorbing the Sephardi Jews here, they can hardly consider themselves shortchanged by Israel. That argument, too, is rudely dismissed by Sephardim abroad. "They certainly didn't spend billions on me," snorts Naim Dangoor, born in Iraq in 1914, who left behind factories and a house when he moved to London in 1959. Naim Dangoor says, "I happened to be in London with my family in 1964 when all the Jews were given three months to return to Iraq or lose their nationality and their property. Although I had extensive interests in Iraq, I decided not to return, mindful of the Talmudic dictum of not taking personal risks for the sake of money. Although I can now justify a claim of \$5 million, this is insignificant in

the context of hundreds of billions being mentioned by both sides in the final settlement negotiations."

The human, cultural and economic tragedy that befell the Jewish communities in Arab countries was profound. Although circumstances varied from country to country, whole communities, some over 2,000 years old, were uprooted. Some Jews managed to sell their homes - often for far below the market value; others managed to ferret out valuables, stuffing jewels and gold coins into their pockets. But most lost almost everything and, like the refugees from war-ravaged Europe who had preceded them, arrived in Israel destitute.

In Iraq, for instance, on March 10, 1951, a new law impounded the property of all Jews who had renounced citizenship and planned to go to Israel. This included many Jews who, although not Zionists, fled persecution which grew with the establishment of Israel. To ensure that the Jews could not use the brief time-lag between passage of the legislation and its implementation to sell their homes and businesses, the Iraqi government shut down the banks for three days. Jews' shops were sealed and their possessions were confiscated. Jewish merchants and jewellers had their homes searched.

In 1945 there were 870,000 Jews living in the Middle East and North Africa. By 1952, hundreds of thousands had arrived in Israel, and tens of thousands had reached Western Europe and North and South Africa. Estimates on the collective value of the property they left behind vary wildly - from a few billion dollars to more than \$100 billion.

Moroccan-born Amram Attias, who heads the U.S. based Committee of Jews from Arab Lands - set up to help spearhead the registration project- claims that the 130,000 Jews of Iraq, the wealthiest Jewish community in the Middle East, lost nearly \$100 billion, while Egypt's Jews lost more than \$60 billion.

The idea that Palestinian demands for property taken over by Israel could be countered by Jewish demands for abandoned property in Arab lands has been bandied about for years. But few people, even those directly affected, are aware that this hitherto theoretical "linkage" is becoming real - with work on the register under way and the final status talks imminent.

When it does become more widely known, the issue could exacerbate Ashkenazi-Sephardi tensions. David Tal, a Knesset member from the ultra-Orthodox Shas party, of Tunisian descent, warns that if the Sephardim are left empty-handed, "the bitterness will come to the surface, with serious public implications."

Adds a government official whose parents immigrated to Israel from Baghdad, and who asked not to be named in this article, "Sephardim will say that Israel didn't want to bring them in the first place, that it then put them in transit camps, then in development towns - and that now we're being used as a bargaining chip. This will create an explosion. I can't say how big. But it will."

Barak's Labour Party is particularly vulnerable to Sephardi rage. Soon after taking over the party leadership in 1997, in an effort to rid Labour of its elitist, Ashkenazi image, Barak issued a formal apology to Sephardi immigrants for what he acknowledged was the suffering and lack of respect they endured here at the hands of the Labour governments of the 1950's. He owed his election victory last May, in no small part, to the defection of thousands of traditionally Likud-voting Sephardim. A misstep on the restitution issue could aggravate old wounds.

In the eyes of some Sephardim who live abroad, the linkage equation is especially alarming. Even though they chose not to make their homes in Israel, they are now facing the possibility of their restitution claims being cancelled out in Israel-Palestinian negotiations. Why, they ask, should they, of all people, cover the cost of Palestinian losses?

Professor Heskell Haddad, in New York, says he had to leave Iraq "illegally" in 1950 as a young man, and that his parents followed - "leaving behind our house in Baghdad, my father's plumbing business."

It would be a terrible injustice to let countries like Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Yemen and Morocco get off scot-free. "They owe us a debt. They should be made to pay it. They shouldn't be let off the hook because Israel wants to make peace with the Palestinians in a hurry."

Deborah Srour, a 37 year old New York lawyer, chuckles incredulously at the thought that the Israeli government wants to bargain away the casino her grandfather owned in Cairo. King Farouk used to gamble there, she says, along with other celebrities like singer Um Kalthoum. In 1950, she says, her

grandfather was arrested on suspicion of allowing Israeli spies to operate in the casino, and then forced to leave Egypt. After Israel and Egypt made peace in 1979, she and her grandfather travelled to Cairo, and found that the casino building had become an office of the Moslem Brotherhood.

"We're Zionists. We'll do anything for Israel", she says. "But this is like a stab in our back. How can the government of Israel bargain away something it has no jurisdiction over?"

But other Sephardim overseas are willing to have the lost Jewish property used as a bargaining chip. Take the American Sephardi Federation's Levy, who was more than happy to oblige when, earlier this year, he was approached by Israeli government officials and asked to help run the registration drive. The Israelis, he recalls, were "alarmed by the sophisticated search that the Palestinians were undertaking. They wanted to be able to balance those Palestinian claims."

WOJAC was set up in 1975 precisely to push Sephardi claims, but with no conspicuous results.

The Camp David framework agreements, signed in 1978 by Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin, did provide for a "Claim Committee for the mutual settlement of all financial claims" between Israel and Egypt. But Israel has never pursued the matter with the Egyptian government; it may be that Israel feared undermining the delicate diplomatic relationship.

But if the details were lacking, the principle of "linkage" was already being set in place. In a 1951 address to the Knesset, after Iraq nationalised Jewish property, foreign minister Moshe Sharett declared, "An account already exists between us and the Arab world: the account of compensation that accrues to the Arabs who left the territory of Israel and abandoned their property...The act that has now been perpetrated by the Kingdom of Iraq...forces us to link the two accounts...We will take into account the value of the Jewish property that has been frozen in Iraq when calculating the compensation that we have undertaken to pay the Arabs who abandoned property in Israel."

This policy, aimed at offsetting Palestinian refugee claims, has remained consistent over the years.

Diaspora affairs adviser Brown says that the issue took on real importance 18 months ago, when it became clear that the Palestinians were

hard at work compiling their own property register for use in the final status talks. "We knew," says Brown, "that this would be the time to put our claims on the table."

Without going into detail, Brown adds that, if the mutual claims are ultimately written off against each other, Israel will have to "find a way to provide compensation to the Sephardim."

For Shas's David Tal, that vague commitment represents the best hope of preventing an outburst of Sephardi anger over the issue. "If Israel resolves this issues with the Arab world, that's fine. But that's not the end of the account. Israel would then have to give some compensation to the Sephardim. I don't want to draw comparisons, but the Jews who fled Germany and Eastern Europe got compensation. That money helped them establish themselves here. The Jews who fled Arab lands have never got anything."

#### **Naim Dangoor writes:**

The assets I left behind in Iraq comprise among other things the following:

- A match factory.
- A large furniture factory imported complete from England.
- Half share in Dry Cleaning company.
- Shares in many industries.
- Half share of two freehold blocks of flats in 1.5 acres of prime land in Baghdad.
- Half share in various houses.
- An office building in the business district.
- Half share in a 1,000 Dunum farmland not far from Baghdad.

At the depressed level of 150,000 Dinars for all the above, that amount would have grown now to \$5 million.

In Judaism we believe that riches are a gift from G-d, so I abandoned it all back into His care, and was not disappointed.

#### **WORRY**

Why do we worry?

We worry because our mind is trying to find a solution to a problem, We should give it a chance and wait for it to come up with a solution.



## ASSETS LEFT BEHIND BY JEWS AND PALESTINIANS

by Naim Dangoor

As a major potential claimant for my assets in Iraq and on behalf of thousands of Iraqi readers of my Journal, The Scribe, I wish to make the following statement:

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

Q.1 Since Israel admits holding substantial Palestinian assets, the Israeli Government should be able to pay Iraqi immigrants something on account. Repeated approaches elicited the reply that no payment can be made to the Iraqi immigrants since billions were spent on resettling them in Israel.

Q.2 Is Israel justified in charging Iraqi immigrants for three years of squalor in tents and transit camps, while later immigrants from other countries were given the red carpet treatment?

Q.3 The above position can only apply to Iraqi immigrants who came to Israel. What about the thousands who went to Europe and America, whose potential claims are more substantial? How can their confiscated assets be cancelled against the Palestinian assets?

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

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

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



Above - Prime Minister Ehud Barak greeting Mr Naim Dangoor who had forcibly stated the strong case of territorial and financial Jewish claims on Iraq.

## COMPENSATION FOR JEWS OF ARAB COUNTRIES

For fifty years while Palestinian refugees were drumming up their right of return to their homes and their right for compensation in accordance with UN security council resolution 242 and 338, claims by Jewish refugees from Arab countries fell on deaf ears. Even WOJAC, the world organisation of Jews from Arab countries, which was established with so much fanfare some thirty years ago, turned out to be no more than a tool in the hands of the Israeli government in an attempt to bury the rights of Jewish refugees as a way of cancelling Palestinian claims.

But now with America getting more and more involved in the Middle East peace process, plans for establishing an international fund to pay compensation to both Jews and Palestinians are being talked about quite seriously.

President Clinton has said in an interview on Israeli Television that the failed Camp David summit, at least brought good news for the more than 580,000 Jews who immigrated to Israel from Arab countries. Palestinian negotiators agreed that these Jewish refugees should be compensated for the property they left behind or were forced to give up, he said, apparently by a kind of international fund suggested in Clinton's remarks.

Now the cat is out of the cellophane bag. If the compensation is forthcoming, it could help the Israeli government sell a peace deal package to voters of Middle Eastern and North African origin, who are a slight majority among Israelis. They are also largely right-wing and usually suspicious of prospective agreements with Arabs. "It will be very important", says Justice

Minister Yossi Beilin. "It could help people accept the agreement. It would be something tangible."

Jews all over the Arab world faced persecution, fear and anti-Semitic attacks after the establishment of Israel in 1948. Community ties that were 2,000 years old packed up en-masse in the following few years and moved to Israel. Some of the expulsions were accompanied by government seizures of property, from the Iraqi regime in 1951 to Muammar Gaddafi's Libya in 1972.

It is clear, therefore, that the promise of compensation is no more than a carrot, a bribe, dangled in front of Mizrahi Jews to enable them to swallow the bitter pill of the peace process now being negotiated, after which the Arabs will keep asking for more and more.

Where did Israel go wrong? Since the establishment of the State in 1948, Israel fought several major wars not with the Palestinians but with the neighbouring Arab countries. There can be no lasting peace in the Middle East unless all these Arab countries are dragged to the conference table and made to bear their share of a peace settlement.

Old Yemtab in Baghdad had a cock who used to perch on a high wall and crow loudly in the early morning. His owner used to remonstrate with him saying "Lo beek khair unzel Jawa" meaning "if you are brave come down and shout". Mubarak and Assad, Fahad and Saddam, Gaddafi and Lebanon are all prompting Arafat not to soften his demands. They should all be made to take part in the sacrifices that have to be made in achieving a just and lasting peace.

From Time Magazine



# CLAIMS OF JEWS FROM ARAB COUNTRIES

Letter to Mr Abraham D Sofaer in California

Dear Mr Sofaer,

You may remember that we met a few years ago at 25 Albert Hall Mansions, when we discussed the claims of Jews from Arab countries. At that time you did not want to move against Israel's policy of setting off Jewish claims against Palestinian claims. Now things have changed, and it appears that even Arafat admits that Jews from Arab lands have as much right to compensation as do Palestinians. President Clinton himself has said "That's another piece of the good news that I think I can reveal that came out of the summit.....The Palestinians thought those people should be eligible for compensation as well."

Assuming, therefore, that both Palestinians as well as Jews who immigrated to Israel from Arab countries will get some kind of compensation, this still leaves Jewish refugees from Arab countries who did not settle in Israel, and this needs perhaps a special attention to advance their claim for compensation.

These people are perhaps the wealthier section of the community and the total amount of their claims can be very substantial. I for one can easily substantiate a claim for \$5 million of lost assets to which one may add the general benefits we were deprived of in our country in which we lived for tens of centuries. The climate for pursuing such claims has never been more favourable and I wonder if you would now reconsider whether you are willing to take up this matter at an early stage so that our voice can be heard together with the others in this regard.

With warm regards.

Yours sincerely

**Naim Dangoor**

20 August 2000

Dear Mr Dangoor,

I remember very well the lovely evening I had with you and your family and friends in London. The situation has indeed changed, and the time may be ripe for action on the claims issue.

I talked last week with Ben Porat in Israel about your letter, and he and his colleagues also agree that

something should be done.

The problems are numerous, but the biggest is getting some person and team committed to the project. Recoveries from the Swiss banks, and the German companies and government, were made possible because lawyers were given authority to represent groups of Jews, and they brought cases and worked with the US government to bring about the pressures necessary for settlements to occur. I am prepared to round up a team, but you and the community would have to commit to that team or they would not be willing to work on a contingent basis to bring about a recovery.

Let me know what you think. Meanwhile, I will let you know the next time I am in London.

**Hoover Institution on War-Revolution and Peace**  
**Abraham D Sofaer**  
**Stanford University**  
**George P Shultz Senior Fellow**

Further letter to Mr Sofaer:

Dear Abraham,

Thank you for your interesting letter of 20 August and I am glad to note it may now be possible to take action regarding compensation. My comments are as follows:

**1.** Mordechai Ben Porat's area of claim would be for Jews who settled in Israel. Mine concerns Jews who never went to Israel but who now live in Europe or America.

**2.** How do you plan to go about it? Will it be through the peace process, through the Israeli government, the US government, the United Nations or perhaps even to sue the Iraqi government.

**3.** What are our chances of success?

**4.** What amounts are we talking about? If the claims would be for houses and businesses, etc that would not amount to very much. The ideal would be to claim a share of Iraq which was left behind by our community which was very prosperous and very active in Iraq's economy. That would more than match the billions claimed by the Palestinians.

**5.** Will this exercise end up in a set-off of

one claim against another?

**6.** What sort of initial commitment are you looking for, for the bulk benefit to the lawyers will have to be by a percentage of the amount achieved. This principle of "no win, no pay" is quite common in America.

I look forward to meeting you again on your next visit to London.

**Naim Dangoor**

**Historical note:** US Judge Abraham Sofaer served for five years as Legal Adviser to Secretary of State, James A Baker and George P Shultz, up to June 1990. He participated in all military actions taken by the United States against terrorism, the settlement of the Taba dispute between Israel and Egypt. He visited Baghdad in connection with the claim against Iraq for attacking the U.S.S. Stark.

## PALESTINIAN REFUGEES

Last November, Prime Minister Ehud Barak came to London on an official visit. Some 15 community leaders were invited to his hotel to an 'around the table' briefing by Mr Barak and his numerous advisors.

Mr Barak touched on the question of Palestinian refugees by stating categorically the official view of his government that there was 50 years ago an exchange of refugees - the near million Palestinian Arabs who left Israel mainly at the instigation of the Arab governments and the near million Jewish refugees who were driven out from Arab countries by persecution and harassment. This is a fact of life that cannot be assailed. There is no question that Jews can safely return en masse to their ancient homes, and, likewise, there is no case to require that Israel should allow Palestinian Arabs to return to Israel and upset the precarious demographic balance of the country.

However, for some unknown reason, the government of Israel refuses to state this publicly, thus encouraging the Palestinians to make a strong public relations issue of their demands as well as of wanting to use Jerusalem as the Capital of Palestine which should never be entertained even if it means not coming to a final agreement with the Palestinians or with Syria.

## MORDECHAI BEN-PORAT AVE



### UNVEILING CEREMONY AT OR-YEHUDA

Hundreds of Or-Yehuda citizens, as well as many other guests, participated in the unveiling ceremony of Mordechai Ben-Porat Ave and Moreshet (Heritage) Square that took place last November at the Babylonian Jewry Center square. Also participated in the ceremony the Mayor of Or-Yehuda - Lawyer Itzhak Buchovza and the "Or-Yehuda Youth Choir" that opened with the song "It's not a dream".

The Mayor said: " It is not customary to commemorate a living person but it is written in the Holy books 'After reaching Jubilee it's allowed to touch'. therefore, I decided that it's only appropriate, especially today, to express the appreciation we have for the history that Mordechai Ben-Porat generated in Or-Yehuda when he established a remarkable town out of a muddy soil and the tents site of Chiriya & Zakkia refugee camps, until what has become of the city of Or-Yehuda today.

Mr Ben-Porat was the first council leader during the years 1955-1969 an he built it all out of nothingness". Mr Buchovza added and said: "Mordechai Ben-Porat contributed enormously to the shaping and the establishing of the Jewish people heritage

and was the centre pillar and the main wheeler of "Operation Ezra & Nehemia", an operation that happens once in 2000 years.

The honouree of the event, Mr Mordechai Ben-Porat said: "I pinch myself to make sure that I am alive because I am used to participate in ceremonies honouring the dead and here I am, standing in front of you". He added and said: "We, the people who lived then in Or-Yehuda, were the first to arrange rides for youth so that they can attend high schools in Petach Tikva and Ramat Gan."

Mordechai Ben-Porat also said: "The Babylonian Jewry Center and the Museum are the diamond of the culture and the symbol of Or-Yehuda - facing all the restaurants in the city. So far, over 260,000 Israelis visited the center, of which 110,000 are youth. This is an accomplishment that enables us all to be proud of, thanks to over 2600 years of heritage, history that connects Israel to Babel for many generations".

As it is publicly known, Mr Ben-Porat had many public functions in Israel, such as a Knesset Member and a Minister in Menachem Begin's government, alongside Mr Moshe Dayan.

**Eran Yoels The Babylonian Jewry Center  
PR Dept**

## THE BABYLONIAN JEWRY HERITAGE CENTER

Beit Hatefutzot in Ramat Aviv is no longer the only museum in Israel dedicated to the Jewish Diaspora. Since 1988, it has been joined by the attractive, well organized and highly informative Babylonian Jewry Museum. This fascinating institution should become a regular stop on visits to Israel.

In the early 1970's, former MK Mordechai Ben-Porat, who had played a major role in bringing the Iraqi Jewish community to Israel after the establishment of the State, proposed the idea of a Babylonian Jewish Heritage Center to the Or Yehuda Council (a town located ten minutes north of Ben-Gurion Airport). The Iraqi-born Ben-Porat was serving at the time as the head of the Council, and his proposal was confirmed. The idea was to establish a museum and a research center devoted to the study and dissemination of information about the first and for many years most influential Disaporan Jewish community. The cornerstone was laid in 1973, the academic council began its research in 1977 and the museum was opened to the public in 1988.

The Babylonian Jewry Museum provides a fascinating overview of the 2,500 years of Jewish history and culture in Babylon (modern-day Iraq).

### OPERATION EZRA & NEHEMIAH

From 1950-52, Operation Ezra and Nehemiah brought almost all the Iraqi Jews to Israel, first by way of Cyprus, then directly to Israel. More than 110,000 people made aliyah. By 1967 only 3,000 Jews remained in Iraq. Today less than 60 Jews remain, all of whom live in Baghdad.

We love receiving the Scribe and thank you very much for a wonderful tribute to our Baghdadi community. I learn something new each time and look forward to the next issue.

Do you know if the Baghdadi community has published a book about dream interpretations? I would love to get a copy; if not maybe we can start compiling one!

**New York Samira Galler (née Balass)**