

## AFRICAN HEBREWS

I am a Canadian citizen as well as being an African born on the island of Jamaica, West Indies. As the last bit of information indicates, my ancestors arrived in the Western hemisphere via the slave trade. What you may not know, either by choice or ignorance, is that many of the people groups/tribes/clans that were the victims of the African slave trade were from tribes that the local African tribes viewed as recent historical arrivals. Thus the intense animosity that was present among them. Some of these foreign/alien black tribes were known in the African dialects as Hebrews, Jews, etc. It is also a suppressed fact that many of the Africans who were enslaved, besides speaking African languages/dialects, also spoke Arabic as well as Hebrew. Many of their traditions and attitudes were also very "Semitic"(?), but were suppressed by their European and Jewish oppressors and enslavers, mostly by very brutal means.

Therefore when I read about the Lemba people's struggles to be acknowledged by their fellow Hebrews I instinctly (sic) understand, because we are living in a very white-souled world, and most of the white Jews from the Diaspora have been greatly affected by their long stay among the Europeans. We also know that birds of a feather flock together - but so too do people of like souls. We also know that what is a Jew is one thing, but what is a Hebrew is quite another. If the right standard of measurements were used, namely from the Torah, rather than recently developed and anti-Hebrew/Torah standards, then the Hebrews from the Sudan to the very extremes of Africa, including the African Diaspora, would be welcomed home.

Maybe it's not our time to be revealed to the world due to socio/economical/ political implications but we know that as long as the ONE who by prophecy scattered us thousands of years ago, know who we are, and where we, the sons of Abraham are, then at least our children or their children will be finally welcomed home by his prophetic pre-determinations.

Canada

Derrick McEwan

### All that glitters is not gold

Do not judge a thing by its attractive appearance.

## THE URGENT SEARCH FOR JEWISH UNITY

Extracts from an address by Professor Moshe Kaveh  
President of Bar-Ilan University  
As delivered in Cleveland, Ohio last January

My speciality as a physicist is the study of stable and unstable systems. And I am constantly asking myself: Is Israel a stable state? Are the Jewish people a stable system? Will Judaism and Jewish identity be preserved over generations?

To answer those questions, first we need to acknowledge the dangerous gaps between Jews, because reducing these gaps is the way to unity. I think this is the need of the hour, this urgent search for unity.

More and more Israeli columnists, politicians and ordinary people on the street denounce all the Orthodox as medieval or uncultured, to treat everyone who wears a kippa as some kind of dark and evil force.

Lately the behaviour of the Supreme Court of Israel is troubling to many religious Jews, who feel it shouldn't be ruling on religious issues like conversion and matters of Jewish identity. I myself believe that our activist Supreme Court is moving into corners where it shouldn't go. How do we close the dangerous, growing gaps that separate Jews from Jews, especially religious Jews and the non-religious? And how do we build a state that is both Jewish and democratic? We need concrete ideas and concrete action.

Right now, in Israel, there is a battle between the extremists of both the religious and secular camps. The majority of people - who are moderates - unfortunately are getting swept into the fray.

One source of the problem is that there are too many rabbis who believe that *halacha* is *everything* in life, that *halacha* is all encompassing. If so, there is a problem with the notion of a democratic state.

On the other hand, the judges in our Supreme Court and many of our politicians and intellectual leaders believe that civic law and democratic norms are everything that you need in a country.

In physics, we know that you cannot have two bodies occupying the same space simultaneously. And that is the nature of this conflict. We have two

systems of law and authority in Israel and each imperialistically believes that its laws and norms must supercede all others.

According to Isaac Luria, the 16th century Kabbalist, when G-d created the universe he had to withdraw, make *tzimtzum*, from some parts.

We Israelis - and other Jews also - could use a little *tzimtzum* right now. If everyone reduced and contracted their ambitions a bit, if everyone withdrew a step or two, if each side stopped trying to impose its view of the world on our complex society, then we might be able to avoid the explosion of raw hatred that threatens us now.

This means that the rabbis should stop using the *halacha* as the basis for statements about political issues. They should restrict themselves to the *halachic* point of view on *Shabbat*, on prayer, on what the Torah and *Talmud* say about contemporary life, but not politics. That's *tzimtzum*.

In the same way, the Israeli Supreme Court doesn't need to aggressively and defiantly apply civil law to every aspect of life. In a democracy the decisions of the Supreme Court must be obeyed, and for this reason it must abstain from ruling on spiritual matters, that too is *tzimtzum*.

Our religious schools increasingly are afraid to confront or deal with secular culture, which is perceived as inherently corrupt and opposed to a Jewish way of life. As a result, young people in those schools are sheltered and cut off from mainstream Israeli life.

Likewise, most of our secular shelter and cut off their students from any contact with Jewish tradition and Jewish wisdom. The idea that the Torah and the *Talmud* have profound wisdom to offer all Jews, whether or not they believe in G-d, seems to have escaped many of Israel's educational leaders.

We now have in Israel a small but growing number of wonderful dialogue programs. Secular and religious students are meeting each other. They are talking, studying together, developing tolerance, discovering that they have much in common, and Bar-Ilan University professors are actively involved in many of them. We teach that Judaism and democracy are *complimentary* values.

Even in the haredi world, there is a growing understanding that the tools of the modern world - like math, like social work, like computers - will help

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young Jews without depriving them of their Jewishness.

We need to develop a stable society whose basic values are shared by those who keep kosher and those who don't, by the young people in the cafes of Tel Aviv and the yeshivah scholars.

An important rule of Jewish life should be the primacy of *Klal Yisrael*, the community of Israel.

In Jewish tradition, we place a great emphasis on the sanctity of life. The sanctity of life supercedes the Torah, we are taught Jewish wisdom and Jewish law indicate that *Klal Yisrael* supercede Jewish life. We go to war and risk our life to protect our loved ones and friends and neighbours and Jews we don't know. But since Jewish life is secondary to *Klal Yisrael*, then *Klal Yisrael* supercedes the Torah.

It's unfortunate that some sectors in the Jewish world believe they and they alone are *Klal Yisrael*, that they and they alone are the Jewish community. In fact, in Israel, *Klal Yisrael* includes the *heredim*, the *dattim* or national-religious, and the secular sectors, each and every Jew. In the United States, *Klal Yisrael* includes the Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist and the unaffiliated. Imagine what our life would be like if our Israeli rabbis understood that Conservative and the Reform Jews are also *Klal Yisrael*. Imagine how imaginative their rulings would be if they believed that, when dealing with the conversion of Reform Jews, *Klal Yisrael* is the supreme value. Imagine how much more welcoming they would be to Orthodox women who want a bigger role in Jewish rituals.

Right now, in Israel, we teach our children to die for *Klal Yisrael* but not to live for it. We do not teach them how to devote themselves to making sure *Klal Yisrael* is preserved in times of peace, as well as in times of war.

**Scribe:** The virtue of lying.

It is noteworthy that the Ten Commandments do not contain a prohibition on lying. But some Rabbis believe that a commandment "Thou shalt not lie" is equivalent to all the prohibitions of the Ten Commandments.

In his speech at Cleveland, Ohio, Bar-Ilan President, Dr Moshe Kaveh, came out with another advice, namely that when you have a confrontation between peace and the truth, peace is more important than truth.

As an example he goes on to cite the case of a woman who became

pregnant and had an abortion and then she became religious and married an ultra Orthodox, then gave birth to a "first born" son. There is a special redeeming ceremony (Pediom) which we conduct for first-born sons. Except that the woman knew that this child was not the "first-born fruit of the womb", she had never told her husband of her previous life, pregnancy and abortion. Should she now? She asked Rabbi Obadia Yosef, the leading Sephardi halachic decisor of our generation: "Should I tell my husband? It will cause tremendous pain and conflict." Rabbi Yosef's wise response: "Whenever you have a conflict between peace and truth, peace prevails. Don't tell your husband".

Dr Kaveh's general advice to resort to lies for the sake of harmony and peace is hard to swallow.

Moreover, Dr Kaveh who is an Orthodox Jew was speaking to an American audience composed mostly of Reformed Jews and his whole lecture shows that he was playing to the gallery.

## **HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE from a booklet by Professor Moshe Kaveh President of Bar Ilan University**

When a child enters primary school, and finally begins to learn Rashi, he encounters Rashi's commentary on the verse "And G-d said: Let there be luminaries in the heavens"(Genesis 1:14). The Talmud (Hullin 60b) quotes Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi: "It is first written 'the two great luminaries', and then it is written 'the great luminary.' How is this explained? The Moon said to the Almighty: 'Master of the World, is it possible for two kings to rule under one crown?' The Almighty replied: 'Go and diminish yourself.'"

Although this parable has an important moral lesson for all generations, it is also interesting to ask whether there is any relation between the Genesis text and science, or at least the science of the ancient world. The idea that the Earth was destined to revolve around the "two luminaries" generates great curiosity. Is such a thing possible?

Before providing answers for legions of kindergarten teachers and their pupils to the questions listed above, it is useful to survey briefly the history of the

universe and the scientific theory of the formation of the Sun and the Moon.

The universe originated about 15 billion years ago in a violent explosion, popularly known as the "big bang". Immediately after the big bang, the entire universe was filled with radiation. Part of the radiant energy was immediately and spontaneously transformed into the elementary particles of matter, and after only one second (!), protons and neutrons were formed.

Three minutes after the "big bang", the first atomic nuclei were formed, primarily helium. At that time, the temperature of the universe was one billion degrees! Great drama! The physics of electromagnetic waves, elementary particles, and nuclear physics, which constitute about 75% of the physics curriculum for the B.Sc degree in every university, all originated within three minutes!

The rate of the subsequent development of the universe was greatly slowed. About 300,000 uneventful years were to pass after the "big bang" as the universe gradually cooled down. However, when the universe finally reached a temperature of about 6000 degrees, dramatic events again began to happen. The first signs appeared of the the present-day structure of the universe, which consists of different materials.

These scientific findings aroused great excitement seven years ago, when the results of the COBE satellite reached the Earth. This satellite, launched into space in 1989 with the most sophisticated equipment on board, succeeded in measuring the radiation that reaches our planet from a distance of over 500 million light years. (One light year is the distance travelled by light in one year, nearly 10 trillion kilometres). The photographs taken by COBE showed the development of the universe starting from 300,000 years after its origin. How much time had to pass until the formation of atoms, the study of which constitutes the remaining 25% of the university physics curriculum? The first atoms were formed about 10 million years after the "big bang".

When were the Earth, Sun, and Moon formed? Physicists have learned that the solar system came into being about 10 billion years after the "big bang", that is, about five billion years ago. The Sun and planets appeared first, but the Moon was not formed until about 50 million years after the planet Earth.

**From: Professor Moshe Kaveh**  
President of Bar-Ilan University  
Ramat-Gan, Israel

When I look back on the past year in Israel, a year of many new beginnings. Last year we launched our major project for the next fifty years - our \$500 million campus extension in Ramat Gan - with advanced construction on the first four buildings.

Four historic lead gifts, all from friends of the university in the United States have jump-started construction on the Gonda (Goldschmied) Brain Research Center, the Ann and Marcus Rosenberg Music Building, the Anna & Max Webb & Family Psychology Building, and we shall finish the Jack and Gitta Nagel Family Jewish Heritage House this year.

We have also made significant progress in advancing essential academic goals in a number of key disciplines. The Center for the Study of Dead Sea Scrolls and Jewish Epigraphy was established in partnership with David and Jemima Jeselsohn of Switzerland and a new chemistry library and research wing is being established by dear friends of the University from Australia. I am proud to note that our campaign to establish doctoral fellowships is gaining impressive momentum.

We also made a major decision to open a new School of Hi-Tech Engineering, and we launched our Virtual Jewish University on the Internet

(<http://bar-ilan.edu>).

I can only be grateful for G-d's blessings and the friendship of our supporters around the world. We have achieved so much.

At this time of the year my thoughts also turn from the university to the broader, the Jewish world beyond - and I find cause for concern indeed.

We seek to bridge between Jews and Israelis of all persuasions by teaching Jewish tradition and ethics in an open, critical manner. Bar-Ilan University's more than 45,000 graduates are testament to our success in this regard.

## I WOULD CHOOSE DEATH OVER ETERNAL LIFE

from *The London Daily Telegraph*

"Death may no longer be inevitable," writes Dr John Harris, Professor of Bioethics at Manchester University, and a member of the Government's Genetic Commission. I never expected to read such words written by a serious scientist in my lifetime.

Of course, no one is suggesting the imminent demise of the Grim Reaper, Male life expectancy since 1900 has increased by about 25 years. Announcing the results of the Human Genome Project this week, Bill Clinton gave young Leo Blair an extra 25 years on the spot. Others are already talking about 150

years, the more exuberant 1,000. The abolition of mortality is now semi-officially envisaged on some distant horizon. It will be achieved by meddling around with genes, which will improve the quality of life as well as its quantity.

Many will greet this putative victory over death as a potential triumph. I believe that it would be a tragedy. For death has a purpose, and without it, our lives on earth would be meaningless and devoid of value.

This is not the popular view of death. The decline of religious belief in western Europe has contributed to uncertainty of what becomes of us after it. We fear the unknown, and death itself may hurt. Mortality militates against the desire to control our own destinies. A predictable death, as in terminal illness, seems no more palatable than the surprise demise of a heart attack. Life is fun and, even when foul, preferable to the alternative. There were relatively few suicides in the extermination camps. The neo-Darwinists see us as robots whose defining genes are simply selfish survival mechanisms. We are programmed to avoid death. No wonder we recoil from it.

But do we? Should we? Will we? If death is no longer inevitable, will it acquire some attraction? Perhaps our distaste for it is coloured, if not caused, by its supposed inevitability. Imagine if death were a choice. Would it lead to a breakdown or to a strengthening of the brotherhood of man? I suggest the former. The earth's resources are finite and would concentrate in the hands of the super-vital, super-aged, to the chagrin of their great, great, great grand-children. Who can doubt that, even today, children are often ambivalent about their aged parents' continued existence? Governments, and the dictators we seem to have forgotten about so swiftly, would soon be busy organising "forced retirement". Life would quickly become nasty, brutish and long.

Crammed together like sardines, and competing with our own progeny for limited space and material resources, we would be alive, but dead from déjà vu. Everything of value would have died except for us... fun, excitement, love, hope, sex, pleasure. It seems certain that our desire for life would not long outlast the knowledge that our wish for immortality would soon be eternally gratified.

Mistrust and fear of death depend on another assumption that may

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*Last March was the wedding in London of Dr Amira Naseem Sopher and Frankie Sweiry.*

*Frankie who is an accountant is the son of Isaac and Rahma Sweiry who came from Bahrain but were originally from Iraq. Dr Amira is now a partner GP in a London suburb (see also picture gallery in The Scribe 70, page 6).*

*The picture left shows the couple with the bridesmaid Gaby Khalastchy.*

not be true. Is life really good? Optimists, answering yes, would point to (say) beauty, love, the joy of children, or the kindness and moral goodness of man. Research into happiness is narrowly on the side of those who say that, on balance, they are contented. In our cultural climate, to admit that life is unpleasant is construed as a sign that we have failed in it. But the last century saw horrors unlike any the world has known.

But if life is, on balance, bad, and eternal life as unattractive as it is insupportable, what then of death, the great deliverance? When no longer natural and inevitable, might it at last be considered good? For believers in G-d and Heaven, how can it not be a wonderful thing to die?

In truth, death defines our life as a full stop does a sentence. Death alone, by providing an ending, makes sense of our birth and the drama of life in between. We have a limited time to plan our legacy, to play to the best of our ability the cards we have been dealt. Death gives value to our times. Those who have brushed with it, and survived, talk of its pleasantness, and yet return from the brink born again, determined not to waste now precious years. They see purpose and meaning in those things they had taken for granted and are determined to leave their mark of goodness on the microcosmic moment of forever that is human existence. A surfeit of life will sicken our appetite for it. Rationing it naturally sharpens our desire to leave our echo in eternity. Will somebody tell the scientists that death is not our enemy? It is our friend.

## THE DEMISE OF G-D

### Continuation of Thoughts & Afterthoughts

Eternal life is equivalent to a perpetual life imprisonment - a fate worse than death. Should G-d, then, be denied the luxury of dying?

In recent years much has been written and said about the death of G-d, apparently because nothing has been heard of Him or from Him for some time. The G-d referred to is obviously the G-d of the Bible, our G-d.

The idea of G-d took many millennia to develop - first G-d the Creator, then the One True G-d, then G-d the Sustainer, who keeps the Universe ticking.

The fact that the Universe was

the result of an act of creation did not seem obvious to everyone. It was arrived at by our ancestors but was rejected elsewhere. As recently as 330 BCE when Alexander the Great visited Israel, he wrote to his mentor, the philosopher Aristotle, asking him what he thought of the Jewish idea of Creation. His reply was, "What creation? The world has always been there!" It was for this that the prophet said:

"Darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the nations but on thee G-d shines and his glory will be seen upon thee."

Modern science has confirmed the inspired knowledge of our ancestors regarding the origin of the Universe and its creation out of nothing which started with the Big Bang. Encouraged by this information, even serious Bible scholars are trying to find scientific proof in every word of the Bible which is overdoing it.

The idea of the One True G-d came about by reasoning that if there were more than one G-d, soon they would compete with one another and in the end one of them would have emerged victorious and thus became the One True G-d.

The idea of G-d the Sustainer, One who does not sleep or slumber but keeps the Universe going, the Living G-d, was arrived at in Babylon by Abraham who was an astronomer and whose ideas are the foundations of all three monotheistic Faiths. According to Josephus, the first century Jewish military commander and historian, Abraham noticed that some stars were not fixed in the sky, but continued to move from one place to another and came to the conclusion that it must be G-d



Himself who, like a croupier, keeps moving these stars around.

We know now, of course, that the Universe is self-sustaining and does not need anyone to direct its movements. In fact, any outside interference would be disastrous. There is no need, therefore, for G-d to take any part in the running of his Creation. Thus, if G-d created the Universe but is no longer there, when did He pass away? Surely, G-d who created time could not have disappeared at a moment in time. G-d could only have disappeared with the Big Bang. It was the simultaneous moment of G-d's demise and the Creation of the Universe. In other words, the Universe is G-d's wonderful memorial.

What about all the instances that G-d spoke to Moses, the experience at Mount Sinai, the parting of the Red Sea, the miracles? How did all these events come about if G-d was no longer there? The answer is that all these events were pre-recorded, pre-destined.

More and more, scientists and philosophers are coming to the conclusion that every event, past present and future, since the Big Bang and until the end of Time was programmed at the time of Creation. It is also the experience of old people that what happens has to happen because it is the destiny that it should happen.

Where do we go from here? We believe that man was created in the image of G-d and I therefore believe that man unless he will destroy himself by committing an error, is eventually destined to become G-d himself which is not impossible in a world of infinity and eternity.

I am writing all the above in the Jewish tradition of investigating and enquiring without any intention of irreverence.

## THE LESSON OF THE HOLOCAUST

The extermination during the war in cold blood and with impunity, by the beasts of Germany and its allies, of six million Jews, is a crime unequalled since the dawn of civilisation. It is an eye opener for those with intelligence.

As he witnessed the daily consignment of ten thousand men, women and children to the gas chambers, one Rabbi remarked "If G-d does not intervene in this massacre, then take it from me that, as far as we are concerned, there is no G-d!"

# NEW EVIDENCE OF THE GREAT FLOOD

from *The Sunday Times* - 27.9.99

Compelling evidence that there was a Great Flood, as told in the Old Testament story of Noah's Ark, has been found far below the waters of the Black Sea by an American expedition.

Underwater surveyors, led by Robert Ballard, the renowned oceanographer who found the Titanic and other sunken ships of the 20th century, have discovered an ancient coastline at a depth of 450 ft.

"I am not sure whether it is Noah's flood or not Noah's flood, but I do buy that there was a flood," said David Mindell, one of the surveyors.

The Ballard team was working from a theory about the biblical flood of antiquity propounded by two marine geologists from Columbia University in New York, William Ryan and Walter Pittman, in their new book, *Noah's Flood*, reviewed in Scribe No. 71, page 3.

As Dr Ballard explained: "During the last great Ice Age glaciers advanced across the surface of the world. That lowered the sea level 400ft. Then, 12,000 years ago at the end of the Ice Age, the glaciers began to retreat".

With its lower sea level, the eastern Mediterranean was cut off from the Black Sea so that when the oceans started to rise, the Black Sea did not.

Dr Ballard continued: "Around 7,600 years ago, guess what happens? The Mediterranean breaks through a natural dam at the Bosphorus and catastrophically floods the land surface. People living there are 400ft below sea level and in trouble. They are facing a flood equal to 10,000 Niagara Falls."

This flood was on a far greater scale than the one described in Genesis, which is said to have lasted for 40 days and 40 nights, covering every living thing on Earth beneath 24ft of water other than Noah, his family and his pairs of animals carried to safety on the ark.

In the new theory, it is believed that each day for two years ten cubic miles of ocean water cut through the widening Bosphorus channel as it flowed into what was then a fresh water lake, raising the level by six inches a day.

The incoming salt water, more dense than the fresh water it displaced, plunged to the bottom of the lake bed, transforming it into a sea where the depths support no life.

This area of inert darkness is known as an abyss that is anoxic, meaning that the trapped water could not circulate and has lost its oxygen, "Such conditions exist nowhere else in the world," Dr Ballard said.

The theory supposes that in this dead zone wooden ships will be preserved intact, possibly still with their Bronze Age sails, and just waiting for Dr Ballard and his team. The explorers are convinced that there may be many ships on the bottom because the Black Sea served as an important commercial waterway.

Dr Ballard has participated in 120 deep-sea expeditions. He found two Phoenician vessels more than 3,000 years old.

**Scribe:** In response to our enquiry, the British Admiralty have confirmed that water flows from the Mediterranean through the straits of the Dardanelle and the Bosphorus into the Black Sea. This clearly indicates that the Mediterranean receives much more river water than does the Black Sea which supports the assumption that when the Dardanelle was closed in ancient times, the water level of the Mediterranean became much higher than that of the Black Sea.

## THE HAZON PETAYA REHABILITATION CENTRE

**by: Mrs Simcha Petaya-Ovadiya,  
Director of the Hazon Petaya Centre**

For over 25 years, the Hazon Petaya Rehabilitation Center in Jerusalem has been providing rehabilitation through work for men and women who cannot hold jobs any place else, because of physical problems or emotional disturbances. Since its founding by my late father, Shaul Petaya, the Center has taught a trade and helped rehabilitate over 2,000 psychiatric patients.

At Hazon Petaya, each individual does real work in packaging, sewing and print production finishing. The work is supervised by a professional staff, with counsel provided by psychologists and social workers.

Patients receive salaries which are most often not covered by the actual work done. At Hazon Petaya, the work is never an end in itself, but a therapy leading to healing and recovery. In fact,

most of the patients at Hazon Petaya remain dependent for the rest of their lives, but a number do go on to find jobs outside, get married, begin studying and even start their own businesses.

In recent years, however, government support for Hazon Petaya has been cut and increased competition has made it more difficult to obtain work for the patients. As a result, the Hazon Petaya Center has built up a huge debt and can only accept a fraction of all potential patients.

By sending your contribution to Hazon Petaya today, you will help us to continue to provide "rehabilitation through work" - the best medicine for those who need to feel self-esteem, self-worth and pride in their accomplishments.

**Scribe:** How Rommell was halted.

On her visit to our offices, Mrs Petaya related that in 1942 Rommell and his German army were advancing rapidly along the Egyptian coast towards Palestine. The Jews there became afraid of the consequences of falling into the hand of the Nazis, and many thought of different ways of committing suicide. Shaoul Petaya went to the British Commanding Officer and asked him to let him use an aeroplane to save the situation by prayers and supplications. As the situation was desperate the officer agreed, and Shaoul Petaya took 12 white chickens and flew around the country killing the chickens one by one as sacrificial offering for the safety of Palestine and throwing them out of the window on the ground below. It appears that soon thereafter Rommell's advance was halted and the tide began to turn against him. The Jews of Palestine drew a deep sigh of relief, while the Arabs became greatly disappointed. They had been chanting everywhere, "Hasten your steps Rommell".

A similar incident was recently reported by the BBC during the long winter drought in Israel. Ten Orthodox Rabbis took an aeroplane with live chickens and performed a similar ritual. Two days later, reported the BBC, the rain began to fall and the drought came to an end.

Nevertheless, the Arabs, who were on the side of Hitler, received all the benefit of the Second World War, while the Jews who were on the side of the Allies are still struggling for a coastal strip of rocky territory.

# INTEREST FREE MONITARY SYSTEM

Dear Dr Soros

My wife and I and our son were very fortunate to attend the dinner at Park Lane Hotel, London on May 4th given by the Board of Deputies in your honour, and to listen to the most interesting answers to the various questions which were put to you. Allow me to put to you my own question, kindly requesting your opinion on this important issue.

In view of the recent final demise of the gold standard, the gradual phasing out of gold reserves by central banks, and of the gradual transition to paper money, firstly by the issuing of gold certificates, then by promissory money (I promise to pay the bearer TEN POUNDS)..... do you think that the time has come for mankind to achieve the biblical dream of Moses and work out an interest-free monitory system? This can simply be done by accepting the principle that promissory paper money needs to be issued - not in the name of the money lender nor of the central bank, but by the consumer, or in the name of the consumer.

In moving from commodity money to promissory money, economists did not take the right step. Moses identified the problem of the need for an interest-free medium of exchange, but no solution was possible at that time.

Moses left only a pious wish against usury, taken up by the Christians in the Middle Ages and also by the Moslems. Ironically Jews became the money lenders to the Gentiles with great riches and persecution. Present Islamic banking is only cosmetic.

My Foundation is able and willing to devote the necessary funds for the promotion of this idea.

Yours sincerely **Naim Dangoor**

Dear Mr Dangoor

Thank you for your letter of May 9th. I am afraid I am not in a position to answer your question about an interest free monetary system.

With best wishes.

**George Soros**

Soros Fund Management LLC  
Open Society Institute  
New York

**Scribe:** *Dr Soros is known to give an abrupt comment on matters in which he is not an expert.*

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It was a great pleasure to read THE SCRIBE, issue 72. I see from this issue that interest-free lending is a matter close to Mr Naim Dangoor's heart.

I have been working on this matter for many years and I believe that interest-free linkage to the average wage or income is a practical way of lending, and is in the spirit of the Miswah: "If thou lend money to My people, even to the poor with thee, thou shalt not be to him as a creditor; neither shall ye lay upon him interest" [Exodus 22-24].

Interest-free loans linked to the published average wage would give an average yearly return of about 1.5% above the price index to the lender. Erosion of the lender's money is prevented, but there are risks.

I look forward to hearing from you.

**Israel**

**Raphael B Yehezkel**

**Scribe:**

Thank you for your information on interest-free loans. Your solution, however, is cosmetic. You just try to get around the biblical ban on usury by various means. This is like Islamic banking. When a person deposits money with an Islamic bank, instead of receiving interest, he receives a share of the bank's profit. This is like curing the symptoms instead of curing the illness. My solution is more genuine, more radical. It goes to the root of money. Money must be issued in the name of the consumer, instead of in the name of the money lender.

If promissory money is issued by or in the name of the consumer, interest suddenly disappears. This is the real money, not commodity money. Where mankind went wrong was to treat paper money as commodity money. Promissory money was not possible at the time of Moses, so the Torah mentioned the problem but could not provide a solution at that time. Now we can have the solution.

You still talk about a lender and a creditor which is directly contravening the Miswah you quote.

I believe that the greatest danger in the world is not the atom bomb, not global warming, but compound interest.

*For a full explanation of Mr Yehezkel's ideas please refer to his home page: <http://shekel.jct.ac.il/~rafi>*

Letter sent to:

The Rt Reverend Dr Richard Harries  
Bishop of Oxford

Dear Bishop

**Why are the poor, poor?**

I was interested in your "Thought for the Day", this morning, especially as that question has been on my mind for 70 years. Since the late twenties I have been thinking over the problem of poverty and its possible solutions.

Communism succeeds in making everyone poor, and this cannot be the answer. Capitalism fails to make everyone rich, and it too cannot be the answer. Helping the poor, while a virtue in itself, the need for it is a loud condemnation of our economic system.

Sooner or later mankind, after decades free of major warfare, will come to realise:

1. The need to restrict the ability to store wealth. The Bible deals with that point, limiting the ownership of landed property to 50 years.

2. Money is a form of credit, and promissory money must be issued in the name of the consumer and not by the money lender. The amount of interest paid by the community for the use of promissory money is staggering and crippling. The Bible condemned usury but unfortunately does not offer a solution. The solution is that money should be issued by the consumer based on ability to repay.

Jubilee Dot Com may yet be the greatest spinner of them all!

**Naim Dangoor**

Reply letter from the Bishop of Oxford:

Dear Mr Dangoor

Thank you for your letter. It was good to receive your thoughts on this important subject.

With all good wishes.

**The Rt Reverend Richard Harries**

**Scribe:** *Bishop Harries recently informed his congregants that any Christian who cannot believe in the divinity of Jesus should not revert to Unitarian Christianity but should take up Judaism - a religion which has been successfully tested and has survived for 4,000 years.*

## ONE GENERATION GOES AWAY AND A NEW GENERATION ARRIVES

On 15 June a son was born to David and Ide Dangoor of New York, a brother to his three sisters. He was named Selim Eliahou Edward, being the grandson of Selim Eliahou Dangoor who passed away two years ago and of Eliahou Edward Weitzen.



*Above: picture of the new born*

*Below : the Torah Crown which was donated by the family to the Great Synagogue of Stockholm in memory of Selim Dangoor.*



At the presentation of the Torah Crown, the Chief Rabbi emeritus, Morton Narrowe made a moving sermon in the presence of Ruth, children and grandchildren.

## MOSHE KATZAV - ISRAEL'S 8TH PRESIDENT

by Percy Gourgey MBE

The election in August 2000 of Moshe Katzav as Israel's 8th President, defeating the famous Shimon Peres in a Knesseth vote, 63-57, surprised everybody. The vote coincided with dissatisfaction over Prime Minister Barak's handling of the failed Peace talks at Camp David earlier in the month. Barak had backed Peres.

Katzav was born in Iran in 1945 and came to Israel in 1951 where his family had settled in the religious town of Kiriath Malachi. Katzav's rise to eminence may be compared to the American process of log cabin to White House!

He graduated from the Ben Shimon Agricultural School and, after military service, obtained a degree in economics and history from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. At the age of 24 he became (Likud) Mayor of Kiriath Malachi, the youngest mayor in ministerial posts in Likud governments culminating as Minister for Tourism and Trade in Netanyahu's government from 1996-1999.

I met him in Tbilisi, Georgia in September 1998 when he led a large delegation of Georgian businessmen from Israel which contracted billions of dollars business between Israel and Georgia. I was a member of the World Sephardi Federation delegation.

The President of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnaze, the penultimate Soviet Foreign Minister under President Gorbachev had decided to celebrate the forthcoming millennium in a unique way. As members of the Georgian Orthodox Christian Church, they decided to honour their 2,500 year old Jewish community, which had never suffered anti-Semitism, through four days of state celebrations. It was a wonderful experience with many notable events organised by the Government. It concluded with a State Banquet.

### GOURGEY FELDMAN WEDDING

The wedding took place recently at the London Savoy Hotel of Gabrielle Gourgey, (daughter of my brother Reggie) with Andrew Feldman. The toast was proposed by Mr James Wolferson, President of the World Bank in Washington, a personal friend of Reggie.

London

Percy Gourgey

# OBITUARIES

## Eliyahu Hillel ZL



I have written a small article in memory of my Brother, Eliyahu ZL. I had it translated to English, which you may wish to print in The Scribe. I believe Eliyahu deserves it. Moreover, I believe his story is the story of a whole generation, your generation, that is worthwhile to tell.

**Jerusalem**

**Shlomo Hillel**

On the 2nd of Shevat (January 8, 2000), Eliyahu Hillel passed away at the age of 84.

Those passing by his grave in the Yarkon Cemetery might not know that there lies a precious man, a man of great deeds, a man who loved his fellow man and who was loved in return. They couldn't have known that there lies a fascinating life story - the story of a pioneer whose life symbolises the beginnings of the redemption of the ancient Babylonian Jewry, its immigration to the Land of Israel, and becoming involved in building it.

Eliyahu ZL was one of the founders of the Ahiever Movement in Baghdad and a key activist in it at the end of the 20's and the beginning of the 30's. Together with friends, most of them youths at the Jewish school "Shamash" he established a dynamic Zionist movement which dedicated itself to teaching Hebrew, speaking Hebrew, and

promoting a strong connection with the Jewish community in the Land of Israel. During those years, while the British mandate was still in effect in Iraq, one could engage in Zionist activity more or less legally (though under the intimidating, hostile surveillance of the local Muslim population and the government institutions). When Iraq became independent in 1932, it became clear that the Zionist movement could no longer operate, due to the extreme nationalistic attitudes of the rulers of Iraq. And the movement did indeed break up, with some of the members immigrating to Israel, while others who remained in place becoming submerged in the problems of day to day existence.

Eliyahu, the son of a well-to-do businessman, decided that he wanted to immigrate to the Land of Israel and to realize the ideal he had believed in and exhorted others to realize. This was a true revolution in the Hillel family. His five older brothers had already left Iraq, but not for the land of Israel but rather for countries all around the world, where they conducted extensive business. This was the role designated for Eliyahu when he finished school - to take his place in the family business. But he stood his ground: neither business, nor commerce, instead - the Land of Israel and the studying of agriculture - of all things - at the Mikveh Israel Agricultural School, as preparation for realizing the dream of being pioneering farmer in the Land of Israel. He was 18 years old when he left his parents' warm, comfortable home to cope with a new and unfamiliar reality of dormitory life in an agriculture school in the Land of Israel.

Eliyahu's aliyah symbolised a turning point in the life of the entire family and perhaps even contributed to it. Except for those who had already struck roots in the various foreign countries around the world where they were living, the entire family immigrated to Israel, one after another, became deeply involved in the life of the country, and became an address for many of the Iraqi Jews who later came to Israel and sought out good advice and guidance in becoming successfully absorbed in the country.

Eliyahu's marriage to Renee of the Twena family and the outbreak of the Second World War which severely hurt the citrus export industry (one of the major agricultural crops at that time), put an end to Eliyahu's dream of agricultural

life.

He built his house in North Tel Aviv, a house that many remember as an open house known for its hospitality.

Another chapter in my brother Eliyahu's life began when I was recruited into the Mossad for Aliyah Bet and sent on missions to Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. It was clear that Eliyahu was the only one in the family to whom I confided the secret of my leaving on confidential missions, and his infinite love and concern always accompanied me on those missions for many years. One of the veteran members of the Aliyah Bet group said to me on the day of Eliyahu's funeral: "You thought it was only you who were recruited into the Mossad for Aliyah Bet, but no less than you - Eliyahu was also recruited. His home and his office in Wesco (opposite the old central bus station in Tel Aviv) served us at the Mossad for Aliyah Bet as a second office that was always at our disposal, day and night". And that was so, not just his office but also the home of Eliyahu and Renee became the home of the people of the Aliyah Bet group. Many emissaries, when they came to Israel, were hosted for days at their home on Ben Yehuda 121. At that time, it was not customary for emissaries who came to Israel to stay at hotels and they were glad to sleep on the rugs in Eliyahu's house and to be hosted at his generous table, abundant with the good food prepared by his wife Renee. Many immigrants who came to Israel also knew their address, found their way to it, and were given help. Testimony of that may be found by the many people who attended his funeral or who came to comfort the family during the shiva period.

Eliyahu left a wife and three loving sons, two of them living in Canada, but the youngest son, Mickey, lives in Israel and is raising his family here. The three children of Mickey and his wife Orli, Eliyahu's grandchildren, were a source of joy and delight to Eliyahu in his last years. With the good feeling that his children, grandchildren, relatives and friends loved him, he left this world. For us, his family, his wife, his children, his brother and sisters it is hard to say goodbye. The pain is deep, the loss is great.

May his memory be blessed.



## Niazi Sion Dangoor



### THE BEAUTY AND THE BEASTS by Abdulla S Dangoor

Niazi Sion Dangoor who died recently in Tel Aviv at the age of 90, was born in Baghdad in 1910 when Iraq was a province of the Ottoman Empire and was named after Niazi Pasha the leader of the young Turks who staged a revolt against the Sultan. Niazi showed his skill in languages and at an early age mastered four languages: Arabic, Hebrew, English and French and latterly German. He was a brilliant entrepreneur and with the help of his brother-in-law, Jacob Mashaal, a racing man and a member of the Racing Board, he secured a concession for a betting office in town. A year later, at the age of 21, he realised that there was a trade opening with Germany and with the encouragement of Dr Grobba, the German minister in Baghdad, travelled to far away city of Leipzig and established a branch office to one of the biggest companies in Iraq, Meyer Toeg and Joseph Moshi to trade through the newly established Havara Mark which enabled German exports to be very competitive. Within a year he became fluent in German and achieved a great success in his business enterprise.

In 1931, Germany was in a state of tranquillity and Jews flourishing in the arts, music and business. The *Lorélei*, the poem written by the Jewish poet, Heinrich Heine, was the most popular song at the time: "I know not why I am so sad; I cannot get out of my head a fairytale of Olden Times". But with the advent of the Nazis things changed

overnight but they retained the song without mentioning the author. Almost every foreigner had to sport a badge of his country and even members of the diplomatic corps with dark complexions were molested. But Niazi was bold to walk the streets without fear. With his angelic good looks, wave hair and blue eyes, he became like an icon in a drab city. Dressed in a Savile Row suit by Henry Poole and driving in a smart Mercedes Benz coupé, he was courted by the intelligentsia as the first man from far away Iraq in their midst. Among them was Professor Landsberger the archaeologist and the greatest Assyriologist of the century who was to compose the Assyrian-English dictionary.

It was during my school holiday in Leipzig that my brother took me with his girlfriend and a couple of German acquaintances to the races. Soon after our arrival, the military band struck, the Nazi anthem was sung by the crowds who raised their hands in the Hitler salute with shouts of Heil Hitler and Sieg Heil. It was a daring do of Niazi and I at his side, giving the old fashioned military salute. The racegoers looked somewhat surprised at our bold and defiant attitude.

A few days after this episode, Niazi was summoned to the Gestapo Chief Obersturmbannführer. Facing the man with his intimidating physical presence, he deployed the strategy that the first part of defence is attack. He upbraided him for keeping him waiting on a primitive and uncomfortable bench. The blond beast, pompous, arrogant and bombastic became docile. Eventually the wolf turned into a little twerp. The Chief asked him silly questions. Is Meyer the senior partner of your company a Jew? Yes he is. Does he worship in a synagogue? I have no idea. Do you know him well? "No. I have never met him." How is that? Because he lives in Basra and I am from Baghdad. Ach so! Where is Basra? It is the main port of Iraq. He never asked Niazi whether he was a Jew for fear that he might tell him to mind his own business. When alerted by an aide that he may be dealing with a Jew, he rebuked him by telling him: It is I who decide who is a Jew. After grumbling on petty and irrelevant subjects, Niazi could not contain his irritation, lost his patience and threatened to complain to the Wilhelm Strasse (The Foreign Office) that the Chief overstepped his mark by his intrusive interview. The Chief has realised that he cannot draw swords with a man of intelligence, learning and charisma. He was now so

polite and promised that Niazi would not be bothered again. This promise was kept for many years to come. He took the unprecedented step by standing up, shook his hand, greeting Grosse Got and Gutten Tag, and not raising his hand in the Nazi salute.

It was at the racecourse that Inge Hansen Niazi's then girlfriend and one of the most beautiful women in Germany, was brought to the attention of Dr Ley, the Labour Minister and one of the most repulsive types of German corporalents. He asked to see the woman and after meeting her he fell madly in love with her, divorced his wife and married her. His strength through joy cruise ships swarmed up to Westminster pier just before the war and in 1940 he promised his workers trips to the beauty spots of conquered Britain. However, with Reich's defeat he was indicted as war criminal in Nuremberg and hanged himself in his cell.

In 1938, after the Munich conference, Niazi was on a business trip to London. When he phoned his office in Leipzig, he was told by his secretary that he cannot speak freely as the premises were occupied by the Gestapo and all communications were cut off with the outside world. Niazi's first reaction was not to go back and was so advised by his friends and relatives. However, the next day and on the spur of the moment, he took the plane and went straight to the Gestapo headquarters. He barged in unannounced and demanded to see the senior chief who became his friend. He stood before him, indomitable, unbent and courageous and berated him for their aggressive raid. The man was dumbfounded and after consulting his colleagues, he apologised profusely that the action was undertaken by subordinates without his knowledge.

Why were the ruthless Gestapo cosying to a man who cocked a snook at them with a brash manner? Niazi had the patronage of Dr Grobba and was a friend of the Emir Zaid the Iraqi envoy. Also they did not want to upset the notorious King Ghazi who was anti-British and broadcasting pro-German propaganda from his palace.

At this juncture Niazi came to the conclusion that it was time to go. He realised that war was imminent as he watched from his office in Nicolai Strasse the queues of the contingent of workers, and was told that these can be transformed within hours into a fighting force. He thought how naive and

**Continued on following page**

ignorant the Western leaders were. The French Prime Minister boasted that Hitler treated him as an equal and Chamberlain proclaiming that he can trust the Fuhrer and that he is a man of his word and he can do business with him.

He said goodbye to his tearful German staff who regarded him as a foreign protector and his being in Germany was reassuring of continued peace. In fact some of them wrote to him after the war seeking his help. Although most of them were Nazi sympathisers, they felt very vulnerable and looked at him as a father figure and foreign protector.

One final noble act was to obtain a visa and work permit in France for his Polish Jewish employee by the name of Fischleiber, mindful of the ancient Rabbinic teaching that he who saves a single life, saves the world.

## Edmond Safra

### SUICIDE OUT OF FEAR

I knew an elderly gentleman, let us call him Jim, who had a morbid fear of hanging himself if left alone in the house, and insisted on having someone stay with him at all times. Being an intelligent person, he reasoned with himself as to the cause of his anxiety. He came to the conclusion that he felt he would be vulnerable, if left alone, to anyone forcing himself into the house or opening the door by some means. As a result he decided to put the chain on the door and his problem came to an end.

In the case of Edmond Safra, there is no doubt that he was in a terrified state, hiding in the bathroom. His fear was if he opens the door he might fall into the hands of his imagined enemy with the result that he might be tortured and be forced to pay out millions. He came to the conclusion that his best escape route would be to die in one piece and leave his money intact.

In the event, there was no enemy waiting at the door and the honest Edmond Safra was only the victim of his own imagination.

His successful life story was adequately covered in the last issue of September 1999.

It is a case when money, which is supposed to be a good servant, became a bad master.

## OBITUARY by Stella Shamoon

### Niazi Shamoon



Niazi (Abraham) Hayim Shamoon, beloved husband of Teffeh (née Iny), father of Olivia, Stella and Hilda, and grandfather of Guy Greenberg, Dahlia and Benjamin Dana and Samuel Setton (Smouha) passed away on 2 September at the age of 86 years.

Rabbi Levy and Rabbi Gubbay led the prayers at the burial.

The immediate family was joined by relatives from Paris and from Geneva, along with life-long friends from our community based in London.

Rabbi Levy said Niazi was a patriarch and dynamic man who although not strictly speaking religious, had a deep sense of tradition and family values. He gave fulsome praise to Teffeh for her unswerving devotion and love.

Niazi used to tell how he met his wife Teffeh. "I met Teffeh at a wedding party. The minute I arrived, two beautiful eyes fixed on me, they stunned me, I couldn't believe them, I looked at her and she smiled". It was love at first sight for both of them. They married in 1942. In 1948 the family moved to London.

This is what Niazi's daughter Stella writes about her father:

My father was of a generation of great, tough and courageous men who lived a turbulent but rich life that straddled East and West, Old and New. His death marks the passing of an era. Family and friends were indeed his most precious values.

Although a talented and

imaginative businessman, it was not the desire for success that drove daddy. It was an inborn boundless energy and a hunger for challenge. He met each challenge and often conquered.

Niazi was born in Baghdad in 1914 to a family of seven children. He was four when he lost his father.

His grieving mother turned to her father, a man of high moral rectitude and sense of duty whom Niazi greatly admired and respected, and who from that day was to become provider, protector and head of the young bereaved family during the rest of his days.

Niazi's great grandfather Shamoon was a brother of the famous David Sassoon the First. But when the Sassoons offered to assume responsibility of the young widow and her children, his maternal grandfather was too proud and said he did not want any outside help.

My father had a remarkable memory and was a wonderful storyteller.

He was a proud man, tall and dignified but utterly unpretentious, possessed of infectious friendliness and a powerful urge to communicate with others. He approached everyone with respect and an open mind.

Whether to charm, to persuade or to argue his corner, my father was an eloquent advocate who delighted in words, had a keen sense of humour and quick wit. He was as awesome in argument as he was persuasive in praise.

With his partner, the late Ghali Shamash, my father built up a chain of London-based hotels and serviced apartments, The Embassy Group, which was sold in 1976.

He was an old man but to the end retained a young person's hunger for life and a keen sense of fun.

My father was unusually open-minded and tolerant towards people whose cultures and principles were different to his own. He was born in the sometimes sympathetic and tolerant and sometimes persecuting regimes of Islam. We were all deeply touched by the fact that so many of his friends came to pay their respects to my father and each told us "He was my best friend".

**Absence makes the heart grow fonder**  
We feel more affection for our relatives and friends when we are parted from them.