

# The SCRIBE

## JOURNAL OF BABYLONIAN JEWRY

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A HAPPY NEW YEAR 5750 TO ALL OUR READERS AND FRIENDS

### THE EXILARCH'S FOUNDATION ELECTION OF A GENERAL COUNCIL

Elections by their nature divide a community. They require one candidate to stand against another and encourage the formation of groups that compete with one another. The result is winners and losers.

Ever since competitive elections were introduced in 1849, our Baghdad community has been rocked with scandals and this pattern seems to continue in the small communities of our new Diaspora.

We are not a political organisation and we need smooth continuity. Everyone who wants to serve our people should be a winner. Everyone who wishes to promote the interests and welfare of our community should come forward and be counted.

Therefore the method to be used in electing a world-wide General Council for Babylonian Jewry in our new Diaspora is as follows:

- (1) Any qualifying member who is nominated by 30 qualifying members becomes a permanent Delegate to the General Council.
- (2) A "qualifying member" is any Jew 18 years of age, living outside Israel, who lived in Iraq, or had an ancestor living in Iraq since 1750, and his/her spouse.
- (3) A member can only make one nomination and can only make another nomination if his Delegate is no longer on the Council.
- (4) The General Council is open-ended, and Delegates are added as nominations are received.
- (5) Nominations should be sent to:  
The Exilarch's Foundation  
20 Queen's Gate Terrace  
London SW7 5PF  
giving full names and addresses of the nominee and the nominating members●

### Ta'ali Talk

A talk was given to Ta'ali on 6 September by Mr Percy Gourgey on the Jews of India in the series of talks on different Jewish communities. Mr Gourgey based his talk on his treatise, "Indian Jews and the Indian Freedom Struggle". In it Mr Gourgey drew attention to the history and composition of Indian Jewry and the participation, as individuals, of members of the Bene-Israel, Baghdadian and Cochin Jewish communities which remained aloof as communities from the struggle in accordance with the advice of Mahatma Gandhi in 1938 - "lest as a small community you will be crushed in the conflict between the three mighty conflicting forces of British Imperialism, Congress Nationalism and Muslim Separatism"●

### David Litton

The recent passing of Mr David Litton, 80, in Jerusalem, removes from the Sephardi scene and Israel a very distinguished personality. Mr Litton, who was President of the Sephardi Council of Jerusalem, one of the oldest organisations in the Holy City, was a 17th generation Sabra. He was a journalist, writer and politician.

In recent years, Mr Litton was invited to become a candidate for the Presidency of Israel, but he declined● P.S.G.

### Sheikh-Speare

When we were at school 60 years ago, schoolboys used to look for the Arab origins of various things to boost Arab morale which was at a low ebb. A classroom joke was that Shakespeare was an Arab and that his real name was Sheikh Zubayr (a town near Basrah).

The joke has apparently travelled on the back of a tortoise at 1 mile a week and has finally reached Libya, and was taken up by Col. Gaddafi. Addressing the Tunisian parliament, he told how the Arabs taught Europeans medicine, geography, maths and literature, pointing out that Shakespeare was in fact "Shaikh Zubayr bin William" amid applause by the deputies.

This is typical of the empty nature of Arab boasts and the serious way they are received by gullible Western observers. It was reported that Shakespearean scholars were startled by the Colonel's claim.

There has always been controversy regarding the true author of Shakespeare's plays - Francis Bacon, Christopher Marlowe, the Earl of Derby and the Earl of Oxford have been mentioned.

As reported in *The Daily Telegraph*, Dr. A. Rowse, historian of Elizabethan England and biographer of Shakespeare, who rejects all suggestions that the plays were written by anyone else, said: "There weren't any Arabs in Elizabethan London, but there were a few Jews, and two half-Jewish people were important to Shakespeare.

"One was Florio, Italian tutor to his patron the Earl of Southampton. The other was his mistress Emilia Bassano, the Dark Lady of the Sonnets. This is why Shakespeare knew so much about Jews."

Dr. Levi Fox, director of the Shakespeare centre at Stratford-on-Avon commented that Gaddafi's claim was the most fantastic in a long line of lunacies.

As for the oft-made Arab claim that they were the teachers of the world, we need only quote from *History of the Arabs* by Professor Philip Hitti, himself an Arab: "The Arab invaders from the desert brought with them no tradition of learning, no heritage of culture to the lands they conquered . . . When we speak of 'Arab medicine' or 'Arab philosophy' or 'Arab mathematics', we mean that body of knowledge enshrined in books written in the Arabic language by men who flourished chiefly through the caliphate and were themselves Persians, Egyptians or Arabians - Jewish, Christian or Moslem. Indeed, even what we call 'Arabic literature' was no more Arabian than the Latin literature of the Middle Ages was Italian . . ."●



The Mayor and Mayoress of Hammersmith and Fulham after recently attending a Shabbath Morning Service specially dedicated to AJEX, held in the Holland Park Synagogue, London. In the centre: past-Chairman of Hammersmith AJEX, Capt. S. A. Shemtob-Reading MBE, of Babylonian Jewry.

### Carmelite Convent

It is said that by having the Carmelite Convent at Auschwitz the Catholic Church wants to Christianise the Holocaust.

Worse: the 23ft. cross rising on the ashes of 3 million Jews must be seen as a Catholic endorsement of the Holocaust.

As such, we are in total war with the Church of Rome●

## LETTERS

I have just returned from a visit to Montreal where a large number of our community reside. All those who receive *The Scribe* are very happy with it. They read it from cover to cover and keep all the issues. It is in my opinion the best link between our community worldwide●  
London SW1 **Elias Dangoor**

I find *The Scribe* most interesting and it keeps me in touch with important Community events (past and present) and I learn a lot through it.

In the autumn of this year, Oxford University Press will be publishing on behalf of the Littman Library a major work in the field of classical Jewish literature – Isaiah Tishby's *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, translated to English. It is a three-volume anthology of extracts from the Zohar – the fundamental work of Jewish mysticism (*kabbala*) which, after the Bible and Talmud, is probably the most important work of Jewish literature – arranged according to topic with extensive introductions and explanations. David Goldstein's acclaimed translation gives English-speaking readers access for the first time to Tishby's classic and definitive work and enables the non-specialist to penetrate the world of the Zohar in all its complexity and poetry.

Professor Tishby, who is the Emeritus Professor of Philosophical, Mystical, and Ethical Hebrew Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, was awarded the Bialik Prize, the Israel Prize and the Rothschild Prize, mainly for his *Wisdom of the Zohar*. Moreover, the translation by the late David Goldstein, Curator of Hebrew Books and Manuscripts at the British Library, won the Webber Prize for translation awarded annually by the Oxford Centre for Post-Graduate Hebrew Studies.

The event has a particular personal significance for me, since the Littman Library was founded by my late husband●  
London W14 **Colette Littman**

I find *The Scribe* emotionally exciting and most stimulating. Its contents are often reminiscent of the good old days of my youth! Wonderful memories of Baghdad and the unforgettable Shamash School, 1937. All brought back to life. Marvellous.

Your last two copies jolted my memory to names I had long forgotten. To me *The Scribe* is an eye opener: illustrating the biased mind of the antisemite justifying unreasonable events and shoddy behaviour.

It is a wonderful change from the usual daily papers to read *The Scribe*: being so politically agreeable and so full of common sense●

Hove, **Dr. Maurice E. Samrah**  
East Sussex

Please keep up your good work! You have a wonderful publication. It has great significance for Israel and for both Sephardim and Ashkenazim (which I am). I recommend it to all my friends in Israel and America●

Jerusalem **Arnold Cytryn**

On our trip to China we visited the house I lived in up to 1946, and met a Chinese teacher of English who now lives in the house next door; he was very interested and helpful in tracing the past. The following is a letter just received from him.

**Renée Dangoor**

Shortly after you left Shanghai in 1946 all the six houses in the terrace came into the possession of the Bank of Chinese Products, which was under the control of Soong Zhi Liang, Chiang Kai-Chek's wife's brother. A Mr. Teng, vice-manager of the bank, moved into the very house you had lived in. In 1949, when the old regime was overthrown, the People's Bank of China, under the new government, took the houses over and let them to its employees. That Mr. Teng was said to have gone to Hong Kong first and then to New York. In addition, recently I happened to find a very interesting book in the city library entitled *China Hong List* which lists almost all the streets, houses and house owners in Shanghai in 1935.

Secondly, I'd like to tell you with one hundred per cent certainty that the second school we visited on Yu Yan Road that day was the very one you looked for. It was then being repaired, so you didn't recognise it. But actually that building, together with another one on the other side, was the Municipal Council-run Public School for Girls several decades ago. It's headmistress was Miss Alexander and art mistress Mile A. Haberer. Do you still remember them? There were several other girls' schools under the Municipal Council, such as Public School for Junior Girls located on Yulin Road, and Public & Thos. Hanbury School for Girls located on Hannan Road. By the way, the first school we visited that day on Jiangshu Road (Edinburgh Road) had been McIntyre School.

During the Second World War there were as many as 18,000 Jews in Shanghai, most of whom came from Europe to escape the fascist persecution. After the war they began to leave for U.S. and Latin America. By 1949 when China was liberated, the number of Jews that lived in the city dropped to ten thousand. In the following years, with the help of the government, about 9,700 emigrated to Israel, and by 1957 there were only one hundred left. The number further diminished to ten in 1976 and to zero in the early eighties. Among those that lived in Shanghai, many were very outstanding persons; such as Ferdinand Adler, master violinist in the Municipal Council Orchestra, Alfred Wittenberg, a distinguished professor of music, Max Warsch, a famous vocalist and leading singer of the synagogue chorus, Max Brand-Bukozar, a playwright, A.J. Storfcr, a student of Freud and editor-in-chief of *Die Gelbe Poste*, Johannes Koenig, first ambassador of East Germany to China, W. Michael Blumenthal, minister of finance in the U.S., Carter's administration, to name only a few.

As for the memorial plate to be placed on the synagogue in Shanxi Lu (Seymour Road), I have considered the matter over and think that before I can do anything, a formal request from you to the department concerned is absolutely necessary. As such kind of things here are very sensitive – even the department that owns the synagogue could not decide for itself. It needs approval from the municipal level. So I suggest you write a letter in your capacity as a tourist to The Director, Shanghai Tourism Management Bureau, 2525 West Zhong Shan Road, Shanghai, China. After that I think I can try my best to see to it that things are handled quickly. Things here are returning to normal●

Shanghai **Yuan Jia-Mou**

\* \* \*  
You can destroy in one day what you can't build in 100 years.

Chinese saying●

I read with great interest the article "The Mujahidun" by N.E.D. in the January, 1989 issue of your esteemed journal.

Your readers might be interested to know that in North-Eastern Iraq of Kirkuk and Sulaimaniya districts (in small towns and villages) there lives a Kurdish tribe by the name of "Kakayee" ('Brotherhood' in Kurdish) who have a strong relation to the tribe of Binyamin. These relations are expressed by traditions similar to the Pakistani Pathans; their Patriarch (besides the prophet Muhammed) is "Peer Binyamin". They believe that King David is an immortal shepherd, they have a handwritten holy book by the name of "Divani Gourah", which contains blessings on "Shehita and Zebahim" and biblical names of Moshe, Binyamin, David, Mayer and Hanoch.

Although they are supposed to be Moslems, their traditional behaviour arouses questionable emotions. They never shave their moustaches, they do drink wine, they have three fast days in which they offer "Kaparot" of poultry and they are very loyal friends of the Jews. On a certain day of the year, they (both sexes) celebrate by drinking and dancing (like Kurdish Purim) on which their Moslem neighbours tell dirty jokes and gossip.

My far-cousin, the late Shlomo Azari, who was a station master of the Iraqi Railways in Ali-Saray (a small Kakayee town) became over many years, an intimate friend of their leaders, who disclosed to him some of their secrets.

I myself (born in Kirkuk, educated in Baghdad and Calcutta) worked as a Senior Vet in Northern Iraq for more than 15 years, had the opportunity of meeting some of their chieftans (including "Dara Beg" their representative in the Iraqi Parliament) and enjoyed their true friendship and loyalty.

After my aliya to Israel in March, 1951, I served in the Negev for 26 years and retired in 1978. The Babylonian Jewry Heritage Centre in Or-Yehuda has asked me to collect and narrate the "History of The Jewish Community in Kirkuk" and I have found some documents which confirm the story of this Kurdish Tribe●  
**Beer Sheva Dr. Shemtob Bali**

I enjoy a great deal reading *The Scribe* which is so interesting and nostalgic.

I was born in Iraq and spent my childhood and early youth in Baghdad. At the age of 13 I wrote a diary in Arabic as regards the regime there between the years 1948-1951, the activities of the Zionist movement, the situation of the Jewish community there and many other events. All as seen through the eyes of a teenage girl. The most moving part was the story of my late father who used to be a major member of the Zionist movement, arrested, tortured and finally disappeared under very mysterious circumstances.

The manuscript has been translated into English and bears the name "Three Years in Hell", and I sincerely hope that it will be published one day, and not before long. The target is to reveal many facts which are so far unknown by many enlightened countries and to awaken the living conscience of a countless number of people who firmly believe that we, the Iraqi Jews, did not pay the "high cost", and the European Jews were the only sacrifice. Our

history should contain more and more of those events. And so long as the testimony and the witnesses are alive, there will be an effect!

**An appeal to readers of *The Scribe*:** Anyone who desires to collaborate with me, to add more material, to contribute and/or to assist in the publication of the book and/or to join me as regards this project, is requested to contact me ●  
P.O. Box 2873  
Ramat Gan, Israel  
Esther Mercado

I was very interested to read the articles on the "Hakham Abdullah Affair" 100 years ago, containing hitherto unpublished material shedding light on this notorious episode in the annals of the Iraqi Jewish community. I found the reports by the British Consul-General and Mr. Morris Cohen of special importance.

Congratulations and best wishes ●  
New York  
Meer S. Basri

I must tell you what happened on a Friday morning, recently.

My son Simon came to take me out in his car, the first time after my operation . . . The postman dropped my mail through the door, I recognised *The Scribe's* envelope, anxiously opened it to see at a glance all about the daring adventure of Naim and Renée witnessing a China in turmoil.

We both sat down, each a copy in our hands.

Several unusual subtitles, difficult to decipher - "that is typical of Naim," I thought to myself. "Keeps you guessing."

Then the good old fashioned shmarabic - *El hamdella al salama*.

I laughed loudly when I finally got the message that it was meant for me personally, spontaneously mumbling . . . *Allah yessalemak*.

"Where is the joke?" asked Simon . . . I pointed it out to him, and doubled my laugh when I realised he couldn't read "Shmarabic" . . . "clever way to pass secrets" he commented.

I was very moved indeed reading about Renée's visit to her home in Shanghai after so many years. It is a one in a million chance that it still stands . . . My parents' home is now Baghdad University. I was fascinated reading Naim's articles about the China-Baghdad connection, alphabet origin and so much other information, I vaguely knew about.

In a hundred years I wouldn't have acquired half of this knowledge. Thank you both ●

London W6  
Violette Shamash

## Broad Beans are Dangerous

*An important Message to all Mothers  
from an experienced mother*

"Please never let your child smell or eat broad beans."

I would like to make mothers aware of G6PD deficiency which is frequently found amongst Sephardim, Mediterraneans, Blacks and Asians. It is predominantly found in boys but also in some girls.

With this deficiency, if a child comes into contact with broad beans he will rapidly become anemic as the child's system cannot tolerate the broad beans, because the red blood cells break down and a blood transfusion becomes necessary ●

## Genetic Diseases

There are no genetic disorders with either a higher or a lower incidence in all Jews as a group. However, certain diseases are more prevalent among specific Jewish ethnic subgroups as compared to other subgroups and/or gentiles.

Hundreds of years of isolation of relatively small Jewish communities, both from their neighbours and from other Jewish communities, with consequently frequent consanguineous marriages, have contributed to a higher frequency of several genetic disorders within certain Jewish subgroups. *Ashkenazi Jews* suffer from at least six rare metabolic disorders. **Tay-Sachs** disease, a congenital, lethal metabolic disorder manifested by arrest of development, progressive visual loss, and slowly occurring dementia, occurs in 1:6000 births among Jews of Eastern European origin compared to 1:5000,000 among non-Jews. **Neiman Pick's** disease is a similar condition. The others are: **Gaucher's** disease with neurological symptoms; **Riley Day's** disease or familial disautonomia, manifested by emotional instability and indifference to pain; **Pentosuria**, a harmless, rare anomaly often mistakenly diagnosed as diabetes; **Bloom's** syndrome, a rare childhood condition characterised by a marked sensitivity to sunlight and associated with leukemia. The first four of these inborn errors of metabolism have been traced back to an area in Poland around the city of Bialystok.

*Non-Ashkenazi Jews* suffer from several other inborn errors of metabolism. The most prominent of these is a specific variety of hemolytic anemia (increased destruction of red blood cells), particularly upon contact with drugs or ingestion of fava (broad) beans. This disorder is based on a deficiency in the enzyme glucose-6-phosphate-dehydrogenase (**G6PD**), which is required for normal carbohydrate metabolism. This enzyme deficiency reaches a frequency of 58% in Jews coming from Kurdistan, 25% in the rest of Iraqi Jews and slightly lower in other Eastern communities, in contrast with 0.5% in European Jews. We are informed by Professor Luzzatto of Hammersmith Hospital, who is a leading authority on the subject, that proneness to **G6PD** is easy to detect by a simple blood test. We recommend that babies undergo this test at an early age. **Thalassemia**, a chronic progressive anemia, is also found primarily in Kurdistan Jews. Iranian Jews have one of the highest world frequencies of the rare liver disorder, **Dublin-Johnson's** disease, characterised by a defect in bile excretion. This disorder has recently been traced to Isfahan. **Phenylketonuria**, a congenital defect that leads to severe mental retardation unless treated early, occurs primarily in Yemeni Jews. **Familial Mediterranean Fever (FMF)**, a disease manifested by repetitive inflammatory attacks of abdominal, pleural and joint pains, is prevalent primarily among North African Jews.

The increase in frequency of inter-ethnic marriages, coupled with a decrease in consanguineous marriage and disappearance of the ethnic barriers in Israel and

elsewhere, should lead to a dilution of the gene pools and a decline in over-frequency of these deleterious conditions ●

Note:

Families that have achieved genetic purity, free of the diseases and disorders listed above, should endeavour to maintain that purity by careful selection of marriage partners from equally healthy stock. Such families have nothing to fear from consanguineous marriage now and again ●

N.E.D.

## Catholic-Jewish Relations

On Sunday 13 April 1986, between Easter and Passover, Pope John Paul II paid a historic visit to the Rome Synagogue.

Addressing the Jewish congregation, he said, "You are our dearly beloved brothers and, in a certain way, it could be said that you are our elder brothers."

"I wish to reaffirm and to proclaim that it is not lawful to say that the Jews are 'repudiated or cursed'."

"I wish to reaffirm and to proclaim that the Jews are beloved of God, who has called them with an irrevocable calling."

Recently, however, Catholic-Jewish relations have soured, and have foundered over the affair of the Carmelite Convent at Auschwitz. The Jews are not asking for punishment or revenge for the Holocaust; all they want is respect for the memory of the 3 million Jews who were martyred at that death camp. Insensitively and perhaps maliciously, the Catholics have occupied the camp and installed a 7-meter-high cross at the entrance. This is deeply offensive to Jews who suffered from the Christian cross no less than from the swastika cross. Rising on the ashes of 3 million innocent Jewish victims, this symbol appears to be an endorsement of the Holocaust. The message it will convey to future generations is, "This is the spot where the murderers of 'God' received their just punishment."

At a general audience in August the Pope himself seemed to contradict previous statements by suggesting that God's covenant with the Jewish people has been superseded. He referred to the Jewish people's "infidelity to God." He claimed that the Church now possessed God's everlasting covenant.

We tell the Pope, "We do not worship the same God! The god you worship is of your own making, the product of human hands. You made your god in your own image. Christianity is not the religion of Jesus but a religion about Jesus. You plagiarised our Scriptures and distorted our religion. The crucifixion of Jesus by the Romans is but one instance of the crucifixion of the Jewish People by the forces of evil for the sake of God's Kingdom. Christian hands in Europe drip with Jewish blood. The Church is not the successor of Israel but of Rome. God keeps his promise; you can't keep your word."

The Pope has supreme authority in the Church but refuses to intervene. If the Catholics persist in their attitude, the Israeli government should consider curtailing Catholic privileges in Israel ●

# Baghdad in 1878

Extracts from the book *Through Asiatic Turkey* by G. Geary who was the Editor of *The Times of India* during the last century.

(by courtesy of Dr. Heskell D. Isaacs of the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit, University of Cambridge).

## Part 3

A good deal is being done for the education of the rising generation in Baghdad. Not the least important of the educational agencies at work is the Jewish school, founded in 1864, by the Alliance Israelite Universelle of Paris. Messrs. David Sassoon & Co. of Bombay gave a sum of £2000 for the erection of the fine building in which the work of instruction is now carried on. The director is Mr. Selman Gareh, a native of Baghdad, who was educated at Paris. There are at present 172 scholars – two being girls – and the number is increasing. The instruction given is of the best modern kind. Arabic is the mother tongue of the Baghdad Jews and the pupils are taught how to write and speak the language grammatically. They are also taught Hebrew, Turkish and French; within the last few months English has been added to the curriculum, at the suggestion of Colonel Nixon, the British Consul General, who pointed out that as many of the boys would seek employment in the offices of Jewish merchants in India and China, that language would be essential to their success in life. I went to the school to be present at the first examination of the boys in English. Mr. A. Martin, the dragoman of the British Residency, was invited to act as examiner. The French Consul and his Excellency the Governor-General also sent their interpreters to examine the boys in French and Turkish. None of the boys had been learning English for more than nine months. Their teacher was a young Baghdad Jew, Mr. Michael, who had received his education in Bombay at the Jesuit College. His pupils did him credit. Many of them spoke without an error of spelling or punctuation. Most of them had been learning French before they began the study of English and they all declared that their knowledge of French greatly helped them in acquiring our more difficult tongue. The French dragoman examined the boys in French. Mr. Grant himself was their teacher and he has certainly achieved great things with them. They speak French with singular purity of accent and expression.

A little girl of eleven, Khatoun Luron, displayed great intelligence and prattled her French in the prettiest way. Her father, an Austrian Jew, took a great part in the establishment of the school and has a hand in its management. Her mother is a Jewess of Baghdad. I may here remark by way of parenthesis that the city of Caliph is very fatal to the European bachelor; the Baghdad beauty ensnares him before he is aware. Nearly all who settle in the city marry ladies of Baghdad. The Armenians and Jewesses are remarkably handsome, the former being so wondrous fair that they would be accounted exceptionally so, even amongst Europeans.

But to revert to the school. When first it was founded, great difficulties were en-

countered amongst the conservative Jews of the place, who imagined that the faith of Abraham might suffer if new-fangled notions were introduced from Frangistan. Few pupils could be got together and the whole affair was so disheartening that the principals of the school were constantly giving up the task in disgust. But now the parents have come to see the advantages of book-learning; and boys are sent to school more freely. The little fellows themselves – bright vivacious boys – all wearing the Turkish fez – seem to like the fun. Some Christians and even two or three Moslems are amongst them. The Turks have two good schools, which were established by Midhat Pasha. Jews and Christian boys are admitted, but generally they keep away as they might be uncomfortable among the little true believers. Young Turks who get through the preparatory school well, may enter the higher school by agreeing to place their services at the disposal of the Government. The most proficient are sent to a college at Constantinople and trained as officers for the army. Schools are attached to most of the mosques, where children are taught to read the Koran. But the Jewish and the Turkish schools are the only properly organised educational institutions in Baghdad. The Carmelite Fathers have a school for Roman Catholic boys, but the reverend gentlemen have so much to do in otherwise ministering to their flock, that at times they have to close the school altogether. Latterly, the Armenians have established a tolerable school of their own and their first care was to take from the Jewish school a dozen little Armenian boys who were receiving instruction there.

The Jews of Baghdad number nearly a third of the population of the town, amounting according to some computations to 25,000, though I think the estimate of 20,000 is more likely to be correct. Like the people of their race all over the world, they prefer trade to manual labour and the capitalists amongst them are the money-lenders and bankers of the Pashalic. Early marriages and large families are the rule amongst them, and the natural result is that the bulk of the community is very poor and ignorant. Children who ought to be at school are required to add in any manner possible to the family earnings and until quite recently it was found to be a most difficult task to get parents to consent to boys "wasting their time" at school: secular learning was, besides, regarded as a danger to the faith. But the money value of book-learning is now becoming recognised and we may look for a great change in the habits and condition of the community in the course of a few years.

Baghdad enjoys two if not three Sabbaths or days of rest in the week. The Mussulmans keep Friday holy; the large Jewish section of the population observe the Sabbath on the Saturday and the Armenians and other Christians observe

the Sunday. The Jewish bazaar, one of the most considerable in the city, is closed, indeed not only on the Saturday, but for a good part of Friday as well. On Friday afternoons at two o'clock, all business ceases amongst the Jews and the commercial houses are closed. Each Israelite returns to his home, puts on his best garments and hurries to the Synagogue, where afternoon service is performed, lasting until an hour before sunset. All then return to their families, sing pious songs in Hebrew and, for refreshment, drink aniseed brandy. All the Baghdad Jews speak Hebrew as well as Arabic, and they usually keep their accounts in the former language. After sunset the evening meal begins and it is sometimes prolonged until midnight. On Saturday morning there is a service in the Synagogue, after which breakfast is got through, when religious exercises commence and portions of Scripture are read aloud by the head of the family or some venerable guest. Sometimes several families assemble at these readings; the selections are usually made from the Prophets. Every member of the family listens with much devotion and strangers within the gates follow their example.

It will perhaps somewhat surprise some readers to learn that when the reading of the Scriptures is over, the rest of the Sabbath is devoted to the interchange of visits and to amusements in the open air. The rich entertain their friends in their beautiful country-houses and palm-gardens on the Tigris. This must not be supposed to be backsliding on their part; it is regarded as the natural and legitimate manner of spending that portion of the Sabbath which is not devoted to religious exercises. J.J. Benjamin, an Israelite of great learning and piety, speaks of the Baghdad way of keeping the Sabbath in terms of the highest approval. "With feelings of the highest satisfaction and approval," he says, "I saw how devoutly and solemnly and with what strict attention to the precepts of the law the Sabbath was observed in Baghdad." The Jews in Baghdad with whom I conversed bore similar testimony of the complete toleration which they enjoyed under the Turkish Government, depending on the Wali of the day. Baghdad has always been noted for a certain tolerance of the differences of faith and race and the Jews owe to that fact, as well as to their numbers, a consideration which is not always accorded to them elsewhere.

The Jewish artificers and traders possess a skill and acuteness denied to the Arab. Jews are found in every trade and are regarded as good workmen. Arabs are employed exclusively in the rougher kind of manual labour. The old clothes trade of Baghdad is exclusively in the hands of the Jews.

The Armenian community is large and many of its members are men of substance and influence.

They are perhaps the most gifted in mental power of all the races in Asiatic Turkey, but possibly on that very account, there is a general distrust of them. They are spitefully credited with strong though concealed Russian proclivities.

(Turkey massacred 1.5 million Armenians during the First World War – Ed.)

## The Final Solution The Wannsee Conference (BBC2)

by Naim Dangoor

On 20 January 1942, fourteen high-ranking Nazi delegates met in secret at Wannsee, a quiet Berlin suburb, at the invitation of Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Security Police. The only item on the agenda was the final solution of the "Jewish question," to legalise and intensify what was already in progress on a small scale – the liquidation of Europe's 11 million Jews.

This TV documentary is an exact reconstruction of the conference based on stenographers' records and interviews. The German production was well-acted by German actors. Shlomo Aronson of the University of Jerusalem was historical adviser to the producers.

The meeting was convened in accordance with Göring's letter to Heydrich dated 31.7.41 which said, "I instruct you to make the necessary preparations for the total solution of the Jewish problem in Europe. Present to me a complete plan for the implementation of the final solution."

The conference lasted 85 minutes, mainly occupied by Heydrich's monologue explaining Nazi policy towards the Jews: "Justice is what is right for the nation. Hitler believes the Jews have no further value as hostages to the world. He is disappointed by England. He hoped she would recognise German rights in the East and the solution of the Jewish problem by emigration. We 'persuaded' 537,000 Jews to emigrate before the war. Responsibility lies beyond our frontiers. Why don't they take our Jews? Why boycott our emigration programme?"

"The Jews have brought it on themselves. No wonder the Führer wants it ended. If we ship the Chosen People *en masse* to the East then perhaps it will be good shock treatment for Roosevelt and Churchill. The Führer says, 'Terror should precede us . . . the terror that we will exterminate the Jews'."

### The Role of the Mufti

A delegate remarked on Jewish emigration, "A Jewish state in Palestine would be as unwelcome to us as to England. We could hardly desert the Führer's friend, the Mufti of Jerusalem; but Madagascar – they could have accepted that."

Another delegate said that since 15.10.1941 Jews have been evacuated in continuous convoys to the East. Rumours about what is happening there led to 208 suicides among the Jews to be deported.

A third delegate pointed out that killing 11 million Jews may require 11, 22, or even 33 million bullets at the expense of the war effort. Heydrich explained that Zyklon B insecticide gas was going to be used in the process. Hitler, who suffered a poison gas attack during WWI, recommended gassing the Jews in his book.

Heydrich gave 3 reasons why it took him

six months to act on Göring's instructions:

- (1) Preparations needed for the conference;
- (2) his appointment as deputy protector of Bohemia and Moravia; (3) American entry into the war.

The conference ended jovially over lunch and (stolen?) French brandy.

### Lessons of the Conference

We learn from the conference the following:

- (1) The Nazis wanted to get rid of the Jews. They encouraged and even assisted German Jews to emigrate; as a result 537,000 Jews left Europe before the start of the Second World War.

- (2) Like the Arabs, who mostly admired and befriended Hitler, the Nazis used terror as an arm of policy. England and America refused to be intimidated into becoming responsible for Europe's Jews, telling Hitler in effect, "This is your problem." Göring's letter of July 41 to Heydrich was meant to intimidate America to take the Jews. With America's entry into the war in December 1941, that venue was completely closed. America's refusal to allow in large numbers of Jewish immigrants was: (a) to prevent infiltration of spies (the refugees could have been interned and screened). (b) to keep the enemy preoccupied with its Jewish problem, hence the Allies' refusal to bomb Auschwitz. This policy may have saved the lives of, say, 6,000 allied soldiers, at the cost of 6 million Jews – a ratio of 1 to 1000, and must be seen in that context. (c) unfortunately, American Jews themselves did not want more refugees for fear of increasing anti-semitism.

- (3) British policy towards Europe's remaining Jews was guided by different considerations. The Foreign Office wanted to frustrate at all costs the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine and sought to prevent refugees from reaching Palestine.

- (4) Any thoughts the Germans had of sending the Jews to Madagascar were ended with the arrival of the Mufti of Palestine, Amin Huseini, in Germany and his meeting with Hitler in November 1941. The Mufti warned Hitler that letting the Jews leave Europe and most likely end up in Palestine would incur the wrath of the Arabs who wanted to support Hitler. Thereafter, the doors were closed and further emigration of Jews from Europe was forbidden. When Rumania gave permission for the emigration of 80,000 Jews, the German minister formally objected "in accordance with our agreement with the Mufti." Thus the Mufti's and British policies were completely identical.

Huseini may well have acted as a double agent, which would explain why he was never prosecuted after the war.

- (5) While most occupied countries collaborated with Nazi anti-Jewish policy, Denmark and to some extent Italy, which put up resistance, managed to save their Jews. Spain likewise saved many Jews by granting all Sephardim Spanish nationality, which Germany respected. The silence of the Vatican no doubt contributed to the scale of the Holocaust.

- (6) The discussions at the conference show that in practice half-Jews were often identified on religious rather than on racial lines. This explains why the Arabs, who were placed below the Jews in the racial scale, were not interfered with, and why the Karaites escaped the Holocaust.

### Apportioning the Holocaust

There has been much discussion, many conferences and publications about the Holocaust, but no-one attempted to apportion responsibility for that immense crime. Before our tragic century is out, we have to put on record who was to blame. When several people have taken part in the same murder, each one is held punishable for the whole crime. On that basis, the guilt of the Holocaust rests as follows:

Germany	6 million
The Church of Rome	5 million
The British Government	3 million
The Arabs through the Mufti	3 million
The American Government	1 million
American Jewish leaders	1 million
European Jewish leaders	1 million
The Ukrainian people	2 million
Poland	2 million
Occupied Europe, according to the numbers of their Jewish victims	6 million

## Tips

contributed by Renée Dangoor

Remove tea stains from crockery by rubbing with a damp cloth dipped in bicarbonate of soda then wiping dry with a clean cloth.

Rub hard-water marks on a tap with vinegar or the cut edge of a lemon; the acid will dissolve away the deposits.

Always soak stained fabric in cold water before washing it; hot water may set a stain permanently.

Clean silver cutlery by immersing it in a bowl containing a handful each of washing soda and milk bottle tops or kitchen foil. Add enough cold water to cover the silver and leave for 10 minutes (the tarnish collects on the milk bottle tops). Rinse in hot water and dry thoroughly.

Soothe a sprained ankle by placing a packet of frozen peas wrapped in a thin towel against it; the packet of peas moulds to the shape of the body.

## Boat Tragedy

مَشِيَاهَا خَطِي كَتَبْت عَلَيْنَا  
وَمَنْ كَتَبْت عَلَيْهِ خَطِي مَشَاهَا



The funeral took place in the Sephardi cemetery of two cousins, Vida and Aziz Shamash, both in their early twenties, victims of the Thames boat sinking on 20 August. Those attending the funeral consisted of many members of the Baghdadian community in London and non-Jewish 'show business' people. Rabbi Dr Abraham Levy officiated and Mr Avihu Ben-David read moving poems composed by himself, in Arabic and Hebrew. The Arabic dirge appears on page 7●

## Tips

by Alice Shashou

To soak burghul for kibbi or tabboulé, always use equal amount of water and burghul. You will not have to squeeze water out before use.

Kibbi burghul should have enough salt when cooked, fried or baked to prevent it from falling apart.

Sprinkle nutmeg on washed potatoes for good taste.

Place nuts in plastic bag and roll with a rolling pin, to crush them without mess.

Add salt to rice to preserve it better.

Always cook to suit the taste of those who will eat the food.

Wrap onions in foil to store.

To add flavour to roast beef, rub it with dry mustard before cooking●

## Metabolic Bone Disease

The Centre for Implant Surgery and the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery of the Bnai-Zion Medical Centre (Rothschild) in Haifa, Israel, will conduct the 12th International Annual Symposium, 3-5 April 1990.

The 1990 Symposium will address the subjects of: Metabolic Bone Disease and Bone Tumors.

For further information contact David G. Mendes M.D., Director of the Centre for Implant Surgery, or Amir Juhn M.D., P.O.B. 4940, Haifa, Israel●

## Shechita in Sweden

Jewish *shechita* is banned in many countries, including Sweden, Norway and Switzerland. But Sweden's Jews have recently persuaded the government that, for chickens at least, Kosher slaughter is as humane as the method required by the country's strict animal rights laws.

"We didn't get them to change the law, but we did get them to reconsider, and we won on the best possible grounds," said Sweden's Chief Rabbi Morton H. Narowe. As a result, the government decided that Kosher slaughter of poultry could continue until June 1992.

The Swedish law tries to protect animals from being slaughtered **while still conscious**; whereas Kosher rules require that animals used for food must be alive when the knife is taken to them, and they are drained of blood. A spokesman for the Swedish Society Against Painful Experiments on Animals, the country's largest animal-rights organisation said, "We will try to make sure that permission to continue ritual slaughter for religious reasons is not extended after the three-year period."

Two things need to be clarified in this connection: "ritual slaughter" and "animal rights."

Firstly, Kosher slaughter is not a religious rite. In the case of Moslem *Halal* meat, the blessing *Bismillah* (in the name of Allah) is recited before killing the animal. The Koran definitely enjoins the faithful to carry out the act as an offering to Allah. "Do not eat flesh that has not been consecrated in the name of Allah." That is ritual slaughter. Recently a Bradford Moslem killed his daughter because she wanted to become Christian. He recited *Bismillah* before he cut her throat. That was ritual murder! No such requirement exists in the Jewish *shechita* process. In fact, because *treifa* carcasses had to be sold for Moslem consumption, the Baghdad Rabbinat allowed Jewish slaughterers to recite the Moslem formula. Jewish *shechita* is simply considered to be the most humane method of killing the animal, and the blessing is recited to remind us of this duty. Stunning to render the animal unconscious isn't always effective or practicable and that method can be more painful than *shechita*, by which the animal loses consciousness without pain as the blood runs out.

Secondly, if animals have rights then they must not be killed at all. But even so-called animal-rights organisations do not question our right to kill animals for food. (One would expect them to be vegetarians). So if we have the right to sentence animals to death, why should not the animal be aware when the sentence is carried out? That is the right way to uphold animal rights. A condemned man is not executed in his sleep!

So the real test is not consciousness but painless slaughter which *shechita* has always endeavoured to achieve●

N.E.D.



Rabbi Shmuel Sadqa  
1830-1909

Messrs. David and Hayim Tweg of Perth, Australia, visited the offices of *The Scribe* and provided the above photograph of their maternal grandfather. He was the great great-grandson of Hakham Sadqa Hossein (1699-1773) who came from Aleppo and was rabbinical leader of Baghdad for 30 years.

Abraham Ben-Jacob in his *Babylonian Jewry 1038-1960* informs us that R. Shmuel kept a diary, and one entry refers to the great plague that swept Baghdad in 1831. "In Nisan 5591 there was a plague epidemic in Baghdad at the time of Daud Pasha. The Tigris river flooded the town and many houses were destroyed. Our family went to Hillah, and many died there. On their return journey all Jews were waylaid and robbed by Arabs because, they said, one Jew of Dabby family, gave them wrong directions. I was six months old, and I was wearing a gold *hijil* (ankle ring) and one bedouin wanted to cut off my foot to get the *hijil* but my mother quickly slipped it off and gave it to him. Many died on the road as they were travelling on foot - thirsty, hungry and exhausted. I was carried by Moshe Gareh, the husband of my sister Esther. He was about 20 years old. Three times he let me down in the field because he had no more strength to carry me but when he heard me cry he took pity on me and carried me to Baghdad because, he said, I was named after my grandfather Shmuel. On the way, my family bought a whole basket of dried dates (*hellana tamer*) and we ate some on the way and brought the rest home. Many died in this plague but I and my sisters were very young and nothing happened to us"●

**Peraquim be-Toldoth Yehude Babel**

(Chapters of Babylonian Jewish History)

Hebrew 2 vols. 780 pp. by Abraham Ben-Jacob (Jerusalem - 1989)

**Review by Meer S. Basri**

The author, an eminent historian of the Jews of Iraq, wrote during the last 40 years, 28 well-researched and documented books on the history, folklore, literature and biography of Iraqi Jews.

Born in Baghdad to the well-known Shlomo David family, the young Abraham was taken by his parents to Jerusalem where he completed his higher studies at the Hebrew University.

His latest book under review, published this year, contains first-hand information on the David Sassoon family of Baghdad, India and Britain and scores of letters addressed to its members during the last hundred years. Some of these missives have a high historical value as they throw light for the first time on many aspects of Jewish life, ethics and occurrences. I would especially mention letters written by the famous Hakham Yossef Haim during the years 1881-1908. Chief Rabbi Ezra Reuben Dangoor exchanged letters with the late Rabbi David Solomon Sassoon in 1897-1928. The last one gives a short history of Baghdad from 1743.

Yossef Heskail Sasson Zubaida wrote an interesting letter to David Sassoon in 1911 on the dismissal of Nazim Pasha, the energetic and well-beloved *Wali* of Baghdad. In less than a year this Governor was able to secure public safety in the city and the whole province and made many reforms and ameliorations. But the Authorities in Istanbul did not relish his liberal and progressive policy and ordered him to return to Turkey.

Mr. Zubaida then proceeds to relate that the previous month a telegram arrived from Istanbul dismissing the *Wali*. All the people, Moslems and Jews alike, went to the Telegraph Office and sent cables requesting that he remain in office. An answer was received from the Turkish capital acceding to the people's request. A large crowd went to the *Wali's* house to announce the good news. They asked Nazim Pasha to go with them to the Sarai, seat of the Government. The men brought a carriage and, when the Pasha mounted, they untied the horses and pulled the cab themselves.

However, another telegram was later received from Istanbul stating that Nazim had to answer serious charges and must relinquish the Governorate immediately. There were demonstrations and the shops were closed. The new acting *Wali* Yussuf Pasha ordered the instigators of the movement to be jailed. Abdul Qadir al-Khedhairi, a prominent merchant, Sion son of Hakham Ezra Dangoor and others were sent to prison. Sion Dangoor was released a week later. The Chief Rabbi



في رثاء عزيز شماش

لذو الداود  
 عز الشباب هوى وضاق فؤادي  
 وجرت بصيني دمه مهراقه  
 اني اودع ، والدواع تفارق  
 انادي عزيزاً قد فقدتكم مرآتي  
 ولقد فقلتكم يا وحيدتي نجاة  
 يا نزر ويحك ما عرفت مصيبي  
 يا نزر ونيك لو عرفت ظممتي  
 ولا كنت طاع في جسدك مثله  
 بحت عن عيد ميلاد بنو قريهم  
 ولا صفاء ولا ذكر الرجل سوي  
 تلك السفينة غم النبي طوقها  
 أم العزيز بكت بفقد عزيزها  
 أم العزيز بكت عويل باكؤها  
 حرقت قلوباً يا عزيز قلوبنا  
 حيناً لنا جمع الأهمية للثنا  
 حيناً للدكار تكريمياً وتقرية  
 نجاء بنا كبير القوم ذو رتب  
 هذا الرثاء عزيز وهو بجلكم  
 رحمه الله كبرى وهو هالنا  
 يا آل شماش مأسا في الحياة جرت  
 لاشيئ أروي يقال اليوم خفضنا  
 وللخاتم ابو الداود شاعركم

David Papou, a close friend of the late *Wali*, was dismissed and the Community nominated Rabbi Abraham Halle as acting Hakham Bashi with Efraim Hakham Ishaq as his assistant.

The writer concludes his account saying that, from the day of Nazim Pasha's removal, the city reverted to its former state of anarchy, the robbers and rogues again on the loose.

Mr Abdulla Sion Dangoor adds:

My late father was a great admirer of Nazim Pasha's liberal policies and his just government.

At a charity auction he outbid all others for a portrait of the *Wali* which was appreciated by Nazim Pasha. We had kept that large portrait in our household for many years until our home was looted in the *farhood* of 1941.

**New Readers**

- Binyamin Ben Eliezer M.K., Israel
- Rechavam Zeevi M.K., Israel
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- Ehud Yaari, Israeli Television, Jerusalem
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