

The SCRIBE

JOURNAL OF BABYLONIAN JEWRY

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Middle East Peace Conference

George Bush and James Baker are trying to pull a fast one on Israel. They intend to achieve Israeli withdrawal on all fronts, and an eventual state for the Palestinian Arabs.

The Middle East conflict is not with the Palestinians but with the neighbouring Arab countries who for 50 years tried and failed to destroy Israel, which they saw as an impediment to complete Arab hegemony over the whole region. Despite their yearning for peace, the Israelis come to the conference table as victors.

The purpose of any peace conference, therefore, can only be to divide equitably the Middle East and its resources between Jews and Arabs. There can be no lasting peace as long as tyrants like Saddam and Gaddafi have at their disposal unlimited wealth which they use to destabilise their neighbours.

Jews and Arabs are parts of the same region, and Arab nationalism, as opposed to Arab imperialism, can best be achieved in cooperation, and not in competition, with Jewish nationalism. Moreover, if the Palestinians are to attend the peace conference in any shape or form, then the two million Jews from Arab countries must also be represented. We have claims that go beyond Israel's borders. Any settlement imposed or agreed, otherwise, is null and void. The Kurds must also be dealt with.

If the Bush alliance claims reparations from Iraq for a month-long war, how much more is due to Israel for a half-century of Arab aggression? If the Arabs are coming only to take, then there will be no settlement●

Sepharad 92

The Jewish New Year 5752 marks 500 years since the Expulsion from Spain and the start of various activities to commemorate that sad event.

I chuckled when I read that the highlight of what is gradually appearing to have the air of celebrations is the visit of King Juan Carlos of Spain to the Madrid Synagogue on 31 March 1992. It is like inviting Pharaoh to our Passover Seder! King Juan may well feel that he started all this *simcha*.

It is true that at his visit the King will rescind the order of expulsion that was made on 31 March 1492 but that is not enough to put matters right and expiate the crimes committed on Sephardi Jews 500 years ago. The Spanish leaders must show true repentance to seek forgiveness and offer material restitution to Israel similar to German post-war reparations for Nazi crimes. \$10 billion loan guarantees to settle Russian refugees in Israel would do nicely.

The expulsion was engineered by the Church of Rome who still have influence in Spain. The toppling of the evil Soviet empire must now be followed by others and it is time to curb the harmful activities of the Vatican and its long history of murder and terrorism, who were responsible for the Crusades, Inquisition and, to a great degree, for the Holocaust●

The Sephardi Story

A new approach to Jewish History
by Chaim Raphael

(Author of *A Feast of History* and
The Springs of Jewish Life)

Valentine Mitchell, October 1991, 280pp.
£6.99. Illustrated.

Published in 1985 under the title *The Road from Babylon*, this paperback is a story of dazzling variety, covering the splendours of Jewish life in Moslem and Christian Spain and further afield, stretching from Baghdad to Renaissance Italy and Ottoman Turkey. It covers an enormous distance of time, from the days of the Patriarchs 3500 years ago to our own day.

Its timely appearance coincides with Sepharad 1992, commemorating the Expulsion from Spain 500 years ago●

I was interested to see my picture in the JIA photograph in your last issue. I have concluded my work with the Joint Israel Appeal as I am taking early retirement after 18 years.

For the last 15 years I was involved with the Sephardi Community which has gained me many friends and made my work very exciting and rewarding. I hope to continue my personal relationship with as many people as possible, as I feel so strongly about the Community●

London NW8

Haya Pesker

Very many congratulations on the 50th issue of *The Scribe* in its 20th year, a most excellent journal which I read from cover to cover (as well as distributing it to some of our leadership).

I wish you continued success in producing such a first rate, interesting and indeed useful periodical●

TA'ALI-

World Movement
for a United Israel

Sidney L Shipton
Executive Director

My best greetings and cordial wishes on the Jubilee of *The Scribe*. May you continue to publish it indefinitely●

Tel Aviv

Shaul Shehayik

Heartiest congratulations for the 20th anniversary of *The Scribe*●

Hill Grange High School
Bombay

Sophy Kelly
Principal

I have learned to await each issue with keen anticipation. The contents are immensely moving and fascinating. All who are concerned in making *The Scribe* possible and available deserve the thanks of the whole community●

Board of Deputies
London

Wally Leaf
Chairman,
P.R. Committee

The Dark Side of 1492

Spain's Eviction of Jews

condensed from *International Herald Tribune*

In 1992, when most of Spain will be celebrating the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America, Sephardi Jews around the world will be remembering the banishment of their ancestors in 1492 from the place they called Sepharad. A series of commemorative meetings called Sepharad '92, whose chairman is former Israel president Yitzhak Navon, will take place in Israel, Spain and elsewhere, to mark a unique historical event for world Jewry. (At that time there were 1 million Sephardi and ½ million Ashkenazi Jews in the world).

The expelled Jews left their mark on the countries in which they settled, such as France, Italy and Holland, but above all in the Ottoman Empire, which received them with open arms. When a French envoy visited Constantinople in 1567, he was amazed at the size and wealth of the Jewish community there. "It is a thing marvellous and incredible" he said, noting that the Jews of the Ottoman empire excelled as traders, artisans, printers and, above all, doctors, distinguished by their high scarlet caps. Even Suleyman the Magnificent entrusted his health and that of his seraglio to a team of 10 Jewish physicians.

According to Mauricio Toledano, a descendant of the last Grand Rabbi of Toledo and Castile, and president of Sepharad '92, the expulsion "was the sudden interruption of an age that still today makes us dream". King Juan Carlos recently promised to rescind the expulsion order on 31 March 1992, the anniversary date of the royal edict.

The name Sepharad, originally applied in the Old Testament to a region around Sart in modern Turkey where Jewish exiles were deported after the capture of Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, was later applied to Spain, where Jews arrived with the Romans.

The Jews of medieval Spain adopted the dress, the language and the customs of the Muslims with whom they lived side by side amid the splendours of the caliphate of Cordoba.

Samuel Halevi ibn Naghdela – scholar, poet, astronomer, mathematician and linguist – became in 1027 vizier and commander in chief of Granada, which flourished under his rule. But his son, Yusuf, who succeeded him, was killed in a revolt in 1066 in which 4,000 Jews were massacred.

Twenty years later, the Almoravids – today they would be described as Muslim fundamentalists – arrived from the North African desert aflame with orthodoxy, and gave the Jews the choice of apostasy or exile. Many moved into the Christian-dominated northern part of Spain. They settled in Castile, Majorca, Catalonia and Valencia. They dominated commerce in Barcelona and some could be found in high public offices up to 1492.

The joining of Castile and Aragon and the war against Islam created in 1492 a strong unitary state that affirmed a religious, cultural and even racial orthodoxy from which the estimated 400,000 Jews were excluded.

The expulsion order gave them the choice of converting to Christianity or leaving within three months. Up to 150,000 left. The sincerity of those who apostasized and stayed behind was suspected, and many were interrogated, tortured and handed over for execution by the Inquisition.

The term Sephardim is used more loosely today to include Jews from North Africa and the Middle East and all who follow the distinct Sephardi ritual.

Spain adopted full religious freedom only in 1979, and is home to about 12,000 Jews now, 90 per cent of them Sephardim●

The Expulsion Edict

"And we further order in this edict that all Jews and Jewesses of whatever age who reside in our domains and territories, that they leave with their sons and daughters, their servants and their relatives, large and small, of whatever age, by the end of July of this year (coincided with Tisha be'Ab), and that they dare not return to our lands, not so much as to take a step upon them nor trespass upon them in any manner whatsoever. Any Jew who does not comply with this edict and is to be found in our kingdoms and domains, will incur punishment by death and confiscation of all their belongings..."

– from the Edict of Expulsion declared by Ferdinand and Isabella on March 31, 1492●

Christopher Columbus

The filming of a new epic on Christopher Columbus will start soon with Gérard Depardieu, France's greatest actor, in the lead role.

Columbus was a Jew, who was forced to convert to Christianity. He knew the most celebrated people of his time; he was a great intuitive sailor, a visionary.

His voyage in 1492 to an unknown world was not unconnected to the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain in the same year. When Columbus embarked on his voyage the idea may have been to find a new home for the Jews who were leaving the Iberian Peninsula. The momentous voyage of *Santa Maria*, *Nina* and *Pinta* led to the discovery of the New World. Several Jews travelled with Columbus and one crypto-Jew, Luis Santangel, helped finance Columbus's voyage.

There will be a World Fair in Seville, Spain, to celebrate Columbus's first voyage to the New World on 3 August 1492●

Your journal is the only link for Iraqi Jews scattered all over the world. Of every issue I receive I make copies and distribute them among friends at their request.

A friend of mine was very thrilled to see the name of a friend whom he hadn't heard of for 40 years. It is clear that many of your letter-writers have struggled and became scientists and holders of high degrees.

We also appreciate your political articles and cookery corner.

Many thanks for your efforts to record and pass to the coming generation the traditions and history of one of the oldest Jewish communities●

Ramat Gan

Abram Ben-Elyahou

Recently, I began reading *Makers of Mathematics* by Alfred Hooper which referred to the Jewish origins of Christopher Columbus.

"In the fourteenth century, the magnetic needle, discovered by the Chinese, came to Europe. No longer were seamen compelled to remain within sight of some coastline, and boldly headed their ships into the open seas.

"Prince Henry the Navigator of Portugal was foremost in the study of astronomy and developing the sciences of navigation and map-making.

"On 13 August 1476, a young Genoese seaman of Spanish-Jewish descent named Christopher Columbus, swam ashore near Prince Henry's promontory of Sagres, after his corsair-ship had been sunk in a sea-fight. The young corsair, then 25, remained for many years in Portugal, where he mastered the art of map-making, and became fired by the spirit of discovery that eventually led him to the New World"●

Jerusalem

Arnold H. Cytryn



Christopher Columbus

Note the Sephardi nose

A Tapestry of Many Threads

The Heritage of Sephardi Jews in Britain A major exhibition for 1992

Among the events to mark the 500th anniversary of the expulsion of Jews from Spain will be our exhibition to highlight the rich and diverse heritage of Sephardi and Oriental Jews now living in Britain.

We would like to hear as soon as possible from anyone who has photographs, documents, objects or memories to contribute to the exhibition. Please contact:

**Rickie Burman, Curator,
The London Museum of Jewish Life
The Sternberg Centre
80 East End Road
London N3 2SY
Tel: 081-349 1143/346 2288●**

I received *The Scribe* from Mr Cyril Moses, uncle of Renee Dangoor, and I enjoyed reading it. Sometimes I go over it again. Please put my name on the list.

My mother is the daughter of Jacob Khazma and first of cousin of Naim Dangoor's mother●

Manila, Philippines

David Shahmoon

From the Chief Rabbi

Dear Naim Dangoor,

Thank you for your letter and the kind wishes extended to me on the occasion of my installation as Chief Rabbi.

Your heartfelt wishes on behalf of Babylonian Jewry in the U.K. and the Diaspora, meant a great deal to me, and I will continue to watch your activities with great interest and enormous admiration.

You might want to know that I have established a Chief Rabbinate Fund, which will dispense contributions to needy charities who make applications to this office, and your generous contribution will be dispensed to one of the Chief Rabbi's charities.

Would you please convey my thanks for this contribution to all those at the Foundation. During this period in the Jewish calendar, in which we know that "charity removeth the evil decree"; your contribution is particularly appropriate.

Many thanks for taking the trouble to write, and I look forward to being updated on the activities of the Exilarch in this country.

With warmest regards

Adler House, Jonathan Sacks
London

Dear Mr. Dangoor,

I much appreciated your very kind letter and the generous sentiments expressed in it.

I am also grateful for your kind offer to make a donation to a favourite charity, and suggest the Conference of European Rabbis.

With special heartfelt blessings for the New Year and kind personal regards

Very sincerely yours,

Immanuel Jakobovits

I appreciate your hard and excellent work in recording the tradition and roots which were lost two thousand and five hundred years and are liable to be forgotten. Thanks to persons like you the achievements and records will remain for the future generations who, I am sure, will always be proud of them

Ramat Hasharon

Sami Haim

Your No. 47 issue made me proud, especially reading about Dr Sasson Aboudi Shem-Tov who participated with the French Resistance against the Germans in World War II.

A distant cousin of mine who changed his name to Stanley Horesh, who also fought the Germans in Paris, was captured and was apparently killed in a concentration camp.

Another friend of mine, Yosef Zelouf, wore the French uniform, of whom I have not heard since 1942. I wonder if he is dead or alive

Forest Hills, N.Y.

Josh Horesh

Scribe: Mr Stanley David Horesh, President of the Elders of the Spanish & Portuguese Jews Congregation tells us that the person referred to above was George Horesh who is still alive. He was arrested in 1941 and worked as a medical orderly during the war

How the East was won

by Percy Gourney

In 75 years the era of both the Tsar and the Commissar in Eastern Europe was brought to an end, signifying giant strides towards real democracy.

In an American context the phrase "How the West was won" referred to the pioneering period of the United States when Americans pressed forward towards the West Coast, overcoming all kinds of obstacles in their path. The dramatic collapse of the Communist empire in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union was confirmed by the abortive coup staged by the hardliners from 19 to 21 August – a date historians will reckon as significant as the Bolsheviks' October Revolution of 1917.

The decline of the Soviet Union as one of the two super-powers to emerge from the defeat of Nazism in the Second World War has, of course, universal implications which include the ending of the Cold War, the destruction of the artificial divisions between Western and Eastern Europe symbolised in the hated Berlin Wall, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the development of democracy among the former Soviet satellite states in Eastern Europe.

Of considerable interest is the impact of these crucial events on the situation of the nearly 3 million Jews in the Soviet Union and the position of Israel in the Arab-Israel conflict.

Surprisingly, there are some who have advised Soviet Jews "to stay in the USSR and consolidate their communities"; this is nothing short of a recipe for potential disaster.

The welcome growth of democracy in that country has been accompanied by the unleashing of militant national forces manifested in organisations such as "Pamyat" ("memory"), which is overtly anti-semitic. The failure of the recent coup against President Mikhail Gorbachev who, in 1985 as General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, initiated the tremendous changes in the Soviet Union through his policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, has brought about declarations of independence by most of the Soviet republics, with unpredictable consequences.

The mass aliya of Soviet Jews – over 300,000 have emigrated to Israel in the last 18 months – is one of the most remarkable phenomena of our times, unparalleled in the modern history of any other country. This aliya is in accord with a fundamental principle of Zionism, the national liberation movement of the Jewish people. Moreover, experience has shown that the various waves of immigrants, after overcoming the initial difficulties of adjusting to a different society, have paved the way for the successful absorption of subsequent waves of immigrants to the benefit of both Israel and themselves. It is hoped that at least another million Soviet Jews would be absorbed in Israel within the next three years.

Another momentous result of the failure of Communism is the potential resolution of various regional conflicts, for instance, in Asia (Cambodia and Afghanistan), in Latin America (Nicaragua and Cuba), in

Southern Africa (Angola and Namibia), and hopefully, in the Middle East. The cooperation between the Soviet Union and the United States led to the successful Gulf War in January and February this year, forcing Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. The coalition of nations, led by President Bush, fought a remarkable campaign, not least of which was Israel's admirable restraint in the face of Scud missile attacks, which kept the coalition together.

The Arab states can no longer seek to play off one super-power against another as they had done in the Cold War, and the Soviets, as a source of arms supplies to the Arabs, has dried up. This enhances the chances of peace in the area through direct negotiations between Israel and her Arab neighbours – a development that Israel has sought since her establishment in 1948 and after seven Arab wars of aggression on her

The nature of the Arabs

One should not be too surprised at what happened to Kuwait in the wake of the Iraqi retreat. One need only read the words of Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), the well-known Arab historian and judge on his fellow Arabs:

"Places that succumb to the Arabs are quickly ruined. The reason for this is that the (bedouin) Arabs are a savage nation, fully accustomed to savagery and the things that cause it.

"Savagery has become their character and nature. They enjoy it because it means freedom from authority and no subservience to leadership.

"Such a natural disposition is the negation and antithesis of civilization... Furthermore, it is their nature to plunder whatever other people possess."

(See Franz Rosenthal, *Ibn Khaldun, The Muqaddimah, An Introduction to History*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1958, pages 302-3. (Extracted from *The Times Literary Supplement*).

Abdul Rahman ibn Khaldun belonged to a family that had gone from Southern Arabia to Spain after the Arab conquest, and settled in Seville. When the Christian kingdoms of northern Spain expanded southwards, the family left for Tunis, where his great-grandfather and grandfather became court officials.

Ibn Khaldun received a careful education from his father and from scholars and held high positions in Tunis and Algeria. His book, in which he tried to explain the rise and fall of dynasties, has continued to attract attention until today. He lived in Cairo until his death

Implant Surgery Symposium

The Centre for Implant Surgery of the Bnai-Zion Medical Centre (Rothschild) in Haifa, will conduct the 14th International Annual Symposium on 29-30 April 1992.

The subjects will include: implant durability; biological joint resurfacing; bone grafting; fracture fixation and lumbar disc decompression.

For further information write to P.O. Box 4940 Haifa. Fax: 972-4-371393

The SCRIBE

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COOKERY CORNER

Shabbath Challa

by Denyse Pinto

Challa literally means that portion of dough which, according to the Law, was to be separated and dedicated to God. During the time when the Temple was in existence it was given to the Priest. Afterwards the custom developed of taking a piece of raw dough and burning it in the fire, thus symbolising the portion which formerly went to the Priest. Since the kneading of the dough was done by women, this was one of the few *mitzvot* (commandments) which was made their special responsibility, just like the lighting of *Shabbath candles*. As the burning of the raw dough was done when the loaves were made for Shabbath, the term *Challa* has come to be applied to the Shabbath or Festival loaves of bread.

Before shaping the *Challas*, *Challa* must be taken. The dough should be covered and the *beracha* should be said.

Baruch ata Ad... Elo... noo Melech Haolam Ashair Kiddishanoo Bemitzvotuv Vetzivanoo Lehafrih Challa.

A piece, the size of an egg, should be taken from the dough. This piece is *Challa* and should be burned.

Challas

4 *Challas* (2 for Friday night and 2 for Shabbath lunchtime)

12-15 *Pettis Pains* (bridge rolls)

Ingredients:

3lbs strong flour

2oz fresh yeast

5oz sugar (6 tablespoons)

2 teaspoons salt

2oz oil (¾ glass oil)

2 eggs

1 egg yolk and 2 tablespoons of water to brush the bread

1 tablespoon of aniseed to be boiled in 2½ glasses of water

2 tablespoons of sesame seeds

Method:

Mix fresh yeast with ½ tablespoon of sugar and some warm water to dissolve the yeast. Then cover and leave the mixture to rise.

Meanwhile in a large bowl mix the flour and oil and 2 eggs and salt and sugar.

Pour the raised yeast and knead the mixture for a few minutes and gradually add the warm water with the aniseeds. The dough should be soft (if necessary add more water). Divide the dough in 5 parts.

Four of the parts for making *Challas* and the fifth part will be used for making the *Pettis Pains*.

To shape 4 *Challas*: the dough should be divided into 12 pieces. With the palm of the hand roll each piece into a thin roll and form the rolls into four plaits. Place on a floured tin in a warm place and leave covered for 1 hour.

Brush over with beaten egg and bake for 30 to 35 minutes at 200° (electric oven)●

by Alice Shashou

Kubba Burghul

Is a party dish which has become popular throughout the world. Can be served as entree or main course.

Ingredients for the shell:

2 cups minced beef or lamb

3 cups burghul (cracked wheat)

Salt

Ingredients for the filling:

1¼lb beef or lamb coarsely minced

4 onions, finely chopped

¼ cup pine nut kernels

¼ cup currants (optional)

Salt, pepper and mixed spices, 1 bay leaf

Some people add chopped onion, curry or cumin to the paste. Some prefer to add cardamom, curry or cinnamon to the filling.

Method: To prepare the past for the shell

Wash the *burghul* and soak in water for about 30-40 minutes (time of soaking depends on the quality of the *burghul*). Drain and press between the palms of hand to remove excess water. Put in a large bowl and add salt. Knead meat and *burghul* thoroughly. Dip hands in cold water while kneading. Run the kneaded mixture through a food processor adding a little water as needed to create a smooth and moist dough.

Method: To prepare the filling

In a large frying pan, sauté the onions until golden. Add the kernels, meat, pepper and bay leaf and stir well. Cook until all the liquid evaporates. Remove from fire. Add the currants and spices. Mix. Taste and adjust. Set aside to cool.

How to assemble:

Wet your hands with water. Take a small lump of kubba paste. Flatten it and place a tablespoon of the filling into the centre and close carefully. Wetting your hands with cold water will help to stick it together. Different shapes and sizes can be made.

Can be frozen at this point

Deep fry the kubbas until golden brown all over.

Place on kitchen towel to soak the oil. Serve hot with salad.

Another way of preparing the kubba paste is to wash the *burghul* and soak in boiling water for 10 minutes. Drain and press between the palms of hand. Knead meat and *burghul* by hand. **No need to run through food processor.**

Another variation: is *Kubba bel Siniyi*, which is easier to prepare. It is a layer of minced meat filling sandwiched between two layers of kubba shell and baked in the oven in an oiled tray. Cut into diamond shapes. Brushed with oil and baked in a hot oven until golden. Serve hot with salad●

Cote d'Azur Potato Omelette

Ingredients:

3 eggs

6 potatoes

½ cup milk

1 clove fresh garlic crushed

About 2 tablespoons chopped parsley

Salt, pepper

Method:

Peel and cut the potatoes into small cubes. Fry in a little oil. Beat eggs. Add milk and continue beating. Add fried potatoes along with garlic and parsley. Mix well. Place non-stick pan over a gentle heat and when hot add a little oil to grease it. Pour egg mixture into the hot oil in the pan and cook until bottom is golden. Turn omelette onto a plate. Return to pan and brown the other side. Serve hot with salad●

Tirami Su

Ingredients:

10oz saviardi biscuits (or boudoir fingers)

1 lb Mascarpone cheese

2 tablespoons of instant coffee dissolved in

1 cup of hot water and left to cool

3 tablespoons rum or brandy

4 egg yolks

3 egg whites

4 tablespoons caster sugar

½ teaspoon cocoa powder

Method:

Beat egg yolks and sugar to a creamy consistency. Add Mascarpone cheese and fold in until well blended. Beat egg whites until stiff and fold into the cheese mixture. Put cold coffee and chosen alcohol in a shallow dish and dip sponge biscuits briefly. Place a layer of dipped biscuits in base of the serving dish, then spread with a layer of cheese mixture and repeat ending with a cheese layer. Sprinkle with cocoa powder. Refrigerate for 3-4 hours or overnight to set and chill●

Salad Niçoise

Ingredients:

1 bunch small round lettuce

1 bunch curly endive (*hendba*)

1 7oz can tuna fish in oil, drained

3 firm tomatoes quartered

2 hard-boiled eggs, peeled and quartered

12 black olives

5oz french beans, blanched (optional)

1 green pepper or 1 red cored seeded and cut into narrow ribbons

3 anchovy fillets well drained (optional)

2 teaspoons capers

1 tablespoon chopped spring onions

Dressing:

2 tablespoons white wine vinegar

6 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon chopped fresh tarragon

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

A little caster sugar

Method:

Arrange the lettuce and endive in a salad bowl. Add all the other ingredients. Now mix the dressing ingredients together. Pour over the salad. Leave the bowl of salad covered in the fridge for 1 hour.

Toss gently before serving●

Tips

To easily identify suitcases in airports, attach brightly coloured ribbons to the handle.

Beans are good sources of fibre, minerals and vitamins. They really can make you feel full of energy.

Whipping cream is an economical cream to buy because it doubles its volume when it's whipped●

BOOKS

أغاني الحب والخلود شعر مير بصري

Songs of Love and Eternity

An anthology of poems by Meer S. Basri with a foreword by Professor Shmuel Morch of the Hebrew University, 270pp. - Jerusalem 1991.

Published by the Association for Jewish Academics from Iraq, Dr. Davide Sala's Library for Jewish Authors from Iraq (No. 11).

This collection of 234 poems covers a wide variety of subjects and shows the author's mastery of the Arabic vocabulary.

He can compose a poem at the drop of a hat - in Arabic, but equally easily in English and French.

The following verse was inspired by the Moonshine Band at a recent wedding in London

ضوء القمر
خترني في الليل ضوء القمر ،
لاعب العين بلطف وكونه ،
قلت : أصدقي حديث الخبر :
ما الذي كان وماذا سيكون ؟
قال : قلبي لله صميم الحجر ،
وضيائي سر ستمت الشمس معار ،
درست حول الأضواء منذ الصغر ،
لست أدري الليل من صفى النهار ،
صلى العلم خيال البشر ،
معلمنا خازن بئيل السمير ،
بعدت في سوكب الدهر التوريم ،
نحن كائناتنا نقرتنا الطولم ،
عيننا في مسرع الكون نخدم ،
صل نحل المنير في قامسي التوريم ؟

Moonshine

(translated from the Arabic)

The Moonshine beguiled me in the night,
gently, lazily, it flirted with my eye.
I said, O tell me the truth,
What was there and what will be?
The Moon said, My heart is made of solid rock,
My light is borrowed from the Sun.
I spun round the Earth since my birth.
I do not distinguish night from day.

Science has obliterated man's imagination,
Our dream dried up in night's darkness.
The Stars went far off in Eternity's parade.
Like children we were dazzled by science,
Our eyes hovered in the stage of the Universe.
Can they solve the puzzle in the distant confines? ●

Complimentary copies of this book are obtainable from the author ●

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Dr. Yossi Olmert, Jerusalem
Dr. Mervin Sopher, Cleveland, USA
Mr. & Mrs. H. Lissauer, London
Dr. Shalom, Tel Aviv
Mr. & Mrs. William Georgi, New York
D. Avneri, London
Mr. & Mrs. N. Tricot, London
Dr. Edward Khamara, Australia
Rachel Gishkin, San Francisco
Najla Burton, Australia
Victoria Vajdany, London
H. and G. Yaari Cohen, Holon, Israel
Yehekiel Dror, Tel Aviv ●

I was born in Baghdad some sixty years ago and I have been a supporter of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for a number of years. The University recently established the James Shasha International Seminar and I was asked to write an introduction to the Seminar brochure. Some of your readers could very well be interested to hear about it ●

Buenos Aires

James J Shasha

Introduction to the Seminar (abridged)

I wrestled with and hassled the Hebrew University to offer a brief up-dating programme in the Humanities, Sciences and Social Sciences:

- 1) What is happening in these worlds of thought in this day and age.
- 2) What new books of importance being published and why, as an example.
- 3) What cultures are meeting at what crossroads and what impacts are they having on our values, just as another example.

No mean task getting the University to accept such an idea. Virtually years went by before the University accepted to institute the Seminar, coupled with one major subject as a running mate to the up-dating offerings.

Choosing Jerusalem, particularly the Hebrew University, seemed of particular significance to tie in the ancestral past with what we call the human person today. Here the dust gathered for millennia and it seemed an ideal place to make a stop in history's path and to scratch the surface of our thinking.

Alongside this endeavour, we tried to introduce joy with afternoon workshops in painting, music and even tennis for the hearty - plus evening sojourns into Israeli cultural life. Call it an intellectual vacation for one week - at a time. I think you might come and come again ●

The James Shasha International Seminar
Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Jabotinsky Street 46
Jerusalem 9104
fax 972 2632117

I enjoy very much reading *The Scribe*. I pass it to friends of Baghdad origin who know many of the people you mention.

My parents left Baghdad when they were very young and settled in Singapore. My mother's father was Heskel ibn abu Dawood. My husband was related to the Khazzam family ●

Lausanne-Ouchy

Mrs K. M. Reuben

The Jews of Havana

by Carol and Rick Sopher

A small, but gloriously strong Jewish community in Havana refuses to die. Against considerable odds, the remnants of a once glorious Jewish community are held together by a core of diligent workers, devoted to maintaining the dignity and religion of the Jewish people in Cuba.

There is no anti-Semitism in Cuba; for this, the country deserves international acclaim. Religion is openly practised and the Jewish community is not discriminated against in any way. However, religion cannot interfere with the aims of government – attendance of synagogue on working days can therefore be problematic.

There are four synagogues in Havana – an Orthodox temple, two Sephardi synagogues and a further synagogue with a well maintained library, active Sunday classes and a community centre. A Kosher butcher enables a number of families to keep a Kosher home and there are two Jewish cemeteries in operation.



Rick Sopher with the president of the Sephardi Community of Havana by the Ark of the main Sephardi Synagogue●

The maintenance of these services is remarkable considering the small size of the community – this has been officially estimated at 1,000 people but our estimates are that there are only 150 Jewish people in Cuba – the balance having been absorbed into Cuban society by a succession of intermarriages.

The origins of the Jews that remain in Havana are principally from Poland, Russia and Hungary, and there are also a number of Sephardi Jews who came to Havana from Turkey and Syria. The Jews remaining in post-revolutionary Cuba were either too poor or too old to leave, but there is a small number of educated Jewish men who have taken up important positions in the professions or in government. The personal dilemma facing these young unmarried men arises from the absence of any unmarried Jewish women in Cuba – some of these men reluctantly marry outside the religion and try to educate their children in the Jewish way; other remain single and hope for a miracle.

Although diplomatic relations between Cuba and Israel were broken off in 1973,

the revolutionary government brought in a team of technical experts from Israel to advise on citrus growing and other agricultural matters.

The Sephardi community in Cuba has a particularly difficult time supporting itself – the pre-revolutionary community was wealthy enough to support two grand synagogues and pay its Hazan \$1200 per month, a substantial sum in the 1950's. The list of officers hanging in the synagogue in the decadent Vedado area of Havana reveals some interesting Sephardi and oriental names – Menasse, Gabay, Ades, Behar.

Today, the remnants of the Sephardi community are very much united and proud of their past – the head of the congregation, a Syrian, keeps the synagogues impeccably tidy. Hundreds of talits and prayer books belonging to those who fled Havana at the time of the revolution are kept in order in the tragic hope that the missing friends will return. The Sephardim play an important part in the Jewish community of Havana; certain Sephardi tunes have recently been adopted by the main Ashkenazi synagogue – apparently they are preferred by the cantor.

The financial position of the Jewish community of Havana is disastrous. The synagogues do not receive any state or community funding and in the words of the President of the Cuban community, "We want to help our Jewish poor, and pay for the religious education of our children, but in Cuba, we are all poor."

The Jewish community therefore survives on the personal efforts and devotion of its leaders, and on the occasional but valuable donation from Jewish communities outside Cuba. The congregation of Venezuela recently donated a minibus which has been invaluable in transporting old people to the community centre and young people to the Sunday classes. The Canadian community regularly send Matzot before Passover, which takes several months to reach the Cuban people.

The congregation desperately needs funds – not only to look after its ageing people and alleviate their poverty, but to support the religious education of the young – the Sunday classes, with 3 energetic teachers and some 20 children have only one Hebrew textbook between them●

At the risk of preaching to the converted, I wish to make a few points on Naim Dangoor's comments on Moshe Kahtan's article in your issue No. 50:

1) The argument of population exchange need not be a substitute for the Jordan-is-Palestine concept. Both arguments complement and enhance one another. I can see a thorny road ahead if population transfer is placed on the agenda. But any road leading to Israel retaining Judea, Samaria and Gaza is going to be thorny, so we may just as well face the trouble squarely.

2) Jordan-is-Palestine demonstrates that Palestinian self-determination has already been satisfied in three-quarters of the old Palestine Mandate. There is no need for a second Palestinian state in the Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

3) While we no longer have territorial claims on Jordan, by pointing out that Transjordan was arbitrarily detached from the Palestine Mandate and, by implication, from the provisions of the Balfour Declaration, we dispose of the call for Israel to make further territorial concessions●

Wembley Park

Ruth Willers

Naim Dangoor adds: I have no quarrel with the above succinct analysis except to emphasise that population exchange must be the key to any equitable, meaningful and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Placing Transjordan under the administration of Emir Abdulla was part of a bargain in which Abdulla pledged to suppress anti-Zionist activity in the rest of Palestine. It was the first land-for-Peace deal and it didn't bring peace●

Our library has been receiving *The Scribe* for almost a year now and I as well as members of the faculty have found it useful, enjoyable and informative.

The latest issue, from September 1991, raised several questions and I'm wondering if you can help.

The first question regards Samir Naqash. Our library has copies of five of his books, all in Arabic and all published between 1978 and 1980. How can we obtain his other books?

I am also interested in obtaining copies of *Adi-Zahab* by Rabbi Ezra Reuben Dangoor, published by your Foundation, and Dayan Dr. Pinchas Toledano's book *Fountain of Blessings* for our library.

My third question concerns a citation from *Goshen*, the Bulletin of Egyptian Jews in Israel. I would be most grateful if you could supply me with an address of the organisation issuing that publication●

University of California
Los Angeles

David G Hirsch
Jewish Studies
Bibliographer

I came across *The Scribe* not so long ago and was delighted and fascinated by the articles. I have always loved the stories about Baghdad, told by my aunts and grandparents and would love to hear more. Although as a child, we were all embarrassed to admit our origins, my friends and I are now proud and pleased to introduce ourselves from Iraqi origin.

I would like to receive *The Scribe* regularly, as it is such a boost to our heritage and tradition●

Edgware, Middlesex (Mrs) Orna Moses

Recollections of Tikrit

In December 1937, I left Baghdad after having served as trainee Ear Nose and Throat specialist at the Royal Hospital in Baghdad. The abrupt change of jobs from the hospital to work as District Medical Officer in Tikrit jolted me badly but never let me slide into self-pity and disorganisation.

I travelled to Tikrit accompanied by the newly appointed administrative officer and we arrived at night. The weather was cold but invigorating. There was no hotel in the town and I was therefore billeted at the only Jewish house in town. I stayed two days with this Jewish family whose name I don't remember. They had a daughter of 20 who was a primary school teacher. The father was a businessman whose job took him to farms where he acted as a middleman (*sarkal*) selling the agricultural produce to the markets. He told me he had relatives in Samarra working as silver-smiths.

In the course of my duties as medical officer of the district I was necessarily and inevitably led to mix more freely with the Tikritis than other government officials. I came to know their history, legends and language. I stayed till March 1939.

Presumably, Saddam Hussein was born at that time (1937). I did not have anything to do with him or his family, except that I met his uncle Khairallah Tulfah whose daughter was later married to Saddam. Khairallah was an objectionable character, a primary school teacher. He was always dissatisfied with the work of the government officials and plagued Tikrit with his numerous and frequent complaints. There were no reactions to his complaints, but I heard later that he left the teaching profession and joined the Military College, passing out as second lieutenant (1939).

As regards the town itself, it was badly neglected, there was no electricity and no water supply. Water was obtained by filling goatskins with water from the Tigris. There were about 4000 people in the town and one primary school. There was a railway station two miles west of the town. There was no art or craft and few people were engaged in agriculture. Most of the Tikritis were rafters (*kalakchis*) navigating the river Tigris between Mosul and Baghdad, carrying their merchandise down the river. Trade with visiting tribesmen was another means of their livelihood. Roads were unsurfaced and driving was hazardous.

All the government officials had to contribute, out of their monthly salaries, a small percentage to the Palestine Cause – an effort outwardly welcomed but inwardly resented. The Tikritis vied with the Samarrais in their pretentious behaviour. Extreme Arab nationalism coupled with rabid anti-Zionism and pro-Palestine stance made me feel uncomfortable. Their attitude was anti-British as well as pro-German. This sentiment was made clear to me when in March 1938, on the day of the *anchluss* I was met by a Tikriti dignitary who was gloating about Hitler's successful move into Austria.

The Tikritis were easily identified by their accent, their pronouncement of the Arabic consonants and vowels, not unsimilar to the Christians of the North, being

identical to the Baghdadi-Jewish dialect. They used to tell me that their ancestors were Christians and there is still evidence of old Christian monasteries which were destroyed after the Islamic conquests. I was also told that their chief Abdul Satih committed suicide by jumping into the Tigris rather than embrace Islam.

Cambridge University Library

Dr. Haskell D. Isaacs

* (The same year that I graduated from the Military College – N.E.D.)

Scribe: Khairallah Tulfah was appointed in 1973 Governor of Baghdad and assisted Mr. Meer Basri, who was president of the Jewish Community, by releasing and thus saving the lives of three Jews who were in the custody of the security police and at risk of being killed. At that time 25 other Jews were abducted by the police, tortured and disappeared without trace.

The three were:

Tawfiq Sopher, still living in Baghdad; Salim Dellal, and Aziz Arbuk, the shohet of the community, who are now both living in Israel.

Fascinating Life and Sensational Death by the late Mr. Gourgi C. Bekhor

This interesting and informative book follows 18 years of intense research and dedication and deals with the fortunes and misfortunes of the Jews of Iraq from the Ottoman times to the late 1970's.

The material is presented in a clear and simple language and is plentifully illustrated with many fascinating photographs of people and places of Jewish historical interest.

The author shed light on this important period which has no equal in the history of Babylonian Jewry. He reviews in great detail the accusations levelled against those Jews, the trial, the reactions of the accused, the conduct of the defense attorneys and the judges, the executions, the wave of reactions to the hangings of the Jewish victims throughout the world.

This book has been recommended by the Office of the President of the State of Israel as a testimony for future generations.

Copies can be obtained from Mrs. Carmen Gabra, London. Telephone: 081-907 4413.

Mr. Jacob Shashoua

Mr. Jacob Saul Shashoua, who died in Poona, India on 15 September at the age of 89, was born in Baghdad and settled in India after the First World War. He was active in the affairs of the Poona Jewish community and contributed liberally to communal charities in Poona and Bombay. He was a great-great-grandson of Haham Moshe Hayyim, a younger brother of Haham Yosef Hayyim of Baghdad, well-versed in Hebrew, he used to observe that his surname was derived from the Hebrew word, *Shaashua* which means "delight". He is survived by his children, Ruth, Ronald, Gerald and Selim.

P.S.G.

Now that the 1975 UN Resolution that equated Zionism with Racism is going to be repealed, I wish to introduce a new resolution that anti-Zionism is Nazism.

Occasionally people speak of "Arab Jews". This is a contradiction of terms, as a Jew cannot be an Arab. It is not to my knowledge that "many Arab tribes did become Jews".

I was born an Iraqi Jew and became a nationalised American Jew. Iraq is an Arab country and was Arabised by Muhammed and his followers long ago.
Forest Hills N.Y. Rabbi David Baron

Scribe: Iraq was not Arabised by Muhammed and his followers. It was captured by Arab invaders who remained an occupying minority for a long time. The Jews then numbered over one million in Babylonia.

Charlemagne used to address Harun al-Rashid: Aaron, King of Persia.

The population of Iraq was only slowly converted to Islam.

At the end of World War I, the Jews constituted the largest community of the capital, Baghdad. In his book *Heart of The Middle East*, Richard Coke writes that the League of Nations did not recognise Iraq as a wholly Arab or Moslem country: "Arabs, Jews, Kurds, Seljuk Turks, Persians, Assyrians, Telkaifis, Armenians – how to mould such a composite collection of races into a single nation? Sunnis, Shias, Jews, Christians, Sabians, Yezidis – how to lessen the friction between such a variety of creeds?"

The Arabisation of Iraq started in earnest after 1921 when Britain surrendered Iraq to an Arab regime. There followed the massacre of the Assyrians, the wars against the Kurds, the effective expulsion of the Jews, the expulsion of a million Iranians during the first Gulf War, the suppression of the Shia revolt after the second Gulf War and their mass escape to Iran. As we saw on television 2 million Kurds went to the mountains to escape the bombs and mustard gas of Saddam.

As to Arabian Jews, after the destruction of the Second Temple, many Jews escaped to Arabia and many Arabs adopted a basic form of Judaism. It is estimated that there are at least 100,000 such "Jews" in Saudi Arabia today.

We recently had visits from two Saudi "Jewish" families who wanted to emigrate to Israel but were refused Israeli visas. Last month we had a telephone call from Jeddah by a man who wants to assert his and his family's Jewishness but is afraid of being branded an apostate and sentenced to death. He said that the Prophet Muhammed allowed his tribe to remain Jewish but were later forced to accept Islam. They have maintained a separate existence since then.

It is related that after the destruction of the First Temple, 80,000 priests who were saved made their way to Arabia and joined those who had settled there previously.

This community has to be rescued by the Jewish Agency.

I am interested in promoting in the U.K. the unique collection of 10 Bible Seals issued in sterling silver in a limited edition. The price is \$990 per set and makes a beautiful and lasting present.
P.O.B. 1579 Dangoor Agencies Tel Aviv

On 3 September 1991 a new day care centre was opened in Jerusalem in memory of the late Noona and Khedouri Hillel.

The Centre helps working mothers to leave their young children aged 3 to 5 years at 7am, where they are given breakfast and lunch, and collect them at 4pm. The Centre caters for 35 children and has a dozen computers of the latest models.

According to a new technique, the children are taught to use these computers for games, etc., and after 4pm they are made available to grown-ups.

The Hillels had left a charitable bequest for a project in Israel and it was through the efforts of the brother, Mr. Shlomo Hillel, World Chairman of Keren Hayesod - United Israel Appeal, that this very useful project was chosen.

The opening ceremony was attended by a large number of relatives and friends and the following members of the family performed the various duties:

Doreen Dangoor cut the ribbon
Noona Shbero unveiled the plaque
Eliahou Hillel fixed the mezuzah●

מכון נעמת ע"ש נונה וכדורי הלל NOONA AND KHEDOURI HILLEL DAY NURSERY



Left to right: Tmima Hillel, Ari Hillel, Shlomo Hillel, Rahmeen Twena, Albert Dangoor, Doreen Dangoor, Sandra Dangoor, David (Salim) Dangoor, Robert Dangoor, Rosa Gahtan, Aliza Twena, Noona Shbero, Eliahou Hillel, Dora Sehayek, Rena Shbero, Renee Hillel●

The letter of Mr Abdullah Zilkha of Zurich (in No. 49) takes me back to the year 1925 when the late Baghdadi banker Mr Khedouri Zilkha (his father Aboudi was my father's cousin) received a letter signed by the "Red Hand" gang, as well as to his colleague Sion Aboudi asking them to pay 2000 dinars, otherwise their lives would be in danger.

Khedouri didn't hesitate to leave Baghdad, entrusting the management of his bank to his accountant, Menashe Paniri and his sister's husband Khedouri Tweg. He opened a branch in Damascus then in Alexandria, Geneva, Paris and elsewhere.

Sion Aboudi remained in Baghdad stuck to an old Moslem body-guard with a revolver on him called Ahmed●

Ramat Gan

E Zilkha

I have pleasure in sending to you here-with a list of 78 Iraqi Jewish proverbs covering various fields of life or describing contrasting human characteristics. I hope they will further enrich your collection. I should add that in compiling the list I was ably assisted, with remarkable enthusiasm, by my friends Albert Yehuda of Melbourne and Saleh and Rachel Imbari (Embarchi) of Sydney. We all had a wonderful time reminiscing and recording the Proverbs. It was an exciting journey into the past, to Jewish Baghdad of the thirties and the forties●

Melbourne, Australia

Gad Ben-Meir

Scribe: Thanks for the Proverbs. They will be used in future issues●

I used to read my mother's copies of *The Scribe* with great interest. She sadly passed away recently.

Please include me on your mailing list●
Cheadle, Cheshire **Dr Neville M Adam**

The Scribe is preparing an index of the contents of the first 50 issues. All issues, in a special binder, together with the index, are obtainable from the Publishers at £30, inc. postage●

As an avid reader of *The Scribe* for the past two years, I have very much enjoyed your articles on various topics, from which I have learned so much. I enclose a copy of my new book *THE SAMARITAN TREASURE*, a collection of short stories dealing with aspects of Jewish life and history, which has received favourable reviews here in the States. Your readers may be interested in some of the stories such as "Tomorrow you will forget" and "The Jew of Bath", a fictional account of the authoress Jane Austen's love affair with a Sephardi Jew in that resort town●

1683 Laurel Ave,
St Paul, Mn., USA

Marianne Luban

During my last visit to Israel, I came upon your magazine. I was delighted to see such a magazine in existence, with very informative content.

I was born in Baghdad in 1935. After Rashid Ali's pogrom we went to live in Bombay. We then went to England via Israel, then 23 years ago to Australia where I have settled with my wife and 2 daughters.

Enrol me as a subscriber.

I look forward to hearing from you. Please keep up this wonderful work, so that maybe one day our children will be proud of their ancestors and the richness of the Iraqi Jewish culture●

Brisbane, Australia

Ezra ben Ezra

We acknowledge with thanks receipt of voluntary and generous contributions from:

Dr. Gourji M. Raby, Great Neck, N.Y.
Mr. Yusuf Meer, Montreal
Mr. & Mrs. Frank Shasha, Buenos Aires
Professor Albert Khabbaza, New York
Dr. Neville M. Adam, Cheadle, Cheshire
Mr. P. Wolf, New Jersey
Mr. Joseph Koreen, Greenlawn, N.Y.
Mrs. K.M. Reuben, Lausanne-Ouchy
Mr. Haim Mathalon, Montreal
Mr. Haim E. Meir, Tel Aviv●

I have been aware for some time of your organisation and its publication, and have admired them as the most highly developed and organised of any in Europe or North America. At the suggestion of Dr. Fred Ezekiel here, I called to see you in London last month, but unfortunately you were away.

There is a small very loosely connected Iraqi community here in the Boston area. I have brought many of them together on previous occasions. They exist as part of the broader Sephardi community, which can offer very enriching interaction.

As elsewhere, the Iraqis have come into the limelight recently, and I, along with some others, have been recently interviewed in the press, on radio, and on CNN (television Cable News Network).

We are developing, under the auspices of Hebrew College in Boston, a new Sephardi Heritage Centre. We recently had a successful evening describing "Growing up Jewish in Baghdad".

Kindly place me on your mailing list and send available copies of back issues. I would appreciate your adding my mother also, Mrs Violette Sheena●

Newton Centre,

Dr David Sheena

Mass.

The Boston Globe wrote:

As David Sheena, President of the Sephardic Congregation of New England, watched the US attack on Iraq, he was flooded with a welter of emotions felt by few others:

It was his country (US) that was attacking.
It was his country (Iraq) being attacked.
It was his country (Israel) that could have been pulled into the conflict●

To further my social history of the Jewish community of Burma, I would appreciate hearing from Jews who can trace their ancestry to that country. Please contact me at 6113 Robinwood Road, Bethesda, Maryland, USA (301-320-5579)●

Bnai Brith

Ruth Freedman Carnea

Hillel Foundations