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# *The* SCRIBE

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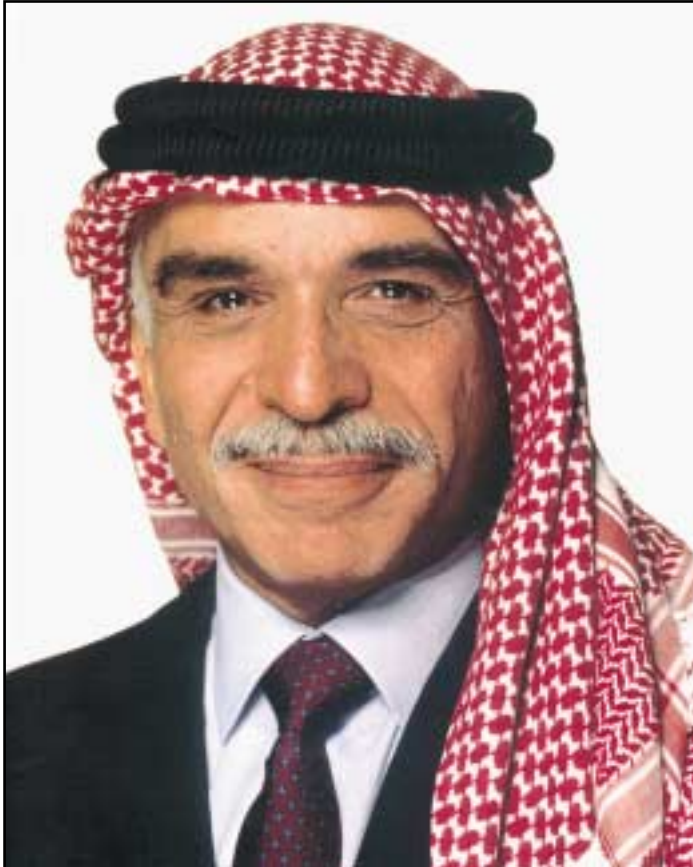
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★ *Wishing all our Readers a Happy Passover*

ONE GENERATION PASSETH AWAY, AND ANOTHER GENERATION COMETH



*The Late King Hussein.*



*King Abdullah II*

Ecclesiastical 1:4

In 1920, Lawrence of Arabia installed Feisal in Damascus in defiance of the Sykes-Picot agreement, and his brother Abdullah was considered for Iraq. But when Feisal was kicked out of Syria he became front-runner for Iraq, and Abdullah threatened to march on Syria! The French asked the British to restrain him, and he was stopped in his tracks at Amman. Land East of the River Jordan was wrested from the Palestine mandate to create Transjordan with Abdullah as its ruler. The Zionists protested, but had to acquiesce when Britain threatened to pull out of the Mandate.

Transjordan prospered with Zionist money for land purchased from Palestinians who invested it across the Jordan, and its population grew with the refugees that fled Palestine in 1948, at the urging of Arab governments who promised to bring them back in triumph when Israel was defeated.

Abdullah was a wise and far-sighted king, who sought to reach an understanding with Israel, but was frustrated in his endeavours by Imperial interests and was assassinated by die-hard Arab nationalists in front of his grandson Hussein, who later in 1952 became King of Jordan at the age of 17.

Hussein followed the wise policies of his grandfather and during his record 46 years on the throne survived rebellions and many attempts on his life. When he died on 2 February, he left a prosperous and influential country. His funeral was attended by fifty of the high and mighty rulers of the world. It used to be said: No war without Egypt; No peace without Syria. It was also said that which ever Arab country was the first to make peace with Israel, Lebanon would be the second. In fact, Jordan was the second to make peace and Lebanon has become the main source of trouble for the Jewish State.

In the last week of his life, Hussein came briefly to Amman to remove his brother Hassan from the succession and in his wisdom appointed his son Abdullah as Crown Prince. King Abdullah II, half-Arab, half-English, appears to have the necessary qualifications for leadership, while his uncle Hassan is spoken of as the future King of Iraq, once Saddam is got rid of. When Hussein's young cousin Feisal was killed in the revolution of July 1958, the throne of Iraq constitutionally reverted to Hussein, as Iraq and Jordan constituted the United Hashemite Kingdom. So, the throne of Iraq was not alien to the Hashemite Royal Family.

When I met King Hussein at a Dinner at the Guildhall in 1997, I reminded him of this.

A Hashemite Kingdom in Iraq and Jordan closely tied with Israel and the autonomous Palestinian territories, allied with Turkey would constitute a mighty nucleus for a Middle East Federation that would bring peace, stability and prosperity to the whole region. It represents the greater homeland of the Jewish people and presents an opportunity to solve the long-standing problems of the Kurds. A modern capital could then be built somewhere on the Euphrates, near Mari of old, where Abraham, father of the Middle East, once lived. What better name could such a capital have than that of Abraham?

The Arab is our brother, we have no other!

# THOUGHTS AND AFTERTHOUGHTS

by Naim Dangoor

## CELEBRATING THE MILLENNIUM

At midnight on 31st December of each year, it is customary, before welcoming the new year, to bid farewell to the departing year by singing, Robert Burns's Auld Lang Syne:

Should old acquaintance be forgot,  
and never brought to mind.  
Should old acquaintance be forgot,  
for the sake of auld lang syne....

The passing of 1999 will also mean the passing of the murderous 20th Century and of the turbulent second millennium. Despite immense strides in technology, medicine, discoveries etc., mankind sank to its lowest moral level during the last 1,000 years in general, and the last 100 years in particular.

It would be most inappropriate to bid these times farewell, but to tell them good riddance, hoping that the coming year, century, millennium, will augur a new period of tolerance, justice and peace.

What should we sing as the clock strikes midnight on 31/12/1999, courtesy of the millennium bug?

At our request the well-known poet Meer S. Basri Poet Laureate of Babylonian Jewry who is now as fluent in English verse as in Arabic, came up with the following ode:

## TO THE NEW MILLENNIUM

by Meer S. Basri

Welcome, welcome, New Millennium,  
And Old Century, Oh! go away.  
Your years brought us affliction,  
Doubt and hate, night and day.

We lived in pain and dismay,  
Wars in land, sea and air.  
Satan danced, chanted with glee,  
Sowing famine and despair.

New inventions, new conventions,  
But mostly heralds of doom.  
Atoms and bombs to kill millions,  
Keeping souls in dismal gloom.

Wealth for the few, want for the many,  
Joy for the rich, grief for the poor.  
In a vile world where Money  
Reigns a master of the floor.

Morals faded out of fashion,  
Marriage? Well, an old institution.  
Doubt in the mind, lust in the soul,  
Life a problem, no solution.

Shall to-morrow see the light,  
Shall we ever find faith and rest?  
Shall our life be sane and bright,  
And rays of peace flow in our breast?

Welcome, welcome, new Millennium,  
We turn to you with hope and love.  
Peace on earth, faith and justice,  
A glorious dawn in the sky above.

Hope will loom in the horizon,  
Humanity will shed its despair.  
East and West will share the flag,  
An end to war, an end to fear.

Our children will free their hearts,  
To find tolerance and solace.  
They will discover high ethics,  
In bliss and love they will embrace.

*Scribe: Although Christian Churches have been trying to consider the coming of the Millennium a religious event, for the world in general it is merely an important change in the calendar.●*

## NOTHING NEW

Recently released documents reveal that 30 years ago the British ambassador in Baghdad wrote to the Foreign office that if Israel would magically disappear overnight, it would do a lot of people and a lot of countries much good.

That's funny! Because that is precisely what Napoleon 200 years ago thought about Britain. He felt that Britain, being at the doorstep of Europe, yet separated by 25 miles of water, was playing a disproportionate part in the affairs of Europe. If Britain was joined to Europe or was far away in the middle of the Atlantic, there would have been stability and peace on that continent. London did not want to give up its privileged position and fought Napoleon tooth and nail, rejecting his terms for a united Europe, which were better than what Britain would get today, being in two minds whether to go in or not.

Trafalgar and Waterloo were in vain. We would also have been spared two World Wars, the advent of Stalin and Hitler, and the Holocaust which will remain for ever a black stain on Europe's history.●

I was given the Scribe issue 70 dated October 1998, recently by a friend.

It was a surprise for me to learn that you have a publication called "Journal of Babylon Jewry."

I was very impressed.

I enjoyed the articles and the pictures which brought lots of memories. I was educated in Alliance School. I was delighted to see pictures of the late Mr Jacob Mahlab, the teachers and the directors at the Alliance School in Baghdad, especially my French teacher Rachel Mahlab, Monsieur Laredo and Monsieur Sabagh and his wife who was my first teacher in Kindergarten. Thanks Rachel Mahlab, Governor.

William.E. Shaoul Quebec●

## THE TORAH IS AUTHENTIC

To the Editor of The London Jewish News.

Contrary to what David Rohl claims (LJN 6 November), the Torah never borrowed anything for the Sumerians. The events described in Genesis were common tradition to all the peoples of the Middle East, going back to almost 9,000 years ago when our ancestor Adam discovered the wild wheat, in the Garden of Eden and thus started our present civilisation.

These traditions came down to the Hebrews, as well as to the Sumerians and other people who lived in that region. It all points to that many of the events described in Genesis actually took place.

By the way, the Garden of Eden was not in Northern Iran but in Aden - where else?

Naim Dangoor

(Appeared 20 November 1998).

*Scribe: It is possible that there were more than one garden referred to in Genesis and as David Rohl suggests, that one likely site is in the area between Turkey and Iran where the Tigris and Euphrates emanate as well as the two other rivers, named in Genesis as Pishon and Gihon.●*

## PARADISE TO COME?

Even if it is true that we are the chosen people of God, and one day in the future the Mashyah will come to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, what is there in it for us today, seeing all the suffering undergone by the Jews?

Our reward must be the pleasant thought of that blissful day in the future when all will be well. This was perhaps what our schoolmaster Shimon Effendi Muallem Nessim, 70 years ago, meant when he used to tap on his tummy and say: 'Guilu bene me'ay, guilu.' 'Rejoice, my unborn offspring, rejoice.'●

## THE PSALMS

The Psalms represent some of the most sublime religious writings that man has devised. The most famous is Psalm 23 - The Lord is my Shepherd, which expresses man's true connection with his Creator. But, who wrote the Psalms? Some were written by Moses, Solomon, Jeremiah and others, but the rest are attributed to King David.

Now David was a shepherd, a warrior, a musician, but in writing poetry he must have needed help. I think most of David's Psalms were written with the help of the prophet Nathan, who was closely associated with his monarch and managed to express in verse David's inner thoughts and feelings.

He was, his Mentor, who could go into the Royal Palace and tell the king to his face, 'you are the man' (who has you served the wife of his neighbour).●

## **GOD OF CIVILISATION**

The Jewish year is said to be - not “lebreath olam,” the Creation of the Universe, ie., the Big Bang, but “layetzira,” to the end of the period of creation which culminated with the creation of Man. The appellation of anno mundi (A.M.) has to be corrected to anno Adam (A.A.). This brings Genesis within focus as the history of civilisation, which was started by Adam when he discovered the wild wheat in the garden of Eden.

To be precise, the Jewish calendar started at sunset on Friday the first of the month Tishri at the Autumn equinox, when sunset takes place at 6:00 p.m. all around the world. It is at that moment that creation came to an end and the Sabbath started.

God was hoping that human civilisation would be free of violence, in other words, the zero tolerance. But, he did not like what he saw: “And the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of His heart was only evil continually.” And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart. And the Lord said: “I will blot out man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth.” Genesis 6: 5-7

Then the great flood came and did its work.

After the flood, the Lord said: “I will not again curse the ground anymore for man’s sake for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth. While the earth remaineth, seedtime, harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” Genesis 8: 21,22 And God told Noah: “This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations. I have set my (rain) bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.” Genesis 9: 12-14

I have always been puzzled by this turn of events. God knew that man will continue to be evil. The explanation is that God had a bright idea. He no longer wanted to continue managing the world and decided to find a people who would suffer for Him the wickedness of mankind. Those chosen people would be offered not an honour but a duty.

There are two versions of how the Jews became the chosen people. One version was that God simply chose the Jews just like that over all the nations of the world. But why would they be so favoured? The more likely version is that God offered the job to every nation, who one by one rejected the offer after reading the small print. The gullible Jews jumped at the opportunity and God gave us the Torah as a consolation prize, in appreciation for taking the load of God’s worries on our shoulders.●

## **MAN VERSUS MACHINE**

A computer, we are told, can make a million calculations in one second, and it can store a whole encyclopaedia on one small disc.

But, unlike humans, a computer has no intelligence and cannot think. Recently, I needed to find a Biblical inpoint Hebrew phrase that has a numerical value (Gematria) equal to the next Jewish year 5760 which corresponds to the year 2,000 C.E. The thousand is usually discarded, so the required number was 760.

I was unable to find such a phrase through the computer. Sitting by the pool at Elat, my mind wandered through various Biblical texts and, hey presto, I was attracted by two words in Psalm 23 - NAFSHI YESHOVEV (He comforteth my soul). I said to myself it is impossible, it can’t be, can these two words add up to 760? And true enough, they did add up to 760.

I had the same experience 15 years ago. I went to sleep with the problem, and woke up with the answer.

### **BACKGROUND**

Before the invention of numbers, people used to denote numbers by writing or scribbling a line for every unit up to four; a diagonal across these four lines would denote five. In Baghdad, we used to call these markings SHEKHOOT EL SAQQA, “The scribbling of the water carrier,” who used sheepskin to carry water to houses and used to mark a line on the wall with a piece of charcoal for every journey. That became the basis of Roman numerals: I found V for 5, X for 10, L for 50, C for 100, D for 500 and M for 1,000.

The Jews designed numerical values to the letters for the alphabet - the first ten letters for 1-10, the next ten letters for 20-100 and 200, 300, 400 for the last three letters. (It was very difficult to do sums in these two systems).

A breakthrough was achieved with the invention of zero and what is referred to as Arabic numerals which revolutionised arithmetic based on the decimal system.

It is interesting to note that the alphabet is used in Arabic publications to denote paragraphs, but in that case, the order of the Hebrew alphabet is adhered to, rather than the Arabic alphabet.●

## **THE HOUSE OF LORDS**

The Bill to abolish the voting rights of Hereditary Peers, cannot succeed. Surely, there is something wrong with the notion that the Salisbury Agreement or the Parliament Act, which limit the power of the Lords, can also be used to abolish or mutilate the House of Lords itself.

The orderly reform of the Upper House should await the outcome of the Royal Commission.●

## **BOOK REVIEW:**

### **Noah’s Flood**

by **William Ryan and Walter Pitman**

Published by: **Simon & Schuster**

For a long time historians and scientists speculated on whether a great deluge actually took place as recorded in the Bible. It was suggested that the Mediterranean once was a desert and that the weight of the Atlantic waters broke the thin barrier at “Gibraltar” flooding the whole area, which became the Mediterranean sea. But this event took place millions of years ago, even before man appeared on earth.

But now, two distinguished geophysicists have discovered that a sensational flood occurred in what is now the black sea.

Sophisticated dating techniques confirmed that 7,600 years ago the mounting seas had burst through the narrow Bosphorus valley, and the salt water of the Mediterranean had poured into the lake with unimaginable force, racing over beaches and up rivers, destroying or chasing all life before it. The margins of the lake, which had been a unique oasis, a Garden of Eden for an advanced culture in a vast region of semidesert, became a sea of death. The people fled, never to return.

It was once thought that the flood took place in Mesopotamia, immediately after the end of the ice-age, when heavy rain fell for “forty-days” and “forty-nights” and the melting of the ground snow flooded the Tigris and Euphrates basin. This may have been a secondary flood and excavations have not shown evidence of a major flood.

The fact that, what is supposed to be the remains of Noah’s Ark are found on Mount Arrarat in Eastern Turkey, clearly indicates that the event took place in the Black Sea area rather than in Mesopotamia.

If Noah lived in Turkey, then Abraham who is fifth generation from Noah, must be considered as coming from that region, as also shown by his ripe old age of 175 years, which is indicative of the longevity of the people of Turkistan.●

## **ABOLISHING HEREDITARY PEERS**

If hereditary power is wrong and should be abolished, what about inherited wealth. Money, too, is power, no less.

Inheritance Tax is not effective in dealing with the problem. The transmission of wealth, especially consisting of national and community loans, from one generation to another, should be restricted for the sake of fairness to the unborn generations.●

# ISRAEL'S 50 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

## Struggles and Achievements

*Abridged from an article by His Excellency Zvi Gabay,  
Iraqi born Ambassador of Israel to Ireland.*

Fifty years ago, for the third time in history, we proclaimed our independence, in a part of what was known as mandated Palestine. Fifty years ago, we restored national sovereignty in our ancient homeland. Throughout the dark days of 2,000 years of dispersion we dreamt of the day when we would renew our national life in the land of our forefathers, the land of Israel.

The renewal of our statehood is one of the great ethical affirmations of our time. An age-old wrong had been righted. Around the same period, 22 Arab states came into being simultaneously in the Middle East and North Africa in far more generous dimensions. In the vast area conquered by the allies from Ottoman - Turkish domination, we were offered a little corner, which covered only 30% of the original territory of mandatory Palestine, promised to us.

We set ourselves to develop it in peace and co-operation with our neighbours. Unfortunately, failure to achieve that complete peace has been costly to Arabs and Jews alike.

### INGATHERING OF EXILES

The primary objective of Israel, set out in the Declaration of Independence of May 14, 1948, was, and still is, to provide a home for every Jew who needs a haven. With diverse backgrounds, speaking 78 different languages and dialects, Jews assembled from 102 different nations. The speed with which communities from varied backgrounds became one nation, testifies to the unique historical bond that ties the Jewish people to the land of Israel and also to the future aspiration of living a genuine Jewish life in one form or another.

### AN EGALITARIAN SOCIETY

A deep contrast exists between Israel and most of its neighbours not only in the political aspect, but also in the economic and social ones. Israel as a democratic state pledged in its Declaration of Independence to '...uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of religion race or sex; guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, education and culture...'

Israel, as a self-declared Jewish State has been struggling with the question of what role the Jewish religion would play in the formation of the government of the secular state. Undoubtedly, the status of religion in Israel will continue to be debated.

Regarding equality before the Law, the position of the government and the people of Israel has remained unchanged for more than 3,000 years. The basic tenets of Judaism, as enshrined in the Bible, are irreconcilable with any form of racism or discrimination. The dictum that 'G-d created man in His own image (Genesis 1:27) applies to all people of all races. These, of course, are but a few characteristics of the society of Israel today.

### CULTURAL LIFE

In Israel, the demand for the arts, entertainment

and literature is out of proportion to its size and population.

Proportionally, Israel ranks among the top countries in the world of newspaper readers, scientific publications and concert goers. The same is true for theatrical performances; their number is almost equal to that of cities like New York, London, and Paris. Furthermore, unlike the tragic paradox that made liberated nations revert to the language of their colonial occupiers as the only means of communication, the Jews who gathered in Israel revived their ancient language, Hebrew. A language that was exclusively the language of major books was transformed and modernised to become the main language of daily communication.

It became a language as playful in the kindergarten as it is precise in the institutes of higher learning. It has now grown from the 8,000 word vocabulary of the Bible to the approximate 120,000 words in use in Israel today. Moreover, the upsurge in artistic creativity particularly in the composition of plays, songs and pop songs attests to the successful revival and the vitality of the Hebrew language today.

Hebrew became the cornerstone of our national and political rebirth, and the unifying factor of the Jewish people and its heritage.

It is evident that Israel is not a melting pot, for that theory clearly envisages a process of assimilation into one group, but rather a tapestry of cultures from the East and the West who came together united by their common history and religion to form a mosaic full of variety. Rather, one can describe Israel as a place where events take place with great rapidity, without any clear notion as to the characteristics of its new generation.

### ECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

With all its tremendous tasks of building, Israel has translated a distant dream into solid reality. It has brought to fruition the labour of pioneers who, since the turn of the century, gave their lives to transform a barren soil into fertile farmland and flourishing villages.

Because Israel is poor in natural resources, it must rely on its brain power. In many technological areas it has shown impressive results. Some of its products compete with those of the most sophisticated economies in the world. Israel became a leader in micro electronics, computer hardware and software, biotechnologies, diamond polishing and scientific discoveries. This year our high-tech production reaches \$7 billion and we expect to double that in 4 years time.

Furthermore, since 1957 Israel has co-operated with scores of countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America in such critical areas as agricultural technology, irrigation, food production, construction, health and regional planning.

We would have been glad to use our energy in the more rewarding tasks of solving problems instead of worrying about military

preparedness. We are still suffering from a deficit in our balance of payments, which last year dropped by \$32 billion, which proportionally is considered one of the highest in the world, higher even than industrial countries like Japan and Germany. In addition, foreign investments reached \$3.8 billion in 1997. Israel is currently a member of the group of 25 countries with the highest per capita national incomes in the world. In 1996, Israel's GDP per capita was \$17,200.

International economic interest in Israel and in the Middle East has grown with the signing of peace agreements. As the region appears to be moving towards co-existence, many friends around the world are helping cement the Peace Process and profit from the advent of a new era. A similar situation is actually happening here in Ireland.

### ISRAEL'S DESIRE FOR PEACE WITH THE ARAB WORLD

Israel is facing an image dilemma which is rooted in the fact that it is a frontier state, located between diverse political cultures: the Western and the Middle Eastern worlds, the latter marked by social and political instability and religious fundamentalism.

The Jews and the Arabs, who have been in close contact with one another for thousands of years, sometimes as different religions, sometimes even as different civilisations, are now confronting each other in a totally new and most complex situations.

The ingathering of Jews in Israel and the re-establishment of the State of Israel have been regarded by most Muslim Arabs as a contradiction to the logic of Arab-Islamic history. Still the Arab image of the Jew, and in our case, the Israeli, is rooted in the clash between the prophet Mohammed and the Jews in the 7th century Arab peninsula. Pan-Arabism of modern times inherited its negative attitude and translated it to the present political and military actions.

Last year, we marked the 25th anniversary of the historic initiative of the late Prime Minister of Israel, Menahem Begin and the late President of Egypt, Anwar Sadat. These leaders, in their historic decision, and their courageous leadership, pioneered the way towards the first peace treaty between Israel and Egypt.

I was happy to witness this first crack in the wall of Arab hostility towards Israel. A year after we signed the peace treaty, I was privileged to represent my country in Egypt.

The comprehensive peace we yearn for will not be achieved until we reach peace agreements with Syria and Lebanon. We wish to see a sovereign, free and independent Lebanon acting determinedly against the terrorist organisations which operate from its territory. It should be emphasised that, for Israel, peace with all of our neighbours must create a reality of normalisation: open borders, freedom of movement and commerce for the benefit of the entire region.

Normalisation is essential to maintain peaceful relations and economic progress for all. Israel's experience and know-how in high-tech industries, together with its history of co-

operation with many countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, constitute an immense opportunity for progress to the whole region of the Middle East.

The countries of the Middle East who are party to the peace effort have a common interest in regional stability, and the advancement of prosperity and well-being for all the nations of the region. We face together the growing shortage of water, and the ever-expanding desert. We are also faced with threats which could undermine the stability of the regimes of various nations and which threaten to plunge the entire region into violence and war.

After the establishment of peaceful relations between Israel and every country in the region, it will be possible to bring about the establishment of a regional security system, which would provide multilateral and shared solutions to a range of security problems in the Middle East.

*Scribe: Some of the difficult problems facing Israel with the negotiations with the Palestinians will be - the return of the 1948 Palestinian refugees to Israel proper, and the status of Jerusalem as the eternal and the indivisible capital of Israel.*

*It has always been our strong contention that there was, subsequent to the war of Independence between the Palestinians who left Israel and the Jews who were forced to leave the Arab countries. Successive Israeli governments ignored this formidable equation, thus exposing Israel to - one-sided - Palestinian demands. Shimon Peres who recently visited the Saatchi Synagogue for a Shabbath service followed by lunch, stood up and said at the Knesset, when he was Foreign Minister, that the Jews who came to Israel from Arab countries were not refugees but Olim. Thus, in typical fashion, he put his foot in one of Israel's major negotiating trump cards.*

*The fact is that the Jews left the Arab countries definitely as refugees having suffered intolerance, discrimination and persecution, even if they may have become Olim on arrival in Israel. The movement of Jews from one country to another is dominated by two forces - a push and a pull. In the case of Jewish migration of the fifties, the push was much stronger than the pull resulting in the entire Jewish population of Iraq of over 120,000 leaving their country of sojourn of 25 centuries.*

*When Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Israel 2,500 years ago, there were exactly the same number of Jews in Babylonia. But of the 120,000 then, only 40,000 chose to return, while 80,000 preferred to remain in the Land of the Rivers, becoming the centre of Jewish life and Torah learning for over 1,000 years where the Babylonian Talmud was created.*

*Moreover, the Jews who came to Israel from Iraq and other Arab countries were treated very much as refugees who were made to stay in crowded tents in transition with minimal facilities where they suffered untold hardship for over two years. As an example, my bank manager ended up peddling oranges in the streets of Tel-Aviv. While Israel finally absorbed her refugees, the Arabs have kept theirs for political bargaining. ●*

## NETANYAHU'S HOPE FOR THE FUTURE OF THE MIDDLE-EAST

'I want to thank you for being here with us for this Jubilee Economic Conference. In the life of a nation, half a century is not a long time. And, in the 4,000 years of Jewish history, this time frame seems even shorter. But I don't believe I would be exaggerating if I say that in the life of the Jewish people it is difficult to find a period of greater significance and more impressive achievements than the first 50 years of the reborn state of Israel. When we review these 50 years, we usually think first of our wars of survival. We were attacked even before the state was officially born, and the attack was meant not merely to defeat us but to destroy us. We survived those attacks, and all the attacks that followed, whether by armies or terrorists. The odds were impossible, but our spirit was indomitable.

During this half-century we brought millions of immigrants from all over the world, most of them penniless, and integrated them into our society. In relation to, it was the largest number of immigrants ever absorbed by any country. And throughout the period, we also managed to make extraordinary contributions in the spheres of agriculture, science, medicine, literature and the arts.

This week we proved in Moscow that we are a superpower even in chess. Only Russia and the U.S. are ahead of us. It is not commonly known that after Moscow, the city with the largest number of chess grandmasters is Be'er Sheva, the capital of the Negev. But all these achievements will not be enough if we do not make our economy one of the foremost economies in the world. I am convinced that we are well on the way to achieving this, too. And we are determined to make this achievement overshadow every other.

The Israeli Economy has been undergoing a structural transformation. In the past it was notoriously centralised, with massive government involvement at every turn. Today, the economy is open, advanced and liberal. It is an economy which has successfully integrated into the economies of the Western world. We are not only a chess superpower, we are a superpower in the sphere of knowledge industries, of high technology; the sphere of the future. In the past we were known for Jaffa Oranges. Today we are famous for our high-tech start-ups. Except for the U.S., Israel boasts the highest number of start-ups in absolute terms.

We have had 3000 start-ups here, more than the UK, or Germany or Japan or China. And don't forget - our whole population is the size of Chicago. This is a direct result of the kind of manpower we have in this country. We have more engineers, more technologists and more scientists per capita than virtually any other country. We are leaders in electronics, communications, bio-chemistry, agrochemistry, agriculture and computer sciences.

This does not mean that we can relax, and rest on our laurels. To cope with the fierce competition in today's world we must continue

to liberalise, deregulate and privatise. We must make the attractiveness of investing in our country second to none. We know this and we are determined to continue until our economy becomes a model of innovation, imagination and entrepreneurship.

Our economic Policy combines free market principles with concern for the underprivileged. It is a policy which has reaped unlimited praise from the International Monetary Fund, and from the investment consultants and experts everywhere.

In the global economic storm we have remained an island of stability. We have felt few tremors, but the soundness of our economy has proved itself. What made it so was our policy of full transparency, accountability and financial integrity.

Inflation used to be the endemic disease of the Israeli Economy. It is now at its lowest levels in 30 years, and I am convinced that within the next 2 years we will bring it permanently, to American and European levels.

The scope of Foreign Investments has reached record dimensions. In 1997 it constituted 4% of GDP. Israel has become a land of unequalled business opportunities. In the framework of this conference, leaders of the business sector and the economic ministries will describe the tremendous potential for collaboration between Israel and the international high-tech companies, both in national and regional projects. Israel attaches great importance to the development of the whole region.

In the 50 years since the establishment of the state of Israel, the wars waged against the state have brought untold suffering not only to us but to the Palestinian people and to the Arab nations. An Arab willingness to compromise 50 years ago could have prevented all this suffering. This region could have become a model of co-operation and prosperity, the model envisioned by the founders of Zionism. Now we have another opportunity.

Let us work together so that this region, which gave the world its three great monotheistic religions, will also give it hope of permanent peace, stability, prosperity and brotherhood. ●

## RELATIVITY

Dear Latif Hoory,

The more I read your letter on Relativity (Scribe No: 70. pg.10) the more I appreciate the truth and depth of your statement, that we are all part of Eternity. The idea that when God created the Universe He also created Time is misleading.

For, there is no such thing as Time, it is an illusion. The rise and setting of the sun, which gives us day and night; the rotation of the earth round the sun which gives us seasons and years; the ageing of living things, and the entropy of matter exists in eternity and we are part of it. Time is only relative to us and to Creation in general. There is no absolute Time. All is Eternity and we are part of it. Thank you for making me laugh. ●

Naim Dangoor

## A PATTERN FOR THE MIDDLE-EAST

by Benyamin Netanyahu

The relationship between Israel, Turkey and Jordan discussed at the October conference held at King's College in co-operation with BIPAC, should serve as a model for the whole Middle East. It is based on mutual respect for the political imperatives of each country, the shared understanding of the primacy of security, and the urgent need to combat terrorism and keep fanatic regimes possessing non-conventional arms.

Yet it is by no means a military alliance and it threatens no one. It is primarily a relationship whose goal is to promote peace, stability and prosperity. We would all consider it a salutary development if others joined us in working towards this goal.

A conference in which the region's problems and prospects are discussed by distinguished leaders and experts helps us find the most effective means to attain peace and security for all the peoples of the Middle East.●

## THE ROAD TO PEACE

by Ambassador Zvi Gabay

Media coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict was not only out of proportion but in most cases distorted and one-sided, the Israeli Ambassador, Zvi Gabay, claimed recently when he addressed a symposium at Dublin City University.

It was difficult to comprehend that some 5.9 million souls, including 4.7 million Jews, inhabiting half of one percent of the Arab land mass 'could continue to attract newsworthiness as Israel does.' The primary objective of Israel - announced in that country's 1948 declaration of independence - 'was to provide a home for every Jew who needs a haven. However, one should recognise that not all of the 2.6 million who found a home in Israel are fully absorbed, this is a major challenge for us,' Mr Gabay added.

The founding fathers of Israel did not envisage occupying foreign lands or ruling over other people. 'However, occupation and ruling became an unavoidable necessity,' he stressed. The peace negotiations with the Palestinians had their 'highs and lows.' It was, he added, a very difficult and protracted process, 'but all sides involved have too much to lose not to pursue it.'

Israel and Ireland were two small nations with much in common. 'Our modern nations were born in war and are striving for the goal of peace. Some of our great leaders came from Ireland, notably, former Chief Rabbi, the late Yitzhak Herzog and his son, the late Chaim Herzog who became Israel's sixth president,' he said in his address to the "Israel at 50 symposium", organised to discuss ways to celebrate that nation's birthday.●

**From: The Dublin Examiner**

My mother, Alice Shashou, mentioned your new web site. Mr Dangoor, you just get better and better. Best wishes to you and to Renee. Thank you for your invaluable service to our community.●

**Dona Linda**

**DonaLinda@aol.com**

## ISRAEL, JORDAN AND TURKEY IN A MIDDLE EAST ALLIANCE

A leading Israeli academic this week declared that a loose alliance of Israel, Turkey and Jordan could serve as a basis for future co-operation among Middle East states. Professor Ephraim Inbar, of the Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies of Bar-Ilan University, was in London to take part in a two-day colloquium on strategic perspectives in the Middle East on the eve of the new millennium. It was organised by the British-Israel Public Affairs Centre (BIPAC) in association with the Mediterranean studies programmed of King's College, London.

The colloquium brought together academics, diplomats and military men from Israel, Jordan, Turkey, Britain and the United States.

Israel and Turkey have been co-operating militarily, while Jordan and Israel have been working together on security issues since the 1994 peace agreement between them.

Stressing that this was not an 'anti-Arab alliance,' Professor Inbar said: 'Israel, Jordan and Turkey, being pro-Western and pro-American, are sceptical of any analysis which sees an easily pacifiable Middle East.'

Turkey's ambassador to Israel, Barlas Ozener, reminded the audience that his country was no stranger to the Middle East, since, during the Ottoman Empire, it had ruled the region for 400 years.

However, during the Cold War, he said, it had other priorities, such as joining NATO and addressing potential threats from the Soviet Union.

The Gulf War, and particularly Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, he maintained, had strengthened the realisation in Ankara that Turkey had to take a leading role in the Middle East, 'to be active and to foresee the actions of certain countries and leaders.'●

**From the Jewish Chronicle**

I am one of those who receive and enjoy so much reading the 'Scribe.' The trouble I have is that both my beloved brothers also want to read it, but as they live far from me, and far from each other, I send my journal every time to one of them, and this reads and sends it to the other. All that means months to wait till I have it back to peruse in it.

I mention all this to inform you that this letter is written with hope that you let my brothers on your list so I can keep always mine without sending it here and there. Also, it'll be a very nice surprise to my brothers to have it personally because they know nothing about this letter I am writing.

In case and the journal will arrive to each separately, we will be so thankful because you have no idea how the Scribe makes good to every Iraqi to read it.●

**Suzanne Sawdayee**

**(now Sudai)**

**Haifa, Israel**

## THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL

by: Salim Khabbaza, Great Neck, NY

In your issue No: 70 you indicated, correctly, that the Arabs increase their population through high birth rates, whilst Israel depends on Aliya, and fails to catch up.

In fact, Aliya (immigration to Israel) cannot be depended upon, because many Jews in the Diaspora are themselves threatened by assimilation. The New York Times of 16th November, 1998, in an article about potential free trips to Israel by Jewish youths, writes:

'The World Jewish Congress has projected that the Jewish population outside Israel, about 8 million people, will decline to about 4 million in the next 30 years. In the US, about half of all Jews marry non-Jews, and the children of a large majority of those intermarried couples do not remain Jewish.'

On the other hand, the same newspaper, in its issue of December 1st, 1998, writes:

'Ramallah, West Bank Nov 30 (AP) - The Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is expected to nearly triple in the next generation, from 2.6 million today, to 7.4 million in 2025, according to census projections made public today. The estimate is conservative, based on a 50 percent drop in the birth rate and the assumption that only a half million Palestinian exiles will return from abroad, said Hassan Abu Libdeh, head of the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics.'

Demographics have always been an important element of the Israeli Palestinian conflict. The latest population figures will probably affect the negotiations between the two sides on a permanent peace agreement, which are now getting under way.'

Apart from the Arabs surrounding Israel, there are about one million Arabs now living in Israel proper and holding the Israeli citizenship. After several generations, this Arab minority will catch up and overtake the Jewish population of Israel. Then the Jews of Israel will become a minority in their own country, and Israel will become just another Arab country with a Jewish minority. This may sound alarming, but it is true.

Judaism existed before Christianity and before Islam. How come that the Christians and Moslems spread their respective religions far and wide, and established many independent states all over the world, whilst the Jews lived as scattered minorities among other peoples? High birth rates are certainly a factor, but birth rates are not and cannot be the only factor (the birth rate among orthodox Jews, for instance, is also high). So, what is the main reason?

It occurs to me that we, the Jews, constitute a closed society, piling up insurmountable obstacles in order to prevent or discourage conversion of non-Jews into Judaism. This is specially true in Israel, where conversions at the hands of Conservative or Reformist Rabbis are not recognised. On the other hand,

Christianity and Islam, not only welcome conversion into their religions, but encourage such conversion. (The Christian Church employs missionaries for this purpose).

The question that arises is what is the remedy? What can be done to maintain the Jewish majority and the Jewish character of the State of Israel?

The existing laws in Israel tend to perpetuate the status quo and the looming danger. In the Knesset, small religious parties wield strong political influence which is disproportionate to the number of their followers. It is therefore necessary to amend the election law to exclude small parties. For instance, only political parties winning 25% or more of the total votes may be represented in the Knesset.

The next step would be to amend the Law of Return in order to exclude those who convert into Judaism in order to immigrate to Israel for economic reasons (like finding work), or because they have a criminal record outside Israel. Each application to immigrate should be dealt with on its own merit.

After the above two steps had been taken, it would be feasible to pass a law in the Knesset to recognise conversion into Judaism at the hands of Conservative and/or Reformist Rabbis. Then it will also be possible for the Jewish population of Israel to elect a Chief Rabbinate composed of Orthodox, Conservative and Reformist Rabbis, and the door will be open for quicker and easier conversion into Judaism without unnecessary obstacles. This will ensure that Israel will remain a Jewish state whose future is guaranteed for our children and grand-children.

I am fully aware that this is a sensitive subject, and the Orthodox Jews, who constitute a minority of about 10% of world Jewry, will object to such proposals on religious grounds. But they should remember that the tens of thousands of Israelis who made the ultimate sacrifice and gave their lives in five wars were driven by allegiance and love for Israel, regardless of their religious affiliation. The safety and future of Israel must come above all other considerations.

It would appear that the choice is between a Jewish state with liberal laws for recognising conversion into Judaism, and no Jewish state at all, if the Jews in Israel become a minority. In the latter case, the Arabs will achieve, through their higher birth rate, what they failed to achieve in 50 years of war. They will have done that 'by peaceful means.'

**Scribe:** *The main Jewish objective is to preserve the purity of the Torah - For this reason Jews cannot encourage large scale conversions or tamper with our religion. Our destiny is to remain a minority everywhere, and in order to survive we have to pursue a parasitical existence and endure the occupational hazard involved in this kind of existence.* ●



*The Monument in memory and honour of the fifty-thousand Jewish Greeks of Salonica, who met a horrible death in the Nazi death camps, stands in the centre of the city. It was unveiled by the President of the Republic Mr Konstantinos Stefanopoulos on Sunday, November 23, 1997. It was designed by the brothers Glid, and depicts the seven candel Menorah and Flames all entangled in a mesh of human bodies.* ●



*The Monument for the victims of the Holocaust in the new Jewish cemetery of Salonica: That the generation to come might know them, Even the children that should be born, who should arise. And tell them to their children*

(Psalm 78,6) ●

A Jewish Greek week exhibition was held at the Hellenic Centre in London, sponsored by Marina, the Lady Marks and attended by Mr Andreas Sefiha, President, Jewish Community of Salonica.

The first Jewish community dates back to the second century B.C.E., coming mostly from Palestine and Egypt. It was there that the Apostle Paul came in the year 53 C.E. to preach the Christian Religion in the Synagogue, but the Jews mostly kept to their traditions and the faith of their ancestors.

During the time of the Turkish rule a new wave of Sephardi Jews arrived in the Ottoman Empire, and especially in the Balkans, with the city of Salonica the most favoured place. There were also Ashkenazi immigrants from Bavaria and elsewhere.

Salonica became an important Jewish Centre and was known as 'mother of Israel, city of

justice, the second Jerusalem.'

It was during the nineteenth century that the Jewish community of Salonica was at its most prosperous.

The fire of 1917 left about 50,000 Jews homeless many of whom were thus forced to emigrate to France and Palestine.

The second World War and the entry of the Nazi army on April 4, 1941 marked the beginning of new upheavals and persecution for the Jewish element of Salonica of whom a mere 2,000 were to survive out of a pre-war population of 56,000.

After finishing his evil work in Nice, the German executioner Brümmer came to Salonica to deport its Jews to the death camps. Brümmer now lives in Damascus enjoying the hospitality of Assad. He is unrepented and boasted he would do it again if he had the chance. ●

I am referring to the attached article which was published in the "Scribe" No. 70 under the title: "The Truth about Jewish assets in Iraq" Please find enclosed herein two letters that were published in "Haaretz" regarding the same matter.

I will appreciate if you would also publish these letters.●

**Mordechai Ben-Porat**

**Or-Yehuda, Israel**

**Chairman**

**The Babylonian Jewry Heritage Centre**

#### **Newspaper clipping - Haaretz 22.5.98**

#### **SOMEBODY SAID.....**

Professor Shenhav touched upon a complicated subject wherein there are interwoven many different factors, often with conflicting interests. (Haaretz Magazine, 10.4) I value the research that he did and where he noted the minutes of Cabinet meetings, but I am astounded that he mixed precise quotes with unfounded remarks based only on "somebody said..." Prof. Shenhav is not unaware of the dilemma and he notes that "private history cannot replace documented history."

It is exactly here that Prof. Shenhav fails and bases all his contentions on "private history." It is true that the immigrants that came to Israel from Iraq suffered greatly in the absorption camps and directed their discontent towards the organisations that had brought them here, but he then goes on to say, "They told of acts of coercion on the part of activists without any documentation or receipt, only promising that the property would be returned to them in Israel, of the bombs that were thrown in the city, according to them in order to frighten the Jews into leaving Baghdad."

I regret that Prof. Shenhav did not make use of the method that every holder of even a B.A. degree accepts, but presents every rumour as fact. Does he have any examples of this coercion on the part of the Zionist activists? Just what property was taken without benefit of a receipt? Who promised them the return of their property in Israel? And again, the story of the bombs - Does Prof. Shenhav have any testimony other than that which was published by Shlomo Hillel and myself, Dr. Moshe Gat and others that all state that the bombs were not the work of the Jews or of the Israelis?

As for property, in my book "To Baghdad and Back" (Published by Ma'ariv), I quote telegrams that I sent to the various organisations. In a telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, March 12, 1951, I suggested that they immediately begin to interrogate the immigrants and compose a list of any and all confiscated property of Iraqi Jews with property of the Palestinians that were in Israel. As an Israeli whose interest is also the protection of the Israeli interest, I can see how such a decision might be seen as a delaying tactic in decision making, but there is a long road between that and "Total Robbery."

While I was the Chairman of WOJAC (The International Organisation of Jews from Arab Countries), I was familiar with the peace agreement with Egypt from its beginning, and I convinced the late Moshe Dayan to include a paragraph (no.8) in the peace agreement that would relate to the mutual claims. The conditions of this paragraph have not yet been fulfilled.

It was at my instigation that WOJAC decided that in all negotiations with Arab States or the Palestinians over property the matter of confiscated property of Jews in Arab countries should be taken into consideration, and if the State of Israel, for its own reasons, decides to forego these claims, or to decrease them, then it assumes the responsibility of compensating for properties confiscated, frozen assets etc. Professor Ya'akov Meiron who is in charge of the division at the Ministry of Justice that deals with these matters has, at the present time, more than 4000 claim files. I am certain that in the course of time that the matter of these properties will be discussed at the negotiating table.●

**Mordechai Ben-Porat**

**Or-Yehuda**

Last January, an initiative to locate and register Jewish property in Arab countries was decided by the Knesset Committee on the Restitution of Jewish Property. The committee, in co-ordination with the World Jewish Congress, has opened a national centre to register documents and testimony on such property. The centre will also gather information already in the hands of government ministries and the Jewish Agency.

Committee chairman, Avraham Herschson, who has led efforts to restore Jewish property in Eastern Europe, said the time has come to carry out a similar operation in Arab countries.

*Scribe: This move may cover Jews who emigrated to Israel; what about the greater assets of Jews who ended up in various foreign countries?*

*In the face of Palestinian claims amounting to \$600 billion, individual Jewish claims cannot come to very much. What Jewish communities were deprived of was their share in the wealth of their countries of origin. This is what we are entitled to, and this is what we have to claim. At the end of the day, all that will happen is to set off Palestinian claims against Jewish claims, and individual claimants will get nothing.*●

#### **From: Rabbi Shmuley Boteach**

I agree with you wholeheartedly that the issue about Palestinian refugees must be considered in the light of the one million Jewish refugees. My father was one of those refugees, my Grandfather having left Iran with his wife and thirteen children in the early 1950's because of the Islamic anti-Semitism, and the horrible treatment to the Jews, so I can, of course, appreciate everything that you say in this regard.●

#### **Newspaper Clipping, Haaretz 29.5.98**

#### **NO AND A THOUSAND TIMES NO!!!**

I am indeed indebted to Shimon Ballas for he who wrote to the editorial section concerning "Questions to Hillel" that appeared in the "Haaretz" Magazine on 8.5.98. He poses to me two very penetrating and direct questions. Questions that it seems I did not adequately answer in my article "The Total Distortion" of "Haaretz" Magazine 29.4.98. or that I was of the impression that these were matters so well understood and clear that there was no reason to repeat them.

His first question is "was there an unwritten agreement between the government of Israel and Iraq concerning this matter?" (That is, was there an undertaking not to compensate the Palestinians for their property and in exchange not to demand compensation from Iraq for the property of Iraqi Jews). The answer is no - a thousand times no!!! No.

There was absolutely no contact between the governments of Israel and Iraq. Not directly, not indirectly, not written and not unwritten. Not concerning the property of Iraqi Jews and not even concerning their immigration to Israel. Iraq, which sent its army to fight against us in the war of Independence, did not even agree to sign the cease-fire agreement and had no contact whatsoever with the government of Israel, not overt and not covert, not direct and not indirect.

Israel's position, to reject the UN resolution on the "Right of Return" and the payment of compensation for those Palestinians who would not wish to return, was taken before the law in Iraq that allowed Jews to leave Iraq if they would, at the same time, renounce their citizenship in Iraq, and most definitely, before the law that "froze" (and actually confiscated) the property of those who chose to renounce Iraqi citizenship. This stance may or may not have been correct. This is a legitimate question but it has no connection whatsoever with the immigration of the Iraqi Jews to Israel or with the confiscation of their property by the Iraqi government.

Mr Ballas's second question and complaint against me is why I did not write in the aforementioned article, who placed or threw bombs at Jewish organisations in Baghdad. I truly do apologise but I do not know! I am sorry that I cannot answer Mr Ballas's question, and indeed, that of many others. I am truly sorry but, until this day, I do not know who was responsible for the bombs in Baghdad.

Undecided Argument.

Who planted the bombs in Baghdad? It's hard to blame me for knowing or not knowing just who did or did not throw bombs. In my book "Operation Babylon" I dedicated a whole chapter to this issue titled: "Bombs over Israel." the only thing I can say, without waiting for the Messiah, is that it was not the "Mossad Aliyat Beth," not the government of Israel, not the Zionist movement and not the "Haganah." This was not in their name and not on their behalf.●

**Shlomo Hillel**

**Jerusalem**



Aziz al-Haj, the eminent Iraqi Kurdish intellectual and former representative of Iraq at the Unesco in Paris wrote a series of articles in the Arabic daily "Al-Quds al-Arabi" published in London on the recent history of the Jews of Iraq.

In his last article published on January 18, 1999, he spoke of the "Farhud" tragedy which occurred on the 1st and 2nd of June, 1941. He said Iraq was a tolerant country where all religions and sects lived together in perfect unity. The Jews held a prominent position in the country's economic, commercial and cultural life. They had their own rabbinical organisation and their representatives in the Senate and Chamber of Deputies.

He proceeded to state he remembered his class in the High Teachers' College, English section, during the years 1944-47. The students were 4 Jews (of which one girl), 2 Christians (one from the North), a girl from Mosul, 2 Moslems (a Sunni girl from Baghdad) and a Kurdish Faili. There was also a Shiite student from Baghdad. All this colourful formation lived and studied in perfect harmony. The Jews took part in the State activities. They had professors, and officials in the Tax department, Customs and Excise, railways, Post and Telegraphs and the Finance Ministry. Since 1932 they performed the Military Service with the other nationals. Among the prominent Jews should be mentioned: Sasson Heskell the Minister of Finance in the 1920's, David Samra Vice-President of the Court of Cassation, Menahem Daniel and Ezra Daniel senators, men of letters Meer Basri, Anwar Shaul, Naim Kattan, Murad al-Imari. Of those who participated in the political parties Kattan, Shalom Darwish members of the National Democratic Party, Jahuda Saddiq, Yusuf Zilkha, Masrur Kattan and other communists who formed the Anti-Zionist League in 1946. Jewish merchants were in the majority of the Chamber of Commerce. In the years 1935-36 the Administrative Committee of the Chamber comprised 20 members of whom 12 were Jews.

Before 1931, the Jewish Committee organisation was regulated by the old Turkish "Hakhamkhanah" Law. In 1931 a new law was enacted to regulate the Jewish organisation. Otherwise the community avails itself of all common legal rights and responsibilities.

The Jews preceded other communities in the field of education for both sexes. The first school to be opened was the Alliance school in 1865, and was modelled on the European curricula. French and English were taught in addition to Hebrew, Arabic and Turkish, as well as modern science. The Alliance Society of Paris established subsequently schools for girls and boys in Baghdad and other Iraqi towns.

Since the 1920's the number of Jewish schools increased. The Jews were also enrolled in government schools. Jewish students studied also in the Law and Medicine colleges and the other higher institutions of learning. Even in 1950 when the infamous Law of De-



*One of two block of flats belonging to Naim Dangoor which was confiscated by the Iraqi government in 1965. They stand on 1.5 acres of land with a swimming pool, in the heart of Baghdad, close to the American Embassy. ●*

Nationalisation was enacted, the Jewish community had 19 schools. The number of pupils was 6918 boys and 1893 girls. The number of students decreased after the mass exodus of 1950/51 and most of the schools were closed.

The Institute of Contemporary Jewry attached to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem published a research on one aspect of the Jewish education in Iraq, i.e., the higher education. A list of Jews who finished their higher education in the country during the years 1910-50 was published. It comprised 10 or 15 Jews who studied law in Istanbul in 1901-10. During the period 1941-50 about 600 Jews graduated in colleges and universities in Iraq and abroad, more than 100 of them in the year 1950.

The Jews of Baghdad took a prominent part in the social life. I remember the rabbinical delegates who attended the special prayers for the martyrs of the "Wathba" (uprising) of January 1948. Also, the Jewish delegation who went to Najaf to take part in the prayers after the funeral of the Shiite Imam Sayid Abul-Hassan.

The co-existence and close relations between the followers of the different religions and sects was exemplary. Jewish schools, commercial offices and medical surgeries were close to those of Moslems, Christians and Sabceans.

Baghdad streets were trodden by Kurds, Arabs, Armenians and Turks. Baghdad was in effect a Tower of Babel displaying a rainbow of languages and costumes. The Baghdad customs at the Mustansiriyah Tigris shore was thronged by Kurdish porters, Moslem and Jewish merchants, Jewish, Moslem and Christian officials.

This was the life in Baghdad in former times!●

## JEWISH ASSETS IN ARAB COUNTRIES

A bill has recently been introduced in the Knesset to activate the claims of assets of Jews who left Arab countries since 1948. This move has been taken in view of increasing Palestinian demands for assets in Israel which they claim amount to US \$600 billion.

The World Jewish Congress will take an active part in negotiating the Jewish claims in line with recent successful negotiations with Swiss, German, French and other Banks. There is no prospect that individual claimants will receive anything. The idea appears to be to set off Jewish against Palestinians properties.●

Is this article true(?) that there was a conspiracy between the Israeli government and Iraq to suppress any claims for lost property in Iraq. If that is true, then it could very much explain why none of the Israel governments did ask for reparations for lost Jewish property in peace talks with Egypt Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the PLO. It is imperative that this issue be brought to the attention of the present government in the strongest terms possible.

**Prof. Heskell M. Haddad, MD**  
New-York, USA

*Scribe: It appears there was a silent understanding of convenience.●*

I was born in Iraq, August 6, 1949, to Shlomo Elazar and Juliette Hakham Shimon.

Avraham Haya introduced me to The Scribe. I am enjoying every single page of No: 63 and it makes me so proud, realising that people and scholars of Baghdad are creating, and documenting our glorious heritage, not to mention the cost.

I am searching my roots, can anyone help me or lead me?●

**Meir Elazar**

e-mail: [melazar@mail.mia.bellsouth.net](mailto:melazar@mail.mia.bellsouth.net)

**Florida**

# GATHERING OF SHANGHAI SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY 50 YEARS LATER TOGETHER AGAIN IN ISRAEL, 1948-1998

A new publication called New Israel's Messenger was published in Israel by The Association of Former Residents of China. The December 1998 edition records the Jubilee Reunion held in Tel-Aviv on the occasion of Israel's Jubilee year.

In an article Joe Cohen wrote:

We came from the Land of Sinim. Some Jews from China came on Aliya in 1948 when the new State of Israel was proclaimed. Perhaps none of them dreamt that during their lifetime Jews would return after nearly 2,000 years to their homeland and participate in building the country.

If we look in the Old Testament, Isaiah 49, verse 12 we will find a reference to the return of Jews from China:

Behold these shall come from afar; and lo, these from the North and from the West; and these from the land of Sinim (the Chinese people). Jewish and Arab traders in caravans must have gone to China and the Far East long before the Silk Road period and brought back an accumulation of knowledge as well as products from those lands.

At the Reunion Dinner, Leah Jacob Garrick read a nostalgic poem on Shanghai reminiscences.

Reunion so great and reunion so rare,  
Precious memories recalled now that we all do share,

Igud Yotzei Sin - because of you I believe,  
We're together for first time here in Tel Aviv.  
Fifty years - looking back, oh my, how time flies  
Since we were all living in China's Shanghai.

First let's honor founders of former community  
-

Sassoon, Kadoorie and Hardoon - they were the top three.

Now I want to recall all the people I knew,  
The family names come to mind - here's a few:-

If you are omitted from the list I present,  
Please forgive me - it surely was not my intent.

Alphabetically: Abraham, Cohen and Dangour,  
Ezekiel, Ezra, Hillaly  
follow for sure, Jacob and Levy I cannot forget,  
Nissim, Reuben,

Toeg, Saul - vivid in my mind yet.

Jack Guri, President of the Reunion - thank you,  
With wife Dvorah, you have really come through.

Appreciate plans for occasion so rare,  
This brings more recollections for us to now share.

Remembering holidays precious and dear,  
Fondly recalling and going through the whole year:

Rosh Hashanah/Kippur - High Holidays for Jews,  
My grandfather in top hat, tail and tennis shoes.



*Leah Jacob Garrick at the Reunion Dinner where she read out her poem on Shanghai reminiscences.●*

Thinking of Succoth my mind is still filled  
With bountiful Succah the children helped build,  
Simhat Torah in synagogue we thought it dandy,  
Getting to eat Pasqual's find barley candy.  
'Aleph-bet-gimmel-daled' singing we began,  
Backward experts - Solomon Nathan and Abe Abraham.

On Purim ate zungoolah, grandma's pastry so crisp,  
Playing vingt-et-un 21 at our risk.  
Tu B'shvat had 100 great varieties  
Of nuts and fruits - minim plenty surely did please.  
At Pesah halek and nuts - the best harosset  
Lives in our minds - we remember it yet.

Also the rice bread, yes, our hearts had won,  
Hebrew, Arabic and English - Seder was in three tongues.  
Shavuot remember halek and kahi  
Made holiday for us a sweet memory.

Home from school won't forget such goodies we got,  
Chudunkweh, dahping yuzakweh - chestnuts hot.  
Chinese New Year - Koong Chi Fahzeh - did bring many smiles,  
Firecrackers all night and heard loud Mah Jongg tiles.

We remember the dishes in our mouths were placed -

Unforgettable foods with such fabulous tastes.  
Has the world ever heard of or the world ever seen

Such delicacies as bahmyah, hamoth, hamine?  
also sijkun a pahchah - we were happy when cooked

Budjuh and poori, uhdjuh - also ahruhk.  
Cheese sumboosuk and kakkahs with milk and strong tea,

Mahmoosah and muhushah - oh, what memories.

Muhrug and rice and salone and curry,  
Tip Top Toffee we won't forget in a hurry.  
Plaited cheese and hubbuss with boiled onions of course,  
Chukla-buklah with food no one needed to force!

Israel's Anniversary - A miracle indeed,  
Gave us a homeland, when home we did need.  
We pray for lasting peace and the end to all harm  
For Israel who embraced us with wide open arms.  
Thrilled am I coming here all the way from US,  
To see all of you now - this reunion I bless.

The world doesn't know our unique history,  
About our survival and how we stayed free,  
Each one of you played a special big part,  
And now I do have a very full happy heart.  
Culmination of experience - years and journeys,  
Is today's celebration making new memories!

Let's raise our glasses to Israel, Blessed Home,  
Thank G-d for this day, l'Hayim, Shalom.●

I read an interesting article which the Lubavitch circulated recently and I will translate the main essence. It is called "Argument in the Family Circle." In recent years the arguments on subjects like the peace process and religion in Israel are splitting the country in half and driving us either to the right or the left. Unfortunately these arguments lead to harsh words and aggressive behaviour and demonstrations etc.

However, on one of the TV programmes a couple who had absolutely diagonally opposite opinions were interviewed. He said he belonged to the extreme left and she had extreme right opinions and both spelt out their ideological opinions emphasising the deep schism between their opinions.

However they claimed that they are definitely an extremely happy couple. They were asked how was it possible to live together in harmony despite this extreme difference of opinion and their answer was simple "We are one Family."●

**Elchanan and Miriam Pels**

**Jerusalem**

## S.F. SEPHARDI WILL SHARE SHANGHAI TIES

Lori Eppstein  
Bulletin Staff

San Francisco banker Matook Nissim had hardly talked of his pre-World War II past to his own children when Stanford's Hoover Institution asked him to give an oral history of his youth in China.

While his story could be told in sundry fashion by other Shanghai refugees living here, Nissim's account differs from most because he was a third-generation Shanghai resident. His family was part of a banking clan of Jews from India.

The original 19th-century clan prospered in the Far East after investing in the tea, real estate and later opium trade. They built synagogues, hotels, roads and schools, Nissim said in an interview.

The region's Sephardim, mainly Baghdadi's, numbered close to 2,000 at their peak, according to Nissim. By the end of World War II, Shanghai was also home to 7,000 Russian Jews and 22,000 Jews from throughout Europe. Nissim will join about 17 family members Thursday, November 12 for the opening of the Hoover Institution exhibit. The display includes his family's papers and photos documenting the Sephardim's little known history in Shanghai.

'I didn't feel qualified to talk about the era before now,' said Nissim, who left China at age 26. After recently published histories of Shanghai's Jews raised much interest locally, the modest 75-year-old said he's ready to divulge his past.

Nissim's family history will be kept at the Hoover Institution along with biographies of other Jews from Shanghai. But his is one of only a few Sephardi accounts in the collection, according to Elena Danielson, head Hoover Institution archivist.

In the interview, Nissim recalled a happy childhood in pre-war Shanghai. After graduation, the youth entered the banking and real estate business with the E.D. Sassoon Banking empire which had originally relocated Nissim's grandfather from British-ruled India. Nissim's grandmother, also of Indian origin, was born in Shanghai.

Leaving India for the Far East was no stretch for the rootless family, whose ancestors had relocated to India from Baghdad. The Nissims belonged to a close-knit Orthodox community and attended the Sephardic Beth Aharon synagogue, where Nissim's father was secretary of the board.

It was at Beth Aharon that the community housed its first wave of war refugees, a group of 200 Jews from Lithuania's Vilna Ghetto, Nissim recalled. The Orthodox refugees arrived in Shanghai via Kobe, Japan. When their boat

prepared to leave Kobe just before Shabbat, they were forced to buy it for \$1, thereby rendering the craft a temporary home, rather than a conveyance. After sundown Saturday, they sold the ship back to the captain for \$1.

Fifteen-year-old Nissim heard their story from a refugee who spoke English. It was one of many stories shared that first night in the sanctuary of Beth Aharon, where mattresses were provided for the Vilna refugees.

After unloading the mattresses, Nissim said, "Daddy, are we going home now?"

"And he said, 'No. We're staying the night.' I said, 'Why?' He told me, 'Because they are just like us and we are just like them and we are all together so we will spend the night with them.'"

The exchange was prophetic as the Sephardic community helped to settle many more Ashkenazi refugees in the years to come. Sir Victor Sassoon of E.D. Sassoon Banking established a 'thrift,' where the newcomers could get blankets, shoes and other necessities. Although their customs were different, the yeshiva students frequented the Sephardic synagogues and schools.

Although the two communities lived together amicably, the language barrier prevented mingling. Later, however, Nissim said he came to know some Ashkenazi youths when the most Jewish community of Shanghai was held in a Yangchow detention camp for more than two years.

The Jews in Yangchow found out that Hitler, having learned of the camp's existence, sent an emissary to negotiate for the Jews' annihilation. The emissary even had a date for the killing, but the Japanese would not honour it.

According to Nissim, the Japanese had high regard for the intellectual sensibilities of the Jews. They also believed that Jews controlled the US Congress and might be provoked by the mass killing of their brethren.

When the war ended, the Nissim family fortune was gone. Their home, used during the war to detain more than 100 Italian POW's was trashed. Their real estate holdings were annexed by Mao Tse-tung's Communist empire. And E.D. Sassoon banking had evaporated.

After several years of hand-to-mouth living, the Nissim family scattered to Hong Kong, London, Israel, France and the United States. Matook Nissim worked a short while in Hong Kong and with Magic Carpet Corporation, which transported Yemenite Jews to Israel.

He immigrated to the United States in 1952. Since then, Nissim has been active in the San Francisco Jewish community through the boards of Sinai Memorial Chapel, Hebrew Free Loan Association and Magain David Sephardic Congregation. He was a co-founder of San Francisco's Hebrew Academy. ●

## SHANGHAI RESTORES A LOST SYNAGOGUE

*Excerpted from: The Wall Street Journal*

More than 40 years after Shanghai's vibrant Jewish community scattered across the globe; its most venerable temple is being revitalised. But neither Mr Toeg, who worshipped in the synagogue as a child, nor Mr Kaplan, one of the city's new Jewish residents knows whether Jews will ever be allowed to worship here.

### Unrecognised Religion:

Though Shanghai owes much of its growth in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to Jewish immigrants, Judaism is no longer recognized as a religion in China, where spiritual matters are tightly controlled by the state, Shanghai's new Jewish community of executives and entrepreneurs even enlisted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to ask the city's mayor for access to the synagogue on holy days, but there has been no clear answer so far. 'Even the mayor apparently doesn't have the authority,' shrugs Mr Toeg from beneath his black yarmulke.

So, after serving for decades as a Maoist lecture hall and city warehouse, the ivy-cloaked Greek-revival building, angled on its lot to face Jerusalem, is destined to be a tourist stop. And the city's new Jews will continue to hold Shabbat services in hotel rooms and each other's homes while the government continues to turn a blind eye.

In a small upstairs room where he and other orthodox Jews once gathered for daily prayers, Mr Toeg points to a spot on the hardwood floor. 'My father sat here,' he says, 'and I sat there beside him, every day for 10 years.'

That was half a century ago, when Ohel Rachel (or House of Rachel in Hebrew, after one of the four Jewish matriarchs, as well as the wife of the synagogue's founder) was the centre of spiritual life for wealthy Sephardic Jews like Mr Toeg's father. Their factories, banks and trading houses helped build Shanghai into the 'Paris of the East.' Then the Communists came, and Mr Toeg's family, along with scores of others, was asked to leave (and to leave everything behind).

### Invited Back:

They sailed for Hong Kong and finally Tel Aviv, where Mr Toeg runs a synagogue and today works for the U.S. Embassy managing motorcades. He didn't expect ever to return until Mr Kaplan called in May, asking for help putting Ohel Rachel back the way Mr Toeg remembers it.

Jews left their mark on Shanghai more than any other city in the East. About a third of its grandest buildings - including Ohel Rachel - were erected by wealthy Iraqi Jewish businessmen, some of whom traded opium and then real estate here in the late 1800's. At one point, 40% of Shanghai's stock exchange members were Jewish, and the city boasted seven synagogues, four of which have since been torn down and one other that has been converted into an office building...

When President Clinton sent three U.S. religious leaders to China last year, Shanghai Mayor promised the Jewish representative, that the city would restore the synagogue and open it to the public as a historic site... ●

# SHANGHAI JEWS AS SEEN BY CHINESE

## JEWISH PEOPLE IN SHANGHAI FOR 138 YEARS

*From: 'China Bus' 12.11.1998  
Translated from Chinese by Huang*

Since 1844, when the second son of the first Jewish Sassoon's family builder, Elias David Sassoon entered Shanghai to expand the market. The history of Jewish people immigrating to Shanghai was more than a century. The total immigrants were more than 30,000, including 20,000 from Europe during the second world war, because of the high pressure of the mad policy of destroying Jews by Hitler. Those Jews had no way out so they chose to emigrate to Shanghai because that was the only refuge where there was no need for a visa. With the support of Jews all over the world, and the help of the Chinese people and with their struggle, they survived from the tiger's mouth during the whole war.

Shanghai developed as a city since 200 years ago. But it is sad, that since the beginning, she was covered by the colour of colony or Semi-colony. In June 1842, Shanghai was bombarded and occupied by the British ship 'Nimigis.' But, 95% of Jewish people entered Shanghai because of WWII. They came to Shanghai only for going into exile. Since W.W.II, almost all the Jews in the world knew Shanghai, and there was an isolated place for Jews in Hongkou district, Shanghai.

In July 1998, President Clinton of the US visited China. It was arranged that he visits the East Pearl Tower in Pudong - the new developing district. But Clinton preferred rather to see the 'Mosi's Synagogue' located in No:62 Changyang Street Hongkou district. The 'Mosi's' Synagogue was built in 1927 by a Russian Jew, it was one of the four big Jewish Synagogues at that time. Today, this red small building is an office of Hongkou district management. As the special history of the house, the second floor is made into a small museum of Jewish people in Shanghai. The pictures on the wall tell people why Jewish people had taken Shanghai as their 'second home town.'

There were three lots of Jews who immigrated to Shanghai. The first lot arrived since 1844, mainly from Baghdad, Spain, Portugal and India. they were called 'Sephardim.' They were not so many, only about 700 until 1920. Most of the 'Sephardim' were rich. As Shanghai was 'the Far East trading centre,' and the 'elysium of adventurer,' who came to Shanghai seeking business and development. Most of those people lived near the shopping centre of the city. Very soon after they arrived to Shanghai, their outstanding business ability showed. The remarkable examples are the Sassoons, Hardouns and Kadoories whose business grew very rapidly and they got very strong economic base in a very short time.

Hardoun was the king of property of Nanjing Street - the most busy shopping centre in

Shanghai; the Shanghai Exhibition centre was the private park of the Hardouns. Sassoon was the Chairman of Shanghai Jewish financial groups - The Heping Hotel today - was their office building. And today's Shanghai Children Palace was Kadoory's private house, (Marble Hall).

The Sephardim were respectable Jewish people. They played a very important role in Shanghai's city building, religion, social and economics; they also gave a great deal of help to the Jews who were kicked out by the Germans during W.W.II. However, it is not that every Sephardi was rich, some of them were staff, 40% of the staffs of Shanghai Stock Exchange were Sephardi Jews at that time. The second lot was mainly Russian blood lineage Jews. In 1906, as North Russians killed the Jews and the revolution, many Jews escaped from Russia to China one after the other. Many of them first stayed in Harbin - North City of China. In 1931, the Japanese occupied the three North provinces of China, tried to build up a Man Zhou country. The president of 'Man Zhou Real Way' Zhanchuan presented a plan to Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to invite 50,000 German Jews to 'Manzhou.' Later, when a son of a rich Jewish businessman was kidnapped and killed, 70% of those Jews left Harbin for Shanghai. This issue broke the hope of building an insulation area of Jews in Harbin. Until 1939, the Russian Jews were about 5,000 in Shanghai. They were mostly ordinary people, few were soldiers or prisoners who escaped from the Hibolia exile. Their economic condition was lower than the Sephardi, mainly working in restaurants, coffee houses, bread houses, fashion shops and book shops. Also, some of them engineers, lawyers or musicians. In the 30's quite a lot of bus drivers were Jews. But few were not decent, who dealt with drug smuggling and had brothels. Part of the Russian Jews became middle class through hard struggling.

The third lot was called 'Ashkenasim'. They came from Germany, Austria, Poland and other European countries since 1933 to 1941, since Hitler came to power. They were about 20,000 people. The moving was in three high tides. The first high tide happened in 1933 to 1934, several thousand were mostly well-educated. Many of them were doctors, musicians and professors. They mainly lived around Xiafei Street (today's Huaihai Street) where there was French concession. As it was unhurried moving, they brought a lot of money with them, so they could start business immediately. Some dealt with small enterprises, some became doctors, some painters and some attended the city's band.

The second high tide was in August 1938 to August 1939 when 10,000 Jews came mainly

from Austria and Germany. They escaped very quickly because of the famous 'Crystal Night.' They even had no time to pack, no chance of arranging a visa, with very simple parcel so they could catch up the ship from Italy to Shanghai in a hurry. They reached Shanghai after 4 weeks of hardship. The last high-tide happened in 1939, a few thousand Jews escaped from Poland as Germany attacked there. Same as the second lot, they also did not bring many things with them and some brought one or two suitcases. The Jews who came from the last two high tide mainly lived in comparatively poor place - 'Hongkou' district.

The well-known 'Crystal Night' happened on the 10 November 1938. In France a young Polish Jew named Herschel Grgasspan, became mad when he heard that his family was forced to move to the wild area in the border of Germany and Poland. He bought a gun, went to the German Embassy to kill the Ambassador. By mistake, he killed the third grade secretary Ernst von Rath.

On hearing the news, the Germans took it as an excuse, so the promoted minister, Yoseph Goebbels, announced the news of spontaneously punishing the Jews. Only on that night and the second day, at the German's instigation, a mob of about a thousand robbed and destroyed more than 7,000 shops and fired and damaged 191 Synagogues.

On 12 November, two days later, the government official ordered punishing all Jews because they had killed von Rath. The order was: 1. To punish all Jews by making them pay 1,000 million marks as a fine for wanting to emigrate, and that proof of payment of the fine had to be shown before approval was granted. 2. They themselves must pay for the damage of their losses, even though insurance had been paid. 3. Announcing a series of orders that the Jewish enterprise became 'alien', so that Jews would be expelled from Germany's economy.

On the other hand, the head of the Gestapo, Himmler, gave an order to catch 20,000 rich Jews and send them into the concentration camp. In this way, they forced their families to pay a high price to buy their freedom.

Before 10 November 1938, although a lot of Jews emigrated to other countries because they could not bear any more persecution of the Nazis, most Jews did not wish to leave the country for all sorts of reasons. But on that day, when they heard that they did not belong anymore to the country they loved, everyone felt losing their head with fright, especially when they heard that the Germans sent a great number of Jews into the camps and killed them with poison gas, then burnt their bodies in the furnace. Everyone became too impatient to leave their home town. At that time, all visa offices were full of Jewish applicants; to them each earlier date of departing meant more possibility for surviving.

However, at that time, more and more countries



# OBITUARIES

## DR. GOURGEY RABY



The late Dr. Gourgey Raby performing the Blessing over Bread at a wedding in New-York was born in Baghdad in 1907. At the age of 20, he joined the newly opened Royal Medical College in Baghdad, completing his studies in 1932 coming top. Dr. Gourgey Raby was head and shoulders above other doctors for his thoroughness in medicine and became renowned as doctor to the Royal family as well as to Jewish and Moslem of Iraq.

In 1966 he migrated to the USA to join his family and exceptionally became in a short time Director at Queen University Hospital.

Dr Raby was greatly loved and respected by members of the community everywhere. Dr. Raby leaves a wife Rachel, two daughters, Yvette and Joyce, and two sons, Dr. Samir and Dr. Khether.●

## THE LATE LILY SHOHEH MOSHE

Let me just mention a very good friend of mine who passed away lately: Lily Shohet Moshe. She was like a sister to me and nearly all our group. She was a wonderful person, never complained about anything and always ready to help no matter what. She was a good mother to Rachel, a wonderful daughter to Paulette. I will always miss her and specially when I am in N.Y. where she lived and as you wrote in the Scribe quote "No man is truly dead as long as he is remembered."

It will give a great pleasure for me and all who knew her to see her name in your magazine. Thank you for your dedication in keeping our heritage alive, we all need it. We are proud of you.●

Albertine Soudai Joory

Rio

## YUSUF MEER

On October 6, 1998, the Iraqi community suffered a loss when Yusuf Meer passed away in Montreal, Canada. Yusuf was a contributor to the Scribe Magazine for many years, submitting old manuscripts and relevant articles, providing old photographs and identifying many of the people in them. He also housed a small library of Iraqi and Sephardi literature and documents while maintaining an international network of friends in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Switzerland, Israel, Iraq, Iran, India, and Australia. He is survived by his wife, Georgette Lawee Meer (Montreal), brothers Haim (Tel Aviv) and Mark (Colorado) sister Violette Murad (New York), son Robert Ezra Meer (Los Angeles) and his wife Caroline Zubaida, and his grandchildren Daniel and Elana.

Yusuf was born in Baghdad August 31, 1919, to Ezra Baroukh Meer and Helwa Meer, the second child and eldest son of five children. He went to school in England in the mid-1930's, then sailed to Boston during W.W.II where he graduated as an Architect from MIT. Following that, he earned his Masters in Architecture at Harvard University in 1943. He then moved to New York City to begin his practice, yet maintaining close contacts with the newly-arrived Iraqis following the end of the war. Yusuf was nearly selected to be the official Iraqi architectural representative for the design and construction of the United Nations building in NYC, only to be rejected by the Iraqi authorities when they realised he was Jewish. He was very involved in the early days of the American Iraqi Association, which enabled all Iraqi Jews to socialise and re-establish their "society." In 1955, after marriage and a child, he moved up to Montreal to involve himself with the then booming real estate development, joining the Lawee brothers, Khedouri (his father-in-law) and Ezra.

Yusuf was a collector and avid hobbyist. He gathered tens of thousands of stamps from around the world, with a nearly complete collection of UN stamps from the 1940's through the 1970's.

Yusuf was a very well read man, articulate and conversant in a multitude of topics. His favourites, however, were the history of the Iraqi Jewish community and of Iraq herself, and the state of affairs in Israel and her neighbours. He recently established a library at the Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue in Montreal for the collection of books and documents pertaining to Babylonian Jewry, and other Sepharad. May His memory be blessed.

Correspondence and memories are welcome and may be addressed to Robert Meer in Los Angeles at 17178 Strawberry Drive, Encino, CA, USA 91436-3825. Donations may be made to the Yusuf Meer Memorial Fund, c/o Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue, 4894 St Kevin St., Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3W 1P2.●

## EDWARD SALEH MAHLAB



Edward Saleh Mahlab: Born in Baghdad, Iraq. He was the 3rd of eight children born to Saleh Sasson Mahlab and Hilwa Dellal Mahlab. At a young age he moved to Kuwait with his family where they lived for 6 years. During those years the family maintained close friendships with the Al Subah ruling family of Kuwait, and Edward maintained some of those relationships.

After living in Kuwait, the family returned to Baghdad. Edward attended the Shahmoon School. He was also a member of the Boy Scouts organised by the school. In later years, at the University of Beirut, he studied commerce. During school breaks he would visit Israel, then known as Palestine. He had a real love of Palestine and spent a lot of time there with friends and family.

After University, he returned to Baghdad and went into business, following his father's footsteps. He was a member of the Chamber of Commerce in Baghdad, and joined the Laura Khedouri Club and later became a member of the Zawra Club.

After his marriage to Farah Lawee, daughter of Khedouri and Muzly Lawee, he moved to the United States where they raised their daughters Vanessa, Lilly and Mona. Edward continued in his own business in Import/Export and travelled a great deal in Europe and Turkey. He was a very observant man, following the traditions of his heritage and attended services regularly, first at Temple Beth Shalom in Roslyn and then later at Shelter Rock Synagogue also near his home in Rosly.

Edward S. Mahlab passed away this January 20, 1999. He was a family man, a man who loved G-d, as well as a devoted and loving husband, father and grandfather.

Vanessa Mahlab, Lilly Seiden, Mona Longman and grandchildren Mathew, Eric and Daniel Seiden and Adam, Benjamin and Emily Longman. He will always be deeply missed by his family, relatives and close friends.●

VM

## SELIM OBADIA



Selim (Zughayir) Obadia died in London on 14th December 1998 aged 94. He was born in Baghdad in 1904, the son of Heskel Saleh son of Shua and grandson of the eminent Rabbi, Hakham Eliahou Yehushuah Obadia (1790-1895) who was the Ab Beth Din of Baghdad for many years in the 1840's and 1850's. He lived to be 105, conserving all his mental faculties and revered in Iraq, Turkey, Palestine and the Far East.

Selim studied at the Alliance School where he learnt Arabic, French, English and Hebrew. As a young man he was employed at the office of the British High Commissioner. In 1928 he joined the offices of the Auditor-General of the State where he served until 1940. He worked subsequently in insurance and he was a keen and active Freemason.

After settling in London, he married Steffy Sopher in December 1961.

Selim Obadia was a keen amateur photographer and had a large collection of historic photographs.●

**Meer Basri**

Selim Obadia was caring and gentle in his ways and a staunch family man. His polished manners were of the old school and it was always a pleasure to be in the company of such an accomplished raconteur.

Before coming to this country in 1961, Selim had had a distinguished career as an auditor in the department of the "Controller and Auditor General" under an English head, Mr Parlby, who had been seconded from the Indian Civil Service. All the auditors were Jews apart from one Armenian and two Christian Chaldeans, thereby incurring the disapproval of the Arab politicians, who dubbed the department a Jewish stronghold. So, when Mr Parlby returned to India in 1935, and was succeeded by an Arab politician, the portents were not good and Selim like many like him resigned to seek new pastures.

He forged successful careers as agent for Century Insurance and later on head of



*Emir Feisal, future King of Iraq, arriving at Basra on a British Battle ship in June 1921. On hearing of Feisal's arrival, my father Selim Z. Obadia travelled to Basra to take the above photograph and to his amazement found nobody there to greet the Rmir. He therefore walked right up to him, smiled at him and took this photograph with his Kodak Brownie camera.*

*Scribe: The reason why there were no crowds to greet the Emir Feisal, who came to be offered the throne of Iraq, is probably that the people of Basra never wanted to be part of an Arab kingdom of Iraq. Likewise, at that time, there was no need for security arrangements as terrorism was still in its infancy.*

*The arrival of Feisal at Basra was a result of the decision of the Cairo Conference convened by Winston Churchill in March 1921, at which the candidacy of Feisal for the throne of Iraq was endorsed by Sasson Heskel and Jaafar Al-Askari, the two Iraqi delegates.●*

insurance at Frank C. Strick's until he left Baghdad.

Selim had a large circle of friends and will be missed by all who knew him. He is survived by his devoted wife Steify, a son David and two daughters Gracie and Linda.●

**Edward Raby & Shawky Dallal**

In tribute to the late Selim Z. Obadia, my brother-in-law, I was privileged to work with him in the same company Frank C. Strick in Baghdad, when I knew him as a man of compassion and wonderful personality.

He was well-known in the Jewish community

in Baghdad. He served in the Ministry of Social Affairs and other ministries of the government of Iraq.

After the revolution in 1958, he immigrated to England where he married and had three children. He gave his family immense care and love.

He associated himself with prominent and intellectual people and was well-spoken and highly presented in the community.

His legacy will be remembered for a long time.●

**Nissim Ezra**

## THE JOSEPH PERESS DIVING SUIT



*The inventor Salim Joseph Peress*

In 1930 Salim (Joseph) Peress demonstrated the diving suit which he invented that kept divers dry and at atmospheric pressure, even at great depth. But it took 40 years before engineers incorporated his articulated joints in a new generation of armoured suits. It was used to help in the exploitation of the North sea oil.

Two British engineers sat in a smoky Brighton pub, deep in conversation with an old man. It was 1965, the North Sea was being explored for oil, and the industry was looking for ways to get divers onto the deep ocean floor. The race was on to develop a working atmospheric diving suit (ADS), and 80-year-old "Pop" Peress was the only person with a possible solution to the problems involved.

The story of the Jim suit, as it was to become known, begins in England in 1914, when 18-year-old Salim Joseph Peress was offered a job by the aircraft manufacturer de Havilland as a trainee draftsman.

The young Peress grew up in the Middle East, where he had watched Persian Gulf pearl divers in action and seen how they suffered from the bends. He had a natural flair for engineering design, and had challenged himself to construct an articulated diving suit that would keep divers dry and at atmospheric pressure, even at great depth.

At the time, little was known about decompression diving. Various atmospheric suits had been developed during the Victorian era, but nobody had managed to overcome a basic design problem - the construction of a joint that would remain flexible and watertight at depth. The joints that had been made seized up under pressure.

In 1918 Peress began working for WG Tarrant at Byfleet, Surrey, where he was given the space and tools to develop his ideas. His first attempt at an ADS was an immensely complex construction machined from solid stainless steel.

In 1923 the P&O liner Egypt sank in 122m of water after a collision off the French island of Ushant. It held a cargo of 10 million in gold bullion, and Peress was asked to design a suit for the salvage operation. He declined, insisting that his prototype steel suit was still too heavy for a diver to handle.

Peress was nonetheless encouraged by the request, so set to work on another suit using lighter materials. By 1929, he thought he had cracked the weight problem, and in the process had managed to improve the flexibility of the joints.

By 1930 Peress had completed the trials and the "Tritonia diving suit" was demonstrated publicly in a small tank at Byfleet in May. In September it was taken to Loch Ness on board the Recovery where Peress's assistant, Jim Jarret, dived in the suit to 135m. It performed perfectly - the joints proved insensitive to pressure and moved freely, even at depth.

Jim Jarret made one more deep dive to 90m on the Lusitania off the south coast of Ireland, followed by a shallower dive to 60m in the Channel in 1937. Then, due to lack of interest, the Tritonia was retired.

Peress gave up and turned his attention elsewhere. He became a millionaire by pioneering plastic moulding, and formed a company that became the world's largest manufacturer of turbine blades for the aircraft industry. With a bit of persuasion from the two British engineers, Pop Peress agreed to come out of retirement. The team set to tracking down the original Tritonia suit. It was found lying in pristine condition in a Glasgow workshop, where it had been hidden for 30 years under a pile of rubbish.

The suit was dusted off and dived for the first time by 80-year-old Peress in the factory test tank. It worked perfectly.

Getting Pop into the suit was not too difficult but it took about three hours to get him out. Five years later the team unveiled two modern atmospheric suits using the Peress joint. The test depth for the new model was to a staggering 610m, and it was to be named "Jim" after the first ADS diver, Jim Jarret.

By the 1980's Jims were being used around the world to depths beyond 600m. Pop Peress died in 1978, after seeing his dream for a working ADS finally reach a successful conclusion.

Seven years later, in September 1985, the Jim suit was used to help salvage a Wellington bomber that had been discovered at the bottom of Loch Ness, close to where the suit had first been tested. ●

The Holland Park Synagogue was built in London in 1928. On December 13, 1998, a commemorative service followed by a reception was held to commemorate the seventieth year of its foundation, attended by the Chief Rabbi of Israel, the Rishon le-Zion Mordechai Eliahou Bakhsi-Doron, the mayor of Chelsea and Hammersmith, and a large congregation. Mr Meer Basri, former President of the Jewish Community of Iraq, composed, by request, and read a special poem on this occasion entitled:

### JEWISH FAITH & ETHICS

In Commemoration of Seventy Years of the Holland Park Synagogue

Seventy Years of keen prayer,  
And the Faithful come to hear  
The Holy words of the Torah.  
On the Sabbath and on weekdays  
And on the feast everyone says:  
Praise be to God, Hallelujah!

The fathers built this small temple,  
In a country free and kind.  
We all remember and assemble,  
To edify our mind.

We remember fathers, mothers  
Who brought us forth and cherished us.  
Time passes but not weathers,  
The memories sacred to us.

In this temple generations,  
Came to pronounce words of bliss.  
In days of strife and evasions,  
Let us pray and exert for peace.

The elders built safe foundations,  
For piety and affection.  
We pass to new generations,  
A moral sense and intention.

We lift our eyes to the stars,  
And wonder at the creation.  
A unity which nothing mars,  
Rouses in us ideal elation.

Judaism is faith of ethics.  
Of moral values and of hope,  
In trade, in science and physics,  
For bigotry there's no scope.

Our fathers met tribulations,  
In ages of persecution.  
We proclaim among the nations,  
An age of love and devotion.

In a world of war and passion,  
Dimmed by dark clouds of gloom.  
We pray for mercy and compassion,  
A garden where roses bloom.

In the sky we see rays of light,  
Unison in dim dissension.  
An end to hate and plight,  
A dawn of love and attention.

The Prophets had a splendid dream:  
Lion and lamb live together,  
Nations bask in peace and esteem,  
And cherish a distant brother.

*Continued on next column*



## **VISIT TO POLACK'S HOUSE, CLIFTON COLLEGE, BRISTOL**

by Rabbi Dr. Abraham Levy

Recently, I visited Clifton College, Bristol together with Mr Francis Mocatta, who was an old pupil, to meet pupils and staff of the college, visit Polacks House and address most of the Jewish students.

We had a very pleasant day and were courteously shown around by Mr Jo Greenbury, Housemaster of Polack's House.

Polack's House has as its motto: 'A Jewish House In An English Public School', and I chose that as a theme of the talk and discussion which I gave to the students. I explained how Sephardim had excelled at synthesising two cultures and gave examples of this from the lives of famous Jewish personalities like Shemuel Hanagid in Granada and Sir Moses Montefiore in London.

I emphasised, however, that for this synthesis to work it has to be made up of a great deal of Jewish education in addition to secular education. A token religious presence alone would not ensure Jewish continuity.

We had a lively discussion with many of the boys and girls participating.

Although there is no doubt that everyone is working in a very sincere manner to accommodate Jewish and religious studies, I could not help but feel that the Jewish input could certainly be much stronger in both quality and quantity. I believe that we should try to suggest to them that young, dynamic rabbis from Ohr Sameach and Aish Hatorah and other similar bodies be encouraged to spend Shabbat with them and inject a religious vibrancy which would be of great benefit to them.●

## **THE SEPHARDIC EXPERIENCE 1999 CELEBRATING THE JEWS OF IRAQ**

Chairs: Carole Basri, David Salim Dangoor, Maurice Shohet

This programme was made possible with the generous support of Congregation Shearith Israel, Esther & Oded Aboodi, Deena & Nissim Aboodi, Fred Cohen, Rose & Ralph Nakash, Stella Levi, Morrie Yohai.

The Exhibition of Iraqi artefacts was mounted by Susan Tobin. The archivists were loaned by Daisy Iny, Lillian & Fred Iny, Eli Saraf, Violette Aghassi and Janice & Isaac Ovadiah.

Hazak U. Baruk to the staff of volunteers: Anita Carmine, Devorah Davi, Nomi Itzhaik, Matilde Hollander, Claire Joles, Stella Levi, Helene Miller, Evelyn Rosen, Joyce Rulnick. Sunday, January 24: Moderator of Opening Session: Dr. Heskell Haddad.

### **PROGRAMME OF THE EVENTS**

Friday evening, January 22

4:41 Candle lighting

4:45 Services at Shearith Israel (Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue), 2 West 70th St. Central Pk. West.

6:00 Iraqi Shabbat Dinner with the participation of the Rabbis of the Congregation and their families.

Special Singles Seating

Speaker: Mr Yerachmiel Bratt, Shamash, Agudah Israel of Madison, Brooklyn

Topic: The Ben Ish Hai: His Life, Influence and Legacy.

Rabbi Ira Rohde, Hazan, and Mr Isaac Ovadiah will lead in Shabbat songs.

Dvar Torah by Rabbi Hayyim Angel, Assistant Rabbi.

Special Exhibition of Artefacts from Iraq donated by Iraqi families will be on view at the synagogue throughout the week-end.

Saturday, January 23 Shabbat Bo

8:15 Services at Shearith Israel.

9:30-10:45 am Learner Services in The Little Synagogue

Noon Iraqi Shabbat Luncheon

Special Singles Seating

Guest Speaker: Dr. Joan Roland, Prof. of Jewish History, Pace University

Topic: Sojourn of Iraqi Jews in India and China

3:30 Class on the Ben Ish Hai on the Parashah with Yerachmiel Bratt

4:45 Minha

5:30 Havdalah

Saturday Evening 8:00 pm

Oriental Iraqi Evening

"Chalghi" Iraqi Musical band with Hakki Obadia on violin, and player and drum

Backgammon and chess tables for your enjoyment.

Refreshments

Place: Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Sunday, January 24

8:00 Services at Shearith Israel  
10-11:30 am The Iraqi Jewish Community Yesterday and Today

Carole Basri, Consultant at Deloitte & Touche, The Frank Iny School and the Educational System in Baghdad.

Maurice Shohet, V.P. Cong. Bene Naharayim, The Iraqi Community in NYC and the USA and Remarks about the 30th Commemoration of the execution of the 9 Jews in Iraq.

Isaac Ovadiah, Engineer, born in Baghdad: Growing Up in Baghdad: The Israeli 6 Day War and its Repercussions on Jewish Life in Iraq. Presentation of video: An Encounter with Saddam.

11:30-12:15 pm "Iraqi Jewish Writers Today." Professor Sasson Somekh. Prof. of Arabic Literature, Tel Aviv University, visiting Prof. at Columbia University.

12:30- 2 pm Light Buffet Lunch Iraqi Style. Guest Speaker: Dr. Reeva S. Simon Asst. Director Middle East Institute, Columbia University Topic: The Jews of Iraq: Between Arab Nationalism and Zionism.

2-2:30 "Exodus from Iraq" A Story of Survival."

Dr. David Kazzaz, Denver Psychiatrist born in Baghdad. Author of forthcoming book: "Mother of the Pound: Memoirs on the Life and History of the Iraqi Jews."

2:30-3:30 pm "The Last Jews in Iraq Today." Alice Hecht, Chief Administrative officer of the UN Special Commission. Illustrated lecture with slides of Jewish quarter in Baghdad and video of services at the Meir Tzeitel Synagogue in Baghdad.

"The Sephardic Experience"  
\$200 - Patrons will receive appropriate acknowledgement.

Recommended Hotel Accommodations:

Olcott Hotel, 27 West 72nd St.  
(212) 877-4200

\$110 Studio-Double.

The West Side Y at 64th St. near Central Park West  
(212) 875-4233

\$100 Double with bath.

Sephardic House was selling books, videos, musical cassettes and CD's on Sunday. at 2112 Broadway, New York, NY 10023●



The Ushers at the Dangoor-Murad wedding with Sandra Dangoor in front.  
All being the bridegroom's cousins and of each other.  
Left to right: David; Michael; Robert; Eric; David; Robert; Robert; Elie; Freddie.●



Keddy and Bertine Soffair recently celebrated their Golden Wedding at a Dinner and Ball at the Langham Hilton. Above, left to right: Armand; Keddy and Bertine; Golda; Elizabeth.●●

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

- Elvera Herbstman - NY, USA
- F. Chitayat - in memory of her mother Naima Chitayat - Montreal, Canada
- Ronald Simon - CA, USA
- Sass Ezekiel - MO, USA
- Aslan Aslan - Floral Pk. NY, USA
- Edward Yamen - Milano, Italia
- Dr. David Solomon - Nottingham, UK
- Mr S. E. Sassoon - New York, USA
- Mrs Samira Balass - Monroe, NY, USA

For those readers who wish to send contributions to our journal, it is uneconomical to pay bank collecting charges on amounts less than \$50.00. We do not encourage readers to send us payments for single issue. ●



Robert and Joy Dangoor at their wedding with the bridesmaids. ●

من لانت كلمته وجبت محبته

Men lanet kelmetou wajbet mehebetou.  
Kind words open the doors of steel.

لبنتي كحلها والولد لمفاتو

Lebnaiti lahla welwalad lemghatou.  
The daughter to her parents and the son to his wife.

بطنو شبعانة وعينو جوعانة

Batnou sheb'ana weainou jouana.  
His tummy is full but his eyes are greedy.

هملني دقفسي الباب

Hmelni datghes el bab.  
Carry me to shut the door.

باب مدود شغ وطفود

Bab mesdoud shagh metghoud.  
If you close your door you don't get harmed.

يشبع وبيقص

Yeshbegh we'yqess.  
Think of the end before you begin.

I have been receiving the Scribe for several years now in London and find it completely fascinating. In fact, I sit down and read it from beginning to end and am unable to put it down! I have very recently made Aliyah here to Israel and hope to continue receiving the Scribe. The only personal connection I can claim with 'your world' is that my late husband Dr. Eric Glick, as a medical officer, was stationed in Iraq, Basra, Shaibur, for his national service and he told us remarkable stories of his time there, including visiting the Jewish hospital in Baghdad and being welcomed to the home of Naim (Nissim) Zubaida.●

Mrs Marjorie Glick Netanya, Israel

## CELEBRATIONS IN GEORGIA

by: Percy S. Gourgey, MBE

There were widespread celebrations in Tbilisi, the capital, and other cities in Georgia to celebrate 2600 years of harmonious Jewish settlement in the country. Streets were festooned with flags of Georgia and Israel, and banners proclaiming the celebrations were on public buildings and squares in Georgian and English, from 7 - 11 September 1998.

A large delegation from Israel attended including representatives from the World Sephardi Federation from Israel, the United States, Canada, France, Switzerland and Britain. The WSF delegation was led by its President, Mr Nessim Gaon, who was invited by the President of Georgia, Mr Eduard Shevardnadze to attend with a delegation. I joined from Britain at the invitation of Mr Sami Shamoon who was unable to attend because of a leg injury. (My surname originates from that country but more of that later!). The Israel delegation was led by its Deputy Prime Minister and Trade Minister, Mr Moshe Katzav, in the absence of the Prime Minister, Mr Benjamin Netanyahu who was ill. There were many businessmen in the delegations and billions of dollars on various projects were discussed.

The celebrations were held under the personal sponsorship of President Shevardnadze, who was the former Soviet Foreign Minister under the then Soviet president, Mr Mikhail Gorbachev, both of whom in the 1980's introduced the significant era of 'glasnost' and 'perestroika', i.e., 'openness' and 'restructuring' which radically changed the Soviet Union. The opening ceremony was indeed spectacular with a personal speech of welcome by the President of Georgia and, later on TV, speeches from President Ezer Weizman, Prime Minister Netanyahu and Mayor of Jerusalem, Ehud Olmert. An interesting and novel item were Georgian folk-songs which were sung ex-tempore. Georgian artists also welcomed us with singing 'haveinu shalom aleichem' enthusiastically.

We visited the Parliament and were warmly received by the Speaker, Mr Zurab Zhvania. Among the speakers were Chief Rabbi of Israel, Israel Lau, WSF President Gaon, its Vice-President, Lilliane Shalom from New York, and myself from London. References were made to Georgia's splendid relations with the Jewish and other communities. Various views were expressed as to the origin of the Jewish community in Georgia, such as, at the time of King Solomon, or the defeat of the Northern Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians in 722 BCE, but the main view, also supported by the Speaker, Zhvania, was the first settlers found their way to Georgia after the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BCE, who carried the Jews captive to Babylon. Reinforcing this view is that in the synagogues the Minhag Bavel is adopted with the same pronunciation in Hebrew, and the Birkat Kohanim (Priestly Blessing), recited daily in synagogues, both in Israel and the Diaspora, as is the Babylonian-Baghdadian custom.

The programme of events included (1) Opening of an Art Exhibition '26 Centuries Together' in the National Art Gallery; (2) Departure to various regions of Georgia to see their historical and cultural monuments as well as Synagogues, Jewish homes; (3) the film 'Schindler's List' at the Tbilisi Cinema House; (4) a Basketball Match between 'Maccabi' of Georgia and 'Hapoel' of Israel; (5) Opening of the Scientific Conference 'Tbilisi-Jerusalem' at the Academy of Science of Georgia; (6) Meeting of Georgian and Israel businessmen at the Krtsanisi Government Residence of President Shevardnadze; (7) Auction of 'Judaica' art at the State Museum of Art, named after Shalva Amiranashvili; (8) An evening on the 5th anniversary of the Georgian Jewish newspaper 'Menora'; (9) The play 'Fiddler on the Roof' at the State Musical Theatre; and (10) A fashion show of Abraham Babel at the luxurious hotel where we stayed, Metechi Sheraton Palace Hotel, 20 Tel-Aviv Street, Tbilisi, considered one of the best in the former Soviet Union.

We visited a welfare centre, 'Hesed Eliyahu', sponsored by the 'Joint', the famous American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which was a popular social club for the Tbilisi Jewish Community, youth and elderly Jews. Its varied activities were explained to us by the 'Joint' - Director in Tel Aviv, Mr Stanly Abramovitz. There was a visit to the Jewish School, 'Tiferet Zvi' and also adult education institutions sponsored by the Jewish Agency for Israel.

At the splendid closing dinner at the 'Aragvi' Restaurant, we were addressed by President Shevardnadze, WSF President Gaon and the Executive President of the Conference of Major American Jewish Organisations, Mr Malcolm Hoenlein. In his address, the Georgian President referred with pride to a great Georgian King in the 11th century called 'David the Builder' who united the people against foreign invaders.

During a lull in the proceedings, I took the opportunity of speaking to the Georgian President, saying how much he was admired in western democracies, and describing the origin of my surname, as Georgia was called by its Muslim invaders in the Middle Ages as 'Gourgestan,' because of the beauty of its women - hence 'Gourgey.' The President indicated he was aware of this, and thanked me for my remarks. It was altogether an unforgettable occasion and foreign visit.

Perhaps the reason for the goodwill and co-operation between Georgians and Jews are: (1) They are small peoples - Georgian Jews today number about 10,000 as most of the former 100,000 emigrated to Israel; (2) They both strive for peace, progress and economic growth, and; (3) They both cherish their ancient traditions and values, combining them with modern developments. In 1969, 18 Georgian Jewish families were the first Jews in the former Soviet Union to apply openly for visas to settle in Israel, stating they had no complaint against the Soviet or Georgian governments, and they simply wished to join their brethren in their ancient homeland. This action started the successful public campaign for Soviet Jewish Aliya.●

I refer to the comments of Mr Naim Dangoor on the letter of Mr E. Raby which appeared on page 35 issue 70.

The comments were so serious, sincere and significant that they rendered the letter a piece of paper turned on the face of the sender, though publishing the letter itself was a very good act that showed a real respect to the "freedom of expression" which the writer of the letter wanted to censure on us.

I want to say in a friendly way to Mr Raby that we are tired of posing anymore, we want to be frank and sincere and act unswervingly, and that to surrender to the psychological horror of compromise and to a kind of submissive hypocrisy don't serve so much. We are at least not anymore living in those countries where might was always right and violence was law.

We have turned the other cheek too long with people who took advantage of us and who oppressively obligated us to pay dearly for fabricated sins and fictitious crimes which we never committed.

The terms 'Old and New Testaments' are prejudicial, if 'New' implies a replacement of the 'Old.' Today, the serious scholars use the nomenclature 'Hebrew Bible' to refer to the so-called 'Old Testament,' and the 'Christian Scriptures' to refer to the Apocrypha and the so-called 'New Testament.'

I hope Mr Raby would completely agree that the term 'New Testament' has a built-in grievance on the Jewish Religion. In the comments of the Scribe, there was a strong suggestion that the time of compromises has gone and middle ways are not anymore good tools.

Mr Raby has lived 63 years in England as he said that is why he should realise that his country is solidly grounded in its democratic heritage. We cannot leave the world as it is. Part of human nature has a darker side that is reflected in those unreformed dictatorial rogue regimes that clung to the idea of aggression and oppression.

Frankly speaking, as soon as I finished reading the Scribe's comments, the famous and daring speech of the late Ezra Menahem Daniel in the Iraqi House of the Senate came to my mind instantly. It was a historical moment when he blamed and reproached the Government in explaining their wrongdoings towards the peaceful Iraqi Jews in his saying "Enough is enough."

Before concluding, I want to quote Albert Camus as follows:

"If you keep on excusing, you eventually give your blessing to the slave camp, to cowardly force, to the cynicism of the great political monsters: you finally hand over your brother!"●

Edward Yamen

Milan, Italy

من هيالو يکخاف

Men khyalou yekhaf.  
Even his shadow frightens him.

## THE COMPLETE SHULHAN ARUCH

A new edition by Machon Yerushalayim  
VENICE, 1570

- The Shulhan Aruch by Maran Rav Yosef Caro is published for the first time. The "Table of Jewish Law" is laid out for all generations.

## CRACOW, 1575

- Rav Moshe Isserles, the Rema, spreads his commentary, the "Mapa (Tablecloth)" over the Shulhan Aruch. Maran's masterpiece is accepted by all congregations as the 'Book of Books' of Jewish Law.

## JERUSALEM, 1994

- The first volumes of The Complete Shulhan Aruch are published by Machon Yerushalayim, the world's largest publisher of Torah literature, as it celebrates the 25th anniversary of its founding. Thousands of errors that occurred in previous editions, which for centuries complicated the interpretation of Jewish law, are carefully investigated and corrected. The 'Table' is set out anew in all its splendour. The publication of the Complete Shulhan Aruch is not only the crowning achievement among the myriad activities of Machon Yerushalayim but a milestone in the history of Torah literature. Years of comprehensive, in-depth study and research by Rabbis and Torah scholars have come to fruition in the creation of this elegant new edition. Rabbinic authorities have eagerly awaited this moment. They knew that only an institution with the status and capabilities of Machon Yerushalayim, could be entrusted with such an immense and vital task. The exhaustive research is being carried out under the leadership and guidance of the great Poskim of our generation. Words and letters are checked, abbreviations are deciphered and sources noted - all in accordance with the earliest editions of the Shulhan Aruch and newly discovered manuscripts. ●

## PRIMO LEVI: TRAGEDY OF AN OPTIMIST

by Myriam Anissimov, translated by Steve Cox  
Aurum, 452 pp., £25, 10 September, 185410  
5035

'One Saturday morning in April 1987, a tragedy disrupted the peace and quiet of the Corso Re Umberto. Primo Levi had taken his own life.'

The lucid and eloquent survivor of Auschwitz, the man who had returned home and had stayed at home since 1945, who had converted much of his life into a work of witness, a defence of light against the century's darkness, seemed not only to have taken his life but to have cancelled it.

Levi was born and died in Turin. The year of his birth, 1919, was also the year of the founding of the National Socialist and Fascist Parties in Germany and Italy. The confused and erratic Italian racial laws of 1938 meant that Levi could complete his doctorate in chemistry (in 1941) but only with a physics professor, since no one else would take him on. After one or two precarious industrial jobs in Turin and Milan, Levi joined the Partisans in the mountains, but was soon arrested by the Fascist

militia, and detained in a camp. Here he expected to wait out the war, but quite suddenly, in February 1944, with the German take-over of the camp, all the Jews in Fossoli, some 650 persons, were deported to Auschwitz. Five hundred people, men, women and children, either died on the journey or were killed on arrival, the others were put to work. Only 23 came back.

In 1963, he published *The Truce*, describing his circuitous journey back to Italy through a war-ruined Russia, and his writing career began to come alive. He retired from the paint factory in 1975, and after *The Periodic Table* (1975), a combination of fiction and memoir centring on the chemical elements he wrote a stirring novel about Jewish partisans in Russia, called *If Not Now, When* (1982). But writing became difficult for him in his last years. He was at work on an epistolary novel when he died.

The Jewish community in Italy is said to be the oldest in Europe, and Levi thought of it, Anissimov says, as 'the most assimilated in the world.' Levi wryly describes his own early sense of Jewry: 'Jew is somebody who at Christmas does not have a tree, who should not eat salami but eats it all the same, who has learned a bit of Hebrew at 13 and then has forgotten it.' He soon learned a lot more about very different sorts of Jews, and came to admire East European Jews in particular, but he never thought assimilation was either a simple solution or a major problem. He said to Philip Roth that he thought it was 'an advantage to belong to a (not necessarily racial) minority:' 'To possess two traditions, as happens to Jews, but not only to Jews, is a richness: for writers but not only for writers.' Those 'not onlys' (and that 'not necessarily') are entirely characteristic, and when late in life he was being fêted and lionised in New York he was surprised to find himself surrounded exclusively by Jews.

He saw no correlation between assimilation and anti-Semitism. The anti-Semite hates the Jew no matter what. ●

## PROFESSOR SHMUEL MOREH AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND POETRY

Those were the days of Youth and Love (in Arabic and English)

by: Shmuel Moreh

(Association of Jewish Academics from Iraq, Jerusalem (1998)

Reviewed by Meer Basri

Professor Shmuel Moreh, the eminent member of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, published in Arabic, a book of autobiography, followed by a selection of his poems in Arabic and English.

Sami Muallem, as was his name before he emigrated to Israel, was born in Baghdad to an accountant father and a school teacher mother. He studied at the Saadum Exemplary school, the Frank Iny and Shamash schools. He started to write poetry and essays in Arabic, and memorised many poems by the famous poets of the century and those of the new 'Mahjar' trend in the USA.

He speaks of the change of the popular attitude to Jews after the death of King Faisal in 1933 who promoted harmony and understanding among the sects and factions of the Iraqi people, and the ascent of his son Ghazi who preached Arab union and radical policies.

Moreh was also a good sportsman at school. A Moslem friend who went to visit him at home said: 'He is sportive and writer, forgetting himself in Tel-Aviv' (sic). Finally, in 1950, he with his family decided to forget their Iraqi nationality and go to Israel in the mass exodus. Before leaving he took his writings and poems to the censor at the Ministry of the Interior. The censor who happened to be a good fellow, signed his papers. But at the airport, the customs official who checked his belongings, said to him, 'Jew, what are you going to do with these Arabic papers in Israel?' You will be a soldier and fight us.' And he tore the papers and threw them. Shmuel silently collected his torn papers from the ground and took them with him to his new country.

Arriving at the Lydda airport, he with the others was sprinkled with disinfectants and taken summarily in lorries to "Shaar Ha-Aliyah" (Immigration post). He spent some time in the "Ma-abarah" and worked as a bricklayer. But eventually he was able to enter the Hebrew University where he studied Arabic literature. He was finally sent to the Oriental and African School University of London, and obtained his Ph.D. in 1965 - Returning to Jerusalem he was appointed lecturer in the Hebrew University becoming in the course of time a full professor. He published several books in Arabic, English and Hebrew on literary, critical and bibliographical subjects.

Shmuel Moreh's Arabic poems composed in Baghdad denotes a lonely spirit, mournful and unsure of his future. In Israel his poetry flows with love, life and charming dreams. A specimen English poem by: Moreh:

## POWER

Power to acquire,

To have an empire.

Is to strike the weak,

When he turns his left cheek.

The pigeon's wing is still unended... (1964)

## THE TREE OF HATRED

The thorn tree, pale and sharp,

In the wild blazing desert,

Sending its roots to the bottom,

Of a dark deepless pit.

Black water, skulls and bones,

Nourish it in obscure darkness,

All the ten plagues of Moses,

Cannot uproot its stubborn cling....(1964)●

بيت بلد وفا مثل الفانوسى بلد  
ضوا

Bet bala magha methel el fanouse bala thawa.  
A house without a wife is like a bulb without a light.



*Left to right:*  
*Standing: Yusuf Elkabir; Zeghair Shabi; Salman Elkabir; Abraham Elkabir; Shaoul Smouha (Levy)*  
*Sitting: Mouzli Shabi; Aziza (Massouda) Elkabir; Saleh Elkabir; Renee Elkabir; Habiba Levy*  
*On the floor: Renee Shabi; Farha Shabi, Sasson Levy ●*

**Prof. Shmuel Moreh Awards**

by Dr. Clara Brakel  
 Institute of Asian & African Studies  
 The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

I would like to bring to your attention that recently it was announced on Israeli T.V., radio and in the Newspapers that the Israel Prize for the Oriental Studies was awarded to Prof. Shmuel Moreh of the Hebrew University.

Please note that in the Jerusalem Post of January 27, 1999, there was an announcement that he has been chosen to be awarded the Israel Prize for research in Oriental Studies. The newspaper continues; "Moreh, of the Hebrew University, will receive the prize for his research in Arabic literature, in particular in modern Arabic poetry, and on theatre and drama in Arabic during the Middle Ages." He also was cited for his contribution to the publication of works by Jewish writers born in Iraq who wrote in Arabic. "In other newspapers it was announced that 'Moreh' is considered one of the best Orientalists in the world."●



*Standing: right to left -*  
*Regina (Loya) Aboudi, unknown woman, Victoria (Cohen) Yahya, Gorgia (Cohen) Loya, Felix Loya, Jacob Aboudi,*  
*Groom: Meir Dallal, Bride: Daisy Aboudi, Marguerite (Aboudi) Dash, 2 unknown women, Habiba (Loya) Dallal and Rosa (Terzi) Loya*  
  
*Children: right to left -*  
*Jamal Loya, Henry Loya, unknown girl, unknown boy, Fawzi Loya, Namir Yahya, David Yahya*  
*Back: Ramzi Loya ●*

# THE BAGHDAD HANGINGS, BAGHDAD 1969

## 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF IRAQI JEWS EXECUTED IN BAGHDAD IN 1969

On Wednesday 27 January 1999, a commemoration service was held at the Lauderdale Road Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, London, in memory of the nine innocent Jews publicly executed in the main Baghdad Square. Over 200 people attended the Memorial Service, including representatives of the Israeli Embassy and the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

### PROGRAMME:

Arbit service, Psalm 121, Psalm 137.  
Addresses by Rabbi Dr. Abraham Levy;  
Percy Gourgey MBE, Chairman of the Jews of Arab Lands Committee;  
Memorial Poem composed and read by Meer S. Basri;  
Hashcaba, Lighting of Memorial Candles, Shofar, Adon Olam.

The importance of this event is that these Martyrs were killed not by terrorists or by mobs but by the Iraqi authorities themselves, in an attempt to create a reign of terror in the country.

Names of Jews executed by the Iraqi Authorities and others missing without trace, presumed killed by the Secret Police.

Yacoub Abdel Aziz (Solicitor)

Ezra Gahtan

Salim Gahtan

Jacob Rejwan

Shaoul Rejwan

Shaoul Baroukh Shamash

Azzouri Shamash

Dr. Ezra Khazzam

Albert Yehouda Nounou

Naji Saat

Ishak Dellal

Ezra Naji Zilkha

Heskel Saleh Shayek

Daoud Ghali Yedgar

Naim Khadhoury Hilali

Sabah Hayim Dayan

Daoud Dellal

Fouad Gabay

Yacoub Gourji Namerdi

Charles Raphael Horesh

Ezzouri Yacoub Joory

Daoud Zubaida

Nessim Yaeer

Akram Sion Baher

Ibrahim al-Sayegh

Victor Abu Daoud

Salim Sadka

Naji Chitayat

Naim Salman Fattal

Shoua Aziz al-Baqal

Yehouda Khdhoury Tweg

Rahma Khdhoury Tweg

Aliza Khdhoury Tweg

Naji Ezra Qeshqoush + wife Suad

Qeshqoush

Shoua Soffer

Reuben Ezra Qeshqoush

(with his wife, 2 sons and daughter, the other daughter was saved because she was at College, but returned home to find her family missing and blood all over the house.

On Sunday 4/10/98).

Sion Gourji Salman (Abu Sami)

Moshe Ephraim Moshi

*PS: The first to disappear Yacoub Abdel Aziz on 14 September, 1972 it was Yom Kippur. He was last seen having bought a chicken for the fast, but did not turn up at the Synagogue, and the Qeshqoush family were the last to be killed in their home on 12 April 1973. ●*



*David Dangoor lighting a candle on behalf of his father Naim Dangoor. ●*

## IRAQI JEWISH MARTYRS 30TH ANNIVERSARY

Speech by Percy Gourgey, MBE

Chairman: Jews of Arab Lands Committee

Thirty years ago today 9 innocent Jews were publicly hanged in Baghdad's so-called 'Liberation Square,' falsely accused of spying for Israel. This atrocity shocked the civilised world and focused world attention on the cause of Jews of Arab Lands with all that implies especially in terms of human rights.

In London the day after the hangings with lurid photographs in the press, there was a mass protest demonstration outside the Iraqi Embassy in Kensington, London of over 5,000 people, organised by the Board of Deputies, the Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue and other communal bodies. So effective was it that the Iraqi authorities summoned the British ambassador in Baghdad to complain about it and he replied that Britain was a free,

democratic country and people were free to express their sense of outrage at such incidents.

At the time, Hassan al-Bakr was President of Iraq and Saddam Hussein was his right-hand man, whose Ba'ath Party had seized power in a military coup six months before. The Jewish community in Baghdad traced its origins to Babylonian times, 2,500 years ago making immense contributions to the development of Judaism through the Babylonian Talmud, the Religious academies, fruitful exchange of rabbis and scholars with Spain, and subsequently. In fact, the modern Baghdad is about 190 miles from the ancient Babylon and Iraq's President Saddam Hussein had plans to develop it as a major tourist attraction, which was nullified by his invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, and the ongoing crisis caused by Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

This service is a Kiddush Hashem and reflects great honour on the martyrs and all present here this evening. The Psalm 137 read earlier refers specifically to the Babylonian community, beginning: 'there by the waters of Babylon, we hanged our harps on the willows and wept at the remembrance of Zion.' Later in the Psalm are the words, 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her skill' which Dr. Theodor Herzl used as the rallying cry for the establishment in 1948. Two months before the 1969 hangings, the World Jewish Congress was warning of the impending tragedy.

Following are extracts of a statement to the Maariv newspaper in Tel-Aviv in March 1991 made by Mrs Selima Gubbay, widow of Fuad Gubbay one of the martyrs, after Iraqi Scud missiles attacked Israel. Israel which had not joined the coalition to drive Iraq out of Kuwait, in accordance with UN resolutions.

'Fuad and I were so happy when suddenly our lives were torn apart. One day four Iraqi officers in a blue Volkswagen drove into our home in Basra. They went straight to the air conditioners and pulled out the transformers. 'These are transmitters,' they shouted, 'you are spying for Israel.' Fuad was roughed up when he protested. Our younger son, David, was picked up and thrown against the railings when he tried to kiss his father. He cut himself, and his face was full of blood. The blood was an evil omen of the future. It was 1968 and I was four months pregnant. Fuad was taken away to a jail in Baghdad. Eventually, he was put on trial with other Jews, all accused of spying for Israel. The trial was broadcasted live on radio and television. Fuad pleaded not guilty. I travelled from Basra to Baghdad to see him in prison. When I got there they pushed me into a room beat me up and kicked me out. In the next room, separated only by a thin wall, the warders were telling Fuad, 'your wife is on the other side of the wall. She's pregnant. If you don't admit your guilt, we're going to rape her, and afterwards open her stomach and cut up the child.'

'The next day during the broadcast of the trial, I heard Fuad pleading guilty, admitting that on such and such days, he was here and there, sending secrets to Israel. When I checked the dates, I realised that Fuad had been with me and the children all of those times. He had made up the story in order to save us. On the morning of January 27, 1969, the streets of Baghdad were even more noisy and crowded than usual. It was the day of the hangings. A day of national celebration. I could hear the neighbours shouting enthusiastically, 'Hang the Israeli spies.' Dancers were brought from far and wide to dance under the gallows. There were free rides on the buses and trams so that people could come and celebrate under the corpses. And what was all the celebration about? The Iraqi nation was taking its collective revenge for defeat of a division on the Jordan front in the Six Day War, and that is how Iraqi television was broadcasting pictures

of 9 hanging Jewish corpses, among them my husband Fuad, all innocent people. The loudspeakers announced that from 4 o'clock that afternoon, the bodies would be brought down so that the mob could deal with them in the streets. I returned to Basra and people, including Jews, avoided me for fear of being linked with my husband's so-called activities.'

Mrs Gubbay then described how she fled to Israel with her children in July 1971.

Over 50 more Jews were, after 1969, executed or died through torture in jail. Martyrdom is, unfortunately, not a new phenomenon in Jewish history. But the Jewish People, because of its adherence to the eternal Torah, has acquired the characteristic of eternity. This is exemplified now by our beloved State of Israel and the survival of the Jewish People in all lands of freedom and democracy. May we go from strength to strength, mechayil lechayil.●



*Meer Basri addressing the meeting.* ●



*Rabbi Dr. Abraham Levy, looks on as a candle is being lit by David Khalastchy who was Deputy Chairman of the Jewish Council of Iraq at the time.* ●

## ABU ZUHAIR SPEAKS OUT OF HIS EXPERIENCE OF IMPRISONMENT AND TORTURE

In The Hell of Saddam Hussein  
365 Days in Qasr al-Nihaya

by Sha'ul Hakham Sassoon  
Son of the Former Head of the Jewish  
Community of Iraq  
Edited by Shmuel Moreh and Nissim Qazzaz  
Published by the Association for Jewish  
Academics from Iraq -Jerusalem 1999, 98 pp.

In November 1968, the Ba'ath Party under Ahmed Hassan al Bakr and Saddam Hussein came to power in Iraq in a bloodless coup. Shortly afterwards, they began a reign of terror against the small Jewish community in retaliation for the humiliating defeat in the Six Day War the previous year of the Arab armies including the army of Iraq.

Prior to the hanging of innocent Jews in January, 1969, the Iraqi authorities rounded up a number of prominent Jews including Sha'ul Sassoon in order to silence his father who was Head of the Jewish community, during the terrible events that followed.

In this Arabic monograph, ninety-year old Abu Zuhair recounts his experience of imprisonment and torture for 365 days in the House of no Return (Qasr al-Nihaya), previously Qasr al-Rihab, one of the Royal Palaces of the old Regime.

This booklet is part of a more comprehensive history of the Jewish Community in Iraq, currently being prepared by the author. ●

Address by Meer Basri  
In July 1968, the Ba'ath Party seized power in Iraq, headed by Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr who became President and his henchman Saddam Hussein. They proclaimed they will crush spying for the USA and Britain. Before long, they arrested Jews, Christians and Moslems, and even a wealthy Pakistani, and accused them of espionage. The only ones who defended the innocent Jewish detainees were Rabbi Sasson Khedhoury, President of the Community, and myself the Chairman of the Jewish Council. Rabbi Khedhoury was eighty years old. The Authorities imprisoned his son, Shaoul, in the infamous Qasr al-Nehayah prison where he was tortured and kept for several months. As for me, I was detained on the 1st January 1969 at the Security Police Headquarters in order to silence me. After the hangings of January 27th I was released.

Allow me to read a short poem I composed for today's solemn meeting:

Thirty years ago in a day of woe,  
Innocent Jews met their death.  
A world of hate sealed their fate,  
And blotted their last breath.

Can the shores of the Twin Rivers,  
The Jewish exiles their harps did hang.  
For centuries they lived in peace,  
Prospered and to their faith they clang.

When in Europe dark clouds,  
Covered the sky of dismal oppression.  
The Jews thrived in a glorious land,  
Humane and of good disposition.

But times changed in a new age,  
Of dissension, war and rancour.  
Friends became sworn enemies,  
And the meek lost their anchor.

We still hope for a golden future,  
Of peace and love among the nations.  
God will bless this earthly nature,  
And grant grace to his creations.●

## BAGHDAD BUTCHERY

Katrin Levy speaks to Eric Benson, whose father disappeared in 1973, believed to have been executed by the Iraqi Authorities.

While the world's politicians discuss the best way of toppling Saddam Hussein from his perch in Iraq, a group of London-based Iraqi Jews paid homage to Jews murdered 30 years ago by the same regime.

Eric Benson's father, Jacob Abdul Aziz, was one of hundreds of Jews persecuted and killed by the Iraqis from 1968 onwards. Here, he tells the story of how his family was ripped apart by the Butcher of Baghdad.

'My family lived in Baghdad, where my father was the only prominent Jewish lawyer left in the city.

'All of the others had already fled the country after the revolution in 1968 which brought Saddam to power, but my father decided to stay on.

'He was very well connected at the time. He had been a childhood friend of Bazaz, who until the revolution was the only civilian prime minister Iraq had ever had. Most of the Jews had fled the country, but in 1968 there were still about 2,000 left.

'My dad wanted to stay in Baghdad because he was comfortable there and very well regarded in both Jewish and Arab circles. No-one thought he was really at risk.

'However, myself and my two sisters were not happy in the country. In 1969, nine Jews were rounded up and hung in the main square in Baghdad, accused of spying for America and Israel.

It was the beginning of a reign of terror that over the next few years would see tens of Jews summarily executed. Hundreds of other Jews disappeared without trace.

'As well as the danger we felt we were facing, we also had to deal with the lack of young people left in Baghdad. So in 1971, myself and one of my sisters made plans to escape to Israel.

'It was impossible to get a passport at that time, so we had to pay some professional smugglers to get us into Iran; from there we went to Israel.

'I was 18 at the time. A few months later, my mother followed us with my other sister. My father was also intending to leave Iraq, but he wasn't given the chance.

'We had been keeping in touch with him via an aunt in America who would forward his letters to us and send on our correspondence to him.

'There was no postal service between Iraq and Israel and we were unable to telephone, but we managed to communicate sporadically with him. I knew that he had been issued a passport and that he was making arrangements to finally

## Lest we forget



*Above, the trial of the innocent Jews.*

30 years ago, in January 1969, the Baath regime of Iraq hanged 11 innocent Jews in Baghdad and Basrah to launch a reign of terror that was followed by the 10-year war with Iran, the invasion of Kuwait and the ostracization of Iraq by the world community. The nation that had 30 million date palm trees and a 20 billion dollar annual oil revenue, was reduced to penury with not enough to eat, and with one million of its citizens in exile all over the world.

When constitutional guarantees are overridden, the Jew is the first to suffer. As soon as the Jew is crushed, then others soon get the same treatment.

Those who danced and sang around the Jewish corpses in Tahrir Square 30 years ago, are now selling their kidneys to feed their families, and Iraqi girls are walking the streets of Baghdad and Amman to satisfy their hunger.●

leave Baghdad for good.

'The first we knew he had been picked up and executed was when we heard a report of it on Israeli radio. Some Iraqi Jews had fled to Israel, and a few months earlier they told us my father had disappeared and no-one had seen him again.

'We found out later that they came for him on Yom Kippur. My father was walking home from the synagogue when a large car pulled up next to him and ordered him to get in. My father was a very religious man. He went to synagogue every day to pray and he was well-known in the Shul.

'No-one knows why he was picked up, but some of the other congregants said he had looked very pale and unwell for a few days before he disappeared, but wouldn't say why.

'He had obviously made some enemies. Before I left Iraq, my father managed to have 200 Jews, who had been arrested for trying to escape, liberated from jail by using Arab lawyers to argue their case.

'He was also friendly with the local head of security, but when my sister and I disappeared, the head of security arrested him for not informing on us.

'My mother told us later that he knew beforehand he was going to be arrested, but he told the head of security that there was no law about stopping your children from leaving the country.

'He continued that 'G-d was stronger than the sultan.' He spent two months in jail before he was eventually freed.

'Many months later, when they were interviewed for the Parisian *Le Monde*

newspaper, the Iraqi regime denied killing any Jews. They said the head of security didn't like my father and blamed him for his murder. I don't believe that.

'The Jews were killed because of anti-Semitism. They were also killed as a gesture to the United States and Israel. However, I believe the main reason they were murdered was political. By killing them, Saddam could then go after the opposition.

'The murders were blamed on influential Muslims or anyone who could potentially lead an opposition to the government. It was then used as a pretext for rounding these people up and executing them in turn.

'Saddam is knee deep in the blood of thousands of people, Arab, Christian and Jew.

'My father was 62 when he disappeared. I have made a few attempts to trace his remains and have them returned to me for proper burial, but haven't got anywhere.

'I don't know of anyone else in the same situation who has successfully retrieved the body of their murdered relatives.

'Saddam hasn't touched the Jews for the last 20 years and I don't think he will harm the 40 or so left in Baghdad. Most of them are very elderly now and want to see the rest of their days out in their homeland. Personally, I hate Saddam Hussein for what he did to my family and my people.

'I hope the United States topple his regime and his rule, but it doesn't look likely. He has ruled Iraq for 20 years now and is ruthless. It will take a miracle to dislodge him and bring him to justice.●

**From: London Jewish News**



## A Nostalgic Trip into the History of the Jews of Iraq.

Translated from Arabic with introduction and update by Reading A. Dallal  
8838 North Central  
Park Avenue  
Illinois 60203 - 1923  
Edited by Sheila Dallal  
University Press of America, New York  
Paperback \$36●

This is a free translation of the well-known History of the Jews of Iraq by Yusuf Ghanimah with many illustrations. The book contains the following chapters:

The Torah and Iraq.  
The Garden of Eden and its Rivers.  
The Flood and Mt. Ararat.  
Nimrod Kingdom - Babylon, Nineveh, Rechovot, Kalech, Rasen.  
The Tower of Babylon.  
The Jews in the Babylonian and Assyrian Eras.  
Medes and the Persians.  
The Hebrew Language and its Culture in Babylon.  
Iraqi Jewry in the Arabian Period.  
The Jews of Iraq during the period of the Mongols and the Tatars.  
The Iraqi Jews under Turkish Rule.  
The Jews of today under British occupation and the Iraqi Arabian Government.  
Jewish Religious Shrines in Iraq.  
The Grave of Ezra the Scribe.  
The Burial of the Prophet Ezekiel.  
Joshua the High Priest.  
Sheikh Isaac El Gaoni.  
The Shrine of Nachum El Lakushi.  
Summary and update.  
About the translator and the Editor.  
Bibliography for Introduction.  
Footnotes for Introduction.  
Bibliography used by Ghanimah.●

Excerpt from the above book:

In 1949 there was another wave of hangings in Iraq. One of those hanged for political reasons was twenty-year old Sassoon Dallal, uncle of Reading Dallal. The following is a letter that Sassoon wrote to his brother David, the night before his murderous execution:

"Dear Brother:

It is an enchanting evening. The wind has been blowing steadily the whole day. It suddenly dropped at nightfall. All is still. There is no stir in the air. The world seems fast asleep. I cannot sleep. It is hard to sleep knowing that tomorrow at dawn I will die. Ever since I was arrested, I wanted to write to you. I was not sure of what to say. I was confused and afraid. I was not sure that you would sympathise with my activity and ideas, ideas that could only prove valid where our lives most need them. I was not sure that your academic life in America would make you see objectively the justice and validity of our cause. Tonight knowing that the coming dawn will start my eternal night, I venture to write to you the thoughts and ideas which are teeming in my brain now.



**Sassoon Dallal, A”H  
1929-1949**

A wave of terror has taken the country; thousands of people are being arrested, tortured and executed. I am not the only one to die tomorrow. There are ten others with me. The people as a whole are persecuted. Life in our country recalls the days when the forces of fascism were marching on murdering thousands of innocent people. I have not lived long enough to enjoy and know what life is. I opened my eyes fighting for a free life and tomorrow at dawn I am dying for the life I never knew. I pray to God that my fight has not been in vain. The forces of reaction cannot rule forever. They have been defeated before by the will of the people and by the same will, they will be defeated in the near future. I am dying tomorrow because I have faith in mankind to master their destiny, which is democracy, peace, and the perfect life. The forces of reaction that are still murdering people to lengthen the time of their criminal rule are afraid of the future. In the future, they see the shadow of their end. This shadow is perverting their minds. They are insane. They have exhausted their ideas. They are bankrupt in their policies, lies, propaganda, and promises. They are terribly afraid of the wrath of the people. They can rob me of my life, but they cannot change my thinking, which is that of all Mankind. I am free because I know the truth and neither prison nor execution can take away that freedom from me.

Tomorrow at dawn I shall die. Yes, they can end my life and stop me from exposing and fighting them, but with my death, thousands of others will rise against them. We are many, they are the few.

Do not grieve for me, dear brother, instead carry my memory with you and perpetuate the fight, which will glorify the future of all humanity. And always remember that I am not sorry to die. In fact, if I am given once again the chance to live, I would follow the same path. Goodbye to all, and my love to you."●

## THREE FAITHS FORUM FORMED IN BRIGHTON

‘There are between 1.5 and 2 million Muslims in the United Kingdom and it is estimated that by the year 2002 there will be more Muslims attending mosques than Anglicans worshipping in churches,’ said Sir Sigmund Sternberg, co-founder of the Three Faiths Forum and this year’s recipient of the Templeton Prize when he addressed the inaugural meeting of the Brighton and Hove Three Faiths Forum recently.

Sir Sigmund told the meeting, that the Forum’s time has come and ‘not a moment too soon.’ Sheikh Dr. Zaki Badawi, co-founder of the Forum and Chairman of the Council of Imams and Mosques stressed that ‘We are all children of the Abrahamic faith. Our ethical values are similar and we can speak to each other with honesty and frankness. In Northern Ireland or Bosnia, religion is not guilty, but human beings are guilty.’

Canon Michael Butler, Canon Pibendary of the Diocese referred to several instances of religious and ethnic prejudice he had personally encountered including vile complaints against the building of a mosque in Chichester and the activities of the National Front in Hove. The three Abrahamic Faiths of Judaism, Islam and Christianity must follow the three L’s, they must learn from each other, love each other and have lots of laughter together, he said.

Mr Sidney Shipton, the Three Faiths Forum co-ordinator, emphasised that the Forum was not a rigid structured organisation but a movement where people, Jews, Christians and Muslims, can come together in a spirit of goodwill to understand each other and to appreciate what we have in common rather than what divides us.

*Scribe: The followers of all Three Faiths should be regarded as the Chosen People of the One True God.●*

### THE JEWISH MEMORIAL COUNCIL

On the occasion of its 80th anniversary, the Jewish Memorial Council produced a 120 page history since its foundation. It is making an appeal for £1,000,000 to finance its numerous activities.

Among the activities of the Council was Jews College and the provision of Jewish Chaplains to the British Armed Forces.

The Council extends its assistance to some 12,000 Jews who live in eighty communal units in provincial areas of the United Kingdom and the islands around the coast, and employs a visiting Minister to render his services to them.●

Recently I came across your Journal over friends house. It was very exciting and interesting to read about familiar names of people of my background. I was born in Baghdad. My father’s surname is Ishayek. My mother’s surname is Nissan.

I came to the United States in 1960 from Israel.●

**Carmela Bagelle**

**Philadelphia, US**

## FROM THE INTERNET

Since October 1998 there were about 400 visitors to the web site of the Scribe - mainly from the United States but also from:

Commercial Organisation  
Networking Organisation  
Israel  
United Kingdom  
Canada  
Australia  
Organisation, miscellaneous  
Educational institution  
Italy  
Japan  
France  
Belgium  
Ireland  
Denmark  
United Arab Emirates  
Mexico  
Netherlands  
United States ●

I have accidentally decided to check the website that was reported under construction in The Scribe issue of October, 1998 and was delighted to see the wonderful photographs of the late Hakham Ezra Dangoor and others that came crystal clear in my home in Locust Valley, NY. I will do my best to popularise this site among members of our community.

Regards and thanks for your efforts on behalf of our dispersed community.●

**Maurice M. Sawdayee** NY, USA  
e-mail: [m.sawdayee@worldnet.att.net](mailto:m.sawdayee@worldnet.att.net)

This note is to inform you that your site has been listed on the update page to the printed book entitled The Jewish Guide to the Internet written by Diane Romm and published by Jason Aronson.

Your site is noted on the update page located at <http://usc/.org/metny/bellmob/inet2.htm> in the section entitled Electronic Journals.

I would greatly appreciate it if you would consider listing my URL on your site.●

**Diane Romm**  
e-mail: [dromm@ix.netcom.com](mailto:dromm@ix.netcom.com)

I appreciate being able to read The Scribe on the World Wide Web. I had occasionally seen paper copies, which were given to me by my good friend, Stanley Somekh. My late father, Emile Marmorstein was the headmaster of the Shamash School for Boys in Baghdad from 1936-1939. I sometimes have the pleasure of meeting former students of his, but always welcome the sharing of memories by some of his many students and admirers.●

**Rabbi Abraham Marmorstein**  
New York City  
e-mail [Mehadrin@aol.com](mailto:Mehadrin@aol.com)

There is no speech, there is no talking, neither is there voice heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. (Psalm 19)●

I came across a report in a qualified philatelic review, published in Switzerland, called 'La Loupe' - issue 4/1998, which affirmed that the first aerogramme in the world was issued as early as 1933 and by a country not other than Iraq. The article continued in saying that the person who invented and promoted the use of those airmail letter-cards was an Englishman called D.W. Gumbley who was the Postmaster in Baghdad, at that time.

The attached picture shows clearly that a postage of 15 fils (1.5p or 7.5 cents) was good enough to take that letter to any part of the world.

And so, Iraq marked the first page in the history of air-letters while countries such as England and Switzerland issued theirs as late as 1941 and 1962, respectively.

I should admit that the whole thing was a pleasant surprise for me because Iraq has never been a world champion in such a kind of thing or anything else for many centuries. Surprisingly enough, just a few pages apart from that subject in the review I came across a solemn topic marking the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly which came into force on 10th December 1948. Iraq being on the wrong side of Human Rights, all my good feelings disappeared and the whole subject of air letters became nothing, it is a drop of water when we come to a very vital and important subject such as this. I said to myself that Human Rights is not a laughing matter and that Iraq has never been a player on the stage of 'Human Rights' if not a bad one.

Just in 1933, the year when the air letters were issued, there was a massacre of 400 Assyrians (Nestorian Christians). The Ikha' Brotherhood party which closed its doors in 1936 had in its charter clear articles against the minorities. The Iraqi-Anglo treaty of 1930 as well contained no safeguards for minorities.

The anniversary of this sacrosanct Declaration as mentioned in the review gives us a chance to emphasise once again the need for the recognition of fundamental human rights throughout the world; a need that is not always met, at the dawn of the millennium by each single nation. Yet these accords, which are certainly motivated by high ideals, have not been carried out to the letter as is evident from the discriminatory measures, the repeated violence and the violations that take place daily all over the globe.

As with Iraq the respect and protection of Human Rights remained simply a formal but unrealised commitment. The classification given to it by academic research is so low that no honest citizen can look at it if not disheartened, as there is no room left for any further degradation.

In the connection, I find it very appropriate to mention a few paragraphs about how the Talmud, 15 centuries ago, expected from the rulers of the world to do as an obligatory service. 'If the rulers do good and positive things to the country and to the people, they should not take credit for themselves, because that's what they were supposed to do. They should not even take pride in their accomplishments because the fulfilment is their

raison d' être. It is for this purpose that they were elected and brought into doing their jobs. They deserve no thanks for anything they do (sic)! - Surely it is meant here good things. And if they do wrong, surely they have to be accountable for it. They have not the right to be arrogant for their 'good' accomplishments than a bird has for using his wings to fly.' What a gap!

**Edward Yamen**

**Milan**

*Scribe: Our records show that in 1933, at the time of the issue of the Iraqi aerogramme, there were two senior Jewish employees in the Directorate of Post and Telegraphs in Baghdad namely: Joseph Shaul (born 1900) assistant Director-General, and Salim Darzi (born 1897), who later rose to become Director-General of the Department.*

*It is very likely that these two gentlemen played a major part in introducing the aerogramme. Since England herself had not thought of the idea.*

*As regards Iraq and Human Rights, Jews everywhere observed the 20th anniversary of the cruel hanging and torture of Iraqi Jews in 1969, while Saddam was second in command.●*

I am a lecturer in Hebrew and Aramaic at the University of Cambridge. Over the last few years I have been undertaking research on the language and culture of the Jews from Iraqi Kurdistan who have immigrated to Israel. As you no doubt know, these communities still speak dialects of Aramaic, the ancient language of the Jews of Iraq. I was shocked to discover, however, that the Aramaic spoken by these Jewish communities is now in danger of extinction, since only the elderly immigrants to Israel can still speak the language with any fluency. The younger generations now speak almost exclusively Modern Hebrew. On account of this situation, I decided to make a thorough study of the Aramaic language of the Jews of Northern Iraq, while it was still possible to find living informants.

Anyone who is interested to help me in my project, please contact me.

Faculty of Oriental Studies,  
Dr Geoffrey Khan F.B.A.  
University of Cambridge  
[gk101@hermes.cam.ac.uk](mailto:gk101@hermes.cam.ac.uk) ●

جبل ويا جبل ما يتلاقى لكن آدمي  
ويا آدمي يتلاقى

Jabal waya Jabal ma yetlaqa laken admi waya  
admi yetlaqa.  
Men may meet but mountains never.

العبد بالتفكير والله بالتدبير

El abd bel tafkir w'allah bel tadbir  
Man proposes and God disposes.

Freddie Khalastchy adds:

In 1919, Gumbley, a member of the Indian Civil Service, was appointed Director of Post and Telegraphs, and Director of Civil Aviation in Iraq, a position he held until 1934.

Gumbley realised that normal letters carried overland, being of varying weight and dimensions, were expensive for mass use on the newly developing air services from England to the Middle East, and India. Gumbley perceived that a light-weight form of specific size, weight and cost, would allow considerably more letters to be carried on each flight. He set to work, invented and designed an airmail letter card weighting just four grams which he registered at Stationers' Hall in London on 15 February 1933, under his own copyright.

Printed in dark blue by Bradbury Wilkinson, the air letter card included the wording 'nothing must be enclosed herein.' The 15 fils impressed stamp bears a picture of King Faisal I. It was first issued to the public on 15 July 1933.

During the early part of the Second World War, the Australian Government asked Gumbley if he could provide a cheap and rapid means of communication between troops and their families as an aid to maintaining morale. He suggested the adaption and use of his Iraq Air Mail Letter Card. This was readily taken up by the Australian command which proceeded to issue one form to each man every week.

In 1980, the Guernsey Post Office issued special air letter to commemorate the centenary of Gumbley's birth in Guernsey, where he was born.

In his obituary, published in The Times, 9 February 1973, the following was mentioned: 'Douglas William Gumbley, who died at the age of 92, was the inventor and designer of the world's first airmail letter card.'

I enclose a photograph of the air letter of the original I have in my Iraqi collection in which I specialise.●

Can you give us some nice stories and reports on Iraqis on the Internet? Daniel originates from Baghdad and Irene from Holland.●  
**Daniel and Irene Einy Givataim, Israel**  
**c12656@coop.co.il**

Just surfed in The Scribe through the Internet. It is marvellous!!! Please keep up the good work. I want to congratulate you with all my heart.●

**Eli Sawdayee** Israel  
**e-mail: saweli@internet-zahav.net**



*Mausoleum of Sitt Zubaidah*



Iraq  
 1941-1947  
 Die Proofs

De La Rue file sheet bearing imperforate die proofs. Corrections required are marked against some of the proofs. The sheet size is signed by Selim Derzi, on behalf of the Director General of Posts and Telegraphs in Iraq.

*Mausoleum of King Faisal I.*



*Oil Wells.*



THOMAS DE LA RUE & COMPANY  
 LIMITED LONDON

*Samarra Mosque*



for *Salim Darzi*  
 DIRECTOR GENERAL OF  
 POSTS & TELEGRAPHS IRAQ

Above is a picture of the Iraqi postage issue of 1940 approved by Salim Darzi.●  
 (From the Khalastchy collection)

**WHY DOES THE COCK CROW?**

By Salim Khabbaza, Great Neck, NY

Do you know why the cock crows in the morning,  
 Singing a sad note at the break of dawn?  
 It laments that a night has passed off our life-span,  
 But we are oblivious and unaware of what happened.●

أَتَدْرِي لِمَاذَا يُصْبِحُ الدِّيكُ صَاغِحًا  
 يَرْدُدُ لِحْنِ النُّوعِ فِي نَحْوَةِ الصُّبْحِ  
 يَنَادِي لِقَدْرٍ مَرَّتْ مِنَ الْعَمْرِ نَيْلَهُ  
 وَهِيَ أَنْتَ لَا تَعْلَمُ بِذَلِكَ وَلَا تَدْرِي

## Books reviewed by Linda Dangoor-Khalastchi

### THE GIFT OF THE JEWS

How a tribe of Desert Nomads changed the way everyone thinks and feels.

by: Thomas Cahill

Published by Nan A. Talese Doubleday

291 pp. US \$23.50

Thomas Cahill has planned a series of seven books under the title *The Hinges of History*. In it, the author undertakes the ambitious task of relating the story of Western civilisation, the evolution of its beliefs and sensibilities, and how the timely arrival of “gift givers” in its history help to transform and transfigure Western thought.

Volume one was a book entitled “How the Irish Saved Civilisation.” Volume two is called “The Gift of the Jews” with the subtitle “How a tribe of Desert Nomads changed the way Everyone thinks and feels.”

Inviting and catchy titles! Taking us first to Sumer in the 3rd Millennium, Cahill explores the civilisation which preceded Abraham, relating some of its many-told tales including the famous Epic of Gilgamesh and how certain of its mythical elements would find their way in the Bible. Then, he begins the story of Abraham and Sarah, Moses and Miriam, David and Amos etc.... emphasising how visionary and avant-garde Abraham was in “Going Forth.” And how this vision inspired thousands of years later, the Declaration of Independence and progress, in general, in the West.

He talks of the Ten Commandments as a gift allowing us to live in the present, in the here and now: “What I have done in the past is part mending; what I will do in the future is a worry not worth the candle, for there is no way I can know what will happen next. But in the moment... I am in control. This is the moment of choice.”

Also, he describes how the standard of the Ten commandments gives the Israelite history a reliability and a consistency for which “a search in vain in other ancient cultures.”

But he is not all praise. He finds many laws in the Torah “that can only make us wince: “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live” for example, has been used repeatedly in Western history to get rid of inconvenient old women, and the commands in Leviticus to execute homosexuals and burn alive both the perpetrator of incest and his victims are “unlikely to commend themselves to modern ears.”

Thomas Cahill is a marvellous and an original story - teller. His style is engaging and effortlessly erudite. Thought - provoking sentences and quotations such as these: “We are the undeserving recipients of the history of the Jews” and “In a cyclical world, there are neither beginnings nor ends... But... in the book of Genesis, time had a beginning....” That which begins must also end. When will that be?

Make this book a compelling and delectable spiritual voyage.●

### ANATOMY OF THE SPIRIT

by Caroline Myss

Published by Bantam Books

302 pp. £7.99 paperback

With a Master’s degree in theology behind her, Caroline Myss is, today, a healer and a teacher. Before her present occupation, however, she was a coffee-drinking hard-boiled newspaper reporter who, later, got involved in publishing books about alternative therapies and healing. She did this for purely business reasons and had absolutely no desire to meet healers nor to be involved personally in alternative or holistic medicine.

Things change for her when she begins to have insights into people’s illnesses: “... a friend would mention that someone he knew was not feeling well, and an insight into the cause of the problem would pop into my head.” Soon, the word about her talent spread in her local community and people began telephoning her at her publishing company for an “intuitive assessment.” The turning point in her career came when she began to work closely with a neurosurgeon diagnosing patients at a distance (over the telephone), scanning them “intuitively” like an x-ray machine. It involved patients with serious illnesses which conventional medicine had not been able to locate or treat successfully.

Caroline Myss gives us many astonishing examples of this. One of them concerns the accurate diagnosis, over the telephone, of an HIV positive patient for whom she creates a strict healing programme. After 6 weeks, the patient’s blood test is HIV negative and it remains so to this day.

This was the “miracle,” regarded by her as a spiritual experience, which turned her “hobby” into the profession she exercises today.

In the *Anatomy of the Spirit*, Myss shows us how to develop our own latent powers of intuition and to identify and correct an energy imbalance in the body - in her view this results from emotional and existential stresses - which leads eventually to illness. Taking us through three ancient spiritual traditions, the Kabbalah’s Tree of Life the Christian Sacrament and the Hindu chakras, she develops a unique program designed to promote physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.

The book is peppered with examples and fascinating case histories which support her views. Explaining what vitality and energy mean in a healthy body, she puts forward the view... “I am responsible for the creation of my health. I therefore participated, at some point, in the creation of this illness.”

This is contrary, of course, to conventional

medicine which considers the patient as an innocent - virtually powerless - victim who has suffered an unprovoked attack. Caroline Myss empowers us. Healing, she tells us, “requires action, it is not a passive event.”

On the whole, an interesting book with an original chapter on how the Sefirot, Sacraments, and Chakras, work together.●

### CLEAR YOUR CLUTTER WITH FENG SHUI

by: Karen Kingston

£5.99 Paperback, 198 pp. Piatkus.

Clutter! who doesn’t know it? And who hasn’t dealt with it? Everyone of us, at one point or other, has “filed” or “stored” useful things (you know, the type that might come in handy one day...) in boxes, in drawers, in attics, in spare rooms, in garages etc.... and, once out of sight, promptly forgot about them.

There are people who review their clutter from time-to-time, and others who continue to accumulate it over the months and years.

For those of you who want to make a fresh start, to clear up or organise a room, an office space or a whole house - I highly recommend this user-friendly book by Karen Kingston. From the very beginning the word clutter is defined as “Stuck Energy.” The author informs us that the word clutter is derived from the Middle English “clotter” which means to coagulate and “that’s as stuck as you can get!” She goes on to say that “clutter accumulates when energy stagnates and, likewise, energy stagnates when clutter accumulates.” Now that should inspire a few of us to change our ways!

Not only does Kingston analyse what clutter is, enumerating the different kinds and these range from Paper clutter (magazines, clippings, newspapers, letters...), Electronic clutter (useless information on hard discs...), Miscellaneous clutter (unwanted gifts, things which need fixing...), to Emotional clutter (unresolved situations, grievances, guilt...). Mental clutter (gossiping, judging, worrying), and Body clutter (constipation, colon cleansing...), she tells us How to get rid of it, with the help of Feng Shui when it is relevant, and for those who do not know what Feng Shui is, Karen Kingston explains it briefly and simply in the second part of the book.

The process of clearing clutter which is very satisfying and uplifting is, according to her, all about letting go and “not just about letting go of your belongings.. but of the fear that keeps you holding on to them.”

An interesting book which suggests that the accumulation of clutter is an indication that deeper issues have remained unresolved. And of course, the bigger the space, house, flat, office, the more the clutter!●

## ON BEING A JEWISH CHRISTIAN

by Hugh Montefiore

195 pp. £7.99 Paperback. Hodder & Stoughton

Whereas Rabbi Blue fell in love and nearly converted to the Christian faith, Bishop Hugh Montefiore's conversion was sudden and irrevocable. At the age of 16, while sitting idly in his study at Rugby, he saw an apparition. A figure in white coming towards him uttering the words "Follow me." Montefiore tells us that the figure he saw was that of Jesus and that his conversion was simple and immediate and he has never looked back.

Born into a well-known Sephardi family, Hugh Montefiore was brought up in a moderately strict Jewish home. That is to say that High Holidays such as Rosh Hashana, Kippur Pesah etc., were celebrated. So were Bar-Mitzvahs. And the main food taboos were observed. But the family tended to keep "biblical rather than rabbinical Laws." Not that they were members of the Liberal Jewish movement, he hastens to clarify, but it was more a matter of "partial assimilation to English more. We were distinct from non-Jews.... but as an English family we did not distance ourselves too much from the English ethos, which was much a part of our inheritance as our Jewish culture."

Hugh Montefiore was a boarder at Rugby since there was only one other Jewish boy at the school, his father, at great expense, hired someone to go the Rugby every week-end to instruct the two boys in Jewish religious history and thought. At 16 years of age Hugh was an English Jewish boy who could read Hebrew (as he had done his Bar-Mitzvah) and was well versed in the Bible, the Mishna and the Talmud. Then, suddenly, the course of his life changed when he had his conversion experience. "In the morning, I was a Jew and by the evening I was a Christian." He went on to become a Priest and a Bishop in the Church of England.

The book has 10 chapters. The first chapter which deals with the background is called: "On Being Jewish." The following chapters deal with "Jewry in Christendom," "Judaism in relation to Christianity," "Judaism," "Jewish and Christian differences," "The Jews and the Land," "Jewish and Christian Liturgies," "Convergences in ethics," "Jewish Christians," and finally "A Personal View."

After his abrupt conversion, Hugh Montefiore was cut off from the Jewish Community, an event which he regards as natural because, "For a Jew to become a Christian is to go over to the enemy," and because "it is to identify himself with a religion whose adherents have for centuries and centuries conceived an implacable hatred or dislike of their race, and for which they have never apologised."

That is pretty much all that Montefiore says about his conversion. The rest of the book is

partly factual on historical as well as a very controlled comparative study of the two religions, their merits, their wrongs and their rights.

In comparing Judaism with Christianity, which Montefiore does obsessively, one gets the impression that a race is on and that a winner might be announced at some stage. Like a diligent bookkeeper he meticulously records the minuses and the pluses in the right columns never managing to transcend or develop the subject. His account of his Christian experience and his subsequent conversion is a sketchy anecdote that lacks substance. After all, it was a very important event which changed his life dramatically. How did his father feel about it? How did his mother or brothers take it? Did he feel guilty, uneasy? Did he suffer, at all, during these times? We are not told any of this. Hugo Montefiore's book lacks intimacy. He has played it safe avoiding the mines of awkward emotions hiding behind a very well-written and very informative book. Perhaps, it is because he did not give much of himself that I found his chapter on Israel irrelevant. He was pointing the finger at the Israelis for their harsh treatment of Palestinians, and giving them advice on how to behave. More love and understanding was needed, he said - Yes. Perhaps. But I couldn't help thinking that he was "pontificating" that the whole chapter resembled a sermon and that he was finally glad not to be a Jew anymore. That was my impression.

At the end, in his "Personal View," he laments, "It is sad.... large numbers of Jews marry non-Jews, there is assimilation to Christian customs..... sad because a strong Jewish community is an asset to this country....." But forgets that two pages earlier he wrote: "Naturally, I wish that all Jews would become Christians, in Israel and elsewhere..."

Make up your mind!

I will leave you with the questions: Who was this book written for? and, Is Montefiore apologising to his Christian friends for having been born a Jew? Just a thought....●

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## BOOKS RECEIVED:

We were pleased to receive with thanks from Dr. David Khalili, Chairman of the Maimonides Foundation a copy of "One Hand Alone Cannot Clap," presented by Lord Janner, President of the Maimonides Foundation in which he describes his experience in visiting an Arab family in Northern Israel.

The book is intended to promote understanding between Jews and Moslems which is the principal aim of the Maimonides Foundation.●

## MY AFFAIR WITH CHRISTIANITY

by: Lionel Blue

164 pp, £15.99 Hardback. Hodder & Stoughton

Lionel Blue was not your traditional Rabbi. Whenever Rabbi Blue had a lover, (Blue was gay and had the courage to "come out" publicly), he would remain faithful to his partner and not succumb to the temptation of having "extra-marital" affairs. He was, or tried to be, exclusive in sexual matters.

In the spiritual domain, on the other hand he was the reverse. Having been "married" to Judaism all his life, he, nonetheless likens the union to an "arranged marriage", because I had been born into it. I had never chosen it." Rabbi Blue had many "extra-marital" affairs of the spiritual kind, with different philosophies and religions. He had his Marxist affair at the age of 20 followed by the Quaker and the psychoanalytical affairs at Oxford. Then came the Vendantic one where he learned to meditate. There was the Buddhist affair, the Anglo-Catholic affair and finally most importantly his Christian affair where he literally identifies and falls in love with the figure of Jesus, (note that I say Jesus and not Christ). Hence the title of this funny and entertaining book. A gem of a book. A warm and courageously candid account of Rabbi Blue's personal and spiritual journey as a child in the old East End of London, through to his Oxford days, his party days, his rabbinical days etc...

Blue talks about the Holocaust and God, Judaism and Christianity, and his homosexuality. He recounts with sensitivity and humour his near-Baptism and his near-conversion to the Christian faith, as well as his days at the BBC.

Yes! You've guessed it. This book is about a search. A search for a spiritual identity. A search for a spiritual home which does not demand, "as some modern fundamentalism" seem to do covertly or overtly, "the suppression of one's inner doubts and truth, whether psychological or critical."

This marvellous humane book encourages its reader to question rather than to be self-righteous, to regard failure as a positive experience and doubt as an opportunity to finding the right path.

"My Affair with Christianity" manages to combine serious questions with a lightness of touch and much humour.●

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## BOOKS RECEIVED:

Foley

The Spy who Saved 10,000 Jews

by Michael Smith

Published by Hodder & Stoughton, London

Price £20.00 hard back. 357 pp.●

## BOOK REVIEW:

### IN THE BEGINNING

Biblical Creation and Science

by Professor Nathan Aviezer

Reviewed by David Dangoor

As a summary of current scientific knowledge on matters related to the creation this book is a useful, comprehensive and well researched guide. Unfortunately, that is where its usefulness ends.

The essence of the book is to try and fit the words of the Bible around current scientific theory. Sometimes it tries to do this in an ingenious way, sometimes it is far-fetched, but the explanations provided invariably depend on hindsight. It is not good enough to say for example that the expression in the Bible "Let there be light" is intended to be a reference to the Big Bang, because we can only understand this after we know all about the Big Bang from science. This process therefore removes the whole revelational aspect of the Bible, which is there to enlighten us, not to provide text that can be interpreted in so many different ways, that the essence becomes meaningless. What is the purpose of the words of the Bible, if they are so inscrutable that we can only understand them once we have obtained the actual knowledge by other means?

Furthermore, the method in this book can be used on many other texts such as the works of Shakespeare, or the writings of Nostradamus. The whole process demeans the Bible to the level of "Bible Codes" where tenuous sequences of letters are strung together to form words to allude to modern day events.

Despite all this, Professor Aviezer's supporters also want to have it both ways. In the foreword, Professor Cyril Domb, also of Bar Ilan University, says: "This book does not abrogate the traditional freedom to interpret the Bible text figuratively when a literal interpretation gives rise to serious difficulties." Meaning, that when we can make the words fit, it's OK, and when we cannot, we just say the Bible is speaking figuratively.

Bible promoters are on to a loser if they just keep trying to change interpretations of the Bible as scientific theory develops. Far better to do what scientists themselves do when confronted with contradictory phenomena in different fields, which is to acknowledge them without demanding immediate resolution of the contradiction. After all, science and religion are looking at the world in different ways, and ought not to be expected to coincide in a simplistic manner.

Regardless of the criticism above, this book is worth picking up for the illumination it provides and the thoughts it provokes on this fascinating subject.

*Scribe: The wonderful Bible story of Creation deserves to be credited with the benefit of the doubt. Which reminds me of the television debate some 20 years ago of the motion "That God did not exist," at which Lord Hailsham, the Lord Chancellor, defended the existence of God. The motion failed when the voting was 50-50. Which apparently came as a relief for Lord Hailsham.*

*I met Lord Hailsham the next day at a Jewish reception and he was amused when I told him that the Daily Mirror that morning had the banner headline on the front page:*

*GOD IS GIVEN THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT, a clever combination of the legal and theological terms. ●*

## THE QUAGMIRE

by Emil Murad

This is the author's story of his life in Iraq, his daring, illegal immigration to Eretz Israel, and of his early years in the Jewish homeland. He bases much of his story on a diary and memoirs, as well as on historical events in Iraq and in Israel as he experienced and understood them.

The book begins in the 1930's, when Emil lived with his family in an exclusive well-to-do neighbourhood in Baghdad. It was an era when Arabs and Jews co-existed side by side, in the Middle East in relative peace and prosperity. As Emil grew into a young boy, the political situation deteriorated dramatically, culminating into the infamous Pogrom of Rashid Ali. This was the beginning of the end for the ancient Jewish community in Iraq. As the establishment of the state of Israel drew near, more and more Jews fled from increasing oppression in Iraq to the freedom of the Jewish homeland.

The author is especially fascinated by the Kurds of Iraq, and describes his travels into Kurdistan with amazing clarity. The Kurds, like the Jews, yearned for a country of their own in which they could control their own destiny. With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the Jews fulfilled this dream. The Kurds did not, and are brutally oppressed to this day under the rule of Saddam Hussein.

In this book, Emil Murad shares honestly and without censorship his knowledge, experiences, and insights along with his innermost thoughts, dreams, hopes and fears. It is a delightful and informative book, worthy reading both for those who wish to learn more about Middle East history, and for those who simply wish to be entertained. Either way, the reader will not be disappointed.

Copies can be obtained from the author:

Emil Murad

P.O. Box 20790

Tel-Aviv 61207

Israel

Price: \$40 including air mail. ●

In your review of "Kosher Sex" by Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, you wrote regarding the myth of Orthodox Jews having sexual relations through a sheet:

"Regretfully, Boteach does not explain how and from where this "myth" originated. Should he know the answer, the Scribe would be very happy to publish it."

The myth apparently came about when non-Jews and non-informed Jews saw a Tallit Katan or Tzizit (a four cornered garment with a hole in the centre where it goes over the head and fringes attached at the corners) hanging on the clothesline of Orthodox Jews. They assumed this "sheet" was used for sexual relations, as Orthodox Jews were probably thought of as being prudish and not passionate about sex.

It is of course a myth, and Orthodox Jews do not have relations through a sheet. ●

**Shmuel and Shoshana Arnold Israel**  
**darnold@aquanet.co.il**

## BRITAIN AND THE HOLOCAUST

The Holocaust Educational Trust recently published a booklet covering the following subjects:

Britain and the Jews;

Britain and Nazi Germany 1933-39;

British - Jewish Responses;

Britain and the Jewish Refugees;

British Jews and the Refugees;

Wartime 1939-45;

Internment;

Knowledge about the 'Final Solution'.

Responses to the Mass Murder of Jews;

Britain and Palestine, 1939-45;

British Jewish Responses;

The Nazi Occupation of the Channel Islands;

Aftermath and Liberation;

Dealing with the Survivors;

Dealing with the perpetrators;

Memory and History.

The picture that emerges is Britain's complacency and indifference concerning Germany's evil intentions and exterminations of the Jews of Europe. ●

My parents receive The Scribe journal at their home in Connecticut. As a 37 year old, and having been brought up with Iraqi-Jewish upbringing, I find your articles and features intriguing and interesting. I suspect there are many in my age bracket who are beginning to rediscover their heritage and dig deeper into their parents past.

I am writing to you today to let you know about the sad passing away of my mother Violet Battat. since she was active in Arab-Israeli and proud Iraqi Jew, I am hoping you can print a summary of her life in your next journal. Here are the details as they appeared in various obituaries:

Battat - Violet Battat, died October 8, 1998, 19th Tishrei. Ramat Gan, Israel. Born in 1928 in Baghdad, Iraq. Violet Battat led a flourishing career in Israel spanning over 40 years in journalism, radio and public service. She was host of a renowned radio programme, broadcasted from Israel and was heard through the Middle East for over 25 years. The programme was dedicated to women featuring interviews with influential personalities on topics and content for advancement of women's issues around the world. She received mail from listeners in many countries including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Kuwait and others through a mail box set in Switzerland. Mrs Battat was a contributor in nurturing Arab-Israeli understanding. She published articles on women's issues and Arab-Israeli relations. She was an active member of the Jewish organisation NAAMAT (Working Women organisation), and was its Arab division head. Attended many delegations, symposiums and provided tireless volunteer work. With homes in both Israel and Connecticut, she is survived by her husband, Abraham Battat, children Eitan and spouse, Oded and spouse, Tamir and spouse, Efrat, and 10 grandchildren. As a leader to the family and the community, she will be greatly missed. ●

**Tamir Battat Woodbridge, CT, USA**  
**e-mail: talene1@aol.com**

Mr Yeheskel Kojaman who prepared and published a Hebrew-Arabic Dictionary in 1970, has now prepared an enlarged edition containing some 150,000 words on which the editor spent long days of hard work to produce such a useful reference book running to some 1731 pages.

This volume is ready to go to the printers and adjoining is a sample page (reduced) of the dictionary. We wish Mr Kojaman every success in his endeavour.

Naim Dangoor discovers an old Hebrew word: At the time of the first Exile in 506 B.C.E., Hebrew had ceased to be the spoken language of the Jews, which was Aramaic. But the Rabbis and Scribes treated every word of the Bible with such reverence that even when they thought there was a spelling mistake, every word was transcribed as it was handed down with a footnote denoting a possible discrepancy.

Such an instance occurs in Psalms No: 127 verse 2 which is translated as 'so he giveth his beloved sleep.' The corresponding Hebrew word for 'sleep' is שָׁנָא which was thought to be a misprint of the word שָׁנָה which was also the case in the Greek septuagint translation - the source of all Western translations. However, שָׁנָא is a Hebrew word in its own right which means 'in sleep.' This is a construction of the word which has long been forgotten. It should be revived and used with many other words. it corresponds in a similar inflexion in Arabic.

Let us hope that Mr Kojaman will make use of this discovery and incorporate it in his dictionary.

Kojaman
116 Hanover Road, London NW10 3DP

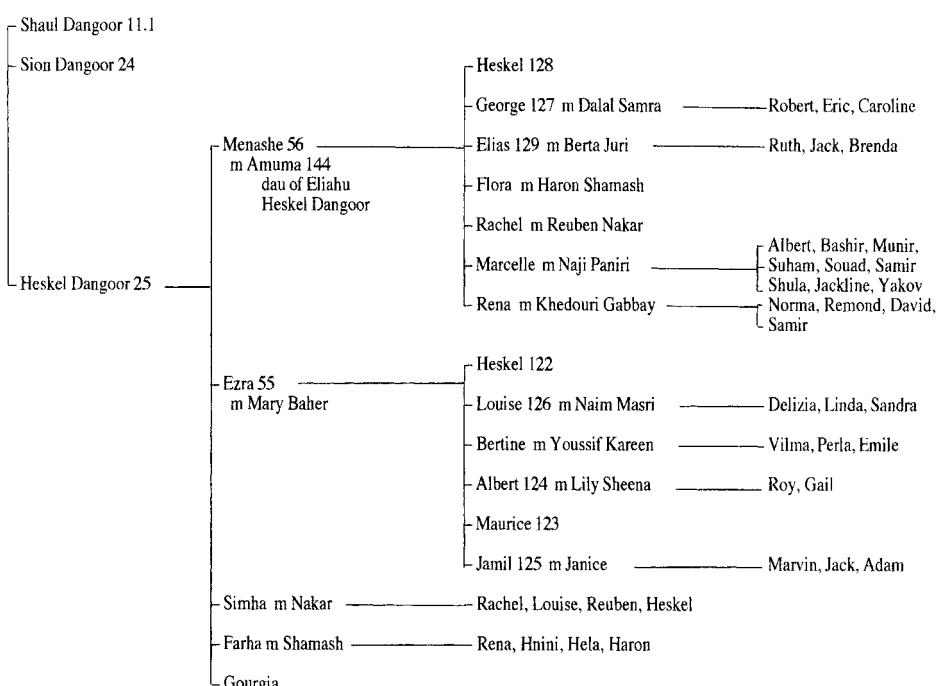
שָׁרִיטוּת : רֶסֶם, תַּחְפִּיט, מֻחַפֵּט
שָׁרִיטוּת מְטוּרָה טַפְטוּפָה, מְטוּרָה עַל שִׁכְל T
שָׁרִיטוּן : חָרָה רְמִיָּה, מְרַתֵּעַ רְמִי, תְּרַסָּת רְמִיָּה
שָׁרִיטוּן חוֹל מְרַתֵּעַ רְמִי
עֵלָה עַל שָׁרִיטוּן גִּנַּח (הַמְרָכֵב), גִּבְיָהּ שְׂמוּבַת
שָׁרִיטוּנִית : מְרַתֵּעַ רְמִי שְׁמִיר
שָׁרִיטוּת : רֶסֶם, חֶפְטָה, שִׁמֵּם, שִׁטֵּר, שֹׂרֵר (בַּלְרֶסֶם אוֹ
הַזֵּית)
שָׁרִיטוּת חֶפְטָה, רֶסֶם, שִׁמֵּם, שִׁטֵּר
הַמְרַטוּת תַּחְפִּיט, אֲרֶסֶם, שִׁמֵּם
שָׁרִיטוּת : מֻחַפֵּט, מְסָם, זֶאֶב מְחַפְטָה, רְסָם הִנְדְּסִי
שָׁרִיטוּתוֹת : תַּחְפִּיט, תַּחְפִּיט, רֶסֶם הִנְדְּסִי, וַשֵּׁב
מְחַפְטָה

שָׁרִיטוּת : דַּלֵּם לְתַעְמִים (נֵבֶת)
שָׁרִיטוּן : דְּרֵעַ, דְּרֵעַ הַחַיִּוּן, פְּרָוֵת מְשַׁחֶה, מְדַרְעָה
בֵּית סִפָּר לְשָׁרִיטוּן מְדַרְעַת מְדַרְעֵת
גְּדוּד (חַטִּבָּת) שָׁרִיטוּן קְטִיבָה (לְוֵא) מְדַרְעֵת
שָׁרִיטוּן חֶזֶה דְּרֵעַ הַשֹּׁדֵר
שָׁרִיטוּן פֶּבֶד מְדַרְעָה נְעִילָה
שָׁרִיטוּן לוחוֹת מְשַׁחֶה, מְדַרְעָה בַּשִּׁפְחָיִחַ
שָׁרִיטוּן קְשָׁקְשִׁים הַמְרֻזָּדָה, דְּרֵעַ מִן זְרֵד
חִיל שָׁרִיטוּן סֵלַח הַמְדַרְעֵת
מְכַוֵּנֵת שָׁרִיטוּן סִיפָּרָה מְשַׁחֶה
מְבַקֵּעַ שָׁרִיטוּן חֶרְפֵּי הַמְדַרְעֵת
נָזִישׁ שָׁרִיטוּן חַמֵּל הַדְּרֵעַ (נֹאֵב יִחְמַל דְּרֵעַ הַמַּחֲבָר)
קִצִּיז שָׁרִיטוּן שֶׁאֵיב מְדַרְעֵת
שָׁרִיטוּן : נְדִיב, תַּחְפִּיט, תַּחְפִּיט בִּדְרֵעַ, וְקִיבָה, תְּחִיבָה,
תְּחִיבָה
שָׁרִיטוּן שְׂגוּם תְּדִיב בְּמִשְׁכָּת חַדִּיבָה
שָׁרִיטוּן סָרָט (חִיל) תְּדִיב בְּשַׁפְחָיִחַ (בַּשִּׁלָּח)
שָׁרִיטוּן סְכִימִים נְבָרִים לְהַקְמִחַ בֵּית חוֹלִים תַּחְפִּיט
מִבֵּלַע כְּבוֹדָה לְאַמֵּת מְשַׁחֶה
שָׁרִיטוּן מְקוֹם עָבְדוּהָ לְחִיל תֹּאמֵר עֵמֶל לְגַנְדִּי
שָׁרִיטוּנָא : חַדִּיב מְדַרְעֵת, אֶחָד אַרְבָּע הַפְּרָוֵת הַמְשַׁחֶה
שָׁרִיטוּנִים : נֹוֵעַ מִן הַסֵּמֶל הַשַּׁחֲלִי (מוֹיָוֹד בִּי זֵבֵלָת)
שָׁרִיטוּנִית : סִיפָּרָה מְשַׁחֶה, עַרְבֵי מְדַרְעָה
שָׁרִיטוּנִית סִיפָּר עַרְבֵי אִסְטִלָּע מְדַרְעָה
שָׁרִיטוּת : חַדִּשׁ, חֶרֶץ, גְּרָח, בְּשֵׁחַ, תְּשְׁרִיט, תְּשְׁטִיב
שָׁרִטוּן : דְּרֵעַ
שָׁרִטוּן : מִנֵּן אֲוֵל בִּי הַגִּנְאָה הַיְמָעִי
שָׁרִטוּן : שֶׁחַח, דְּרֵעַ, חָנָן, וָקֵי, תִּבֵּת, גְּמַד, אָמֵן, כִּפֵּל
הַשְׂמִירוֹן תְּדֵרַע, לִישׁ דְּרַעָה, תֹּאמֵן, תְּגַמַּד
שָׁרִיטוּת : אִנְיָח, תְּמַדַּד, אִנְיָסָה, תְּשַׁחֵם, תּוֹשֵׁעַ
שָׁרִיטוּת : מַדָּ, בְּשִׁטָּה, הָטֵלָה, תְּמַדִּיד, תּוֹשִׁיעַ, אִסְטִלָּעָה,
אִנְיָח
שָׁרִיטוּת הַשְׂחִל הַחֹדוֹל וְהַנְּבִיד (טֵב) תַּחְפִּיט הַטְּחָל וְהַכֵּיֶד
שָׁרִיטוּת הַלְשׁוֹן (טֵב) כִּיבֵר הַלְּשָׁן, שְׂחֲמָה הַלְּשָׁן
שָׁרִיטוּת הַמְעִי הַגָּס (טֵב) כּוֹלוֹן עָרְטָל, כּוֹלוֹן

שָׁרִיטוּתוֹת : חֶמָשׁ, חֶדוּשׁ, כְּתִיר הַחֲדָשׁ
שָׁרִיטוּת : חֶרֶץ, חֶרֶץ, חֶרֶץ, חֶדֶשׁ, בְּשֵׁחַ
שָׁרִיטוּת : מְכֹאֵן מְטַפֵּי הַמַּאֵה, בְּרִכָּה מַאֵה שְׂפִירָה
שָׁרִיטוּת : (אַרְמִיָּה) מְגִיז, מְשִׁיב, מְרַחֵם, מְחַרְרֵם, מְפִיֵק
שָׁרִיטוּת : מְגָז, מְבֵיחַ, מְסוּחַ בֵּה, מְרַחֵם
רִבִּי לֶךְ שָׁרִיטוּת וְלֵי אִסְרוּ? סִידִי אֵלֶּךְ מְבֵיחַ וְלֵי
מְנוּחָה? נֶדֶד מַאֲתַשֵּׁחַ בֵּה!
שָׁרִיטוּת : שָׂרִי, חֶמֶר הַסְּבִיבָה הָאֶשְׁל
שָׁרִיטוּת פְּרַנְדִּי : שָׂרָב כְּחֹלִי מְנוּחַ מִן עַשִּׂיר הַכְּרִז
שָׁרִיטוּת שֵׁם רְשָׁעִים יִרְבֶּב שַׁחֶף לְאַשְׁרָא!
שָׁרִיטוּת : חֶרֶץ, חֶרֶץ, חֶרֶץ, חֶרֶץ, חֶרֶץ, חֶרֶץ
שָׁרִיטוּת : חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר (חֶסוּסָה לְעַנְבֵּן), אֵמֶלוד, שְׁמֵרוּחַ
שָׁרִיטוּת : מְשִׁיב, שְׂפִירָה, שְׂפִירָה, תְּשִׁיבָה, תְּשִׁיבָה
שָׁרִיטוּת : מְשִׁיבָה, מְשִׁיבָה, מְשִׁיבָה, מְשִׁיבָה, מְשִׁיבָה, מְשִׁיבָה
שָׁרִיטוּת : חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר
שָׁרִיטוּת : חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר
שָׁרִיטוּת : חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר
שָׁרִיטוּת : חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר
שָׁרִיטוּת : חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר, חֶמֶר

Appendix to Dangoor Family Tree

Tree published in The Scribe no.68. Additional details supplied by Perla Yehuda



BOOKS by: Meer S. Basri

A new book in Arabic has now been published by Meer S. Basri in London and Beirut: 'The National Movements in Arab Countries and Their Leaders.' This book and other publications by Mr Basri may be obtained from London Arabic bookshops, Al-Saqi, Al-Warrack and Al-Rafid, etc.

Al-Warrack Bookshop
132 Hammersmith Road
London W6 7JP
Tel: 0181 748 7500

Al-Rafid Distributing and Publishing
348A Harrow Road
Paddington
London W9 2HR
Tel: 0171 266 4342

Dar al-Hikma
88 Chalton Street
London NW1 1HJ
Tel: 0171 383 4037

## BOOKS RECEIVED:

### THE JEWS OF IRAQ (In Arabic)

From the Babylonian Captivity to the Mass Exodus of 1951

by Nissim Rejwan

Introduction by Prof. Shmuel Moreh

Published by, Association for Jewish Academics from Iraq, Jerusalem 1998

By the same author (in English)

### The Jews of Iraq -

### 3,000 years of History and Culture

Published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London

Commissioned by the late David and Irene Sala.

### Association for Jewish Academics from Iraq

Dr. David Sala's Library

for Jewish Authors from Iraq

POB 1147, Mevasseret Jerusalem 90805, Israel  
Tel & Fax: 972-2-5341044

The Association for Jewish Academics from Iraq was established in July 1980. This is a scientific, social and literary association, which is non-political and non-profit making. Its purpose is to enable the publication of scientific and literary works and research on the Jews of Iraq, as well as co-operation with academic associations for the furtherance of the interests of Jewish academics from Iraq.

### HONORARY PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION:

Mr George Elias,

Members of the Board of Directors:

Prof. Shmuel Moreh, Chairman; Adv. Shaul Bar-Haim, Deputy; Yahizkael Fattal, Acting Chairman;

Dr. Yosef Gabbay, Honorary Accountant; Editorial Board: Dr. Nissim Qazzaz, and David Sagiv.

Naim Netanel Halbi, Secretary.

Members of the Board: Mrs Esperance Cohen;

Prof. Menasheh Ben David; Abraham Kahila.

Accountants: Mr Zadoq Halevi and Mrs Dalia Ma'yan.

### Publications:

1. Adv. Anwar Shaul, The Story of my Life in Mesopotamia (Memoirs), Jerusalem, 1980, 352 pages.

2. Dr. Salman Darwish, All Quiet in the Surgery, (Memoirs), Jerusalem, 1981, 256 pages with plates.

3. Shmuel Moreh, Short stories by Jewish Writers from Iraq, 1924-1978, Edited with Introduction in English, Hebrew and Arabic by Shmuel Moreh, Jerusalem, The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1981.300,39,38 pages.

4. Anwar Shaul, ... And a New Dawn Broke (Poems), Jerusalem, 1983, 184,8 pages.

5. Isaac Bar-Moshe, A House in Baghdad, Jerusalem, 1983, 420 pages.

6. Meer S. Basri, Eminent Jewish Men of Modern Iraq, (Biographies), vol. 1, Jerusalem, 1983, 114.

7. Samir Naqqash, The Chilly People, A Play, Jerusalem-Shfar Am, 1990, 158 pages.

9. Abraham Ovadia, A Cry from the Abolished Iraqi Regime, Poems, Jerusalem-Shfar Am,

1990, 112 pages.

10. Abraham Ovadia, The Confused Thirst, Poems, Jerusalem-Shfar Am, 1990, 96 pages.

11. Meer S. Basri, Songs of Love and Eternity, Poems, Jerusalem, 1991, 270 pages.

12. Meer S. Basri, Life's Journey from the Banks of the Tigris to the Valley of the Thames, Reminiscences and Thoughts, Jerusalem, 1991, 270 pages.

13. Meer S. Basri, Eminent Jewish men of Modern Iraq, (Biographies), vol. 11, Jerusalem, 1993, 131.

14. Samir Naqqash, Prophecies of a Mad Man in a Cursed City, Short Stories, Jerusalem, 1995, 150.

15. Gila Yona-Swery and R. Rajwan, Dictionary of Iraqi Judeo-Arabic Dialect, Jerusalem, 1995, 348 pages.

16. Shmuel Moreh, The Tree and the Branch, Studies in Modern Arabic Literature and Contributions of Iraqi-Jewish Writers, Selected and Edited by Olga Bramson, Jerusalem, Magnes, 1997, 414 pages.

17. Shmuel Moreh, Those were the Days of Love and Youth, Jerusalem, 1998.

18. Nissim Rejwan, Arabs and Jews, Retrospect and Prospects, Jerusalem, 1998.

19. Nissim Rejwan, The Jews of Iraq: From the Babylonian Captivity to their Emigration of 1951, Jerusalem, 1998.●

## HANNUKAH HEAT AND LIGHT

by Shlomo Riskin

Hannukah is undoubtedly one of the most widely observed holidays in the Jewish calendar. Interestingly enough, however, its historical roots are almost frightening.

The historian Josephus proves fairly conclusively that a military battle began as a civil war of Jew against Jew, with a group of devoted religionists fighting against the upper class Jewish aristocracy which were leading Judea toward Hellenization and apostasy. It was the wealthy and intellectual Jewish leadership who brought in the Greek Syrians when it appeared as though the religious Hasmoneans were winning; it didn't help, because the religionists won anyway.

What I found most fascinating is that our Sages completely muted the 'civil war' character of the initial battles. They even intensified their apparent opposition to the thought of Jew lifting up sword against Jew, by making the symbol of the festival not an implement of war, but rather the menorah lights of warmth and peace. Fire destroys; light illuminates. Fire diminishes and ultimately obliterates whatever it devours; light especially the Hannukah lights which grow from one to eight, cumulatively include more and more.

In these fateful times of tensions, - tragically also between Jew and Jew - we must learn from the candles of the menorah - to offer light rather than heat, to include rather than exclude, and to bring the warmth of love rather than the fire of destruction. Ohr Torah Stone will always do everything in its power to bring the light, warmth and love of Torah to as many human beings as possible.●

Dear Mr Dangoor

At the request and with the compliments of my Uncle Abraham, who resides in Israel, I take pleasure in sending you a copy of his recently published poetry book: 'Wuroud Shaika', which I trust you will enjoy reading.

It goes without saying, I am one of the numerous admirers of the superb work you are putting into the 'Scribe' and would like to congratulate you for this excellent publication.●

London

Edward Obadia

## BOOKS RECEIVED:

The Poetic Works (in Arabic), of Abraham Obadia (Thorny roses).●

## فرد وكتاب

يسر رابطة الجامعيين اليهود ان تنشر ديوان «ورود شانكة» وهو الديوان الحادي عشر لأمبر الشعراء اليهود النازحين من البلاد العربية والذين ينظمون باللغة العربية في اسرائيل.

بدأ الشاعر ابراهيم عوبيدي نشاطه الأدبي في العراق في العهد الملكي. فقد نظم الشعر وكتب المقالات الأدبية والنقدية ونشر أول ديوان له «خضات قلب» في بغداد عام ١٩٤٥، أُرده بدواوينه الغنائية والرومانتيكية وقام بنشر خمسة دواوين حتى عام هروبه من العراق الى ايران. ثم قدم الى اسرائيل، فلم يشارك في الحركة الشعرية والأدبية في اسرائيل الى عام ١٩٧٧ حين نشر ديوانه المتغائل الذي يدعو الى السلام «أخي ستشرق الشمس» (الناصر، مطبعة الحكيم ١٩٧٧). وأُرده ديوان «امراة في شعري» (١٩٨٠)، فلم يلتفت اليه النقاد لعراقيتته العربية ولمسكه بالوزن والقافية والتعبير بواسطة الفكرة لا الصورة الشعرية، ولحافظته على روح الشعر العربي الرومانتيكي.

وقد قامت رابطة الجامعيين بنشر ديوانين له وهما «الظلم الحائر» و«صبيحة من عراق العهد البائد». تعلق ابراهيم عوبيدي بالعراق وماضيه وما زال يتكلم بلهجة المسلمين العراقيين وينظم الأغاني العراقية باللهجة العراقية الاسلامية وهي تلحن وتغنى من دار الأقامة الاسرائيلية من قبل الملحنين والمغنيين العراقيين في اسرائيل. وهو مثال لليهودي العراقي الذي يأبى التحلي عن ثقافته وماضيه، وهو يحب العراق ويتغنى به ويحن الى أيامه السعيدة الماضية بالرغم من بلوغه الرابعة والسبعين من العمر، وما زال يحلم بزيارته. مد الله من عمره ومتعنا بانتاجه الادبي وقصائده الرائعة.

## البروفيسور شموئيل موريه

رئيس رابطة الجامعيين اليهود النازحين من العراق

## CHARITY

My younger son told me the other day: 'Daddy, I think you are reserving too much for charity, after all, we are commanded to pay only ten percent.'

'No, my son,' I replied. 'I am not reserving too much. First, think who gave the hundred in the first place! And in the Commandment to pay 10 out of a hundred, there is a hidden promise that not many have discovered! Namely, that if you pay ten you get back one hundred. Ergo, if you pay twenty you get back two hundred.'●





יושבים (מימין לשמאל): חי מריומה, השליח ר' יהושע פאלאצי, נחום יצחק הלוי, משה שמעון, אהרן חיו חמו, השליח יוסף חיים שרים, משה ראובן שובי, חכם יחיא חמו, עבד קפצ'ון, חכם סלימאן ב"ר אליהו ברזאני, צאלח עבדאל-נביא. עומדים (בשורה השנייה): משה חיו חמו, ברוך זאכוי, יחיא פריח, חכם דוד שלם, צמח שובי, רחמים אל-מוכתר, יחיא שמש, יהודי מהעיירה דהון. עומרים (בשורה השלישית): שאול נגילה, חיים יוסף, נחום חיים, חכם חיים ברזאני, עבד-אללה אל-חלוצי, אסתא עבד, דוד ששון, חכם אליהו אל-זעיר, דוד סלמאן (מדהור).

**1930 - Leaders of the Jewish Community of Mosul with two emissaries from Israel:**

*From right to left: Seated: Haya Marioma; the envoy Rabbi Yehushua Palatchi; Nahome Itzhak Halevi; Moshi Shimeon; Aharon Hayou Hammou; the envoy Rabbi Joseph Haim Shrem; Moshi Reuben Shubi; Hakham Yahya Hammou; Abed Qafson; Hakham Sulaiman Ben Rabbi Elyahou Barazani; Saleh Abdel-Nabi. Second row: Standing: Moshe Hayou Hammou; Baroukh Zakhawi; Yahya Fraich; Hakham Daweed Shalom; Semah Shoubi; Rahamim el-Mukhtar; Yahya Shemash; a Jew from Dehok. Backrow: Shaoul Nghoula; Hayim Yoseph; Nahome Hayim; Hakham Hayim Barazani; Abdalla Halwatchi; Esta Abed; Daweed Sasson; Hakham Elyahou el Zeghayer; Daweed Salman (from Dehok). From: The Travelling Envoy Rabbi Joseph Haim Shrem in two volumes by: Dr. Abraham Ben-Yaacob Published in Jerusalem, 1998*

**SAINTS SHOULD NOT TELL LIES**

Many Jewish groups were outraged at the plan to beatify Pope Pius XII who remained silent about the Holocaust and could have saved at least one million Jews during W.W.II. Father Gumpel of the Vatican said 'I would not be surprised if it (the criticism) led to a rise of anti-Semitic feeling as many Catholics feel insulted by these attacks.' Is this statement not an incitement to anti-Semitism by the Church??

In a document issued in March 1998, the Pope apologised for the failure of many Catholics to protect Jews but defended the policy of Pius XII who, he said helped some thousands of Jewish lives (!) and remained silent only out of fear that more Jews would be killed if he publicly criticised the Nazis.

More Jews would have been killed?! More than how many? It is a known fact that the Nazis killed the maximum they could per day.

I am confused. Please, Scribe, help me to understand!  
**Albert Khabbaza, MD Great Neck, NY**

*Scribe: In 1939, Pius XII made a concordat with Hitler that gave him a free hand concerning the Jews, on condition that he did not attack the Catholic Church. Pius XII saved 800 Jewish children merely as a camouflage.*

**Bruno Schulz: a Chronology**

This narrative is based on the life of Bruno Schulz, a Polish Jew born in 1892. In 1941, he was protected by a Nazi officer, Felix Landau, as a useful Jew. Bruno was engaged in cataloguing books for the Nazis in order that those the Nazis considered worthwhile may be exported to Germany.

In 1942, Landau shot a Jew under the protection of a rival officer. This officer takes advantage of what later become known as 'Black Thursday' when 150 Jews were killed in retaliation for the shooting of a Nazi officer, to search Bruno out and shoot him twice in the head. 'You shot my Jew, so I shot yours.'

This shows how the Nazi German beasts felt free to treat the Jews as chattel. In 1957, Bruno's stories are reissued in Polish and translated into German and French and begin to find an international readership.

*Scribe: The above story reminds us of when the government of Iraq in the 50's refused to grant visas to Italian Jewish tourists, the Italian Government, in retaliation, decreed that no Iraqi Jews would be granted Italian visas. The idea being, 'you discriminate against our Jews, we discriminate against your Jews.' In both cases it is the Jews who suffer the punishment.*

Sir, You report in your issue No: 70 that a Reform Rabbi has recommended the combining of Yom Hashoah and Tisha B'Av. Your readers will be relieved to know that the official view of this movement, as articulated by its Chief Executive Rabbi Tony Bayfield, is that the unique and evil consequences of the Shoah must continue to be marked independently of our other tragedies. The Sternberg Centre for Judaism houses a Shoah memorial in its grounds where services of commemoration take place each year and will continue so to do.

Anyone who wishes to visit it at any time is welcome to call on us.

World history post 1945 tells us that no nation has a monopoly on bestiality, but the systematic slaughter-house tactics of Nazism remain as an unparalleled assault on one section of society on a world-wide basis. The victims of that monstrous crime deserve their own moment of remembrance.

**Barry Hyman London**

Please add my parent's name Jacob and Shoshana Rimon, Florida, on your mailing list preferably the Hebrew edition.

*Scribe: The Journal does not get published in Hebrew. We have put your parents on the mailing list.*

**Abraham Rimon U.S.A.**

صدر مؤخرًا في لندن كتاب جديد من تأليف  
 مير بصري عنونه "اعلام الوطنية والقومية العربية"  
 وهذا يتناول فلسفة الوحدة أو الاتحاد العربي  
 وتأريخ الحركات الوطنية في الشمال الأفريقي وعصر  
 وسورية العراق وجزيرة العرب وتراجم رجالها  
 ورؤساء الثورة العراقية الكبرى سنة ١٩٤٠ .  
 يمكن الحصول على هذا الكتاب وسائر  
 مؤلفات مير بصري من المكتبات العربية في لندن  
 وبيروت وسائر الأقطار العربية .  
 اعلام اليهود في العراق الحديث (جزآن)  
 اعلام السياسة  
 اعلام الادب (جزآن والثالث تحت الطبع)  
 اعلام الكرد  
 اعلام الترمكان والادب التركي في العراق الحديث  
 رحلة العمر (مذكرات)  
 اخفى الحب والخلود (شعر)  
 نفوس ظالمة (قصص ومرحيات)  
 شخص بغدادية  
 اعلام النقطه الفكرية (طبعة ثمانية)  
 نزهة المشتاق في تاريخ يهود العراق (تأليف  
 يوسف خنيمه مع عاتق بتأريخ يهود العراق  
 في القرن العشرين ونظرة مجمله في الدين  
 اليهودي بقلم مير بصري .



Al-Ahwar  
 During the visit to the marshes in southern Iraq in 1966, Ramzi Loya is seen standing in front of the boats  
 (Mashaheef) and huts of the inhabitants. A beautiful scene of Palm trees in the background.●

#### BOOKS RECEIVED:

Jewish Customs of Baghdad (in Hebrew), in 3  
 volumes  
 by Dr. Abraham Ben-Yaacob  
 Edited by: The Bne Issakhar Institute,  
 Jerusalem 1993●

#### THE ISRAELI CENTRE FOR SCIENTIFIC-TECHNOLOGICAL TERMINOLOGY

Ramat-Gan - Chairman, Dr. Ezra H. Nuriel

Dr. Abraham Ben-Yaacob is recognised to be  
 one of the thoroughgoing outstanding and  
 precise researchers of the Jewish Babylonian  
 community from a thousand years ago to the  
 present time.

Dr. Ben-Yaacob has published 38 books and  
 has acquired, attained and earned the  
 honourable recognition of the historic scientific  
 community, he won many awards including the  
 honourable presidential award.

His latest book, is a three-volume book, its  
 subject is:  
 Babylonian Jewish Customs.

Part one includes the following subjects:

1. Prayer and synagogues;
2. Shabbat and Rosh Hodesh;
3. High Holy days;
4. Festivals;
5. The three weeks and fast days;
6. Bibliography.

Part two includes the following subjects:

1. Jewish annual life in Babylon;
2. Customs regarding Brit Mila, Pidion Ha-Ben  
 (Redemption of the first born), and Bar-  
 Mitzvah;
3. Marriage and divorce.
4. The Jewish family and the Jewish  
 homemaker;
5. Death, Burial and Bereavement;
6. Miscellaneous;
7. Bibliography.

Part three includes the following subjects:

1. Miscellaneous Jewish Babylonian customs;
2. Customs surrounding Ceremonial meals and  
 banquets;
3. Clothing and Jewellery;
4. Furniture and dish ware;
5. Blessings, curses and oaths;
6. Folk songs and other various songs;
7. Bibliography.●

#### BOOKS RECEIVED:

Another 1001 Baghdad Proverbs  
 by Moshe Hakham  
 Printed in Israel

This book is a follow up to the editor's earlier  
 volume 1001 Baghdad Proverbs. The proverbs  
 are given in Arabic and Hebrew with some  
 translations into English and French.

This topic has been very popular in Israel  
 recently and there have been several  
 publications which give an insight into the  
 culture of Babylonian Jewry. ●

## BOOK REVIEW

### Babylonian Jewish Customs

#### Vol. I & II out of III

by Dr. Abraham Ben-Yaacob

Reviewed by: Mrs L. Levy

This book describes the Jewish annual life in Babylon in the last generations. One example which illustrates the tradition is birth and the celebrations which follow.

Until W.W.I all births were handled by midwives at home. The first Jewish hospital in Baghdad was opened in 1910. The midwife was respected, very well paid and received a lot of gifts.

#### Pregnancy (HABAL)

When a woman became pregnant her parents sent her a big tray of sweets and goodies like: LOOZINA (Quince confectionery)

KAND (Loaf sugar)

HALKUN (Turkish delight)

MLABAS (sugared almond)

KIZIBRA (dried coriander)

and also small items of Jewellery.

The pregnant woman had to be supplied with all the food she desired. She was not allowed to scratch any part of her body, because scratching would produce a child with birth mark.

At the start of the seventh month of the pregnancy, the women starts to sew the baby's clothes. When the nine months commences, her parents would send her 10 kg of rice, one rooster and two hens.

One hen "KAPARA" for an easy birth. A rooster "KAPARA" for a boy. Another hen "KAPARA" for a girl. Rice was cooked with pieces of chicken, almonds and raisins and sent to friends and family.

A rice dish was cooked and given to the poor.

After the Birth the mother's mother took care of her daughter for forty days and helped her with all her tasks.

On the fifth day after the birth the midwife came home and sewed small packages filled with items which were considered helpful against the evil eye. Items as: garlic, little buttons in blue azure (DIHASHE), blue beads and muschel (WADA).

These small packages together with plates of sweets were sent to family and friends houses.

Forty days after the birth the midwife took the baby to the "Linen Bazaar" and showed him around so that no evil spirit would enter him (KABSA).

A boy was preferred to a girl. The reasons were: It is easy to marry off a son and he received a dowry; The son carries the family surname for ever. There is an old saying: "The son of your son is your son, the son of your daughter is not;" When the parents got old, their son supported them.; The son says "KADISHE."

For all the above reasons, when a son was born there was joy and many celebrations. And when a girl was born it was a big disappointment.

The first celebration for a boy and the only one for a girl is called:

The sixth night - SIT1.

There was a big celebration and a feast on the sixth night after the birth. A crockery dish was smashed. Into every piece Saffron water was poured. Young boys took the pieces and threw them onto the yard's floor and shouted "SHASHA" "SHASHA."

There was a band of singers with drums and flutes. Everybody danced and sang. The most common food was popcorn (THOUGHHA) which is called also "SHASHA," since there is no sixth night celebration without it. The midwife put her finger in Saffron and made a spot on the baby's and mother's forehead against the evil eye.

Trays with sweets were sent to family and friends houses.

When a SITI was organised for a girl, the midwife announced the chosen name. Usually the girl was called after one of the grandmothers who died.

For the SITI the mother's parents sent gifts for the baby: gold bracelet with little bells to wear on the ankle, or a gold palm (KHAMSA).

Another celebration was the ALIYAH LATORAH.

On Shabbat before the circumcision (Brit Mila) the father's father was called up to the reading of the Torah.

In the Synagogue a band sang verses from the Torah and poems. The women sang "HILIHIL" and threw candies and flowers.

After the Synagogue a feast was served at home.

There was another celebration on the seventh night, the celebration of the MYRTLE (Aqd Elias). (The celebration of the chain).

The night before the circumcision a big feast was held. Family and friends were invited. The chair of ELIYAHU HANABI (the Prophet Elija) was brought home from the Synagogue and decorated with myrtle leaves. The 5 books of the Torah and a copy of the "ZOHAR" were placed on the chair.

"ABOU LE SHBAHOTH" (the choir master) blessed the baby, and was in charge of the celebration. The men danced and sang around the chair. The women sat by the mother's bed.

The Circumcision - (Brit Mila)

The circumcisers (Mohalim) were not paid. Many of them circumcised also Muslims. The most famous Mohalim were: The Chief Rabbi Ezra Reuben Dangoor; The Rabbi Moshe Bar Eliyaou and the Lyricist David.

The poor celebrated the Mila in the Synagogue where food was not permitted, so they were not obliged to serve a meal. The rich celebrated at home or at the Jewish hospital.

The custom for everybody was to eat big bagels, baked especially for the occasion (Ka'kat) and HALKOON candies.

The circumcision took place in the morning. During the ceremony everybody had to stand up.

Three candles were lit. The custom in Baghdad was that the mother of the father brought the baby to the Synagogue and handed him over to his father.

Usually, the father was also the godfather (SANDAK). Sometimes the grandfather was honoured.

Before the Brit, the baby was with his mother. The singers stood near the women and sang songs about the Mila and then called the father to the circumcision. The Mohel blesses the wine, drinks a quarter, and puts some drops in the baby's mouth. (It is believed that this wine has special virtue for women and brings BERAKHA) blessing.

After the Kiddush, the Mohel announces the baby's name. After the Brit and then all the participants get big bagels HALKOON and MLABAS.

In the afternoon, a "MITZVA" feast was offered to family, Rabbis and "HASIDIM." The meal was called: "The feast of Abraham Avino."

The rich sent plats of cakes, HALKOON and MLABAS to family and friends. Some sent very special sweets "MANIL SAMA (manna)."

Redemption of the first born son (Pedion Haben). A big celebration of the 30 day after the birth of the first son. Again, a big feast is offered to family, friends and especially Rabbi and Torah students. The money the Rabbi received was donated to the Synagogue.●

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## BOOKS RECEIVED:

To Baghdad and Back  
the Miraculous 2,000 Year Homecoming of the Iraqi Jews  
by Mordechai Ben-Porat  
English Translation  
Gefen Publishing House - Jerusalem, 366 pp.

The book contains the full report of the inquiry commission on the bombing of Baghdad. Jewish authorities deny any involvement in this incident and we believe them; Iraqi authorities likewise categorically denied having any hand in the bombing and we tend to believe them. That leaves only the oil companies who wanted to see the Jews out of the way before developing the full Iraqi oil potential.●

## MY FATHER

(I wish I had known him better)

by: Commander Fred Solomon Sopher I.N. RET'D

My elder brother Henry, my late sister Phyllis and I were born in London between 1914 and 1919 when my parents were here during the First World War. My late brother Cecil and the youngest of the family Helen were born in Bombay when my parents returned there in 1920.

My father who was a pearl merchant with his brothers Charles (Saleh) and Albert (Abdullah) was wealthy and this meant having a number of servants in the household. Female servants for my sisters and male for myself and my brothers. Then there was the butler, cook, gardener and driver as well as 2 night-watchmen all being accommodated in the servants quarters - a separate block of rooms.

My parents had a full social life and most days were not home until quite late in the evening - dinner being at 9.0'clock. Consequently, the amount of time spent together was little and the care of the children was in the hands of servants. Loyalty was uppermost with all of them and their care and compassion towards us was of the utmost. They bathed, dressed and fed and attended to all our needs.

Of my parents, - G-d Bless them both, my mother was always there to see to our needs. My father had his hands full running the family business and we therefore saw very little of him.

As I grew up, I gained my first taste of independence when I was bought my first bicycle and most of my daylight hours were spent at school, on the playing fields or at the swimming pool. In good weather bathing was in the sea. Home was for eating and sleeping. From August 1940 it was the Navy with long spells away from Bombay, whether at sea or in shore establishments. I retired in 1965 and almost immediately came to London with my wife and son - my two daughters having preceded us. A few years later my father passed away and I honestly wish that I could have spent more time with him.

Just as I did not have much time with my father, so I now do not have much time with my son, who has been in the States since 1977. My wife and I see him and his family only when we visit them or they visit us. I am now missing the opportunity of knowing him better.

I notice that from time to time old prints appear in The Scribe which would be of interest to the younger generation of those appearing in them. I have managed to obtain one which was taken about 75 years ago showing three generations from my grandparents Hakham H. Baruch Sopher and his wife Simha nee Hillel. The family has been widely dispersed since the photo was taken in Bombay. They had three sons and two daughters who with their offspring are shown in the photo.



Solomon (Silman) 13  
m. Mozelle Hillel 20



Henry 14  
Fred (self) 1  
Phyllis (D) 7  
Cecil (D) 8  
Helen 9  
Sion (D) 27 from father's previous marriage.

Albert (Abdullah) 28  
m. Rosie Sopher 26



Victor and Robert who were not born when the photo was taken.

Charlie (Saleh) 19  
m. Habiba Sopher 12



Annie (D) 29  
Margaret 11  
Eddie 10  
George 6  
Noreen 2  
Violet 4

Aziza 17  
m. Silman Gahtan 18



Menahem (D) 21  
Mozelle (D) not shown as she was with family in Singapore.  
Flo (D) 23  
Sonny (D) 25  
David (D) 3  
Doris 5

Lily 24  
m. Moses Hillel 22

No issues.

There are a further three generations dispersed in Israel, the USA, Canada, Australia, Denmark and of course in this country and I would greatly appreciate promulgation.●

## TO OUR CHILDREN

by: Meer Basri

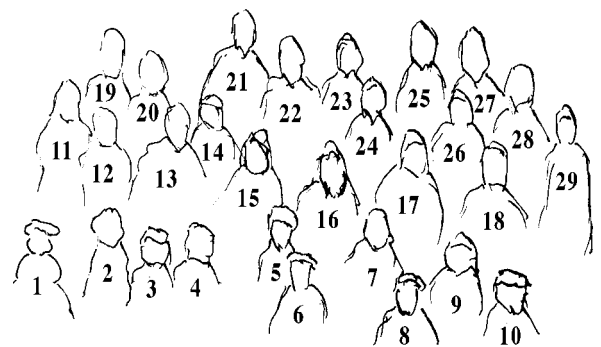
O children we love and cherish,  
Remember us when we are gone.  
Grow to be good men and women,  
Live all together and not alone.

You will live to see a new world,  
Novel inventions and conventions.  
But moral values stay as of old,  
Social ties and true intentions.

We hope you will thrive in peace,  
Under a sky benign and clear.  
No wars, but tenderness and bliss,  
In a family well-knit and dear.

A new era for you will open,  
Work and play, travel and leisure.  
West and East with links unbroken,  
No misery in sane pleasure.

Broaden your mind, brace your heart,  
Marvel at the noble Creation.



The world is but a tiny part,  
Of God's Universe with no cessation.

Do your daily task, great or small,  
Do not covet riches or glory.  
Money is a means, not a goal,  
And laugh at the end of the story.

Serve Society, live in harmony,  
Among many friends and with no foes.  
This is our legacy to you,  
A community gentle and close.●

# THE JEWS OF ARABIA

Condensed from a recent lecture at the Montefiore Hall, London

Mohammed, the Prophet of Islam, was born in Mecca in the year 570.

The world at that time had its physical centre somewhat around the Eastern edge of the Mediterranean sea. There for many hundreds of years the two great 'world' empires of Rome and Persia had confronted each other in a state of perpetual warfare, punctuated by brief periods of peace.

Our world was ready for change in the seventh century as conflict everywhere had undermined the old-established patterns of society.

The surviving Byzantine Eastern half of the Roman Empire, ruled from the splendid city of Constantinople, still controlled a broad swathe of territory in the Balkans, North Africa and the Middle East. Remember that the coast of North Africa then was not arid as it is today, but covered with trees and very fertile.

The Jews helped the Persians in their conquest of Jerusalem in 614. The Byzantines exacted their revenge when they recaptured Jerusalem in 629. But the Persian and Byzantine empires were now in a state of utter exhaustion and impoverishment.

## ARABIA

The vast and mostly arid peninsula of Arabia adjacent to both the Roman and the Persian empires.

By the time of Mohammed, the merchants of Mecca controlled much of the transit trade between East and West. They bought goods off the ships at Aden and then transported them along caravan routes for sale in Egypt, Syria and Persia. The proceeds were used to buy manufactured goods, which were then brought back to Mecca and sold at the trade fairs.

## RELIGION

The rudimentary and barely developed pagan worship of the Arabs was centred on the three hundred and sixty idols which surrounded the shrine of the Ka'aba in Mecca, to which the Bedouins flocked in annual pilgrimage. The Ka'aba housed a black stone sacred to all Arabs - which was most probably a meteorite that had once fallen flaming from the skies.

Some Arabs had developed an admiration for the more developed religions of the Jews and Christians.

This feeling manifested itself in signs of spiritual discontent such as the rejection of idol worship by a small number of seekers after the one God, who practised a religion of their own. There were also converts to both Judaism and Christianity in the settled populations of the desert oasis and in the deep South.

## THE JEWS OF ARABIA

Before the coming of Mohammed, the Jews of Arabia, were few in number, and I have found only two references to them in Jewish sources. All we know of them comes from Arab historians, and from the Qur'an itself.

## THE NORTH

I Will start on the Jews of the North.

Before Islam, they dominated many of the main oasis in the West of Arabia and had also settled in the present-day Gulf States - Bahrain in particular. There was even a tiny Jewish community with its own cemetery in Mecca.

Curiously enough, Naim Dangoor told me that a Saudi Arabian father of many children from the Gulf area visited him with his family, about 8 years ago to ask for help in emigrating to Israel. He claimed to be one of a large group of Muslims of Jewish origin who had always maintained a separate identity, praying together and marrying only amongst themselves. Naim believed the story and contacted the Israeli Embassy on the man's behalf - but without success.

Arab historians mention some 20 Jewish tribes, including two tribes of Kohanim. The Jews spoke Arabic, were organised into clans and tribes just like the Arabs, and seem to have fully assimilated the values and customs of desert society.

A contingent of 500 Jewish soldiers was supplied by Herod to accompany the Roman expedition set to conquer the Yemen in 25 BCE. It paused for a time at a place said in the Talmud to contain Jews. We may legitimately ask ourselves whether the Jewish soldiers were sent to act as links between the Roman armies and the Jews of Arabia.

Arab sources maintain that the Jews of Medina were survivors of the Jewish revolt against Rome.

Another theory is that the Jewish date-growers - and the cultivation of dates was the most common occupation - might have come from the Jordan valley as refugees from Christian Byzantine persecution.

Another obvious source of immigrants was, of course, Babylonians.

The Jews were engaged in agriculture, not trade which was exclusively in the hands of the Arabs.

According to Arab legends, Jews introduced the date palm and the honey bee into Arabia. Also, advanced irrigation and other new agricultural crafts.

The Jews appear to have been educated. It was their ability to read and write that made Bible stories and Midrashim generally familiar to the pagan Arabs - and those were the seeds from which Islam developed.

Perhaps most importantly of all, Jews also familiarised the Arabs with the belief in the coming of the Messiah.

## THE SOUTH

Many legends refer to early Jewish settlement in Himyar, present-day Yemen.

The first is that Jews accompanied the Queen of Sheba when she returned from her visit to King Solomon.

Arab historians claim that very large numbers of Jews - the figure of 80,000 is mentioned - arrived after the destruction of the First Temple, to join others already established there.

There is a story that Ezra the scribe cursed the Jews of Yemen for ignoring his call to return to Israel and help rebuild the Temple. In retaliation from then on, they refused to name their sons Ezra.

Arab legend ascribes the conversion to Judaism of the king and people of Himyar to two Jewish Rabbis from the oasis of Medina who cured the kind of a terrible illness on an expedition to the North of Arabia. The king was so impressed by the Rabbis that he and his generals converted to Judaism on the spot. He then took the Rabbis back with them to Himyar where they also converted part of the population - presumably members of the court and leading families.

Himyar fell to the Christian Ethiopians in the year 525.

Persia sent an expedition to expel the Ethiopians and take control for itself. The Jews prospered for a time under Persian rule and maintained contact with their brethren in Babylon. But the economy of Himyar was in steep decline during this period, partly because of the warfare, and partly because of a catastrophic failure of the great dam that controlled its irrigation system.

## MOHAMMED

Mohammed was born in Mecca in the year 570, at a time when guardianship of the Ka'aba and successful international trade had greatly enriched its ruling clans. We are told that the Meccans were swollen with pride and their society was an unhappy one, differing from that of other Arabs because of its rivalries, greed, and great disparity between rich and poor.

Mohammed came from one of the poorer and least influential of the ruling families of Mecca. Orphaned at an early age, he had a reputation for honesty and reliability.

Mohammed had already accompanied his uncle on trading missions to Syria, where he had come into contact with Christian monks and with Jews, when he was asked to lead a similar expedition himself on behalf of the wealthy widow Khadijah. This was successful; and he accepted Khadijah's proposal of marriage on his return to Mecca. The marriage was a happy one. Khadijah bore him six children; and Mohammed took no other wife or concubine until after her death.

Thus freed from financial anxiety for the first time, Mohammed was able to devote himself increasingly to spiritual concerns. He made his own family live frugally, distributed much of his money to the poor, and was conspicuously kind to slaves.

He used to retire alone to an isolated mountain cave for days at a time in order to meditate and pray.

Mohammed received his first revelation in the year 610, when he was forty years old. An angel appeared to him in his cave and commanded 'Iqra' - recite! When Mohammed demurred, the angel 'overwhelmed me in his embrace until I reached the limits of my endurance.' Then the angel proclaimed what was to become the first verse or sura of the Qur'an:

'Recite in the name of your Lord, the Creator, who created man from clots of blood.'

At first Mohammed doubted his own sanity. It was only three years later, when other revelations began to follow in quick succession, that he recovered his self-confidence and commenced his mission to the Arabs as the 'Messenger of God.'

The revelations, transmitted by the angel Gabriel to Mohammed when in a state of trance, were taken down in writing by his followers as he repeated them later. They were collected together after Mohammed's death, to form the Qur'an.

The message of the Qur'an is similar in essence to much Jewish and Christian teaching.

There is no God but Allah, the all-powerful Creator, and Mohammed is his Messenger.

There will be a Day of Judgement.

There is an afterlife in which the good will be rewarded and the wicked will burn in hell.

Life is to be lived according to divine law, with prayer and fasting, the giving of alms and the supporting of widows and orphans.

Mohammed had some success with the young and the poor, but he was ridiculed by the leaders of Meccan society.

The fact that he could not work miracles was held against him. His prayer ritual of repeated prostrations was alien to their proud Bedouin spirit; and the required total allegiance to the new community of Islam cut right across traditional tribal loyalties.

More important, Mohammed's teaching that their idol-worshipping ancestors were burning in hell, outraged the Arabs, who had always venerated their forefathers.

Above all, the concept of only one God, and the resulting rejection of idols, seemed almost to have been designed to ruin the cult of the Ka'aba, the basis of Meccan prosperity. It would, quite simply, have been disastrous for business.

Mohammed made some converts to Islam among pilgrims who visited Mecca on the haj. A group from Medina, a desert oasis some two hundred and fifty miles away, secretly invited Mohammed and his followers to join them there to become their judge in disputes between their tribes.

So, in the year 622, Mohammed and seventy of his followers fled from Mecca to Medina. And that is counted as year one of the Muslim calendar.

Medina was occupied by three Jewish tribes and two pagan tribes who had once forced their way into the oasis; each tribe lived in its own fortified village. Mohammed was soon accepted as leader by the pagans and concluded a treaty with the Jews.

Unlike the Meccans, the pagans of Medina - who had long lived alongside Jews - were not shocked by the demotion of their gods to mere spirits under the new order. It did not affect their livelihood, and they were thrilled by the presence in their midst of the Prophet for the Arabs, with his revelations in their own tongue. There was a rapid tide of conversions to Islam; and Arab historians praise the Jews for preparing the ground for the favourable reception of the Prophet's message.

#### **MOHAMMED AND THE JEWS**

As a fellow monotheist, Mohammed looked to the Jews as his natural allies; and he no doubt

hoped they would accept him as their long-awaited Messiah. Some Jews did so at once and I quote an Arab historian's account of the first Jewish convert to Islam.

Many other Jews converted to Islam later and I am obliged to Naim Dangoor for his account of the Jewish ruler of Afghanistan visiting Mohammed at the peak of his power and accepting Islam.

The leading Afghan tribes, you may remember, still claim with pride to be descended from King Saul of the tribe of Benjamin - as again confirmed by Naim Dangoor's account of the meeting of Eliezer Kedourie and King of Afghanistan in 1925, and also by official guidebooks of the country..

In a deliberate attempt to reconcile the Jews and gain their acceptance, Mohammed promptly adopted the Aramaic name 'Medinta' used by the Jews ('al-Madinat' in Arabic) in place of Yathrib, the old name of the oasis.

His followers were directed to face towards Jerusalem in prayer and to recite three daily prayer services and special Friday evening prayers in imitation of the Jews.

Ablutions and forms of worship were modelled on Jewish patterns. It seems that the Muslims had misunderstood the solemn Jewish fast of Kippur to be a celebration of victory over Pharaoh, for they too adopted the same day to celebrate their own successes.

Mohammed repeatedly compared himself to Moses and clearly regarded himself as his successor. According to the Qur'an:

'Before this book there was Moses's book.... and this book confirms it in the Arabic language.'

And again, in response to taunts arising from the Jewish origin of one of his wives, Mohammed proudly declared:

'Aaron was my father and Moses my uncle.'

Above all, the Qur'an itself is full of Jewish elements.

#### **MOHAMMED'S JEWISH ADVERSARIES IN MEDINA**

It is clear that Mohammed knew the Torah only from hearsay and that he was much confused by imperfect knowledge of scripture and rabbinic legend.

"The Messenger was a proud man who could not tolerate public ridicule; and so, only eighteen months after his arrival in Medina, he began to order the assassination of Arab poets who had satirised him and also of certain Jews who had opposed him in one way or another.

His attitude to the Jews also changed radically. Mohammed demonstrated his displeasure with the Jews as a whole and his growing self-confidence and his independence of them by adopting measures designed to steer his followers firmly against Jewish practices."

#### **MOHAMMED'S CONQUEST OF THE JEWS**

Mohammed next moved to eliminate the three Jewish tribes of Medina, by then considered a threat to the Muslim community in its struggle against its pagan enemies in Mecca.

One by one he accused them of treachery, of having broken their treaty with him by conspiring with his pagan enemies in Mecca. As already mentioned, the Jews were also accused of making common cause with the waverers within the ranks of the Muslims of

Medina.

Curiously enough, the Jewish tribes made no attempt to defend one another against the common foe when pretexts were found to attack and besiege each of their villages in turn. They were eliminated one by one.

The first tribe was called on to accept Islam. When its members refused, a pretext was found to besiege its village. The Jews were expelled on condition to leave most of their possessions behind.

The following year saw the expulsion of the second tribe, accused of planning to kill the Prophet by dropping a rock on his head as he rested under a wall outside its village. Mohammed, who received divine warning of the plot, returned home unharmed before anything happened.

The second tribe, being in a less vulnerable position managed to depart carrying all their possessions with them. Muslims were ordered to turn towards Mecca in prayer and no longer towards Jerusalem - now with five daily prayer services instead of the Jewish three.

All traces of the Sabbath were eliminated when Friday was declared a day of public prayer on which work was allowed. The month-long fast of Ramadan was instituted in place of Kippur.

The extra month instituted by the pagan Arabs long before Mohammed to reconcile the lunar year with the solar year, as practised by the Jews, was abolished. Since then the Muslim year has consisted of 12 lunar months, with no correction at all for the solar year.

In a complete change of emphasis, Mohammed began to lay far greater stress on Abraham, whom he claimed as the first Muslim, than on Moses.

#### **INFLUENCES ON MOHAMMED**

Though respecting Christians - Christian monks in particular, and accepting Jesus as a major prophet, Mohammed vehemently rejected the notion that Jesus was the Son of God as well as all idea of the Trinity. The Qur'an itself is full of unmistakably Jewish elements - Bible stories and midrashim in particular.

However, a major puzzle remains. Although Moses is mentioned over one hundred times and Jesus only twice in the Meccan period of the Qur'an, Mohammed's often repeated dread of the Day of Judgement and hellfire is certainly more akin to Christian monasticism than to rabbinic Judaism.

Mohammed died of natural causes in the year 632, leaving the whole of Arabia united under the rule of Islam.

By definition, Mohammed - as Messenger of God and the last of the Prophets, was irreplaceable. Yet, a new leader had to be found at once if his achievements were not to be squandered.

The Arabs found it very difficult to elect a successor and bitter struggles between rival clans resulted in the violent death in office of three out of the first four Khalifs. One of them, and this is significant, was killed by a revolt led by a Jewish convert to Islam.

Those early controversies persisted; and it was the refusal of some to accept the legitimacy of any but a descendant of the murdered Khalif 'Ali (cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet) that created the Shi'a movement, which permanently split Islam.

Welded together by Islam, their poverty and

their greed, the half-starved Bedouin nomads erupted from Arabia with extraordinary vigour. The Byzantine Empire was humbled and the Persian Empire totally destroyed during their first twenty years of warfare.

By 732, one hundred years after the death of Mohammed, the Arab Empire stretched from the Atlantic in the West to modern Pakistan in the East. At one stage, the vanguard reached a point in France only two hundred and fifty miles from Dover before falling back into Spain. Progress was slower after that, with Sardinia, Sicily and parts of Southern Italy gradually added to the Islamic world.

Many hundreds of years later, of course, the Muslim world expanded again to include the Balkans in Europe - though Spain was lost to the Christians, much of the Northern half of the African continent, the whole of Northern India and parts of South East Asia, such as Indonesia. In retrospect, it is not difficult to find convincing reasons for the astonishing success of the comparatively small body of Bedouin tribesmen in defeating the armies of two mighty empires and then going on to conquer much of the civilised world.

There can be no doubt that Mohammed himself had the rare ability to inspire unlimited devotion in most of those who met him in Arabia.

Also the essential simplicity and egalitarianism of Islam suited the mentality of the Arabs, already discontented with their primitive form of paganism and aspiring to a nobler expression of their religious yearnings. The new creed of Islam, combined with the old fighting traditions of the Bedouin tribes, provided the Arabs with the self-confidence they needed to challenge the rest of the world.

Once the invasions started, belief in the one God who had chosen the Arabs and rewarded them with success after success became inspirational. Fighting, Arab-style, seemed to be the way of God as the Bedouin warriors used the deserts like seas - appearing suddenly from nowhere and, whenever necessary, retreating back where none could follow.

Looked at in another way, the Arab conquest was a classic invasion of the world's settled lands by semi-starved nomads, seeking bread and booty - but this time, spurred on by the powerful missionary zeal of Islam.

It should not be forgotten that the Arabs exploded into a world exhausted by twenty-six years of constant warfare, a world whose inhabitants longed for peace and stability and had come to believe that great changes were inevitable. Christian heretics and Jews in the Byzantine Empire, to whom almost any change must have seemed for the better, welcomed the Arabs with open arms. The Christians and Jews of the Persian Empire too, weary of civil and religious strife, also willingly accepted the prospect of change.

Another important factor in the overwhelming success of the Arabs was the generosity of their surrender terms. For most pagans, the choice of Islam or the sword was not onerous; they too could join the ranks of the conquerors by simply declaring: 'There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his Messenger.' Also, it soon became widely known that Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians would not be harmed by the triumphant Muslims so long as they submitted to the new order by paying the

poll tax, which often amounted to no more than the tax demanded by the former regimes.

The result was that, in time, almost all the defeated nations aspired to the name 'Arab'. Though strict social barriers between Arabian and non-Arabian Muslims were erected in the first century following the conquest, those dissolved and merit alone became the key to advancement for Muslims in the expanding empire.

According to surviving records, Jews helped the Arabs in many places. From Syria to Spain, they opened city gates to the besieging armies; and in Spain, they often garrisoned the captured cities to enable the Muslims to sweep on to further conquests.

In 658, Gaon Yizhak of Pumbeditha, at the head of 90,000 Jews, was reported to have welcomed Khalif 'Ali into Firuz-Shapur. The Exilarch Bustanay was even awarded one of the Persian King's daughters by the grateful Arabs - and as another daughter was given to Husain, grandson of the Prophet, that was no mean gift.

The conquests of Islam united both halves of the Jewish people under a single political and cultural system. Arabic became the universal language, replacing the Aramaic, Persian, Greek and Latin they had previously spoken.

Jews, accustomed to adversity, found their change of masters an improvement. They survived the hardship brought about by the conquest and were eventually able to participate in the creation of the new Arabic civilisation that followed.

Islam, claiming to be God's last and perfect revelation to mankind, extended limited toleration to members of the older monotheistic faiths on condition they submitted humbly to its rule. In contrast, the only choice open to polytheists was Islam or the sword - though the less wasteful alternative of slavery was often substituted for the sword.

The Qur'an frequently refers to Jews and Christians, who had received earlier revelations from God but had then distorted and corrupted them.

Though some of its suras (verses) mention Jews and Christians in friendly terms and are quoted in support of Islam's tolerant attitude to fellow monotheists, others display very different sentiments. The Qur'an it must be remembered, came to Mohammed in stages throughout the many years of his ministry - from the time he was a persecuted outcast to that of his final role as the undisputed master of all Arabia.

Non-believers, though protected by Islam, were generally despised because of their wilful persistence in refusing to accept the words of God recorded in the Qur'an. However, unlike Jews in Christian Europe, they were neither hated nor demonised.

Mainstream (Sunni) Islam and Judaism have more in common with each other than with Christianity. First and foremost, they both share the basic concept of the absolute unity of God. Though Muslims accept Jesus as a major prophet, they strenuously deny that he was the Son of God. In the words of the Qur'an:

'...Allah is one, Allah the eternal. He begets not and is not begotten. Nor is there anyone like him'.

Abraham is accepted as the first man to have received God's revelations: and most other

Jewish patriarchs and prophets are also revered by Islam.

Both religions are based on divinely given books. The Qur'an like the Torah, is the unchanging word of God; and every letter of its text is holy. Sunni Muslims go even further and believe that the Qur'an is eternal and untreated - as is the view of the Torah held by some Jewish mystics.

Muslim forms of worship are far closer to those of the Synagogue than the Church. Neither Islam nor Judaism employs priests with supernatural powers to serve at symbolic alters of sacrifice. Indeed, Jewish Rabbis and Sunni Alem receive similar training and perform much the same function. Other concepts such as the sanctity of Jerusalem, forbidden and permitted foods, and many others, appear to have come directly from Judaism.

The equivalent position of law in Islam and Judaism may not be a coincidence, for Islamic law first developed in Iraq, home to the great academies of Jewish learning. In both faiths, holy law governs every aspect of human activity and its very study is an act of worship. Both distinguish between 'written' and 'oral' law in much the same way; and in the development of 'oral' law, the mufti's fatwa serves the same purpose as the Rabbi's responsa (an authoritative statement of the law on an obscure or disputed point).

Another common feature of the two systems is that neither was imposed by the state or by a central ecclesiastical authority - as was the canon law of the Church - but was developed by the deliberations of independent scholars.●

Sephardi communal Rabbi Dr. Abraham Levy recently paid a visit to Polack's House which was established in 1887 for the education of Jewish boys within the framework of Clifton College, Bristol.

Mr A. H. Munro, the Headmaster of Clifton wrote to Rabbi Levy as follows:

It was so good of you to come. I met a group of boys and girls the next day and they had thoroughly enjoyed meeting you, both at lunch and during the latter part of the day.

I would be very pleased to do anything that I could to foster links between Polack's and the community and if there were any occasion when you thought it might be beneficial for me to give a presentation or a speech, I would be only too pleased to do so.

I speak on behalf of all members of the Governing Body when I say how enthusiastic we all are to ensure that the unique position of Polack's is made more secure and by building up endowments, we are able to offer the opportunity that Clifton has to as many boys and girls as possible.

I do hope that our paths cross in the near future. Florence Gladwell wrote:

The young people appreciated your coming, as was clear by the numbers who wanted to talk to you afterwards.

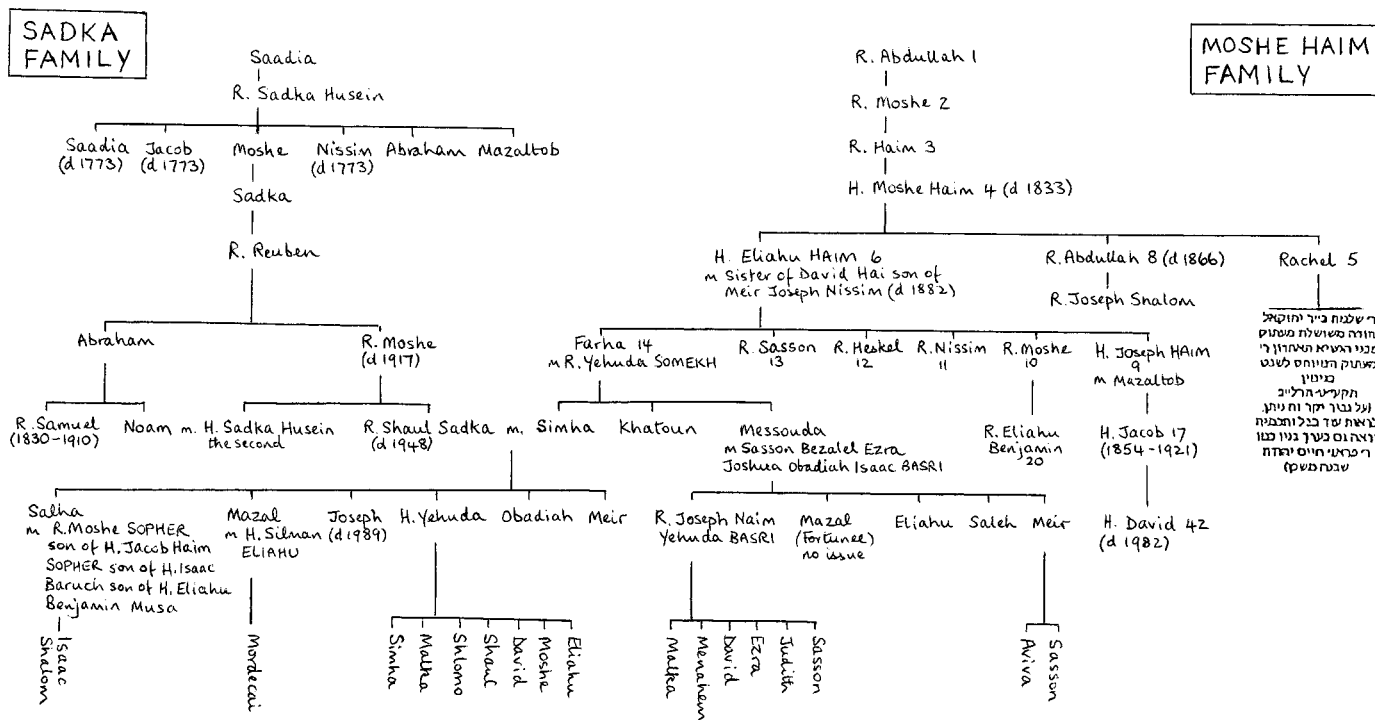
It was wonderful to hear your encouragement to them to be proud of their Jewish heritage and their contribution to the world.

As a Christian, I have so much to thank the Jewish people for, and the debt I owe them in giving me God's word and to use your word 'passion' for it.●

# Sadka and Moshe Haim Family Trees

Trees published in The Scribe Nos 67 and 70

Additions supplied by R. Ezra Basri



## HAKHAM MOSHE HAIM FAMILY TREE

As a great-great grandson of Hakham Joseph Haim, I reviewed the family tree published in the Scribe with great interest. I note some omissions and corrections you should make.

1. Your spelling of "Aboudi" can also be "Aboody".
2. Victor Aboody's wife (my mother) should be added to the list. Her maiden name was "Eva Esther Lewis".
3. Habiba and Menashe Aboody had another son, Albert (after whom I am named) who died at the young age of 14.

May I add the following information:

Victor Aboody was the only Aboody to breed children, three sons, Albert (myself), Ezra, and Abe.

I married Milane Abrams and have two children, Nalini (married to Reuven Ibragamov) and Joshua, born in 1979 and 1982, respectively. Ezra is unmarried. Abe married Sumathi. They have a son, Zohar, born in 1994.

I enjoy reading the Scribe and intend to acquire the past volumes. In the meantime, I would be very grateful if you could arrange to mail future issues to me.●

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Ohio  
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**JOSE ISAAC PERES:**  
**LEADING PROPERTY DEVELOPER IN SOUTH AMERICA AND PORTUGAL.**

Ocean Drive, the "hottest" happening place in South Florida will have a distinctly Brazilian flavour starting soon, Jose Isaac Peres, founder of the highly successful Multiplan Group of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, is bringing to Miami Beach the same talent and expertise that made his company the number one developer of regional shopping malls and planned residential communities in South America and Portugal.

A driving force in Brazilian real estate through dimension projects such as Barra Golden Green on the ocean in Barra de Tijuca, with eleven residential buildings, two five-star hotels and a golf course, the Multiplan Group excels in conception, construction, commercialisation and administration of communities and the largest network of shopping centres in Brazil, now extended abroad.

The Brazilian branch of the Peres family built a synagogue in Rio De Janeiro. Opening took place October 3, just before last Yom Kippur. Jose Isaac (Yousef) Peres donated the project in memory of his late father Hugo Henrique (Harone).

Jose's uncle Eduardo (Heskel Ezra), son of Menashe Peres left Iraq at the turn of the century followed by his brother Harone and sister Rachel.

Jose Isaac is the principal shareholder of Multiplan Brazil's largest conglomerate.●



We would like to update you on a recent event in our family. Our dear father Mr Jacob Zilkha, who passed away in Israel in April 1997 (obituary 68 page 33), was honoured in August 1998, by the city of Bat-Yam with an opening of a park in the city in his name.

Mr Zilkha was an architect for fifty years planning buildings all over Israel, but mainly in Bat-Yam, which grew to become a big bustling city. At the opening of the park were present many friends, colleagues and family members. Among them the mayor of Bat-Yam, Mr Sagie and his wife; Mr Ben-Porat; Mr Ezra Gabbay, head of the Babylonian Education fund; representatives from the Technion in Haifa and other organisations as well as many friends.

## THE JEWISH GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

by: Victor Ozair M.Sc., P.E.

At the 18th annual Seminar on Jewish Genealogy, which took place in July 1998 in Los Angeles, I was called with Dr. Hammou from University of California to take part and lecture on the Iraqi Jews. It appears that this was the first time that Jews from Iraq participated in this Seminar on Jewish Genealogy.

The lecture included slide presentation on historical and cultural background of the Iraqi community given by Dr. Hammou. After this presentation, I talked about the historical immigration of Jews from Iraq to other countries during the Islamic occupation, during the Abbasid Caliphate, during the Mongol take over of Iraq and during the Turkish reign. Details of the severity of Farhood (Pogrom) of June 1 and 2, 1941 was also given. Then I presented a thorough description of the Ozair's (Ezeir) family tree, which I had researched for several years. This generated a lot of interest among the audience.

This research on the family generates contacts with others, develops new friends and reinforces relationships with distance relatives. The family tree is a historical book, where so much about the family is exposed including the genetic information, so essential. The tree motivates the person with a sense of pride to learn about relatives and ancestors who have succeeded in their rich service to their communities. Thus the tree might be a personal inspiration to open vistas towards a successful future.

The lecture took place in Century Plaza Hotel and attracted the organiser of the Seminar Mr Ted Gestin and many members of the Genealogical Society, who came from several countries. It aroused the admiration and the curiosity of the audience, who asked lots of inquisitive questions. It was a good opportunity for us Iraqi Jews to participate with the Ashkenazi in the study of Jewish Genealogy and to show how the Sephardim and Ashkenazim might have interacted in the past.●



*In the picture: L to R: Dr. Edmond and Yael (daughter) Shahin, Talma Ron (daughter), Mrs Tikva Zilkha (daughter), Chen Ron (granddaughter) and Haim Ron, near the stone that states the park's name: 'Park Zilkha.'*●

## SEEKING INFORMATION

My name is Shmuel Yossef. I made Aliyah over 2 years ago from Sydney, Australia. I am pursuing any information concerning my great-grandfather: Shaul Yossef Saeed, A"H. He was born in Baghdad in 1868 (or 1869). He migrated with his children (including my grandfather Reuben Joseph, A"H) to Rangoon, Burma in 1908. In 1935 (or 1936) he made Aliyah and passed away on Shabbath, 26 Teveth 5701 (25 January 1941) in Yerushalayim at the age of 72. He is buried on Har Hazeitim, (Mount of Olives), but none of the family know the location of his grave. He lived in the "Mekor Baruch" neighbourhood of Yerushalyim. I would like to know:

- a. The exact location of his grave (if anyone knows);
- b. Anyone who may have known him while he was in Yerushalyim, in the "Mekor Baruch" neighbourhood;
- c. Anyone who may have known him, either from Baghdad, Burma or Israel;
- d. If any of his brothers or sisters, nephews, etc that may have come directly to Israel (or migrated to any other place) from Baghdad. i.e., does anyone know anybody with the surname "Saeed," or whom had this surname but changed it - and who originates from Baghdad.
- e. Moreover, he had a son Moshe (or Moussa) Joseph or Moshe Saeed, who returned to Baghdad from Rangoon, Burma around 1923. Did anyone know him as well, either in Rangoon or Baghdad?

Anyone with the above or additional information concerning Shaul Yossef Saeed or his son Moshe, please contact me.  
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I'm looking for a Goorji... My cousin Ellen Goorji, daughter of Naim, lived in Montreal in her youth until Teen years, then she went to

England, where apparently, she married a Publisher, I believe...

I would like to hear from anyone who knows her whereabouts.

David Philip Gladstone  
Independent Financial & Insurance Services  
President IFIS  
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## FAMILY TREE

Charlotte Joury and Vivi Bekhor have asked me to make two corrections to the H. Moshe Haim tree published in the last Scribe.

1. Selim (no. 62) married Denise daughter of Abraham Ishayek.
2. Naima (no. 16.5) married Jacob Aaron Shlomo (not El Kebir).●

**Lydia Collins**

I was delighted to read my article (the late Jacob Mahlab) published in the Scribe of October, 1998.

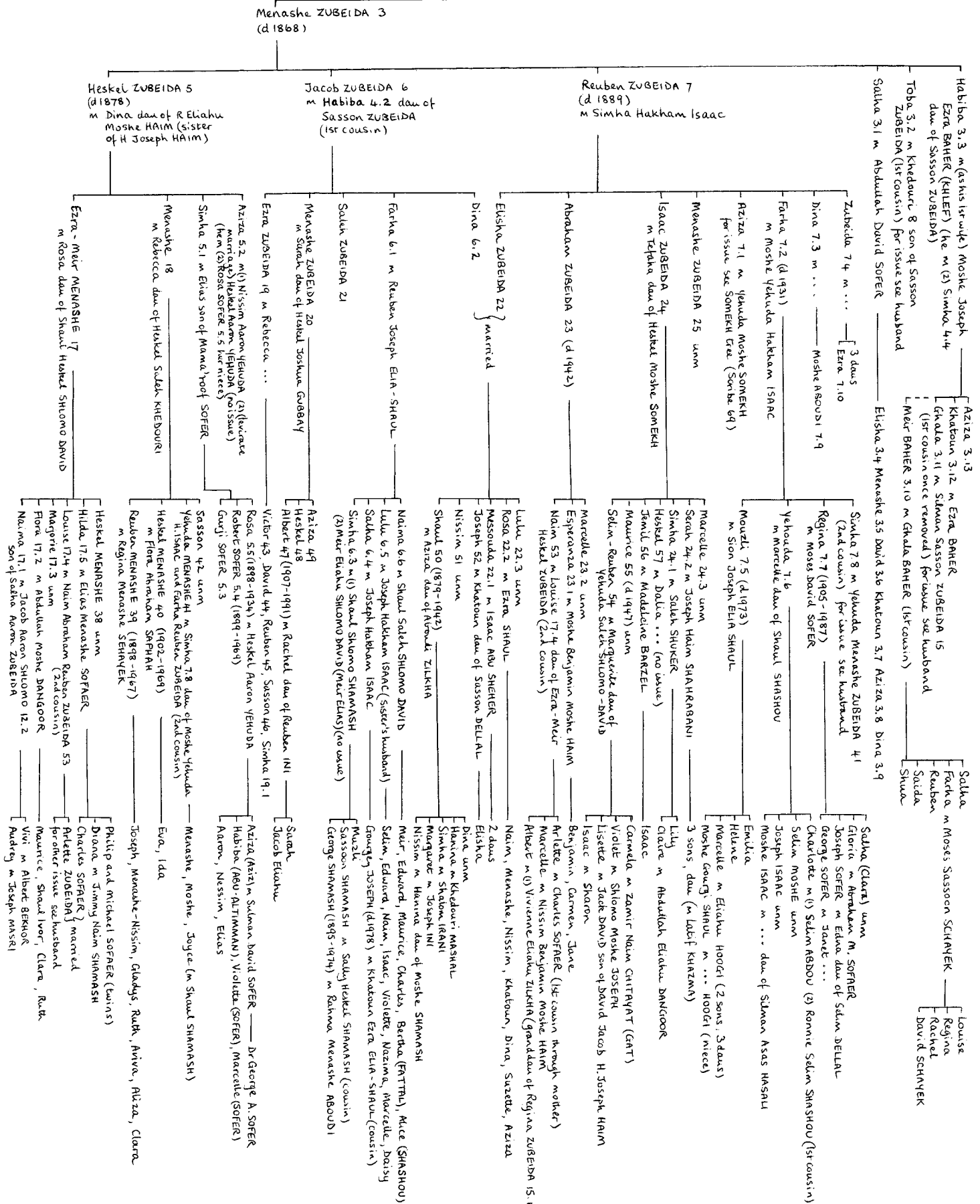
All the pictures I sent were printed but I was shocked to read something I never wrote, referring to the picture representing group of students of the 'Ecole Normale Israelite Orientale' in Versailles - France, holding gas masks. I wrote the names of three Iraqi girls: Flora Hay, the late Naima Nahum and myself Rachel Mahlab, and wrote the other girls are not Iraqi, but I never stated that some of them must have perished in Auchwitz. In fact all of the remaining girls, except one, are alive. Three of them are living in Israel, and the others live abroad, all of them are from Oriental origin.

I hope you will correct this error, so that your readers will know the facts.

While on this subject, I would like to add that the late Naima Nahum, after coming to Israel, became Cultural Affairs Officer in the Israeli Embassy in Rome and later on in Hague.●

**Rachel Goren (Mahlab) Tel-Aviv, Israel**

R. Heskell Reuben Menashe 1 (d 1851)  
 m Zubeida 2 (d 1851) dau of R. Yehuda MATUQA



# Zubeida Family Tree



Based on Beit Zbeda by Abraham Ben-Yaacob with additions

Chart prepared by Lydia Collins

## BAGHDAD CUSTOMS

by Eileen Khalastchy

**WEDDINGS:** It used to be the custom for the girl's parents to pay a dowry for their daughter when she gets married. Sometimes the groom used to bargain to get a larger dowry. Although the money was meant for the girl, but in many cases the groom used to take the money to help him in his work.

For the wealthy families the dowry was no problem. But for the not so well off, it used to be very difficult and sometimes it even affected the chance for a girl to get married.

When the Head of the Jewish community found out that the dowry is affecting many girls that couldn't get married because their parents could not afford a dowry, he issued a law forbidding dowries. But if a father wanted to give his daughter a present, that was accepted because it wasn't a dowry. So it was a relief for the poor families.

The Moslems, on the contrary the man gives a dowry to the girl.

In Synagogue they used to have a small table with a nice embroidered tablecloth and on the table they had a white satin bag, hand embroidered with gold where the family and guests after the wedding ceremony, used to put their presents to the bride which used to be mostly gold coin (see illustration).●



**BABY TALK:** Before they used to think that babies were not clever enough to understand normal grownups talk, so they were taught baby talk which it made it more difficult for them to switch back to normal talk - like learning another language eg., Effa = food; matchi = kiss; mayya = water; kekh = dirty; qahhi = sweets etc...

Babies proved to be clever and quicker than grownups in learning and understanding.●

**BREAST FEEDING:** Is not only good for the child to give him immunity, but also good for the mother as it prevents breast cancer. Also strengthens the muscles of the mother's tummy and brings it back to normal. At birth some babies get a rash on their tummy; so it was the custom to thread seven pearls and put it round the baby's wrist like a bracelet to avoid such rash which was called loulou el baten (tummy's pearl).●

**BIRD'S LANGUAGE:** A new language was invented in the olden days among the grownups called "birds' tongue," in order to speak it in front of the children if they didn't want them to understand what they were saying. They used to add the letter "Z" after every letter eg., ezai lezave zeyou which means "I love you." I think this language is completely forgotten now.●

**HAND FANS:** In the long hot summer days in Baghdad, hand fans were used (see illustration). They were made of hand woven straw, some plain and some with different colours. When it used to be very hot sometimes we sprayed the fan with water so it gave a cool breeze when moved.●

Earthenware jars (Tenga'ee) were used for



drinking water and they were covered with hand-made crochet cover with beads on the edge (see illustration). Rosewater was put in the new jar before putting the water to give a pleasant taste to the water.●

It is believed if you are starting special work or a transaction and someone sneezes, they wait for them to sneeze again, otherwise the work or transaction gets postponed to another day. For a single sneeze is not considered a good omen among Moslems.●

### TIPS:

#### Cough Syrup

Slice a turnip and spread with brown sugar, cover and leave overnight. The syrup that comes out is good for coughs. Also, boiled turnips are very good for a sore throat, as well as the water in which they were boiled.●

#### Potatoes

You can peel potatoes a day or two in advance of cooking, still keeping them white and crisp. Peel them and put them in a basket and then cover them with water, put slices of bread on top to absorb the starch, and they will stay as fresh and crisp as when you first peeled them.●

#### Peanuts

It may come as a surprise to learn that peanuts are not, in fact, nuts at all but are related to peas and lentils. They are legumes whose edible seeds are produced under the ground, on low growing bushes. That is why they are called ground nuts.●



In Baghdad, Jewish women were recognised till the 1930's by their distinctive wrap which hid their European-fashioned dresses. Their attire was more elaborate and different from the wraps of Moslem women. It was hand-woven with silk thread and interwoven with gold thread.●



اذا ما عندك احد تشا وعو خالي  
فيس وهيتايتك قدامك وشاوغا

Etha ma endak ahad tshaweghou khalli fes wchitayetak qedamak wshawegha.

If you have no-one to consult, put your hat in front of you for advice.

.....

قلولة لمغات العم : ما كنت كنه ؟  
قالت : كنت ونينة

Qalola lemghat-el-amn: ma kenti kanna, qalet: kentou wensaitou.

The mother-in-law remembers not that she too was a daughter-in-law.

.....

بيو واندم ولا ماتبيو وتندم

Bee'e wendam wala ma tbee'e wtdam.

Sell and regret better than not to sell and regret.