

final examination. The students were given 10 days to write a thousand word essay on either of two questions. One question dealt with how rabbinic Judaism developed in the Talmudic period shaped Jewish civilization in the Diaspora. The other dealt with the transformation of Jewish communities at the onset of the modern world. To my great delight, the students' answer demonstrated a fair amount of knowledge. Where previously they knew next to nothing about Jews and Jewish Culture, they now had a degree of understanding comparable to a Christian graduate of an American university.

RUDOLF LOWENTHAL FUND

The Sino-Judaic Institute plans to re-publish the out-of-print Lowenthal Bibliographies on the Chinese Jews. This most important work needs to be made available to scholars and other interested persons.

The cost of publication is \$5000, and we request **Points East** readers to make contributions to the Sino-Judaic Institute, 3197 Louis Road, Palo Alto, California 94303. Please note on check, "Rudolf Lowenthal Publication Fund."

Thank you!

SLIDE SHOW ON CHINESE JEWS AVAILABLE

To provide a convenient presentation of the historical background of the Kaifeng Jewish community from its arrival in the 12th century down to the present time, the Sino-Judaic Institute is preparing a set of slides with taped commentary suitable for showing in schools, libraries and community centers. Prof. Albert E. Dien of Stanford University is assembling the slides and providing the narration. The package will include some 50 slides, a cassette tape, and a bibliography of suggested readings. The projected date for distribution is May 1st of this year. It is estimated that the price will be around \$50. There will be a further announcement when the set is ready for distribution.

CORRECTION

Every once in a while people make mistakes. **Points East** made its first major blooper when it identified David Buxbaum as the Sino-Judaic Institute's representative in China. Although Mr. Buxbaum assisted SJI on one or two occasions in the past, he was never appointed as SJI's official representative in China.

Join The Sino-Judaic Institute

The Sino-Judaic Institute is a non-denominational, non-profit, and non-political organization which was founded on June 27, 1985, in Palo Alto, California, by an international group of scholars and laypersons. Its goals and purposes are as follows:

- 1) To promote friendship and understanding between the Chinese and Jewish peoples, and to encourage and develop their cooperation in matters of mutual historical and cultural interest.
- 2) To support the establishment and maintenance of a Judaica section in the projected municipal museum of Kaifeng.
- 3) To promote and assist study and research in the histories of early Jewish travel in China and in the rise and fall of the various Jewish communities that were established in China in the course of the past thousand and more years.
- 4) To publish general information and scholarly materials dealing with all aspects of the Chinese-Jewish experience.
- 5) To assist the descendants of the ancient Jewish community of the city of Kaifeng, Henan Province, in their efforts to preserve and maintain the artifacts and documents they have inherited from their forebears, as well as in their efforts to reconstruct the history of their community.
- 6) To serve as a briefing and information center for those interested in Sino-Judaica, and for travelers to Kaifeng and other centers of Jewish interest in China.
- 7) To cooperate with other groups whose interests lie in Sinitic and Judaic matters.

Membership in the Institute is open and we cordially invite you to join in supporting our endeavor, the first such effort since 1924. Our annual dues structure is as follows:

Senior citizens and students	\$20	Corporate/organizational	\$ 250
Regular membership	\$50	Benefactor	\$1,000

I wish to become a member of the Sino-Judaic Institute and to receive **Points East**. Enclosed is my cheque for \$ _____.

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POINTS EAST

An occasional publication of The Sino-Judaic Institute

VOL. 3, NO. 1

FEBRUARY, 1988

RETURN TO KAIFENG

BY Joshua Stampfer

I came back to Kaifeng in August, 1987 with high hopes. I had visited four years earlier with Harry Dawson, a photographic friend, and Katherine Shen, an interpreter, just after open travel to Kaifeng was allowed. At that time I met with members of the Chao, Shu, and Ai families and realized how far removed they were from any identifiable form of Jewish life. They were curious about my interest in them and had difficulty grasping a relationship between themselves and the Jewish world. Even formulating questions about Jewish life was difficult for them because of their total lack of background. They did show me photographs of deceased parents and grandparents who wore caps and had, according to my Chinese interpreter, different features from their Chinese neighbors.

I left filled with the hope that, once their interest was aroused, renewed contact with Jews would bring them gradually back into the mainstream of Jewish life. The following year the activities of Louis Schwartz, an American professor of sociology who was spending the year at Beijing University and who had an intense interest in Kaifeng Jewry, added to my anticipation. He visited Kaifeng a number of times and met both with local officials, as well as Jewish families. Through his inspiration, our Sino-Judaic Institute was formed, and we have continued these efforts. Wendy Abraham and Rabbi Arnold Belzer were especially effective in establishing ties with a number of Kaifeng Jewish families.

I met with the director of the CITS in Kaifeng upon my arrival and outlined the program that I wished to follow for my group of Jewish tourists from Portland. He was vague in his responses and said that he would do what he could, which turned out to be very little. We visited the home of Mr. Chao, the most visible Jew of Kaifeng, but he was not there. The model of the ancient synagogue that he had made

was literally gathering dust on the top of a tall dresser, out of reach and out of sight. The meeting place that was supposed to be ready for visitors and natives alike was non-existent. The stelae in the museum were in the same state of shabbiness as when I first saw them. Our guide was enthusiastic about showing us every sight of interest in Kaifeng except Jewish ones.

I realized when we left how profound was the loss of Jewish identity in Kaifeng and what enormous efforts it will require to restore it, if indeed the task is achievable. The economic plight of the Jews there is very low, as is their educational level. Efforts should be made to enable a teacher to live in Kaifeng over an extended period of time and transmit to them the Jewish heritage. They do not have the resources to enable such a project themselves. Whether the Chinese government would permit such an enterprise is also a matter of serious concern. The future for Kaifeng Jewry is indeed bleak, as it has been for a long time, but we have never been a people that have given up hope.

REPORT FROM BEIJING

by Wendy Abraham

I'm sure everyone knows by now there's a group of 8 students at Peking University studying Hebrew officially. I have become very close to these students and want to add more info on their situation at this point.

In almost any regular class you walk into in China you'll see a teacher lecturing and the students passively listening, never daring to raise their hands in class or call any attention to themselves in any way. In the Hebrew class which convenes every morning on the campus of Peking University, Building #1, Room 211, however, you will see eight students who debate and argue endlessly about the proper translation of government documents, interrupting each other (and sometimes even the teacher) for a more correct understanding of their subject. It's really a sight to behold. Hearing

them read aloud in Hebrew, however, is what will really move you.

Getting back to how we may be of other help to them, it would be great if *Points East* could direct any donations of Hebrew language books (advanced level) to this class, again c/o me at the Shaoyuan. They're in need of everything and anything in this regard. I brought over with me lots of books on Jewish history and philosophy, etc., and my room has become a lending library of sorts. They each come over individually, unbeknownst to the next one, mostly to borrow (get this) my Siddur and other prayer-related material. They're all very much aware that Jewish history and the Jewish religion are intertwined somehow, and want to know more. A while ago the Board of Jewish Education had donated material to me for intended translation and other projects for Kaifeng, in particular. Seeing as they would not be welcome by the authorities in Kaifeng, however, I took a chance and brought them all to Beijing. Many I have already donated to the teacher for use in class as the Jewish holidays roll around. Others I will leave here when I leave Beijing, although since there is no guarantee they will be catalogued in the library (per someone else's experience here), I will probably opt to give them to the individual students who I can be sure will use and appreciate them.

Lastly, I'd like to relay the news that two of the students — Yehuda and Na'ama (they never go by their Chinese names anyway!) — have been given permission by the Chinese government to study in America (Hebrew and Jewish studies). They've been applying mostly to East Coast universities, and one of them must still take the TOEFL exam in January. If these universities can somehow come up with a scholarship for them, all the better. The administration here for some odd reason seems to think it best to only allow them to apply to one school at a time, writing to the second only after hearing from the first. Natu-

(continued on page 4)

From the Editor:

Volume 3, #1! When I volunteered to edit *Points East*, I thought to myself: "Laytner, this is the easiest job you ever had — 2, maybe 3 issues and there'll be nothing left to publish on the subject of the Chinese Jews."

Now we've reached our first issue of our third year of publication. Not only do we continue to receive reports from visitors to Kaifeng and elsewhere, but the ancillary topics relating to the Chinese Jews grow and grow.

In this issue, for example, we explore the perennially controversial subject of the Radanites and the Chinese Jews, journey to India to learn about the Jews of Mizoram and study the Chinese tiles of the Cochin synagogue. We also have 2 first-hand accounts of experiences in China, a recipe for Kaifeng Jewish Passover chicken wings (which I hope is not a Purim flight of fancy by its author), and the conclusion of our review of cinema projects relating to the Chinese Jews.

That's vol. 3, #1 in a nutshell. Although we're well stocked with articles for future issues, I appreciate having a choice. So keep those articles coming. Thanks to those of you who took the time to write in to us.

By the way, in our next issue we will publish, by state and country, a complete roster of our membership. If you need to renew, or know of someone who is thinking of joining, the next few months is the time to do so if you wish to be on our printed roster.

Anson Laytner

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Anson Laytner, Editor

Editorial Office:

510 Securities Bldg., Seattle, WA 98101
(206) 622-8211

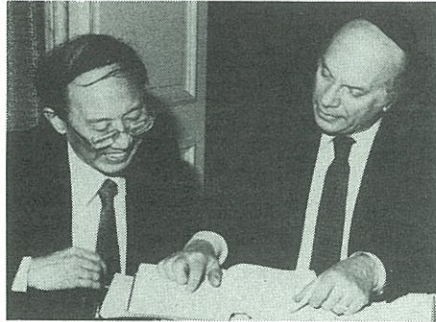
The Sino-Judaic Institute

3197 Louis Rd., Palo Alto, CA 94303
(415) 493-4096

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IN THE FIELD



● SJI member, Professor Gao Wangzhi of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (left) pores over a Pentateuch with Rabbi Arthur Schneier, president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation. Prof. Gao, China's leading expert on Christianity and Judaism, delivered a lecture on the Shanghai Jewish community during World War II at Park East Synagogue in Manhattan, of which Rabbi Schneier is spiritual leader. The Chinese scholar is completing a year of study at Harvard under a fellowship from the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, an interfaith group of business and religious leaders dedicated to promoting religious freedom throughout the world. Photo by Alexander Archer.

● Leo Gabow received a letter from Mr. Wang Ji Ping, Director of Kaifeng Municipal Foreign Affairs Office, Chief of Kaifeng Tourism Bureau. He writes as follows:

"I was very pleased to know you from Mr. Chen Libo, the manager of Kaifeng sub-branch of CITS. I write this letter to inform you that a Tourist Bureau Group plans to visit your beautiful country next year, and I will lead the group." (This letter was written on Dec. 19, 1987)

"Mr. Chen told me that you are interested in having contact with us, and we also wish to have business relations with people who are wishing to work with us. When I am in the States, I would like to meet you and discuss matters of interest to our both sides."

Mr. Chen goes on to say, "Kaifeng City Museum will be open to the public in the coming year."

● SJI member, Jonathan Jacob Nadler, is currently spending the 1987-88 academic year teaching American Law at the China University of Political Science and Law in Beijing. He writes as follows:

"I have found great interest among both faculty and students concern-

ing Judaism, and a willingness to accommodate to my religious beliefs. A group of my students made me a Rosh Hashana party, and at official banquets, I am frequently toasted with 'Mazel Tov.'"

He also writes, "I have greatly enjoyed the last two issues of *Points East*."

● Dennis Leventhal, chairman of the Jewish Historical Society in Hong Kong, is the representative of the Sino-Judaic Institute in Hong Kong as well. The Jewish Historical Society in Hong Kong and the Sino-Judaic Institute have close fraternal relations, and exchange information on the subject of the Chinese Jews and other related matters. Leventhal may be reached by writing to Synagogue Ohel Leah, Jewish Historical Society, 70 Robinson Road, Hong Kong.

● We wish to thank Ms. Sally Ann Fox of Chico, California, for her generous donation, in order to have our *Points East*, and other institute literature, sent to the Meriam Library of the California State University at Chico, California. We suggest that Ms. Fox has shown a way of presenting our material to university libraries, and we hope her act will be emulated.

● Summer Ulpan: The summer ulpan at the Rothberg School, which primarily gives intensive Hebrew language preparation for overseas students prior to their entering their year (or more) of university studies, this year registered its first student from the People's Republic of China.

Chen Jian Ping, 32, of Shanghai, came to the University on an Israeli government scholarship and will study Hebrew for a year as part of his search for his Jewish roots.

A graduate in Japanese studies from Hang Zong University in China, Mr. Chen came to Israel by way of Japan, where he spent the past year studying Japanese literature and reading what he could find about Jews and Judaism in books printed in Japanese. The whole purpose of his stay in Japan was to apply for formal contacts between Israel and China. While in Japan he met and received assistance from Yaakov Teshima, a graduate of the Hebrew University and the son of Avraham Teshima, founder of the pro-Israel Makuya group in Japan.

Mr. Chen says his ancestors moved to Shanghai in the 19th cen-

It helps Grossman learn the intricacies of deal-making in Hollywood.

At this early stage of her career, Grossman sees herself as primarily a documentarian. In addition to her own reasons for liking the form, she stresses that documentaries are good for everybody. "I am hoping to educate Americans," she said, "a people without a sense of history." This is not to say that she is adverse to making films based on fictional stories. That will come. Grossman, whose eventual goal is to be a producer, also wants to bring new voices into the cinema — more minority directors, as well as women. But she will get to those things later. For now, Grossman is immersed in her AFI studies and making *Escape to Shanghai*.

TEACHING ABOUT JEWISH CULTURE IN CHINA

BY Martin Edelman

In the Spring of 1987 I was a Visiting Professor at Peking University. I had been invited by the Department of International Politics to teach a course on Israeli Politics — the first time that a formal course on that subject had been taught in the People's Republic of China. (See *Points East*, vol. 2, no. 3). I also taught a graduate course on Jewry and Jewish Culture and what follows is a brief description of that experience.

The educated Chinese have great respect for Jews and for Jewish culture. These philo-semitic attitudes are not based on personal acquaintance; there are no Jews in China. The Kaifeng community of indigenous Jews functionally disappeared at the turn of the century. The communities of foreign Jews in Shanghai and other coastal cities fled the advancing Communist armies in 1949.

Nor have the Chinese learned much about the Jewish people in the course of their education. Chinese society has been quite ethnocentric. China was the Middle Kingdom which mediated between Heaven and Earth and was thereby superior to all other civilizations. Traditional Chinese education therefore did not cover the Western world, let alone a small minority like the Jews.

This ruling myth was shattered under the impact of Western (including Japanese) imperialism. The Chinese have sought to modernize their society by learning from the West. In the process they have frequently en-

countered a Jewish presence. But to this day the Chinese lack a detailed knowledge of Jewish history and Jewish culture.

What little the Chinese have learned about the Jews seems admirable. Wherever they turned in their study of Western society, they encountered a Jewish presence. In science there was Einstein; in social science there was Freud; and everywhere there was Marx. But the Chinese have not been able to understand how so small a people — never more than 20 million souls — could have such a major impact. To a nation of more than a billion people — almost a quarter of the world's population — that is indeed a mystery. Little do they know that Westerners, especially the Jews, have been asking the same question for the centuries without coming up with any definitive answers.

Therefore the most frequent request that my family and I received in China was: please explain who the Jews are and what makes them different from other Westerners. We began to appreciate the dilemma of the Rabbis in the Talmud who were asked to explain Judaism while the questioner stood on one foot! But we always resisted the temptation to act like Shamai and send our questioners on their way with a swift cuff behind the ears. Unfortunately, neither were we able to respond with a brilliant one liner like Hillel. Instead we tried for as long as time and the patience of our audience permitted to explain the distinctive qualities of the Jewish people throughout our long history.

In my course on Jews and Jewish Culture this was less of a problem. The thirty, first-year, graduate students were quite fluent in English and had been exposed to many aspects of contemporary Western society in their previous courses. Through a combination of historical and sociological materials, I attempted to explain the distinctive characteristics of Jewish civilization. The students were eager to learn, and the orderly presentation of material in a chronological framework helped explain the many transformations which took place as a result of Jewish interaction with surrounding cultures. But the enterprise was handicapped by the lack of other resources to support the class lectures. The library lacked books on the subject and there were no audio-visual aids to bring this esoteric material to life for the Chinese students.

Not surprisingly therefore, the most

successful lessons were a series of informal presentations. When my wife and daughters joined me in Beijing they brought a series of slides from the Jewish Museum in New York and Bet Hatsfusot in Tel Aviv. We organized two classes around these slides. By carefully explaining the dress, the artifacts, the buildings depicted in these slides, we were able to illustrate the underlining unity in the vast diversity of Jewish life through the ages.

Even more successful were the two classes we organized around our own family's religious practices. Chinese culture has always placed a high value on education and has accorded scholars an exalted, perhaps too exalted, status. Therefore the students were inclined to treat with respect my personal practices: I was a distinguished Visiting Professor, a foreign expert. Moreover Chinese culture has always placed a high value on the family. When the class saw how our family practiced Judaism, there was a strong emotional response.

We organized these classes around the daily and periodic cycles in Jewish life. When we talked about prayer, I showed the students how I put on my tephilan and the slides and pictures we had previously shown the students came to life. When we talked about the Sabbath prayers, my younger daughter Deborah demonstrated how the Torah portion is chanted in the synagogue each week. My older daughter Ruth chanted a portion of the Book of Ruth to illustrate that part of a Festival service. My wife Miriam explained how she lights candles on Shabbat and then took the class through some of the rules connected with Kashruth. I must confess, the latter was an almost impossible task. But because the students know that we observed Kashruth even in China — we became vegetarians for the duration — they were willing to accept the fact that Kashruth was important even if difficult to grasp intellectually.

These less traditional classes were plainly successful. The students asked questions (most usually Chinese students just listen to lectures and take notes); they talked about the material at other classes; they invited guests to attend the presentations. At the end of our stay, the Dean (Chairman) of the Department told us that it was the first time a professor had brought his family into a class to help with the instruction. Plainly it had an impact.

At the end of the semester, I gave a

could rival Ethiopia today," the script outline says. But Clark will show how the enterprising refugees, whose average age was over 40, started a minor economic boom by rebuilding Hongkew out of its own rubble. They constructed European-style houses with indoor plumbing. New businesses included restaurants, open-air cafes, general stores and even night clubs that attracted patrons from all sectors.

The newcomers' excellent skills as craftsmen, tailors, smiths and such drew customers from every nationality in the city. Because they valued education so highly, Shanghailanders organized schools with high standards and strict discipline including two kindergartens and nine grades for 600 students. By 1941 they had opened a trade school, a dancing school and the Gregg Business College.

The script reveals the general lack of prejudice among Japanese who, despite urgings from Germany, could see no difference between a European and a Jew. Their kindness to the refugees was not, however, totally selfless. Japan believed Jews controlled British and U.S. financial and political forces including the media.

The Jews were free to move about all sectors of Shanghai until Nazi pressure finally persuaded the Japanese to confine them to Hongkew. Still, the Japanese never hindered any relief efforts coming from outside the country for the refugees. The film will credit the Japanese attitude with saving many Jewish lives.

At the end of the war, most Hongkew Jews went to Israel, the United States and Latin America. Some to other countries. Today there are no more than a dozen Jews living out their lives in this communist-controlled city. Clark's story has a happier ending than most others about the war years. "Whatever they did and wherever they finally went, they succeeded in their professions and businesses," Clark said.

Clark is a former professor of anthropology at the University of California at Berkeley who found the academic world too narrow for his pervading curiosity about human relationships. He is famous for producing documentaries on quirks in American society.

His first film, "The Workplace Hustle" dealing with on-the-job sexual harassment, has won film festival awards and high praise from major corporations.

He also intends to make a one-hour documentary on the Hongkew expe-

rience, with possible funding by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. He has already obtained permission to shoot on location in Shanghai.

To fund the mini-series, Clark is selling 35 \$10,000 investment units on the basis of a limited partnership. Anyone interested in participating financially in this project may contact Clark at (415) 777-1668 or c/o *The Shanghai Film Newsletter*, 943 Howard Street, San Francisco, CA 94103.

DOCUMENTARY ON SHANGHAI JEWS IS DREAM OF YOUNG FILMMAKER

By Tom Waldman

Reprinted from the Jewish Journal
Jan. 30-Feb. 5, 1987

The crowd that jammed the Streisand Center at UCLA earlier this year came primarily to see four Hollywood celebrities discuss the responsibilities of Jews in the "business." There were, however, important things to be done prior to the panel discussion. Stanley Kramer, the renowned producer and director, presented an award to Roberta Grossman for the best film proposal. The 28-year-old woman has been working for two years on a new project focusing on Jews who escaped the Holocaust by settling in Shanghai, China, in the late 1930's and early 1940's. It is a story that has never really been told. Grossman and her partner on the film, Stacey Foiles, have done extensive research. They raised enough money — \$15,000 — to produce a 21-minute video cassette. It was on the strength of the clip that Grossman won the award.

The proposed film, called *Escape to Shanghai*, represents the mix of a historical subject and a dramatic theme that so intrigues Grossman. Then there is the added appeal of presenting the story through a popular medium. "Historians write books, and nobody reads them," noted Grossman. And there is also the fact that the film deals with Jewish life. Grossman, who grew up with a strong sense of Jewish identity, has always had an interest in her people, their struggles and their aspirations.

This film, then, is a coming together of many of the stimulating parts of Roberta Grossman's world. That she can do this at the beginning of her career is rare indeed. This will not be a film of compromise, but one in which Grossman's talents as an historian

and an artist can be realized. The cassette gives an early indication of this. Short interviews with Jews who were in Shanghai (most of the subjects for this film appear to be in their early 60's, meaning they were adolescents and teen-agers during the war years) are interspersed with rare footage of the Holocaust and the Sino-Japanese war.

Grossman filmed the interviews at a reunion of the Jews of Shanghai held in New York. When more funding comes through, she and Foiles will travel to Shanghai with their subjects and conduct interviews over there. Like a politician running for office, Grossman is now in the somewhat uncomfortable position of having to ask for money — \$250,000. She has already spent hundreds of dollars in postage fees sending out a bulky treatment and history of the project to potential contributors. This was necessitated in part because Grossman's impressive grant proposal was turned down by the National Endowment for the Humanities, for reasons that remain unclear.

Her sensible decision was to approach Jewish patrons, and Jewish foundations, for financial support. The film *Partisans of Vilna*, which dealt with the war experiences of Jews in Vilna, Lithuania, received funding from dozens of Jewish sources. There would seem to be no significant barriers to receiving the money. *Escape from Shanghai*, which Grossman said will be between 60 and 90 minutes long, is another in that growing genre of uplifting films about the Holocaust. *Partisans of Vilna* focused on a tough group of Jews who survived; *Courage to Care*, a short released earlier in the year, profiled righteous gentiles. The Jews of Shanghai had their tense moments, but most of them made it through the war.

Grossman pledges that the film will be made "If I have to raise the money \$10 at a time." The statement, coming from someone who succeeded with her first short on the strength of almost no experience, is not idle bragging. Furthermore Grossman, over the past four years, has become sophisticated in ways of the film world. She is a second-year student at the American Film Institute, which is an honor that goes to only the very few (most students are not asked to return after their first year). Where Grossman's regular companions were once tied to the academic world, she now spends most of her time with film people. They share ideas, strategies and sugges-

tury from Kaifeng, a former center of Chinese Jewry, and that they still describe themselves as "Isaleah," a Chinese equivalent for the people of Israel. He has pursued his dream of studying in Israel as the climax of his search for his Jewish roots. After the intensive two-month ulpan, he will continue with his Hebrew studies at the University. He is living in the student dormitories on the Mount Scopus campus.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

We are writing to ask your help and assistance. We are not asking for financial help, but we need books and religious articles.

We belong to the Jewish faith. Due to the political situation in our area we are cut off from the outside world and contacts with other Jewish groups. As a result, it is becoming more and more difficult for us to continue teaching about our religion to our children.

We will appreciate it if you would consider the following: sending us Jewish religious articles, as well as Jewish prayer books for daily, Shabbath, high holidays, festivals, and services. We need 200 copies of each book. We don't ask for new books and articles. We will be very happy if you will send us your used items.

We hope the political climate in our area will eventually be eased and that you will come to visit us. We would very much enjoy to meet you, talk with you and show you first hand how we are using all the materials you have been kind enough to share with us.

We thank you and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Haniel Sharon, Bene Israel
Bene Manasseh, Secretary Beth Shalom
Hibbath Zion Quarter's, Moreh Town, W/NOI
PO Moreh, Dist. Chandel
Manipur, India 795131

Dear Editor

I wish you to know that I look forward to reading *Points East* because the subject matter is highly interesting to me. I have been fascinated by the story of the ill-fated Jewish community of Kaifengfu ever since I learnt about it during my stay in Shanghai from 1935-1947. I have a number of books on the subject and an article in the May 1949 issue of *The Jewish Monthly* by my late father Rev. Mendel Brown,

former minister of the Ohel Rachel Synagogue, Shanghai, written in London shortly before his death. I also had an opportunity to meet one of the Jews brought to Shanghai from Kaifengfu and have often wondered what befell them and the rest of the Community. I was therefore delighted when I learnt about the existence of the Sino-Judaic Institute and *Points East*.

I appreciate your efforts to bring us up-to-date articles and news and, in a sense, extend the life of the Community. It is a unique publication. Keep up the good work.

Henrietta Reifler
Seattle, Washington

Dear Sir,

I am looking for historical material on the SEPHARDIM IN SHANGHAI and would appreciate hearing from any of your readers who may have such material.

Joseph Hayim Abraham
27 West 86 Street
New York, NY 10024

The November issue of *Points East* was very exciting with many new projects under way in which I wish you great success.

Phyllis Horal
London, England

Keep up the good work — *Points East* is getting more interesting with each issue.

Lou Lempke
Jamaica, New York

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Sino-Judaic Institute was founded on June 27, 1985. We are a non-profit, tax exempt organization. We achieved this status through the efforts of our Legal Counsel, Robert Grodsky. I would like to thank him on behalf of our Institute for his work on this matter, and for other work done on our behalf.

I can report the following activities to our membership.

1) We have published seven issues of our Newsletter *Points East*. All in all, comments from around the world have been extremely favorable, and our Editor, Rabbi Anson Laytner, must be thanked for the work he has put into *Points East*.

In addition to *Points East*, we have published three lithographic reprints by the late Samuel Sokobin. These previously unpublished works are now in circulation. Our Vice-President, Michael Pollak, organized this material for publication. We are proud to have colleagues such as Mike Pollak.

I should like to reiterate a point made in a previous report. We have no paid employees; and that includes our Editor, Rabbi Anson Laytner, your President, Treasurer, and all other officers.

2) I recently received a phone call from Michael Pollak offering the following suggestion. As you may know,

the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, have a number of prayer books, Haggadahs, etc., that originally came from the Kaifeng Synagogue. Pollak has suggested that he would reprint these in booklet form. The material to be printed would be listed as published by the SINO-JUDAIC INSTITUTE and the HEBREW UNION COLLEGE.

I have communicated this suggestion to Mr. Herbert Zafren, Director of Libraries at the Hebrew Union College, and he responded as follows. "We have no problem with this concept, but would prefer some delay so that the timing would be better for our purposes." We now have this interesting project to look forward to.

3) The Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati has approached us regarding a joint publication of the very important out of print Lowenthal Bibliographies. We have made considerable progress in our negotiations, and there is every reason for believing that our negotiations will bear fruit.

We envisage a two stage process. The first stage would be a reprint of the Lowenthal Bibliographies, and the second stage would be the printing of a Bibliography containing modern source material. We consider this entire project to be an important contribution to the literature on the Chinese Jews.

The cost for printing the Lowenthal Bibliographies alone, will be in the neighborhood of \$5000.00, and this would be borne equally by the SINO-JUDAIC INSTITUTE and the HEBREW UNION COLLEGE. We hope our membership will support this worth-while enterprise with contributions.

4) We have in the past toyed with the idea of a Sino-Judaic exhibit in China, similar to the Kaifeng-Jewish exhibit that has been traveling around the States. A few exploratory letters have been sent to China, and we have finally evoked the following response from Professor Gong Fangzhen, Director of the Office of Religious Research, Institute of Religious Studies, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences. His letter was dated December 6, 1987. "Thanks for your detailed suggestion of the exhibition. We have already given a report to the authorities and I think they'll quickly make response. We have stated this exhibition is merely a cultural exchange and scholarly dialogue. We do our best endeavors to promote realizing this plan."

I have advised Professor Gong that I will be in Shanghai in April. To which he replied, "we'll be very glad to re-

ceive you and I hope the exhibition will be perfectly arranged on time.”

Should we receive a go-signal on this project, we will have to seek a grant from a major institution, as the project will be quite costly. Any suggestions from our members in this regard will be greatly appreciated.

5) Dennis Leventhal, a member of our Board of Directors, and Chairman of the Jewish Historical Society of Hong Kong, lives and works in Hong Kong and spends a considerable amount of time in China. He has provided us with much important data on the activities of the Jewish community in Hong Kong. One of his reports will soon be printed in **Points East**.

He has also placed our application blank for membership in the Hong Kong Jewish Chronicle.

Dennis has provided us much important data on China as well as a number of contacts. We are constantly impressed with the high intellectual calibre of our membership.

6) On the scholarly front, our member in Southern California, Nigel Thomas, is one of the few scholars in the United States, perhaps the world, who is doing research on the Radanites, those medieval Jewish merchants who traveled from Spain and France to China. Professor Gong in Shanghai has advised our Institute that he is also doing research on this subject. We are in the process of putting these two scholars in touch so that they may exchange information.

7) In late 1986, Sotheby in Manhattan, auctioned a Torah Scroll described as follows. “Chinese Torah Scroll, Kai Fengfu. Manuscript on Sheepskin. Undated (1642-53)” Reverend David Smith of London, England purchased the Torah Scroll. Our Michael Pollak, author of *The Torah Scrolls of the Chinese Jews*, has been in contact with Reverend Smith, in an attempt to get information on the Scroll. To date, we have not been able to get hard information, authenticating its history. However, Reverend Smith advised that he would take photos of the Torah Scroll, and send them to us. Phyllis Horal, our Board member in London, England, writes that “Pastor Smith assures me that photographs will be to hand by the end of February.”

8) We have a number of members who have spent time in China as “Foreign Experts,” in various Chinese Universities, as well as visitors who have done important work in China.

Doctor Ronald Kaye lectured on Medicine at various Medical Schools

in China. He was probably the first Westerner to view the stelae left by the Kaifeng Jews since the Revolution. Doctor Kaye made a rubbing of one of the stelae.

Professor I.I. Glass of the Institute of Aerospace Studies at the University of Toronto, was invited to China for a lecture tour. A number of his books have been translated into Chinese. He was the first foreigner to be awarded an honorary Professorship by the Nanjing Aeronautical Institute.

Professor Donald Daniel Leslie’s “Survival of the Chinese Jews,” will soon be translated into Chinese.

Professor Jonathan Nadler is currently teaching American Law in Beijing.

Wendy Abraham is Resident Director of the Council on International Educational Exchange at Beijing University.

Professor Andrew Plaks has done research on the Jews in Harbin.

Rabbi Arnold Belzer has conducted service in Kaifeng, and Rabbi Joshua Stampfer has visited China on several occasions, meeting with scholars.

Professor Albert Dien has also visited Kaifeng on several occasions, and made a determination that the 1489 surface of the 1489/1512 stele was face-up.

Rabbi Marvin Tokayer, past Rabbi for the Jewish Community of Japan, and co-author of *The Fugu Plan*, has made several trips to China. He has provided us with numerous contacts, both Jewish and Chinese.

Last, but by no means least on this list is PROFESSOR LOUIS SCHWARTZ, who was an exchange professor at Beijing University. During his stay in China, he visited Kaifeng and met a number of Chinese Jews. He made important contacts with Chinese officials and scholars. Professor Schwartz’s work was basic in the formation of the SINO-JUDAIC INSTITUTE.

This by no means exhausts the contact we have made in China. I apologize to those members who names have not been listed.

Leo Gabow
President

REPORT FROM BEIJING

(continued from page 1)

rally, at this rate, they’ll never get to study in America. Does anyone on SJL’s Board know people in the Hebrew or Jewish Studies Depts. of Brandeis, U. Mass. at Amherst, Univ. of Pennsylvania, Hunter College, He-

brew Union College in New York, Hebrew University of Brookline, Mass., or Tufts University? If so, could they please write to them or call to inquire whether or not they’ve heard of or from these students from Peking University? I know that these are basically the schools to which they are applying.

If and when these two finally reach America, it would be wonderful if Jewish families could host them for Shabbats once in a while. I know they’re practicing already for the occasion! We had one trial run here with the Weidenbaums (a couple at Peking Univ. here as visiting scholars), and they loved it.

Wendy Abraham can be reached at Shaoyuan 2-103, Beijing University, Beijing, China.

“RADANITES AND CHINESE JEWS”

by Nigel Thomas

In 1948, the late L. Rabinowitz published an account of the medieval Jewish merchants named by Arabic geographers the Radanites (ar-Radhaniyah). It was titled “Jewish Merchant Adventures,” and represents a notable effort to collect all the rather scanty information then available on this subject.

The primary original sources is the Arab geographer, ibn Khordadbeq (c.850), who described an extraordinary network of trade routes, extending from present day France to China, travelled by those merchants. The principal ones were from France and Spain across the Mediterranean and North Africa to Syria, Baghdad and Iran, thence, both by sea (from the Persian Gulf) and by land to India and China — also, a land route from Europe north to India and China — also, a land route from Europe north of “Rome” (Byzantium) to the Volga and the Caspian, and east through Iran to China.

Rabinowitz tried to explain the origins of this phenomenon as being due to the simultaneous rise of Islam, the Tang empire in China, and the empire of Charlemagne in Europe — along with the undoubted role of the Jews as the principal intermediaries between Islam and Christendom at this time.

This may well account for the development of the western part of this trade network, since Moslem traders were barred from Christian countries. It does not explain why Jewish traders were so active on the routes to the Orient, especially the land route, along with their Islamic fellow-traders.

tangular or square garment made of silk, linen or wool under their coats. Tzitzith or fringes having white threads entwined with a cord of sky-blue are attached to the four corners of this distinct apparel called Thallith Qathan or Arbah Kanfoth (small prayer shawl or four corners). So also the Thallithoth or prayer shawls worn by the Jews over their shoulders during morning worship have similar white threads entwined with a cord of sky-blue attached to the four corners.

Another notable feature is that the human figures appearing in the paintings are blurred. This was done intentionally so as not to transgress the second commandment: “Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness . . .”³ The tiles paved inside the circular Bimah (pulpit), which stands at the centre of the prayer hall, are larger ones. And the human figures appearing in them are clear. Therefore a carpet bearing impressions of a large six-pointed Magen David (Shield of David) at the centre and two smaller ones at the rear end is used to cover them. Chief Rabbi Louis Rabinowitz, who visited the shrine in March, 1952, described these tiles as “The glory of the Pardesi Synagogue . . .”⁴ And he added: “They are the most magnificent examples of Chinese tiles of the famous Willow pattern that I have ever seen.”⁵

Of these tiles A.B. Salem wrote: “Many a visitor has carried away these things on their visits to adorn their own walls or drawing rooms. Lord Curzon is said to have carried away a tile from the Synagogue. A Manager of the National Bank of India Ltd., also secured one tile.”⁶ Many others too tried to obtain them and when their efforts failed these frustrated souvenir hunters spread a fictitious tale to malign the Jews. According to this legend these tiles were brought by the merchants of the Cochin Rajah for paving the floor of the Royal palace. This palace, built by the Portugese in 1555 C.E. and renovated by the Dutch in 1658 C.E., stands in the adjacent compound. But the Rajah refused to use them because some of the Jews misinformed him that they were made by using the blood of cows. According to the religious philosophy of the Hindus, cow is a sacred animal. Hence the Rajah ordered their immediate removal and consequently they were transferred to Jew Town.

Had this tale been true it would have certainly strained the friendly ties between the ruling family and the Jewish community. The fact that Jews

were held in high esteem in the Cochin Royal Court in all periods speaks volumes against this concocted story. Besides, the Rajah would have preferred the traditional Hindu colours of red and green and not sky-blue and white as the Jews did. A.B. Salem explains: “It may also be mentioned that the great and learned people who built the Synagogue could never have been a party to spread on the floor of their beloved house of worship any tiles, however beautiful, obtained by questionable means of stratagem.”⁷ And the words of the Dutch Commander Adrian Moens, a contemporary of Ezekiel Rahabi, who described the Cochin Jew Town Synagogue as a shrine “with silver hanging lamps and the floor paved with Chinese tiles bought by Ezekiel Rahabi from China”⁸ prove the fallacy of this tale. Sr. S.S. Koder, the warden of Cochin Jew Town Synagogue, too assets that it was Ezekiel Rahabi who beautified⁹ the Synagogue with Chinese tiles.

The tiles are still in an excellent state of preservation; the paintings on them have not faded. Visitors and tourists who come to the Synagogue have to remove their footwear before stepping on them so that they may not damage the tiles. Such tiles are not found anywhere else in India or abroad. And, needless to add, many visit the Synagogue just to look at them.

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THE SHANGHAI STORY COMES TO TELEVISION

By Ellen Mary Schantz

Reprinted from National Jewish Post & Opinion

Woodrow W. Clark, Jr., president of Woody Clark Productions, Inc. in San Francisco, sees the Jewish people as survivors who fought Nazi persecution with ingenuity and knowhow, not with guns and violence. Clark discovered the perfect example of Jewish spirit among nearly 20,000 Jews who fled to Shanghai, China, from Germany and other Central European countries between 1932 and 1941.

Clark has decided to bring this moving story to public attention in an eight-hour mini-series for television rather than a feature film so that the Shanghai experience may be presented in depth. It is based on the adventures of former Shanghailanders now living in the United States who have volunteered their stories.

To recreate the immigrants’ lives, Clark will use composite characters. The production will include some teenagers, adults in their late 20s and an older couple who faced a new life in a strange land, he explained in a recent interview.

“It’s a story about Jews who didn’t have the Holocaust experience,” Clark said. “But their experience was just as painful. Yet it’s not one of those stories that makes you feel guilt and pain.” He added that he hopes to see the series on the air in less than two years.

In 1938, the teeming city of Shanghai was the world’s seventh largest port with 4 million Chinese and 100,000 foreigners, including 60,000 Japanese. Some Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews, including the Rothschilds and the Sassoons, had called Shanghai their home for more than a century. Engaged in banking and trading, the highly successful Sephardim had built two grand synagogues there in the 1920s.

The only place Jews could escape Hitler and the Nazis without waiting for clearance of any kind was Shanghai, where the Japanese had been the real power since the Sino-Japanese hostilities of 1937. The Chinese “scorched-earth” policy of burning everything so that the enemy could not profit from aggression had leveled the city’s Hongkew sector. Since they could leave Germany with only personal belongings and a limited amount of cash, Hongkew was the only place where many refugees could afford to settle.

Clark’s film will outline events that brought the Jews to Shanghai but will concentrate chiefly on their accomplishments after their arrival. It will open with a quick montage revealing “a squalor and poverty level which

reports, now call themselves by names which are altogether different from the Hebraic-sounding ones they were given at birth: Da-weh (David-?) and Elisheba. This much, incidentally, I am free to tell you about my informant himself: he is an authority on modern Portuguese poetry, and especially that portion of modern Portuguese poetry which deals with Jewish themes and was written by those who, like himself, are known to their countrymen as the *gente da nacao*.

In a letter dated April 2, 1983, my correspondent sent me a recipe for the chicken wings that were apparently an outstanding feature of the Passover gastronomic tradition of the Kaifeng Jews. This recipe, and others, were dictated to him in Portugal in 1968 by his Grandmother Yang, who had received them before her departure from China from her Grandmother Shi. Sadly, I must confess that not all the ingredients contained in the Shi-Yang chicken wings recipe may be precisely the same as those which were customarily employed in old Kaifeng. In his 1983 letter my correspondent tells me: "Having a pretty good knowledge of Chinese cuisine, I believe that the recipe has been modified as my relatives advanced toward the coast of China. The reason is that in China you use fresh hot peppers, and grandma used the powdered (westernized) Portuguese piri-piri. Also, the parsley should be a fresh sprig nicely minced. Anyhow, I believe that as a whole this is a good, delicious Chinese-Jewish dish." In another letter he tells me that his grandmother's children wings "are out of this world."

Here, then—with a caveat—is the recipe for preparing chicken wings "in the style," as my correspondent puts it, "of Grandma Yang." The caveat is, in short, that observers of the laws of kashruth may find it difficult to locate a reliable source for the recipe's sherry, Chinese white wine, and soy sauce that a board of rabbis would accept as halakhically kosher for Passover.

- 12 chicken wings
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil (preferably peanut or sesame)
- 4 tablespoons soy sauce
- 3 tablespoons sherry (or Chinese white wine)
- 1 teaspoon white vinegar
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 6 scallions minced, including part of the green tops
- 2 large cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

- 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon dried parsley

Cut wing tips (and save for soup stocks), and split the rest of the wing in half, cutting through the joint.

Heat oil over medium heat in a wok or an iron skillet. The pieces should be sauteed until brown on both sides.

In a separate bowl, blend all other ingredients and add to the chicken wings in the wok or skillet. Mix well, cover and cook for about 30 minutes over low fire until wings are tender. Stir occasionally while cooking to prevent burning.

Place wings on a big tray and coat with sauce and serve.

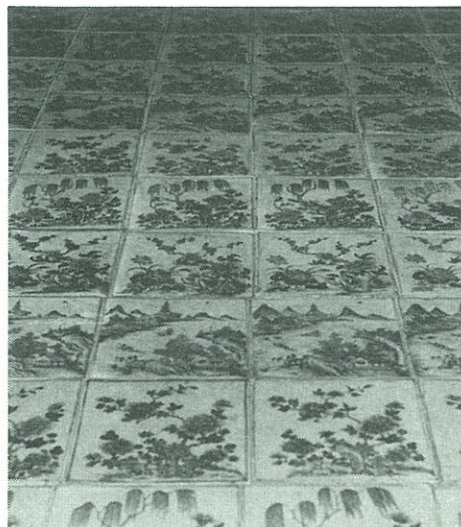
The finished product, I am assured, is "excellent with Rice Cha-chau from Macao—recipe available in the near future." But "the near future" has now stretched out to five years, and I am still waiting to hear the secret of how Rice Cha-chau is made. If and when it is ever imparted to me, I'll be happy to share it with those readers of **Points East** who ask for it. Let me remind you, however, that rice may be legitimately eaten at Passover by Sephardic Jews only, and not by those who belong to the Ashkenazic community.

In any case, *Bon appetit!*

THE CHINESE TILES OF COCHIN JEW TOWN SYNAGOGUE

By Adv. Prem Doss S. Yehudi

The Cochin Jew Town Synagogue, Mattancherri, Kerala, India, also known as Pardesi (Foreigners') Synagogue, was built in 1568 C.E. by Samuel Castiel, David Belileah, Ephrahim Sala and Joseph Levi. This Beth Knesseth is the oldest Jewish house



of worship in the commonwealth and the only functioning Shul in the Indian state of Kerala. As Steven R. Weisman writes it "has become a symbol for Judaism in India generally."¹

The importance Kerala Jews attach to their House of Prayer can be gauged from the Synagogue's luxurious interior. Its floor, which lies a foot higher than that of the Azara, is paved with 1,115 hand-painted tiles each measuring 30 cm. by 30 cm. These beautiful ceramic tiles were imported by the wealthy Jewish merchant and diplomat Ezekiel Rahabi from the Chinese city of Canton in 1762 C.E. These are known as 'Weeping Willow Pattern Tiles'. All these white tiles have sky-blue paintings of the willow pattern on them; as they were painted by hand each one is different from the rest. They are arranged in groups of four, each group depicting the complete story of the love of the Chinese peasant Chang for Lichi, the daughter of the Mandarin.

In these paintings a swift flowing river is seen in the centre. On the east bank of the palace of the Mandarin and his beautiful daughter Lichi. Chang, her lover, lived on the west bank and he used to cross the river in a little country boat pushed forward with a pole, in order to meet Lichi at the small out-house of the palace. The Mandarin was unaware of all this and he decided to give his daughter in marriage to Tajin, a Chinese prince. Arrangements for the marriage were made. But, in the night, Chang managed to enter the palace and eloped with Lichi. The elopement was soon discovered and the angry Mandarin ordered their capture and immediate execution. But the merciful Genii transformed the lovers into a pair of turtle doves and they escaped the Mandarin's wrath. The weeping willow grew up on the ground where the tears of Lichi fell and it became the abode of this happy pair.

The choice of white and sky-blue, colours of Jewish religious significance, make it clear that these tiles were specially made for paving the floor of his house of prayer in accordance with the specific directions of the elders of Kerala Jews. "And Hashem spoke unto Mosheh saying: 'Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them throughout their generations fringed in the corners of their garments, and that they put the fringe of each corner a thread of blue ...'"² In order to fulfill this commandment Jews wear a rec-

I think that the answer lies in Chinese historical records of the Sui dynasty (580 - 618), showing that the East Roman Empire (Byzantium), endeavoring to bypass hostile Persia, established a trade route across the Don-Volga steppe and Kazakhstan to Xinjiang north of the Tien Shan.

The existence of this "Northern Silk Road" has been substantiated by recent archeological discoveries of Byzantine gold coins in China, published by Xia Nai. Its function would be even more important to the Byzantines when Islam replaced Persia as the enemy, since this route lay outside Islamic territory.

The Byzantine accounts indicate that early (in the 6th century), Jews in the Kerch-Taman region were involved in this trade. It is plausible that this current of Jewish traders brought about the remarkable conversion of the Khazar Turks to Judaism, which certainly much improved the position of the Radanite traders, as noted by Rabinowitz. However, he completely and surprisingly missed the Byzantine connection.

The recent translation by Sidney Shapiro of ZhuTiang's article (1983) on Jewish traces in Yang Zhou recounts a tradition of a local family migrating from "Lumi" (Rome-Byzantium) at the beginning of the Sui dynasty.

To sum up — just as the Moslem-Christian hostility led to the rise of Jews as traders between western Europe and Islamic Spain and Sicily, so the efforts of Byzantium to keep trade routes to China open in the face of the Islamic advances led to the Jews operating a route "round Islam" to China.

Because Byzantium was then of far greater commercial importance than Latin Europe, the trade volume on this route was probably much greater than the routes to west Europe.

It also dovetailed into the Scandinavian trade down the Volga, and — above all — became a back door trade channel through neutral territory between Byzantium and Islam, as ibn Khordadhbek indicates. Of the routes outside Islamic territory, he knew little — but he knew of the existence of Jewish Khazaria and its association with the Radanite traders.

One point not mentioned by Rabinowitz was the possibility that Radanite traders may have acted as transmitters of Chinese technology to medieval Europe.

Since Joseph Needham's work was not then available, this is not surpris-

ing, but it remains a significant omission.

I would suggest that, in cases where Chinese technology found its way to Europe but not to Islam, *before* the Mongol era, Jews must have been the transmitters. The most notable example is, perhaps, the magnetic compass. Much more investigation is needed here.

I would like to thank Mr. Sidney Shapiro, Professor Hao Zheng-hua, and Dr. Joseph Needham for their kindness in making historical material available in correspondence. Their help was essential in developing the ideas set out in this article.

GROUP IN INDIA YEARNS TO BE JEWISH

By Richard M. Weintraub

Reprinted from the
Washington Post
March 16, 1987

AIZAWL, India — The men in the room wore prayer shawls and skullcaps and a small holy ark had the traditional Hebrew on the front. A calendar showing the dates of the Jewish year was hung on the wall.

In the mountain fastnesses of north-eastern India's Mizoram state, some 300 Mizos consider themselves Jews, descendants of Joseph's son Manasseh who had wandered from Assyrian captivity to China and eventually southward to these beautiful but isolated mountains that straddle India and northern Burma.

In neighboring Manipur, they say there are even more, with some estimates of the total number reaching 1,400 in this tribal region.

It is an area vastly different from the rest of India in culture, racial composition and religion, reflecting the Mongoloid tribal background of the people and the overwhelming influence of Christian missionaries who accompanied the British into the area in the late 19th century.

If the region seems vastly different from the rest of India, the tale of the people who live here and who consider themselves Jews is even more so. Their story, unusual in its own right, also provides an intriguing link to the little-known and now all-but-vanished community of Chinese Jews.

The existence of small Jewish communities in India has been known for centuries, with evidence of some settling in what is now Maharashtra state on the west coast as early as the 10th century, with suggestions of an even earlier arrival.

The Cochin Jews of southwestern Kerala, once numbering as many as 2,500, have dwindled to only a couple of dozen.

The Ben Israel Jews of present-day Maharashtra state, including Bombay, are the largest remaining community. Emigration to Israel, the United States and Britain has shrunk a group that numbered more than 20,000 when India gained independence in 1947 to fewer than 5,000 today.

The third distinct group, known as the "Baghdadi" Jews, was traders and merchants who came to India from Iraq, Syria, Iran and Afghanistan in the 19th century and settled mostly in Calcutta and Bombay. Once numbering about 5,000, today there are only a few hundred.

These groups have a well-defined Jewish identity and generally seem to be accepted by rabbinical authorities in Israel.

But for the families of Joseph Rei and others of Mizoram and neighboring Manipur, it is a different question.

Theirs is admittedly a late profession of faith, coming only within the last two decades and after an odyssey of centuries of tribalism, followed by conversion to fundamentalist Protestant Christianity. They strongly believe that it is not a new conversion but a rediscovery of an old faith.

"Originally we were Presbyterian and then went to [the] church of God where the sabbath was celebrated," said Joseph Rei's daughter, Rebeccah. "But our forefathers had passed on by word of mouth that we were descendants of Manasseh, so we started studying the Bible intently to find our connection to Israel."

Such leaps of belief are not uncommon among intense students of the Old Testament, but historians of the hill tribes of the region say there are references to Yahweh, the Hebrew name for God, and other Old Testament concepts in the oral tradition of the tribes. There also is a story of the lost "parchment," which had been the tribes' contact with their past.

This has raised the possibility that the present-day Mizos had at one point been part of a small Jewish community in ancient China or at least had come in contact with someone familiar with the Old Testament.

After the contacts with other Jews in Bombay and Calcutta and some limited contacts with Jews in Israel, the Mizo community had developed a tapestry of Jewish practices; the major

festivals and holidays are celebrated, and there are Saturday morning services; the prayer book, or parts of it, have been transliterated into the English alphabet and translated into the Mizo language; the men undergo circumcisions, but they are performed by a doctor, not a rabbi, and they do not follow the prescribed ritual. The women follow the general outlines of keeping a kosher home, although there is no kosher butcher. With no rabbis, there also are no bar mitzvahs of young boys.

Probably the most active link is a Jewish social service organization and youth training center in Bombay, which a number of the Aizawl youth have attended.

Efforts to gain formal recognition have been stymied, however, and a much-sought meeting with rabbis from Israel that finally took place in Calcutta in 1985 ended in disaster, with the group's Jewish links being rejected as too weak.

"The rabbi told us he wouldn't give certificates of conversion because ... we would go back and eat nonkosher, that it wouldn't be a real conversion," said Rebeccah Rei.

Efforts to get permission for several youths to go to Israel for study also were rejected.

Joseph Rei, 63, a carpenter and current leader of the Aizawl community, said they are trying, but it is difficult.

"We do try to learn Hebrew, and we receive books from the rabbis. But even if we wanted to go for more training, no one would let us," he said.

The 300 Jews of Mizoram are mostly small shopkeepers, carpenters or other tradesmen, traditional farmers or holders of menial government jobs. "We don't have any big shots," said one member of the congregation.

Their synagogue and gathering place is a small room about 15 by 20 feet in a rough-hewn wooden building. In addition to the small ark, which contains a tiny Torah scroll, it has a few plain wooden benches. Congregation members say there is little trouble gathering together the required 10 adult males for a service on festivals, but Saturdays sometimes are difficult. Women sit at the back of the room, following Sephardic orthodox practices.

But sometimes, their Jewish practices make life difficult for them.

"There is no discrimination spiritually," says Miriam Rei, Rebeccah's mother. "But people make fun of us.

They say, 'You do a circumcision and wear skull caps, so you are like Moslems.' "

GATHERING THE LOST TRIBES

Reprinted from Jerusalem Post

by Haim Shapiro

According to the demographers, there are some 12 million Jews in the world and the number is shrinking disastrously as a result of assimilation, intermarriage and a low birth rate. But according to a Jerusalem rabbi, there is a vast reservoir of some 22 million people in the world who trace their roots to the Jewish people and at least some want to return to the fold.

They include many of the Afghan rebels, members of a Christian sect in South India, tribesmen on the Burmese-Indian border, a vast group in the remote mountains of Western China and thousands descendants of Marranos in Spain, Portugal and Latin America.

Rabbi Eliahu Avichail, a lecturer in Bible and Jewish thought in a number of teachers' seminaries, is the initiator and main inspiration behind Amishav, an organization dedicated to bringing back the scattered remnants of the tribes of Israel. Avichail studied at Yeshivat Mercaz Harav in Jerusalem and received his ordination from the Chief Rabbinate.

His organization was in the news recently when the Indian government opened a normally closed area in the northwest tribal areas to members of the press, in order to enable them to cover an election there. To their surprise, the journalists found a synagogue in Manipur, complete with a Tora scroll, serving a small, but dedicated Jewish community, made up of members whom, in appearance, were no different from their neighbors.

Avichail has been involved with such groups since 1960, when he heard about these lost Jews from someone he will only describe as "a Jew close to Mea Shearim." Later, the Jerusalem rabbi became acquainted with the scholarly work of President Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, who was a pioneer in studying them.

But, stresses Avichail, while Ben-Zvi was involved in scholarly research, his own interest is practical. "I believe that these tribes belong to Israel and must return," he says with assurance. He admits that it is impossible to talk about the genealogy of these groups with any degree of certainty, but he

insists that it is possible to find probable areas indicating a former link with the people of Israel. In their prayers they mention the name Menashe. "But the most important thing," he says, speaking of some of them, is that they *want* to be Jews and are ready to convert. For such people, he insists the usual rules for would-be converts, in which one is obliged to try to dissuade them, do not apply. "On the contrary, we have an obligation to help them."

Avichail has written a basic handbook on Judaism which is available in Hebrew and English and also exists in unpublished form in Spanish, French and German. There is also an edition in Kuki, the language of the tribes in Northwest India and Burma, with whom Avichail has had a good deal of contact.

He has sent them books in English, written to them on both sides of the border, and visited India four times, although the Indian government never allowed him to visit the area in which the tribes live. But he has met with them elsewhere in India and sent in his emissaries, who include Indian Jews, and it was he who donated the Tora to the synagogue in Manipur, discovered by the newsmen.

The number of people living as Jews in this community is 4,500, but a year ago there were only 1,000. Avichail insists that in order to be Jews, they undergo a complete conversion, and that all conversions must be on an individual basis.

Some of the journalists who visited them recently recorded a certain bitterness at the "shame" they feel at having to convert, when they already regard themselves as Jews, but they also are reported as saying that they fully accept the decision of the rabbis in this matter.

Another problem involves their wish to come to Israel. So far, the Interior Ministry has not been receptive to their requests and has even rejected the application of 30 young people whom Avichail has selected to come to learn about Judaism. They are not even allowed to come as tourists. In the past, however, three youngsters did come from this area to study in Israel and they are now back in their homes teaching their people.

Of those who want to come, some are far from needy or destitute. One of them is the secretary to the government of Manipur, a wealthy man who visited Israel with his wife and son and told Avichail he would like to come and

live in Israel. But even so the rabbi is aware of the difficulties their aliya might pose both for them and for Israeli society. "We can't aim at bringing them to Israel at the present," he says. The mental gap is great and they have little knowledge of Judaism. The fact that they look different is the least of the problem, he added.

These tribes, who number between one and two million, and who trace their ancestry to the Jewish people, are known as the Shinlung. They believe that they are descendants of the ten lost tribes who came to their present home by way of a tortuous route through China.

Avichail believes that they may be related to another group which is still in China, the Chiangmin, who number about a quarter of a million, living in the mountains of Szechuan province, near the Tibetan border. This group, he says, believes that they are descendants of Abraham and they believe in one God.

He first heard about the Chiangmin from an American doctor who had had some contact with a Scottish missionary, whose father had lived among the Chiangmin and noted that they followed some Jewish customs. According to their accounts, they once numbered in the millions. Avichail believes they may have been related to the Jewish community of Kaifeng, which still existed in the 19th century and some of whose descendants are still identifiable.

So far no Jewish expert has visited the Chiangmin, but there have been many personal contacts with members of another group, the Pathans, who number about 15 million in Afghanistan and Pakistan, with another 30,000 living in Kashmir. The Kashmiri people also traces its descent to the lost tribes.

In 1975, Avichail sent his first emissary to this group, which is now embroiled in a bitter life-and-death struggle with the Soviet occupation forces in Afghanistan. In 1980, he led a delegation of Amishav to visit them in Kashmir, and in 1983, another two people met with them in Pakistan.

Friends of Avichail have met with Pathans in Europe and Canada and have tried unsuccessfully to arrange a meeting with the deposed king of Afghanistan, himself a Pathan. Among his contacts is a Pathan who wrote two books in Urdu linking his people to the ten lost tribes. With the Pathans, he says, "we don't even talk about conversions."

that succeeding generations of Shi clan of Kaifeng (and, presumably, their fellow Jews as well) are said to have enjoyed at their seder tables. I should like to share the recipe for this dish with you. But before I do, let me tell you how it came into my hands.

Between 1980 and 1983 I exchanged letters with a Portugese professor who, though he prefers to remain anonymous, had no objections to letting the story of his very unusual family background be made public. He was born, he told me, in a Portugese town whose inhabitants are for the most part at least partially Jewish by descent, as he himself is. In fact, one member of his father's family was tried in 1732 by the Inquisition on the charge of Judaizing, and was fortunate enough to receive the relatively light sentence of exile to Angola. But what sets my correspondent apart genealogically from so many of his townsmen is that although his maternal grandmother was Jewish, she was Chinese Jewish, not Portugese Jewish. Her parents, it seems, were born in Kaifeng. She herself was a native of Tianjin (Tientsin). The man she married—perhaps, as my correspondent suspects, in order to avoid ending up as the concubine of another man—was of Jewish descent too, a Portuguese who had come to Tianjin for business reasons. Not long after their marriage the couple sailed to Portugal and settled down in the husband's old village. There, in the course of time, they had thirteen children. The second and third of these children were twin daughters, one of whom would become the mother of my correspondent.

In 1947, my correspondent traveled to China and met his great-grandparents, both of whom were then in their middle nineties. The great-grandfather, I am told, may not have been Jewish—at any rate, his surname, Yang, was not among those used by the Kaifeng Jewish community. As for the great-grandmother, she was a member of the Kaifeng Jewish Shi clan, and also the last of ten surviving children. Because she was the youngest daughter, none of the family heirlooms were left to her.

In Beijing, my correspondent met two of the children of a great-aunt. These cousins, he says, preferred to conceal their non-Han origins, and it is in deference to the wishes of these and other relatives that he has asked me to refrain from publishing his own, or their, surnames. The cousins, he

But despite this, of all the groups he has investigated, it is the one in the Far East which has the clearest links to the Jews. They have their own law, which is similar in some ways to Jewish law. There is an element in which land reverts to its original owner, just as with the biblical jubilee year, and there is another element which recognizes the right to refuge of a person who kills someone by accident. In their courts they may choose to be tried according to this code, which is known as Pash-tunwally, rather than by the Islamic code.

"Even if they don't convert, wouldn't it be wonderful if Israel had another 15 or 20 million friends." The Pathans, he adds, are known as the best fighters in the world.

Another 100,000 potential "friends" are the Canaanites, members of a Christian group in South India who believe that they were originally Jews and who show some signs of wanting to re-establish their ties with the Jewish people.

The only real evidence of authentic Jewish links is with the descendants of the Marranos, whose ancestors converted to Christianity under duress in Spain, but who continued to observe some Jewish rites. These include a group of some 30,000 in Majorca known as Chuetas, most of whom are now apparently pious Catholics.

About 20 years ago, however, a group of some 20 families were brought to Israel, but the attempt ended in failure and they returned to Majorca. "It failed," Avichail says, "because those involved were only concerned about their economic absorption and not their spiritual absorption."

There are, however, a few thousand in Portugal who have openly proclaimed their Jewishness and a few communities in Mexico which Avichail is working to bring to Israel. A few young people from the Mexican groups are at present studying in the country, he added.

There are other groups in Brazil and Amishav has not even begun to investigate the reports it has received from Africa, says Avichail.

A PASSOVER RECIPE FROM KAIFENG

by Michael Pollak

Every year, as the first evening of Passover draws near, I am reminded of a Chinese Jewish culinary delight