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BANGKOK JEWRY
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says Djemal. "Events in Israel are hardly reported here, and bilateral ties are good, although the government doesn't like to make too much noise about them."

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VOL. 4, NO. 1

FEBRUARY, 1989

PASSOVER REUNION IN SHANGHAI

An historic and dramatic milestone has been scheduled for Shanghai during Passover 1989 when members of the Jewish community, some with roots in China for generations, and some that survived the Holocaust by taking refuge in that Chinese city during World War II, will return for their first reunion in China.

Members of the China Jewish community, their families, Jewish leaders and Jews from around the world will converge in China between April 18 and April 30, 1989 to re-establish their ties with China for the first time in 40 years. Some 30,000 Jews, most of them fortunate escapees from Hitler's Europe, lived in China during the World War II period.

Receptions and meetings with Chinese officials and dignitaries, economic and business seminars, historical tours and Passover seders with food specially flown in from the United States are but some of the highlights of the *International Assembly of Jews in China*.

Ambassador Yosef Tekoah, former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, Chancellor of Ben Gurion University of the Negev in Israel and a former resident of Shanghai, is Honorary Chairman and will be the keynote speaker of the Assembly.

Rabbi David Rosen, former Chief Rabbi of Ireland and currently Dean of Jerusalem's Sapir Jewish Heritage Center and Special Advisor on Interreligious Relations for the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith in Jerusalem, will conduct the Passover Seders in Shanghai.

"For most of us, returning to Shanghai will be a tangible restatement of our faith in Jewish survival and our friendship toward China," said Ambassador Tekoah.



First and foremost, the Assembly is a reunion of Jews of China and an opportunity for them to return to the land that was once their home. But there is more.

With the full blessing of the Chinese government, appropriate signs will be placed on all still existing buildings that were important to the Shanghai Jewish community. Shanghai Television will broadcast these ceremonies and an American film crew led by Mary Catherine Harold, producer of the hit television series *Knots Landing*, will record the events for inclusion in a Public Broadcasting System documentary on the Chinese Jewish community.

Because the Assembly will occur during a time of increased contact between China and Israel, the importance of official Chinese partici-

(continued on page 4)

REPORT ON TRIP TO THE PRC
Fall and Winter, 1988

by Albert E. Dien

Late this summer my wife and I led a tour group to Tibet, after which we returned to Beijing. We were able to remain in China for the next several months because we were both on sabbatical leave from our respective universities. While most of my time was engaged in research connected with my academic interests, the archaeology and history of medieval China, certain of my activities may be of interest to members of the Sino-Judaic Institute.

Beijing

I met Mr. Tang Yusheng, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and had a long conversation with him at his home. He has almost completed a MS of a book analyzing the belief system of the Kaifeng Jewish community based on the various inscriptions. He is hoping to have the manuscript translated into English or Hebrew.

I also met Miss Chiara Betta, a young Italian student who is a member of SJI and who has just enrolled in Beijing University to continue her studies of Chinese and eventually, perhaps, to do a dissertation on some aspect of the history of the Chinese Jews, for submission to her university, the University of Oriental Languages of Venice.

Kaifeng

I was in Kaifeng from Dec. 3 to 10. Again, not all of my activities were directly related to Sino-Judaic matters and I will report only on those which might be of interest. I lived in the Dongjing Hotel, the manager (the formal title is Vice General Manager) of which is Liu Wenqing, whom some of us knew as a guide in the Kaifeng branch of CITS. He was very helpful and is interested

(continued on page 5)

From the editor:

This issue of Points East is brimming with articles and events. A glance through our Board minutes will suffice to give you a sense of our ever-widening scope of activities. We also have a report on a trip to China, an announcement of a Passover reunion in Shanghai, the founding constitution and program of the Shanghai Judaic Studies Association, articles on Indian, Japanese, Burmese and Thai Jews, and the proposed itinerary of the first official SJI trip to China in autumn 1989.

This past fall saw Diaspora Jewry in an uproar when both the Likud and Labor parties in Israel sought to form coalition governments with the ultra-orthodox parties. The price these small parties requested was high: changing the Law of Return to meet halachic (Jewish legal) requirements and promulgation of laws setting standards for Sabbath observance. Ironically, the former was more seriously considered because it would have had little impact in Israel itself. It would, however, have had great symbolic value in the Diaspora and this was the cause of the protest. What was left unsaid is how a change in the Law of Return would affect the Jewish communities at the ends of the Diaspora.

Israel's Law of Return is the embodiment of both the traditional Jewish and modern Zionist concepts of the "ingathering of the exiles." In Israel's early years, nearly 700,000 Jews came from over 50 lands. But when the Bnei Yisrael of India began immigrating in the early 1960's, the Chief Rabbinate questioned their

Jewishness. Only a resolute stand by then Prime Minister Levi Eshkol in support of their equal status prevented the creation of a special screening and marriage registration system. A similar situation arose with Ethiopian Jews. Here the Chief Rabbi initially sought ceremonial immersion before the orthodox accepted the Ethiopian Jews into the body of Jewry. The Ethiopian Jews, however, rejected this as a delegitimatization of their status as full Jews. A compromise on paper was negotiated by then Prime Minister Shimon Peres according to which the collective status of Ethiopian Jews was no longer in question, but individuals may have their status reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Regrettably this agreement has resulted in a backlog of cases of would-be immigrants awaiting decisions in their cases by the appropriate Israeli authorities. Most recently, Points East (3:1) carried a story about the problems that the Jews of Mizoram and Manipur have had in gaining recognition, not to say acceptance, by Israeli rabbis. The Chinese Jews, with their adherence to patrilineal descent and almost total assimilation are the most obvious case for rejection as Jews according to the halacha. But, as many members of SJI hold, they remain Jews nonetheless.

I do not have a solution to this problem. Both sides --- the Israeli Chief Rabbinate and the religious parties on the one hand and the far flung Diaspora communities and their supporters on the other --- have merit to their positions. Somehow the two points of view must be reconciled without injury to either side's position. For the time being, the best that can be said is that pushing a politically expedient solution developed on the basis of Israeli coalitional politics is not the route to travel. Such moves, at this time, only divide the Jewish people and weaken Israel's standing as the homeland for all of the Jewish people.

Anson Laytner

Points East:

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IN THE FIELD

- The New Year's calligraphy on our front page is done by SJI member Ms. Marcia Miller of New York City. The style of the calligraphy is from the Han dynasty.
- SJI member Mark Sommer of New Jersey, under his pen name of Sung Lee Gou, has published an article entitled "Sinew-Pluckers, Blowfish and Jewtown: Judaica Philately in the Far East" in *The Israel Philatelist*, v. 39, no. 11/12, Dec. 1988. The article

reviews stamps of Jewish interest from Taipei, Japan and India.

- SJI Board members Arthur Rosen and Wendy Abraham teamed up to present a lecture on China's Mideast policies and Chinese Jews of Kaifeng on December 11 in Atlanta in conjunction with the Jews of Kaifeng Museum exhibit.
- The Jewish Rep Theatre is presenting an off-Broadway musical about a group of Jews seeking the Lost Tribes in China.
- SJI continues to seek donations of all sorts of Judaic books and teaching materials, including Hebrew language study materials and reference works like Encyclopedia Judaica, for distribution to educational institutions in China. Your assistance is urgently requested.
- Professor Gong Fang Zhan of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, Institute of Religions, along with other members of the Shanghai Judaic Studies Association, is writing a book entitled "Jews in Shanghai." The book will include many photos. We look forward to the publication of this work with extreme interest, and hope that Professor Gong will keep us advised of developments.
- SJI member Mr. Louis Lempke of Jamaica, New York lectured at St. John's University in New York, on November 16, 1988. His subject was China's Jewish Experience. Mr. Lempke, a retired import executive with 30 years traveling in the Far East, donated his honorarium to the SJI. Thanks go to Mr. Lempke.
- Mr. Marvin Josephson of New York City has repeated his benefactor status by contributing \$1,000.00 to the SJI.
- Leo Gabow, SJI's President, lectured on the history of the Chinese Jews at Rabbi Arnold Belzer's synagogue, Beth Rishon, in Wyckoff, NJ. Beth Rishon turned over Leo's honorarium to the SJI.
- A new organization has been formed in the Soviet Union. It is named the Jewish Historical Society of Moscow, and consists of historians and scholars. Correspondence has been established between it and the Jewish Historical Society of Hongkong and the Sino-Judaic Institute. JHS of Moscow is primarily interested

PROPOSED DAILY ITINERARY

- Day 01 Oct 27 DEPART U.S.
Fri Dep. Los Angeles via KE 011 at 12:10PM for Hong Kong
- Day 02 Oct 28 ARRIVE HONG KONG
Sat Arrival 10:40PM. Transfer Sheraton Hotel (or equivalent).
- Day 03 Oct 29 ENTER CHINA/BEIJING
Sun Fly Hong Kong—Beijing via CA 102 12:20PM/15:10PM. Transfer Jinglun Hotel.
- Day 04 Oct 30 BEIJING
Mon
- Day 05 Oct 31 BEIJING
Tue
- Day 06 Nov 01 BEIJING
Wed
- Day 07 Nov 02 BEIJING/KAIFENG
Thu Fly Beijing—Zhengzhou via CA3182 12:20PM/14:00 PM; transfer to Dongjing Hotel (Eastern Capital), Kaifeng by air-conditioned bus (ca. 90 minutes).
- Day 08 Nov 03 KAIFENG
Fri
- Day 09 Nov 04 KAIFENG
Sat
- Day 10 Nov 05 KAIFENG/XI'AN
Sun Bus to Zhengzhou. Fly Zhengzhou—Xi'an via CA 5209 or CA 2532. Transfer to new Garden Hotel or just-renovated Bell Tower Hotel.

QUESTIONNAIRE

The following person(s) are interested in joining the SJI Delegation to China. Please send further information.

	NAME	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE NO. OFFICE/HOME
1.	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____

The following comments are offered on the proposed itinerary _____

Name

**SINO-JUDAIC INSTITUTE
INAUGURAL DELEGATION
TO CHINA**

October 27-November 14, 1989

by Frederic M. Kaplan

At the last SJI Directors' meeting, it was agreed that SJI should sponsor a delegation to China in the fall of 1989.

As this will be the first SJI-sponsored group to China, the tour should carry some historic implications. We are planning a ceremony in Kaifeng to honor the opening of the new Jewish Wing of the Provincial Museum. Efforts will also be made to meet with participants in the Hebrew language program at Beijing University, and to meet with Chinese colleagues and contacts working on Jewish issues at the Chinese Academy of Science branches in Beijing and Shanghai as well as with members of the new Jewish Culture Research Center at Fudan University.

Of course, sites of Jewish interest will be visited and lectures and meetings will be provided on subjects related to Jewish heritage in China.

SJI members and friends as well as all others interested are welcome to take part. The total price will be \$3,600, inclusive of all costs in China, hotels in Hong Kong, and all transportation, including round-trip airfare from Los Angeles.

The group will be limited to a maximum of 22 persons (including leaders) and early indications are that it will fill up rapidly, once publicity begins.

If you and/or your relatives or friends may wish to join us, please fill up and return the enclosed form. *Please do not send money.* At this point we only wish to receive expressions of interest on the part of Board members in joining the delegation.

Please return to:

Frederic M. Kaplan
China Passage
168 State Street
Teaneck, NJ 07666
800-247-6475

seum, Kampo Kaikan, is at 35 Minamigoshomachi, Okazaki, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto; tel. 771-6111.

Though the synagogue in Tokyo is lively, you'll have to go to Kobe, the port city 45 minutes west of Kyoto, to see a synagogue that is truly beautiful. The modern building of the Jewish Community of Kansai (13-3 Kitano-cho 4-chome, Ikuta-ku, Kobe; tel. 221-7236) is located on a quiet street of traditional Japanese architecture about halfway up the mountain that Kobe is literally carved out of. The synagogue's interior features a marble-framed Ark flanked by Japanese and Israeli flags. In addition to Shabbat and holiday services, at which about half the regulars are Sefardic, community activities include lectures, Israeli dancing and an annual Seder at which tourists and casual visitors often outnumber Kobe Jews about four to one.

Beyond Tokyo and the Kansai, Jewish sights are fewer, but there are surprises. The mayor of Kurose, a small town in Hiroshima Prefecture, plans to erect a Holocaust memorial; a sign for the Auschwitz Memorial Pavilion is standing in a field, waiting for construction financing to be raised. Isaac Stern gave a benefit concert in Hiroshima for the project. Next year, an exhibit on the Holocaust, sponsored by the newspaper *Asahi Shimbun*, will tour the country with the proceeds to go toward the memorial.

Japan can be a land of double-takes for Jews. The swastika and the six-pointed star are often visible as insignia and design motifs at Buddhist and Shinto buildings. Neither has any connection with their usage by Jews or by Nazis.

Symbols aside, you can also find the trail of Jews almost anywhere. One example among many is the town of Takayama, high in the Japanese Alps, remote from the major cities. At Minshuku Sosuke, a traditional inn whose interior belongs in a Kurosawa movie, visitors sit around an open pit, with a fire that keeps them and their tea warm. On the wall behind the patrons are testimonials written by satisfied guests—about one-third of which are in Hebrew.

Personalities: The personalities associated with Jewish Japan are not all Jewish, and some, like Jacob

Schiff, never lived in Japan. Arthur Waley, an English Jew, was the foremost translator of Japanese and Chinese literature into English. Shaul Eisenberg, who grew up in Japan, is one of Israel's wealthiest businessmen. Setsuzo Kotsuji, a foreign ministry consultant who was helpful to Jews during the war, might have been designated a Righteous Gentile had he not converted to Judaism and changed his name to Abraham; he is buried in Jerusalem. David Sassoon is reputed to be the largest real estate owner in Kobe. There have not yet been any Jewish sumo wrestlers, but Toranosuke, a recently retired champion, has a Jewish wife and is reportedly encouraging his Jewish son to follow in his heavy footsteps.

Books: Among the books that shed light on the Japanese-Jewish connection are *The Fugu Plan* by Marvin Tokayer and Mary Swartz (Paddington) which details the World War II encounters; and *The Japanese and the Jews* by a Japanese with the pseudonym Isaiah Ben Dasan (Weatherhill).

Eating: Since fish is the main source of protein in the Japanese diet, it is relatively easy to observe *kashrut* in Japan. The Tokyo Jewish center has a kosher kitchen, but you should call in advance to make arrangements. One vegetarian restaurant near the Tokyo synagogue and recommended by the rabbi is Bodaiju, 1-1-1, Nishiazabu, Minato-ku. If you must have traditional Jewish fare, there is Fox Bagels (6-15-19, Roppongi, Minato-ku), which is not kosher.

Recommendations: Japan Air Lines richly deserves its reputation for good service. Not only does it serve kosher food, but flight attendants treat passengers who order kosher food as if they were holy—perhaps because the only people in Japan who follow religiously prescribed diets are priests.

The best hotel within walking distance of the Tokyo Jewish center is the Roppongi Prince. A healthier walk, or a short trip by subway, is the Akasaka Prince. In Kobe, try the new Portopia. The best place to stay in a traditional Japanese inn is Kyoto; one *ryokan* where you won't spend your entire budget in one night is Rikiya.

One mistake often made by visitors to Japan is confusing mod-

ernization with Westernization. Try to do things there that help bridge the gap between East and West. One way to have a Japanese theater experience with no language barrier is to see a local production of a Broadway show you are already familiar with (*Les Miserables* and *Big River* are recent Tokyo hits). Unlike the mixed audience you will see at Kabuki shows, you probably won't see another foreigner. You may even sit next to a prince. The most popular Western musical ever to tour Japan was *Fiddler on the Roof*.

BANGKOK JEWRY

by David Horovitz
Reprinted from *The Jerusalem Post International Edition*,
Rosh Hashannah 5749

Jews have been living in Bangkok since the 1800s, but only formed a community just before World War II, to help German refugees.

By 1964, the Jewish Association of Thailand had been established, holding synagogue services at the Israeli Embassy among other places, before land was donated for the Beit Elisheva shul.

Unfortunately, Beit Elisheva lies some distance from the majority of the town's Jewish homes, and consequently is only used for weekday social occasions, or on festivals such as Hanukka.

Instead, the Jews have taken a room on the ground floor of an office block in the centre of the diamond district, fitted it out as a synagogue, and named it Even Chen. Here a daily minyan is held, and on Shabbat the place is packed, with up to 80 people sitting down to an evening meal.

Jewish Association treasurer Jack Djemal says that all they need now is a rabbi. "Lately something new has been happening here: businessmen have been coming to live with their families.

"Trade is booming, and the community is growing gradually. We're enjoying something of a renaissance of Jewish life."

Religious freedom is guaranteed in Thailand, with the king the protector of all faiths. Judaism means little to most Thais, Israel even less. "They've heard of Moshe Dayan, but I should think that's about all,"

in the Jews of China and the Soviet Union.

Should any SJI members wish to establish correspondence with them, the address is as follows: Mr. Valery V. Engel, President Jewish Historical Society of Moscow

St. Snajperskaja, 5, App. 1
Moscow, 111395

Russia (USSR)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Mr. Gabow:

I am writing to draw your attention to the following two items.

1. Iraqi Wedding on Cassette.

The newly created Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center in Or Yehuda, Israel, has available two video cassettes at \$75 celebrating the traditional Jewish wedding in Baghdad. It includes the elaborate Henna ceremony preceding the wedding day. As you know, the Baghdadi Jews also lived in India.

2. *The Best of Baghdad Cooking* by Daisy Iny (a book) \$11.00.

3. Postage for all the above \$ 3.00

Both the cassettes and the book are available from Sephardic House, 8 West 70th St., New York, NY 10023, (212) 873-0300 at cost, which is a tax deductible contribution to the Babylonian Center.

Sincerely yours,
Sam Daniel
New York City

Dear Rabbi Laytner:

Having a special interest in Chinese Jewry, I invite any of your readership to submit scholarly articles for publication consideration to the *Journal of the American Association of Rabbis*. The Journal will be featuring articles on the Jews of Burma and India in 1989, and would welcome any inclusion on the Jews of China.

Thanking you for your consideration, I remain,

Very truly yours,
Rabbi Steven J. Kaplan
c/o Dept. of Religious Studies
University of Florida
CPR 107, Tampa, FL 33620

Dear Mr. Leo Gabow,

I write to thank you most sincerely for the undertaking offered in your letter of September 22. We

hope to receive early the books and reference materials through you in order to speed up our study.

As you know, it needs our arduous endeavors to develop further the Judaic study in China. So we've made a tentative programme (to see the appendix), and are taking appropriate measures. Our office is set up temporarily in 247R., 622/7 Huai Hai Zhong Rd. The reference materials are left temporarily in the reference room of Mid-East Cultural Research Institute in Shanghai Foreign Language Institute. The funds for the study are provided by some enterprises, but are limited. Though we have some difficulties recently, we believe, with your support and our effort, we can realize our project under the guidance of the Honorary President Zhao Fusan (Vice President of Chinese Social Science Institute) and Mr. Li Chuwen (Consultant of Shanghai People's Government). You might notice from our regulations that the SJS is a country-wide organization. The Judaic learners in the country are expecting us to provide convenience in the respects of books and materials, and the publication of the study achievements.

In order to promote our mutual understanding and cooperation, we hope you will visit Shanghai at your own expense presently. You can discuss with our heads the possibility of the cooperation, and make learned report on Jewish issues. We'll send out our official invitation if you'd like to come.

Our studies' regulations are enclosed herewith. We'll be delighted if you would send them to the Jews who have ever lived in Shanghai and tell them our project. We wish them to support our plan and provide us their reminiscences.

Sincerely Yours,
Jin Yinzhong
Vice Secretary General

THE CONSTITUTION OF SHANGHAI JUDAIC STUDIES ASSOCIATION (September 1988)

I. This Association is named as the Judaic Studies Association of Shanghai International Relations Association, its short form as Shanghai Judaic Studies Association.
II. Aims
This Association, based on the

belief that understanding and friendship between all the peoples in the world helps to promote world peace, unites all the researchers in the field of Judaic Studies for the development of the studies of Judaic history, culture, economy, politics, religion and folk customs. It will also promote the development of Judaic Studies and better understanding of the Jewish people.

III. Range of Academic Activities

1. To organize and coordinate research subjects and projects of the field;
2. To compile and publish research achievements and reference materials in the field;
3. To organize and promote international academic exchanges;
4. To build up a reference pool of books and materials for the facilitation of the research in Judaic Studies;
5. To facilitate the establishment of a centre for academic activities of the researchers in the field;
6. To offer consultation services for the establishment of economic cooperation between Chinese and foreign industrial and business enterprises;
7. To set up a foundation when circumstances permitted.

IV. Membership and Organization

1. Anyone who is engaged in the field of Judaic Studies in Shanghai can become a full member through self-application, recommendation by two of the full members in the Association, and the final approval by the Association council;
2. Those who are engaged in the field of Judaic Studies beyond Shanghai can become correspondent members through the above procedure;
3. The leading body of the Association consists of a chairman, several vice-chairman and a secretary-general. They are elected by the Association convention. The term of office for them is two years, and they can be re-elected continuously. The secretary-general is in charge of the routine duties on behalf of the chairman;
4. The Association honors famous scholars with the title of honorary chairman or counsellors.
- V. Sources of Funds

1. Membership fees;
 2. Donation from individuals and foundations without any attached conditions.
- VI. The office of the Association is at present in Room 247, No. 7, Alley 622, Huaihai Zhong Lu, Shanghai, China.
Telephone: 270285, 271170x2247 (ext.)
Telex: 33461 sslic CN

List of the Council (from September 1988 to August 1990)
Honorary Chairmen: Zhao Fusan, Li Chuwen
Chairman: Zhu Weilie
Vice-chairmen: Tang Peiji, Chen Hefeng, Pan Guang, Gu Xiaoming
Secretary-general: Jin Yingzhong

THE SHORT-TERM PROGRAMME OF THE SHANGHAI JUDAIC STUDIES ASSOCIATION (SJSA)

The Shanghai Judaic Studies Association (SJSA) was inaugurated in August, 1988. The first (enlarged) session of SJSA council was held in early October to discuss what is to be done in the near future, and it is generally agreed that the following should be stressed:

1. The compilation of 'Symposium on the Studies of Jewish History and Culture', with Zhu Weilie and Jin Yingzhong as the editors, to be completed by the spring of 1989.
2. The compilation of a monograph on 'Jews in Shanghai', with Tang Peiji as the editor. An outline has been drafted for chapters to be written by scholars and compiled into a collection in 1990.
3. Aiding Gu Xiaoming in editing 'Jewish Culture' series. The topics and the contributors thereof will be decided in 1988.
4. A collection of memoirs with a length of ten to thirty thousand Chinese characters each, written by the former Shanghai Jews, will be solicited, compiled and translated into Chinese under the editorship of Jin Yingzhong, as soon as funds are sponsored. SJSA seeks the assistance of Jewish institutions of the world to provide

memoirs approved by the authors themselves in order that more people in China can get in touch with the life experience of Jews while they were in Shanghai.

5. Making arrangements for a Jewish Language Course (the first of its kind here) by engaging teachers from abroad and building up foundation for educational funds, facilities, and materials. Scholars from the Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai International Relations Studies Institute, Institute of History, SASS, The Institute of Shanghaiology, Fudan University as well as scholars from other cities will be enrolled. The aim of the course is to train a number of scholars who will master the Hebrew language, and to create favourable conditions for further development of our Judaic studies. The term of the course will be three or four months, which is due to begin in the first half of 1989 if things go favourably.
6. The establishment of a documentation centre. As the centre is the key to making achievements in academic research, it is important to gather, as early as possible, a collection of books, documents and reference materials on Judaic studies contributed by scholars and institutions at home and abroad, and to make a catalogue of the book and material holdings of various institutions and scholars. The Judaic study holdings of the SJSA's Documentation Centre shall be the most complete in China. Lu Peiyong, of the Mid-East Culture Studies Institute, Shanghai International Studies University, is in charge of the work.
7. Judaic study scholars throughout China will be engaged by SJSA as special researchers on a voluntary basis, to ensure the organization and coordination of Judaic studies in China.
8. In view of the great interest on the part of Jews in trade with and investment in China, the members of SJSA are delighted to offer consultation service and extend the social influence of SJSA.

9. SJSA seeks to build up funds through domestic and international channels and the assistance of friendly personages to sponsor research projects, publication of research achievements as well as international academic exchange.
10. SJSA is the first academic institution in China engaged in Judaic studies. From a long-term point of view, SJSA is certain to become a permanent body of academic research, and for that purpose a permanent site is needed for the deposit and display of the holdings and for academic activities.
11. SJSA plans to form contingents of Judaic scholars in the realm of a) studies on Jews throughout the world; b) studies on Jewish history; c) studies on Jewish culture; and d) studies on Jews in Shanghai.
12. SJSA seeks to open channels for Chinese scholars to do research on Jewish history and culture through establishing progressive contacts with academic institutions in the world for the exchange of visiting scholars.

PASSOVER REUNION IN SHANGHAI

(continued from page 1)

pation cannot be minimized. A further sign of this thaw in Chinese-Israeli relations is the recent formation of the Shanghai Judaic Studies Association.

Assembly members will arrive in Shanghai from Hong Kong on April 18. In Shanghai, they will stay at the Jinjiang Tower Hotel, a modern five star international facility. The Assembly will have exclusive use of the hotel's banquet kitchen and hall to assure adherence with kashrut standards for those desirous of observing.

The Assembly will remain in Shanghai through April 23, when the group will fly to Beijing for four days of tours to the Great Wall, the Ming Tombs, the Forbidden City and more. In Beijing, Assembly participants will stay at the Kunlun Hotel, also a modern five star international hotel.

For further information about participating in the Assembly, contact Shelly Wax, CAL Hospitality Services, 3015 Main St., Suite 317, Santa Monica, CA 90405. Telephone (213) 392-8541.

Sights: Tokyo is where tours of Japan begin. The center of the world's largest metropolitan area (27 million people), it rivals New York for vibrance, culture, wheeling and dealing, and manages to do so with virtually no crime or dirt. It is not, however, the locus of most of Japan's Jewish sights. Tokyo has only one place of purely Jewish interest, the building of the Jewish Community of Japan (8-8 Hiroo 3-chome, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150; tel. 400-2559).

The old center (on the same site) was a Japanese-style mansion with a beautiful garden, but it was torn down a decade ago. Half the land was sold to endow a more utilitarian building, with no garden. Nevertheless, the red-brick building, with windows that form the branches of a *menora* on the facade, makes up a great deal in activity what it lost in aesthetics. On the third floor is the synagogue, a small, European-style sanctuary with high-backed oak pews and a *bima* in the center. Like many synagogues in remote communities, it has one section for men, one for women and one for mixed seating. Though affiliated with the Conservative movement, it does not count women in the *minyan*. The crowd at a typical service will be perhaps one-third tourists or short-term visitors. It will also include, on the average, three or four Japanese—students, members of one of the Christian Zionist movements, people with an academic interest in Judaism, or the merely curious.

Though the congregation is small, it has a school and a full range of activities, from a Passover cherry blossom tour to adult classes as diverse as Jewish folk dancing and Japanese flower arrangement. The center also has a regular lecture series on subjects of Jewish and Japanese interest; lecturers in recent years have included Elie Wiesel, Ed Koch and Yitzhak Shamir.

On one wall in the community center building is a photograph-on-silk-screen piece of the old Tokyo synagogue by Tetsuya Noda, one of Japan's leading graphic artists. When Noda married the daughter of the Israeli ambassador, he converted to Judaism, and one of his best known works is an illustration of his conversion ceremony. He has

done a variety of works on personal and Jewish themes and his art can be found in the Tel Aviv Museum, the Israel Museum in Jerusalem and the Tikotin Museum of Japanese Art in Haifa.

Though Makuya is based in Tokyo, and it appreciates visitors, it does not have a formal visitors' arrangement there as it has in Jerusalem. If you happen to be in the city's Denenchofu section, you can drive by the Makuya seminary, with the large *menora* on the outside. It is possible to attend a Makuya religious service at one of the group's meeting places in central Tokyo, although aside from a few Hebrew songs, the service is entirely in Japanese. Those who want information should call 705-1211.

If Tokyo marks the beginning of a trip to Japan, Kyoto (two hours and forty minutes west on the "bullet" train) is the heart of any journey. The ancient capital is filled with cultural treasures and temples. Since it was not bombed during the war, it also has an ingredient lacking in most other big Japanese cities—history. What is perhaps most surprising, however, is that Kyoto has the largest number of Jewish sights.

The Beit Shalom movement, originally the Japan Christian Friends of Israel, takes its name from the guest house on its campus on the city's western outskirts (9 Utano Nagao-cho, Ukyo-ku, Kyoto; tel. 461-4603). Any Jewish visitor to Kyoto is invited to stay for three days at Beit Shalom, free of charge. The building is a blend of the Jewish and the Oriental. The house is Japanese; shoes are removed before entering and guests sleep on *futon*—mattresses placed on the floor. The Western-style living room has a display case which holds a small collection of *menorot* and a Seder plate. On the walls are a copy of Israel's Declaration of Independence, and a photograph of former Ashkenazic chief rabbi of Israel Shlomo Goren, a one-time visitor.

Also on the grounds are Beit Shalom's headquarters church and seminary. If you're there on a Sunday, you may be lucky enough to hear the Shinonome Chorus, Beit Shalom's Hebrew-singing choir, which has performed in Israel and the United States. In front of the church is a statue of Anne Frank, a

figure of near-worship for the church's members.

Though the Beit Shalom movement does not officially embrace the theory of Japanese descent from the lost tribes, some of the evidence cited to support a connection is just a few miles away. Koryuji is a temple worth seeing for its Buddhist merit alone—the setting is beautiful and it is home to a remarkable eighth century wood-carved Buddha, known as the Miroku Bosatsu, officially designated as a national treasure. Adherents to the lost-tribe theory believe that the statue's physical features and the position of its fingers are evidence of central Asian, and therefore Jewish, origin.

The statue and temple are lovely, if less than convincing as Jewish sights, but in a small residential section adjacent to the temple grounds things get a bit more spooky. Facing the road is a well which bears the inscription "Isara well." The word "Isara" is written in phonetic characters, indicating foreign origin. It could mean "Israel's well." Of course, from a well built by a Jewish sojourner to evidence of "lost tribes" is still a quantum leap, but the well, at the very least, casts an aura of mystery over the origins of the Japanese-Jewish relationship.

If there is one Japanese who has a claim to a Jewish pedigree it is Kampo Harada, probably Japan's best known calligrapher. He traces his ancestry to thirteenth-century China—a time and place where Jewish settlement is documented—and says the story that they were of Jewish origin has been handed down in his family. Though he has no halakhic stamp of approval, Kampo has always felt close to the Jewish people and to Israel and, about 15 years ago, started what is now the largest collection of Judaica in the Far East. He has more than 4,000 books—from seventeenth-century Poland to twentieth-century America—on Jewish subjects, as well as a Torah and Ark in a room of his calligraphy museum just a block from Kyoto's Heian Shrine, an important center of the Shintoism Kampo practices. The books are in Hebrew and English, neither of which Kampo knows, but the library/synagogue is part of his museum tour. The mu-

World War II produced some of the most fascinating interactions between Jews and Japanese. Though allied with Nazi Germany, Japan resisted German urgings to institute anti-Jewish measures. There was a good deal of respect for the Jews among some Japanese officials—based, in part, on the belief in Jewish money power—and there was even talk of setting up a Jewish state in Manchuria to exploit Jewish skills and gain support from powerful Jews in the West.

The Fugu Plan, as it became known, was never instituted, but Jews came nevertheless, partly through the efforts of Senpo Sugihara, Japan's consul general in Kovno, Lithuania. In 1941, against orders from the foreign ministry, he issued more than 5,000 Japanese transit visas to Jews who had fled to Lithuania a few steps ahead of the Germans. Among those who arrived in Japan with Sugihara visas was the entire Mir Yeshiva, the only East European *yeshiva* to survive the war intact. For his efforts, Sugihara was fired. (Asked many years later why he had disobeyed orders, Sugihara quoted a samurai maxim from the Bushido code of ethics: "Even a hunter is not allowed to kill a bird who flies to him for refuge.")

In 1942, Mitsugi Shibata, the Japanese consul in Shanghai, became privy to a plan by the local Gestapo representative to kill the 18,000 Jews who lived there. He warned the Jewish community, whose leaders used contacts in the foreign ministry to have the plan quashed.

There are areas in which Jews have left their mark on Japan, although not always in ways that are visible to the Japanese. Raphael Schoyer was mayor of Yokohama's foreign colony in the 1860's. He was also the founder of one of Japan's first foreign-language newspapers; Jews subsequently played a prominent role in English-language journalism. *The Japan Times*, largest of the country's four English-language dailies, traces its roots to the prewar *Japan Advertiser*, which was owned by the Fleisher family.

The Jewish impact is more noticeable in the area of music. Although Japan was first exposed to Western classical music in the late

nineteenth century, it saw few practitioners until the influx of German Jewish refugees in the 1930's. When Joseph Rosenstock left Berlin in 1936, he headed for Tokyo to become the conductor of the Nippon Philharmonic. (He ultimately became conductor of New York's Metropolitan Opera.) One of the ironies of the war was that German officials in Tokyo often sat in the front row to hear classical music by an orchestra filled with Jewish musicians.

Community: Today's Jewish centers of Japan are Tokyo and Kobe. While there are some 1,000 Jews in the Tokyo area, only about 400 are affiliated with the community. About half are American, one-quarter are Israeli and one-quarter come from a variety of other countries. There are roughly 500 Jews in the Kansai area—which includes Kyoto, Osaka and Kobe—of whom fewer than 100 are affiliated with the Kobe synagogue.

As recently as 20 years ago, about 80 percent of Japan's Jews were permanent residents, working in the jewelry, toy or garment businesses. Today, probably no more than 20 percent are long-term residents (including perhaps a dozen native Japanese converts to Judaism). The rest are mainly business consultants, corporate people on assignment, diplomats, journalists and students. Many of the Jews in Tokyo live near the synagogue in Hiroo, or in the neighboring sections of Nishiazabu and Minamiazabu, an area with many foreign residents, embassies, expensive homes and posh apartment buildings.

Japan's Jewish presence embraces more than resident Jews. It also involves the twin issues of philo-Semitism and anti-Semitism. The country is home to not one but two Christian Zionist movements, both of which include love of the Jewish people and Israel among their religious tenets. The Tokyo-based Makuya uses Jewish symbols, particularly the *menora*, has a bar mitzva rite for 13-year-olds and sends many members to Israel to study Bible and Hebrew. The Kyoto-based Beit Shalom is a bit closer to mainstream evangelical Christianity and uses a Christian cross, but embraces Jews and Israel with equal fervor.

No issue has caused more dis-

cussion among Japan's Jews in the past two years than the publication and popularity of several anti-Semitic books, notably those of Masami Uno, who borrows from the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and posits various Jewish conspiracies to control the Japanese and world economies. While the books are a genuine cause for concern, Rabbi Michael Schudrich, leader of the Tokyo community, feels that Jews in the West make a mistake in trying to understand an Asian manifestation of anti-Semitism in terms of the European experience.

"The people who write these books are anti-Semitic," Schudrich says, "but not necessarily the people who buy them. People buy the books not to learn about Jews but because they think they might learn something about the Japanese economy." For every Japanese who reads one of the books and develops a negative opinion of Jews, it seems, there is another who, based on the same propaganda, concludes that Jews are admirable and ought to be emulated. Schudrich has had at least one prospective Japanese convert who wanted to be Jewish so he could become rich. Even during World War II, when there was a lot more anti-Semitic literature in Japan, there was no anti-Jewish activity. In the year that anti-Semitic books on the economy were selling (sales have since declined greatly with the economic upswing) the Jewish center in Tokyo received "one nasty phone call," according to Schudrich.

An issue of more significance in Japanese-Jewish relations is the Arab boycott of Israel. Of all the industrialized nations, Japan is by far the most dependent on Arab oil and, as a consequence, is more deferential than the United States or Europe to the Arab boycott. But there is progress. After years of an arm's-length trade relationship, Japanese business with Israel is increasing rapidly. Japanese trade delegations are visiting Israel for the first time, and this year Foreign Minister Sosuke Uno became the first Japanese Cabinet official ever to visit the Jewish state. Ironically, because the boycott affects Japanese exports more than imports, Israel is one of the few countries that has a trade surplus with Japan.

REPORT ON TRIP TO THE PRC

(continued from page 1).

in promoting our activities in so far as they might encourage tourist groups to come to Kaifeng and to stay in his hotel. These are difficult times for persons in his position, for the hotel, still under construction, has enormous loans to pay off without help from the government. It is an extremely attractive place, and he is an effective manager. Liu Wenqing visited the United States last year as a part of a Kaifeng delegation, and I was able to entertain them to some extent on behalf of SJI. One member of that group was Wang Jiping, formerly the Director of the Kaifeng Tourism Bureau. He is still a powerful figure there, and is central to any progress that we will make in Kaifeng. He has used his influence to get many things done in Kaifeng, such as the restoration of historical monuments, the revival of the art of folkcrafts, and so forth. His interest in the history of Kaifeng extends to that of the Jews in Kaifeng, and he made helpful suggestions about what the SJI might accomplish.

The newly-built museum is almost across the street from the hotel. It is a handsome structure, three full stories with a large room, some 40x30 on the fourth level. The building has not yet been completed, and the displays are only now in the process of being installed. Thus far, only the second floor, representing the Sung period, can be said to be ready for the public, or almost so. There are fine exhibits on the outside verandah on the ground floor, but these suffer from dust and wind, and measures need to be taken to protect the exhibits. That verandah is the only portion accessible to the public at present. I did not meet Wang Yisha, a former director, who was said to be not feeling well. I found too late that I had his home address; otherwise I would have paid him a call. The present director is Li Kexiu, whose interest is archaeology and history, but he was very busy with a variety of meetings, and so he passed me on to Xu Baiyong, his immediate predecessor. Xu is a delightful person,

very knowledgeable about Kaifeng history, the Sung period, and about the Jews of Kaifeng. I was very impressed with him, with his erudition and his informality. It is his idea that the large room on the fourth floor be dedicated to the history of the Jews, not only of Kaifeng, but of Shanghai as well. He himself is from the Shanghai area and has plans to follow up this interest. His idea is to move the Jewish stone stelae up to this room. It turns out there are elevators nearby; I refrained from asking whether the flooring would take such a weight. I assured Li Kexiu and Xu Baiyong that the Institute would be happy to be of any assistance and to provide any material which would be useful. I also said that we could provide photographs and facsimiles similar to those in the Beth Hatefutseth exhibit which has been touring the United States for them to use as they saw fit. It would give them a sense of security in using the material.

I brought up the matter of the plaque marking the site of the synagogue. It seems that the responsible agency was already considering such a plaque in Chinese, just as there are plaques at other historical sites. The problem seems to be the identification of the word Jew (or Youtai) with Israel. There is concern that not only the general populace, but even the CITS guides themselves were not clear about the distinction, and given the present Sino-Israeli relationship, there were difficulties with such a plaque. The suggestion was made that the Chinese use the term Tiao-jinjiao, or Sect that Plucks Sinews. For the English version I suggested "This plaque marks the location of the synagogue of a community of Jews who settled in Kaifeng during the Song Dynasty. The synagogue was dismantled in the 1850's." The phrase "and whose descendants still live in this city" was considered not acceptable.

There is a very interesting museum complex in Kaifeng called the Shanshangan Huiguan which is dedicated to the history of Kaifeng. There is a large topographical map of historical Kaifeng which has small-scale models of various buildings placed on it. Where the synagogue would be located, or very close to it, is the model of the mansion of a Liu family which gave

its name to the lane which leads to the South Teaching the Scriptures Lane. It occurs to me that a very small model of the synagogue might be presented to the museum with the suggestion that it be placed on the appropriate spot. On the walls of the gallery around the map are a series of photographs and texts presenting the history of Kaifeng. One of these sets, as it were, deals with the Jews of Kaifeng. The text, in translation, reads:

After the destruction of the Jewish state, its people scattered everywhere over the earth. Among them one branch came in the Northern Song to settle in the Eastern Capital (Kaifeng). Jews everywhere in the world were discriminated against but only in China did they live in harmony and enjoy good relations for over a thousand years. The Jews believe in the Israelite religion. In order to commemorate the battle of their deity Isaac in which he injured the sinew of his thigh, when eating beef or mutton, they pluck out the thigh sinew, and so they are commonly called the Sect that Plucks the Sinew. The stelae of the Plucking the Sinew Sect were originally within the place of worship of that sect, but today that temple no longer exists and the stelae have been placed in the collection of the city museum. The inscriptions relate the history of the Jews coming to China and their relations with the Han people. They are valuable sources for the study of the Chinese Jews.

This text is accompanied by four photos, some taken from the White volume, II.6 and II.55, the others perhaps from elsewhere. So a beginning of an exhibit in Kaifeng has been made already.

One of the objectives of my visit to Kaifeng was to engage in a treasure hunt which turned out to be a wild goose chase. Lowenthal's bibliography, pp. 181 and 191 of our reprint, mentions that the stone lions of the synagogue had been sold to a Buddhist monastery outside Ts'ao Gate. I had rented a bicycle so I could get around and had a copy of the map of Kaifeng in 1910 from White's book, so I set out to see if those lions could be located.

It took me into back lanes, questioning old people whose dialect could barely be understood, and into all sorts of courtyards. It seems that the monastery had been destroyed years ago, somehow the Japanese were involved in this, and a Christian mission established a hospital on the site, which has now expanded to become a very large city hospital. I finally located the old gate, now rarely used, and poked around there but found no lions. I located a monk in his nineties, sick in bed at another monastery, whom I questioned, but while his memory was very clear, he knew nothing of the lions. Too bad. Elsewhere in the bibliography it is said that the synagogue stone balustrade was moved to the Confucian temple. This site was easier to locate, but all that is left of that temple is the front gate. Inside they have built a large middle school, and from what I could see, nothing antique remains. I also located the site of Bishop White's church. I knew that it had been razed but did not know that nothing had yet been built on that piece of ground. I was also interested in looking up as many of the temples marked on White's map as I could and to see how much change there was in the streets and lanes. Only the mosques and the Catholic church seem to have survived; as one old man told, the children had destroyed the Chinese temples—his characterization of the Cultural Revolution. The thoroughfares, on the other hand, were largely the same although a few had name changes.

I felt that I could be most effective in Kaifeng if I emphasized with the museum people and others our interest in the history of the Jewish community, and so I did not seek out any individuals of the Chao or Shih families. My intent, in other words, was to establish my interest in the past and not the present. I did pay a visit to the Chao household which I had been to in past years, but found no one at home. I left a note and a gift of ginseng tea which I had brought from Korea.

Shanghai

In Shanghai I continued to carry out this program of above-ground archaeology. I had brought with me Prof. Gao Wangzhi's list of Jewish

sites, and in the four days I was in Shanghai I managed to visit and photograph them all. Of course, in many cases the buildings no longer survived but there are many that do and these are of great interest. There is a former synagogue used as an auditorium of a normal school, a former Jewish hospital still a hospital, a recreational club now a child daycare center, a theater, and the Jewish Club of Shanghai, which is now the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, and where Isaac Stern did his *From Mao to Mozart* film.

I met and talked with Gong Fangzhen one evening, and he set up an appointment for the next evening with Jin Yingzhong and Lu Peiyong. I had also wanted to see Gu Xiaoming of Fudan University who has written a very interesting article on Judaism. Gong said they would try to reach him, but it seems they were not successful. I, of course, had been out of touch with the U.S. since early August so I had not heard of the Shanghai Judaic Studies Association before. Jin, the secretary-general, has much energy and many ideas. The projects which are being planned include:

- 1) An illustrated volume of Jewish cultural relics, more extensive than the list which Prof. Gao has produced. This will also include extensive discussions of the history of Jews in Shanghai.
- 2) A collection of the papers presented at the Hangzhou meeting on Jewish studies.
- 3) Translations of works on Jewish history and culture. These are to be published in conjunction with the Sanlian Press in Hongkong. The first is Rabbi Tokayer's book, *The Fugu Plan*. The series is to be called the *Youtai wenhua congshu* ("Collectanea of Jewish Culture").
- 4) Collection of memoirs of Jews who had sought refuge in Shanghai.

They are also very interested in organizing a Hebrew class at the Shanghai International Studies University, where the new center is to be located. For that purpose, they would like teaching materials and video tapes, or assistance in compiling such materials geared to the Chinese student, and a teacher of the language. They also are interested in acquiring materials to establish a research library.

Prof. Gong had said that they hoped to hold a conference with foreign scholars attending some time in the future, perhaps the year after next, but Jin claims that such a meeting could be held next year. When I asked about the possibility of an exhibit on Jews in China, he said that it was a delicate issue, but that the possibility of a settlement of the Middle East question would permit greater latitude in China. The next morning, when I saw him at the Academy of Social Sciences before I left, he said that such an exhibit could be held in conjunction with the conference. That is to say, that the conference would provide an adequate pretext for the exhibit.

I am impressed with the people whom I met in China, with the sincerity of their interest, their knowledge and their commitment to educate their fellow-citizens about Jewish history and culture. At the same time, it is very clear that they must proceed with care because the political situation is a sensitive one. But I am much more hopeful than before that progress is being made in a variety of initiatives.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING—MINUTES SINO-JUDAIC INSTITUTE SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 1988 HEBREW UNION COLLEGE, NEW YORK

Present: L. Gabow, President; W. Abraham, A. Belzer, W. Gao, F. Kaplan, M. Pollak, A. Rosen, L. Schwartz, M. Tokayer
Also in attendance: Mr. Leo Lowenthal (no relation)

The meeting was called to order at 10:15 A.M.

President's Report

1. Recap of important contacts made by SJI until now. In particular:

- a) **Gong Fangzhen**, Director of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, said that the Academy would welcome an exhibit on the Chinese Jews there, although no date has been set. They would like the SJI to begin sending materials for this project.

still feels his father's presence on the bima and in the pews. Memory and filial devotion inspire the sons to keep Musmeah Yeshua beautiful, to try to preserve it and its memories. At one time 126 Torah scrolls stood upright in their shining silver cases. Moses proudly showed us the two remaining Torah scrolls, donated to the synagogue by his grandfather. The others were taken by community members when they left for new homes abroad.

According to Moses Samuels, fewer than 20 Jews maintain an association with the synagogue in Rangoon. Of these, the eldest is 86, the youngest eight. A generation ago, the community needed three bottles of wine to celebrate kiddush on Friday evenings. Now one bottle suffices. The staff of the Israeli Embassy in Rangoon or visitors from abroad are needed to complete a minyan or to fill Musmeah Yeshua with the sound of Hebrew. The Embassy also helps with special ritual needs: Living so far from other Jewish communities, it is difficult to acquire the essentials for Jewish practice—books, matza, Chanuka candles. Still, the sense of Jewish identification runs deep. "What kind of Jews are they who come to this country and eat pork?" Moses Samuels asked me in outrage about tourists.

Moses and Nellie Samuels have three children, the youngest Jews in Burma. (Moses's brother Jacob was out of the country when we visited.) Diana and Khazma are teenagers, their brother Sammy is eight. Moses rents furniture for weddings and other celebrations. The family lives a few streets from Musmeah Yeshua in a neighborhood that was once dense with the homes of Jewish traders. The doorway of the Samuels home is marked by a mezuzah and the walls are lined with posters of Israel obtained from the Israeli diplomatic staff in Rangoon.

Today, a truly exceptional man assists the Samuels family in caring for Musmeah Yeshua. He is U Aung Kywe, a Burmese Buddhist and former business associate of Isaac Samuels. U Aung Kywe acts as administrative consultant for the synagogue. Because of his close relationship with Samuels and his concern for the community, he has schooled himself in Jewish ritual

and history. Lining the synagogue entrance are lovely watercolor posters that he painted to depict the holidays and announce the times of religious services. U Aung Kywe maintains the synagogue accounts, collects rent from merchants who lease shops on synagogue property, dispenses the small welfare payments to community members, acts as liaison to the government and keeps the archives. The latter is a major task, since Jews who left Burma long ago frequently request birth certificates or other information. Synagogue historian, accountant and caretaker, U Aung Kywe is openly grateful to the Burmese government, the Israeli Embassy and to organizations and friends worldwide who help the synagogue. He, in turn, inspires respect and gratitude.

For nearly a century, Jewish life flourished amid the shining, gold pagodas, the verdant landscape and the dampness of the Irrawaddy delta. Now, Moses and Jacob Samuels, U Aung Kywe and others worry about the fate of their beautiful synagogue. And there is a little boy and his teen-age sisters who go to schools and play with their friends and do not yet understand that with them may rest the future of a Jewish presence in Burma.

JAPAN'S JEWS

by Alan M. Tigay
Reprinted from
Hadassah Magazine,
October 1988

When Prince Mikasa, younger brother of Emperor Hirohito, showed up for a Seder at Tokyo's Jewish community center a few years ago, it was more than a gesture. Asked by the rabbi if he wanted simply to observe or to participate actively, he chose the latter. Asked if he would like to be assigned a passage from the Haggada in advance, he said, no, he'd like to be called on like anyone else. When the Prince's turn came, he peered into the book that recounts the Israelites' exodus from Egypt and read—in perfect Hebrew.

In the vast physical and human panorama of Japan—a California-sized country with 120 million people—there are little more than 1,000 Jews. The Japanese and Jewish people are as different

from each other as any two modern cultures on earth. But as the Prince's academic interest in Judaism and the ancient Near East indicate, there are points of intersection. Places of Jewish interest in Japan are few in number—no one should travel there to see Jewish sights alone—but in the process of traveling from one Jewish sight to another, the voyager can, in fact, see much of the country as well.

History: Commodore Matthew Perry's opening of Japan in 1853 paved the way for a permanent Jewish community. Alexander Marks, who arrived in Yokohama in 1861, was the first Jewish resident of modern Japan; by the end of the 1860's, the city had 50 Jewish families from Poland, the United States and England. Toward the close of the nineteenth century, two more communities emerged: a predominantly Sefardic one in Kobe and a mainly Russian one in Nagasaki.

The first Jewish-Japanese encounter to have a lasting impact on Japan came in 1904. Japan was at war with Russia and the governor of the Bank of Japan was sent to London to arrange for loans to finance the war effort. He got nowhere with the British banking elite, but while in London he had a chance meeting with the American investment banker Jacob Schiff, whose hatred for the Russians was fanned by the pogroms of the time. Schiff arranged for more than \$200 million in loans, Japan won the war, and an American Jewish financier became a hero in Tokyo and was invited to lunch by Emperor Meiji. But his help also set the stage for a stereotype that would resurface periodically in Japan with both positive and negative facets—the belief in the world-wide influence of Jewish wealth.

Major historic events in Europe, from the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917 to Hitler's rise to power, produced minor waves of Jewish migration to Japan. By World War II, the Nagasaki community had all but disappeared, leaving Kobe and the Tokyo-Yokohama area as the Jewish centers of Japan. In addition, there were larger communities in the portions of China occupied by Japan in the 1930's, particularly in Shanghai and Harbin.

Jewish population—the smallest and shortest-lived one—is that of the Ashkenazim. Never forming separate communities, Ashkenazim's contributions to India were made on individual bases. There was, for example, Walter Mordechai Haffkine, developer of the anti-cholera vaccine; a medical research institute bearing his name stands in Bombay today. Haffkine was not the only Ashkenazi Jew to save countless Indian lives. As temporary home to about 2,000 refugees from Nazi Germany, India benefited from an influx of Jewish physicians who attached themselves to the various communities of their co-religionists in India's major cities.

6. Tribal Jews

The most mysterious of India's Jews are also the most controversial. Several Chin-kuki tribal groups in the northeastern Indian states of **Manipur, Mizoram, Assam and Nagaland**, the western Burmese **Chin** state and Bangladesh's **Chittagong** hill tracts claim to be descendants of the lost tribe of Menashe. They say they came from China and lost their religion during centuries of wanderings through remote Asia. A curious religious revival has emerged among them involving dreams and revelations about their history and a return to their "true identity." Living in remote and conflict-ridden tribal areas, they are as inaccessible as they are tantalizing. Several Jewish groups, especially Jerusalem-based Amishav, have made efforts to reintroduce them to Jewish observance, and numbers have undergone Orthodox conversion. It is estimated that there are 4,300 Jewish tribals in India, with more in Burma and Bangladesh. No one knows quite what to make of these tribals—animists until the last generation—nor what to do about their claims to Jewish identity and their aspiration to immigrate to Israel. The Israeli ambassador to Burma, Itiel Pann, is sympathetic to their cause, but the Israeli government recently denied visitor visas to a delegation of Indian tribals.

As the End Nears

Our generation will likely witness the extinction of Indian Jewry. There is much to be learned from an ancient Jewish community

which never experienced persecution. For one thing, the commonly-held view of Zionism as simply a response to persecution is challenged by the case of India, where Zionism was embraced despite the affection and hospitality of the host nation. For another, an ancient Jewish principality in Cranganore, in Kerala state, lies buried beneath a thin layer of earth, awaiting archaeological excavation. There remain manuscripts in Jewish homes throughout India containing a wealth of poetry, hymns, *pizmonim* and Kabbalistic tracts which never have been analyzed or studied, just as there are priceless Jewish artifacts in dilapidated former synagogues desperately in need of rescue to museums in Israel and America.

Dr. Nathan Katz is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of South Florida (Tampa, FL 33620). Ellen S. Goldberg is a writer, editor and photographer. The couple is working on a book about the Cochin Jews, based on a year's stay there supported by a Fulbright research grant, 1986-87.

THE LAST BURMESE JEWS

by Ruth Fredman Cernea
Reprinted from *The Jewish Monthly*,
June-July 1988

It would be easy to miss Musmeah Yeshua, the grand and all but silent synagogue in the heart of Rangoon. It stands behind high white walls, on a dimly-lit, narrow street filled with vendors of betel leaves, bananas, books, homeopathic medicines and clothing.

But if you turn from the sights of the streets, if you raise your eyes as my husband and I did that first evening, you will see in the dusk, above the white walls, an archway decorated with a blue candelabra and the name of the synagogue in large blue letters. Still beautifully maintained, the building stands as a testimony to the proud community that constructed it in 1857, and to the love and care of the few remaining Burmese Jews and their friends, who hold it in trust for an uncertain future.

Jews have lived in Burma since the mid-1800s. The first Jew known to be in Burma, named Goldenberg, came from Romania to trade in the local teakwood. Another early

Jewish settler was a Galician, Solomon Rieneman, who arrived in Rangoon in 1851 to serve as a supplier to the occupying British Army.

The core of the Burmese Jewish community consisted of immigrants from Baghdad who fled persecution in the 19th century. Others came from Teheran and from the ancient Cochin and Bene Israel communities in India. In Burma, they worked as traders and merchants. These deeply Orthodox but almost as deeply divided groups of Jews lived together in uneasy peace. Once there were Jews in Rangoon, Mandalay, Bassein and Thayetmyo; once there was a Jewish day school, a Zionist society, another synagogue and a Jewish mayor in Rangoon. In 1939, when the community was at its peak, there were approximately 2,200 Jews in Burma.

Three years later, the Japanese invaded the country. Fearful for their safety, Burma's Jews fled. After World War II only a few hundred returned. Most of them eventually left to join family members who had settled in Israel, India, Australia, England or the United States. Through the years, there have been intermarriages with Buddhists and Muslims. Some of the descendants of these unions are strongly identified with Judaism; others have drifted away.

The small community lives in peace in this Buddhist land, where a visit to one of the many pagodas to meditate before the towering Buddha is a common, almost casual, part of the day. In this atmosphere of reverence and tolerance, the Burmese government is protective and supportive of the Jewish presence in Burma, and shopkeepers close to Musmeah Yeshua and personnel in the tourist office were eager to help us find our way to the synagogue.

We visited Musmeah Yeshua (Hebrew for "brings forth salvation," a reference to God's life-giving powers) and the fascinating Jewish cemetery in Rangoon, one of several in the country, with Moses Samuels. Moses, 37, and his elder brother Jacob care for the synagogue—with their own funds and with their hearts. Their father, Isaac, was a leader of the community and a trustee of the synagogue until his death in 1978. Moses says that he

Professor Gong is also involved in the newly created **Shanghai Judaic Studies Association**, which was created for Chinese scholars to do research on Jewish culture. Leo has received word from this organization which expressed the hope that the study of Judaism will become an integral part of Chinese scholarly activity.

Professor Gong and **Zhao Fusan** of the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences were both sent copies of the Loewenthal bibliographies.

b) **Shanghai Representation for SJI:** Leo Gabow broached the possibility of assigning a permanent representative to Shanghai for on-going contact with the Academy of Social Sciences there. The Board unanimously agreed to ask Dennis Leventhal to take up this position, due not only to his proximity to the mainland and frequent trips there but also to his already well-established contacts in China. Leo will take the matter up with Dennis in the near future.

c) **Jewish Historical Society of Moscow:** Leo has received a letter from Valery Engel, President of this organization, expressing a desire to establish contact with the SJI.

d) **Judaica Wing of Kaifeng Museum:** Leo received a letter from **Liu Wenqing**, former local guide for tour groups to Kaifeng who now manages a new hotel in the city, stating that the curator of the Kaifeng Museum would like a Judaica room for the museum, slated to open October 1, 1989. SJI has said that it will supply photos, etc., for the museum.

Liu Wenqing also mentioned that the Antiquities Dept. of Kaifeng will not put a marker on the site of the synagogue until it ascertains exactly where the site is. Several members of the Board felt this was merely a delaying tactic by the Kaifeng authorities.

2. Leo Gabow has appointed SJI member **Rena Krasnow** its Publicity Chairperson. Rena

was the mastermind behind the Beth Hatfutsot exhibit.

3. It was learned from a Ma'ariv article that a Connecticut T.V. station airs a Jewish cultural program regularly. SJI Board members agreed that a representative should be sent to be interviewed on the show, and that perhaps SJI's slide show on the Chinese Jews could also be aired.

Report on Wendy Abraham's Year in China

1. **Hebrew Students at Peking University:** Wendy reiterated her earlier discoveries transmitted in a letter to SJI, to wit: Yu Zhiqi (Na'ama) is now studying at Brandeis University with official Chinese government permission. The other six Hebrew students will graduate Peking University in May '89, after which it is hoped (per Wendy's conversation with Vice President Luo Haocai) that a new group may begin to study Hebrew in Beijing.

Language texts, general Judaica books and most of all a Hebrew teacher are still urgently needed by Peking University for this endeavor. *Points East* and our new publicity Chairperson should announce that those wishing to donate books should send a list of prospective books to Wendy in New York, who will then send it on to Luo Haocai for approval before actually mailing anything, since some subjects may still prove too politically sensitive. Resumes and letters from those wishing to teach Hebrew in China should also be sent to Wendy who will then send them on to Luo Haocai.

Wendy will be keeping in contact with this first group of Hebrew students to follow their progress vis-a-vis job assignments after graduation, etc., to get more of an idea of just how China plans to use their new talents.

2. **The Jewish Culture Research Center at Fudan University:** Wendy was introduced to several members of Fudan's History Dept. and reported a growing interest in research on Judaic topics as well as on-going work and doctoral dissertations on the same, the

research for which can only be done through the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences.

A proposal was sent by Wendy to a member of the History Dept. and to the School for International Cultural Exchange, which was in charge of her group of American students this summer, for the establishment of a Jewish Culture Research Center located at Fudan University, which would include the creation of a Judaica library (or section of an existing library), a Judaic Studies Professor to teach at Fudan one semester each year or for a full academic year, and the translation of Judaica books into Chinese.

This proposal was formally accepted over separate banquets by the Vice President (one of four) of Fudan's School of Humanities, Prof. Zhuang Xichang, who is also the Head of the History Dept., and the new President of Fudan University, Prof. Hua Zhongyi. The History Dept. in particular spent a considerable amount of time going over the specifics of setting up such a center, and added that perhaps conferences and seminars between Chinese and Jewish scholars on topics of mutual interest could be implemented.

Since this center would be for use not only by scholars and students at Fudan, but by anyone in China interested in researching Judaic topics, it is hoped that somewhere soon down the line several Chinese Jewish descendants from Kaifeng might be sponsored to go to Shanghai for several weeks out of the year to do research on their history. This would allow the Chinese Jewish descendants to do research in Chinese.

SJI expressed a desire to be a part of the creation of this Center, offering help in getting books donated and locating a Jewish studies professor. Again, advertisements in *Points East*, etc., should specify lists of books and resumes of prospective teachers for Fudan should go through Wendy Abraham.

3. **New Honorary Members of SJI:** Wendy suggested that President Hua and Vice President Zhuang be made honorary members of SJI. Arthur Rosen suggested that Vice President Luo Haocai of Peking University also be made an honorary member. These motions were seconded by members present.
4. **Translation of Wang Yisha's book by Hebrew University:** While in Kaifeng Shi Zhongyu mentioned the matter of Wang Yisha's two books being published in America and asked for Wendy's help in the matter. Leo Gabow asked Wendy to follow up on having Wang Yisha's manuscript sent to Irene Eber at Hebrew University for a decision on whether or not to translate the book.
5. **Sponsorship for a Visit to the U.S. by Shi Zhongyu:** Wendy broached the possibility of offering an official letter of invitation by the SJI to Shi Zhongyu to come to the States to lecture. The Board moved to make an official invitation including an Affidavit of Support and whatever else is necessary for a U.S. visa. Wendy will draft a letter with the help of Arthur Rosen, and supply an English translation to the Board.

Financial Report

As Al Dien (Treasurer) is in Southeast Asia, Leo furnished the Board with the following information:

1. SJI has a total of \$10,000.00 in its account. \$3,000 will go immediately to Michael Pollak's Wayside Press for reimbursement of outlays made for the Loewenthal bibliographies. *Points East* cost \$1,200 for its most recent issue. Taking other expenses into consideration, that leaves SJI with approximately \$6,000 to work with.
2. The need for a fund-raising chairperson who will make personal contact with foundations was expressed as an urgent matter by Leo Gabow. Arnie Belzer was asked to be in charge of fund-raising. A goal of \$50,000 before next October was set.

Other Matters Taken Up By the Board

1. **Amount of Attention Being**

Paid by SJI to Kaifeng: Louis Schwartz again reiterated his feeling that SJI is not concerning itself enough with the Jewish descendants in Kaifeng. He suggested SJI concentrate more on personal contacts, and proposed SJI obtain a Torah from Iran to donate to the Museum's opening, and perhaps finance an endeavor by Zhao Pingyu to obtain stones to be made into steles for his mini-museum.

Leo stated that SJI members could all agree in principle with his feelings on the matter, but that we must be cautious and not jeopardize its future contacts and connections with Kaifeng by being mistaken for an organization interested in proselytizing to the descendants. This was agreed upon by most members present.

Arnold Belzer expressed the opinion that a physical structure of some sort in Kaifeng would go a long way in encouraging a renaissance among the Jewish descendants.

The issue of sending a Torah for the opening of a Judaica Wing in the Kaifeng Museum was discussed, with some feeling the inclusion of a Torah even on a list of items to be sent would be too risky, while others felt SJI should include anything and everything on a preliminary list and let the Kaifeng authorities weed out what they deem inappropriate or unwelcome. This latter view was accepted by the majority present.

2. **Re: Michael Pollak's Suggestion to Change the Name of the SJI and Alter its Focus to Include All of Asia:** Michael Pollak recommended no decision on this be made at the present meeting, and himself pointed out that a change in the name of SJI might dilute the thrust of its activities, just at a time when we need more membership in order to extend the base of our activity. Art Rosen pointed out we must establish ourselves securely with China first and then perhaps branch out. It was generally agreed that SJI's name should not be changed, that we should focus our ef-

forts on establishing strong contacts with China, and most likely limit our interest in other parts of Asia to the newsletter.

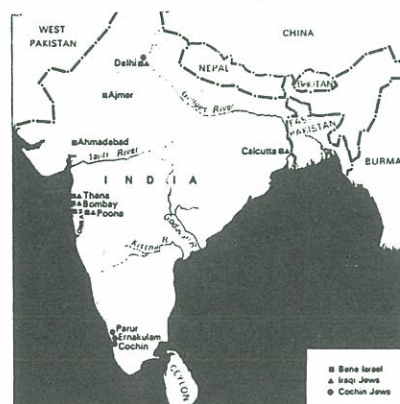
3. A motion was made and seconded to ask Marvin Josephson to serve on SJI's Board of Directors.
4. **Royal Ontario Museum Holdings:** Pollak related his dealings with Sarah Irwin, a technician at the Museum in Toronto, concerning the authenticity of the Toronto relics. Ms. Irwin concurred with Pollak's doubts about whether the items in question were made for the Kaifeng synagogue specifically or were bought separately. She also showed him several pages from a Section Book which were previously unknown. Pollak would like to print these for SJI gratis. The first three sheets from Genesis, which the R.O.M. possesses from Kaifeng, would date to the early 1700's. They also have one page from a Rosh Hashanah prayer book and fifteen pages from Leviticus, made from woodblock printing, bound in the form of a booklet. Pollak would like SJI to study these, and if printed, would give the Museum several hundred copies and acknowledge them. Leo expressed SJI's gratitude to Pollak for such an offer, and readily accepted.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 P.M.

FAREWELL TO INDIA

by Nathan Katz & Ellen S. Goldberg

Theirs is a history said to date back to King Solomon's time. *They* were cut off from their brethren for centuries but never lost their identity. *They* served as advisors in the lavish courts of kings and emperors. *Their* business prowess and



Major Jewish settlements in India in the 19th and 20th centuries.

teenth century in **Surat**, where there were 95 Jewish families and a synagogue. However, when **Bombay** rose to replace Surat as west India's leading port and commercial center, Jewish attention was directed there. The earliest Jewish, or at least Marrano, settlements in Bombay date from Portuguese times in the mid-sixteenth century. Many Bene Israel from the neighboring Konkan coast were attracted by the opportunities of a boom-town economy, and they built their first synagogue in 1796.

Syrian-born Suleiman ibn Ya'qub was the first prominent Arabic-speaking Jewish businessman of the city, his activities spanning 1795 to 1833. But it was the arrival of Iraqi merchant, industrialist and financier David Sassoon in 1833 that heralded the remarkable sojourn of the city's Baghdadi Jewish community. The Sassoon family, "the Rothschilds of the East," played a major role in the industrialization of Bombay. They also built two beautiful synagogues: Maghen David (1863) in Byculla and Keneseth Eliyahoo (1883) in Fort. As the city was transformed from a backwater to a booming metropolis, Jews flocked to the city, providing it with three of its mayors, numerous educators, and producers and stars for its prolific film industry. During its heyday, Bombay had several Jewish newspapers in four different languages, a Jewish publishing industry, and Zionist and community groups. By 1950, there were nearly 20,000 Jews in Bombay. Emigration to Israel, America, Britain, Australia and Canada has reduced those numbers to about 4,500 today, mostly Bene Israel. Of the Baghdad community, around 200 remain. Former Israeli Vice Consul Oded Ben-Hur predicts that within 20 years there will be no Jewish life in Bombay.

Leaders of the Baghdadi community include Moses Sultoon, trustee of the Sassoon Trusts, and Sophy Kelly, founder and headmistress of the prestigious Hill Grange School.

Like many upper-class Bombayites, David Sassoon took a summer home in **Pune**, 120 miles east. The city's best-known landmark is the 90-foot tower of the red brick Ohel David Synagogue (1863), known locally as *Lal Deval*, or "Red Temple." Sassoon's impressive mausoleum

is found in the synagogue's courtyard. The handful of Baghdadis still left in Pune, mostly middle-class merchants and civil servants, continue to attend Ohel David, although more often than not they fail to get a *minyan*, even on Shabat, and no member of the community is qualified to read the Torah.

Calcutta's community was founded by Shalom Obaidah Hakohen, who arrived there from Surat in 1798. His commercial ventures took him from the Punjab to Dhaka across the great Gangetic plain of northern India, and small Jewish trading outposts—often with prayer halls and cemeteries—sprang up in his footsteps from Lucknow to Darjeeling. The leadership of Calcutta Jewry was held by the Cohen and Ezra families, the latter ranking among the city's most prominent industrial and commercial houses. Calcutta has three synagogues located within a few paces of each other in the China Bazar area: Neveh Shalom (1831), Beth El (1856) and the magnificent Maghen David (1884). The three obtain a *minyan* on a rotating basis, using *asarah batlanim* (paid congregants). Calcutta hosted Jewish schools, a *beth din*, a *matsah* board, charitable and burial associations, a Jewish hospital, several newspapers, a Jewish publisher since 1840 and Zionist groups. The city has had three Jewish sheriffs, and Jews have provided Bengal state with its first female attorney, several religious and secular scholars, journalists, writers, musicians and sportsmen. The most well-known Calcutta Jew of recent times is Lt. Gen. Jack Frederick Ralph Jacob, who commanded Indian forces during the 1971 war which led to the creation of Bangladesh. Before World War II, there were 3,800 Jews in Calcutta, a number which grew to more than 5,000 with the influx of Jewish refugees from Rangoon; now there are around 120. Jewish visitors are warmly welcomed by the Nahoum family—one need only drop by at Nahoum's Bakery in New Market.

Bene Israel and Cochinim followed the Baghdadi's trail of prosperity to Calcutta and even beyond, to **Rangoon** where another major Jewish community grew up.

The first Jew known to settle in Burma was one Solomon Gabirol,

probably a Bene Israel, who served as a commissar in the army of King Alaungpaya (1752-1760). The community itself dates from the early nineteenth century when Baghdadis from Calcutta pursued their opium-based fortunes eastward, stopping in Rangoon en route to Singapore, Jakarta, Bangkok, Saigon, Manila, Tokyo, Hongkong and Shanghai. But it was not until the 1870s that a sufficient number of Jews was concentrated in Rangoon to form a proper community, which built the beautiful Musmeah Yeshua Synagogue in 1896. A second synagogue, Beth El, was opened in 1932, but is now closed. Some 700 graves are found today in the well-kept cemetery on 91st Street. The community once boasted 126 Sifrei Torah, a Talmud Torah, a Zionist group and numerous charitable and communal organizations. Satellite communities developed in Mandalay (where there remain a few Jews and a cemetery), Maymo, Moulmein, Bassein, Akyab and Toungyi. Both Bassein and Rangoon had Jewish mayors. The community was virtually destroyed during World War II when the Japanese, suspicious of Jews as potential British sympathizers, conquered Burma, driving most of its 1,200 Jews to Calcutta. About 500 returned after the war. Burmese Judaism enjoyed a brief flowering after the country's independence in 1948 and the establishment of cordial Israeli-Burmese relations, which were based on the warm friendship between Prime Ministers David Ben-Gurion and U Nu. When Ne Win launched a successful coup in 1962, the position of minorities in Burma generally deteriorated, as did the nation's economy, and most Jews left. Today there are only a handful of Jews and half-Jews in Rangoon. The synagogue is beautifully maintained by Jack Samuels, the community's 40-year-old leader. However, the last regular Shabat service was held back in 1965. Although the synagogue is open for all festivals, a *minyan* is only possible with assistance from Israeli, American and Canadian diplomats and tourists during the High Holy days. Sadly, the Burmese chapter of Diaspora history has already come to a close.

5. India's Ashkenazim

A fifth distinguishable Indian