

III. **Sino-Judaica, vol. 2** — The first printing of volume one of the journal has been exhausted and an additional 50 copies were printed to meet continuing demand, at this point primarily from libraries. There are also a number of standing orders for the second volume which is now in the process of being compiled. The major focus of this volume will be Shanghai. Pan Guang's bibliographic essay on Chinese studies of Jews was originally meant to be included, and toward that end, the Chinese characters were added by a research assistant in Shanghai, recruited by Al Dien, but recently we have learned that Pan had the essay printed at the Hebrew University. Irene Eber sent a copy, and suggested that it was not worthwhile reprinting. In that case, an alternative article by Wang Haijun, a member of the Institute of Minority Studies, Chinese Academy of Science, who studies the Chinese Jews, will be used instead. This appeared in Chinese in the Academy's journal, and will be translated into English by Al. He will also translate the article by Wang Qingyu, who is at present a researcher at Yale. The journal should appear sometime in the Spring.

IV. **Report on China Trip from Al Dien** — Al Dien was in China last August and September, during which time he was told there were Jews in Urumqi and Khotan. He intended to look into this while in Khotan, but a flight change reduced his stay there to an overnight stay. The source of this information was both Zhao Xiangru and, more reliably perhaps, Dr. Arshidin, a Uighur who is director of foreign relations within the Xinjiang Department of Education. In Al's opinion, these may well be Bukhara Jews who fled to China, or were stranded there, much like the well-known colony of White Russians, also in Xinjiang. Al intends to look further into this while in China again in October, and it was approved that he be supported up to \$1000 for expenses entailed in this effort. After receiving more information, Al intends to apply for funds from other sources, so that amount would be a back-up in case support from elsewhere is not forthcoming. Further, Al reported on his meeting with Eyal Propper, Second Secretary in charge of cultural affairs, Embassy of Israel in Beijing. In accord with the cultural agreement signed between Israel and China, the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra visited China in November. The publication Israel Magazine, in Chinese, is distributed to 5,000 people in China. The embassy and the Institute for Hebrew Literature have set up a special prize of \$1,500 to be given next year for the best translation of Hebrew literature. Mr. Propper has been placed on our list to receive Points East.

V. **Liaison activities**

1. Hirsch-Council on the Experience in Shanghai — Ralph Hirsch has been instrumental in establishing the Council on the Jewish Experience in Shanghai (CJES), which has the goal of publishing a newsletter, facilitating research, encouraging donations of materials to archives, and discussing with the pertinent Chinese organizations to preserve and honor the sites of the Jewish presence in Shanghai. We are in contact with Mr. Hirsch, and intend to cooperate with the CJES in areas of mutual concern.

2. Friend-China Judaic Studies Association — Beverly Friend, who heads the China Judaic Studies Association, visited the Bay area recently and met with Institute officers. This organization is largely a support group for Xu Xin. We also exchange material and information with the CJSA.

VI. **New Business** — Rabbi Tokayer, who had hoped to attend some of the meeting, but was not able to do so, in a letter of Jan. 17, suggested the following:

1. Update on the rebuilding of the Kaifeng synagogue;
2. A current bibliography, to include MA and PhD theses, including some excellent papers written at the HUC;
3. A list of locations of the Chinese Torah scrolls, items at the HUC, Royal Ontario Museum, District of Columbia Cathedral, etc., so people can visit these places, as well as the possibility of research at locations at places known to have had Jewish communities, and a few more subjects. Volunteers to undertake these projects would be most welcome.

Join The Sino-Judaic Institute

The Sino-Judaic Institute is a non-denominational, non-profit, and non-political organization which was founded in 1985 by an international group of scholars and laypersons.

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

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Corporate Patron	\$ 500 & up
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Corporate membership	\$ 250
Libraries	\$ 50

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

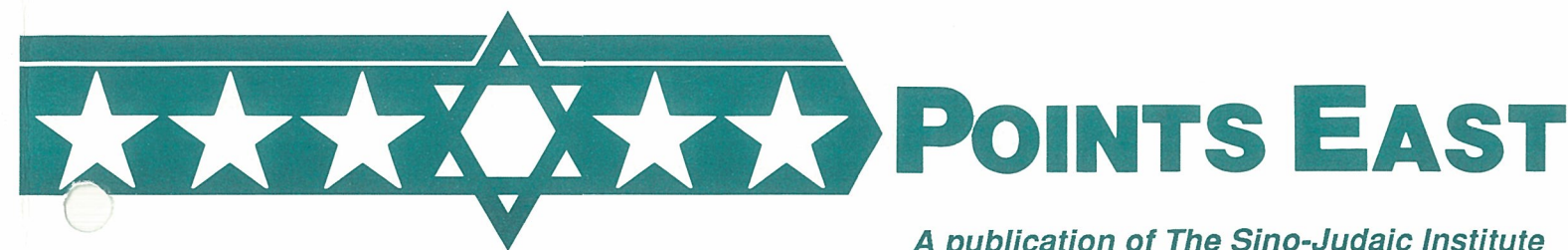
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VOL. 10, NO. 1

MARCH, 1995

INDIAN JEWS PREDICT THE END OF THEIR MILLENNIUM

by Tom Tugend

excerpted from the Jerusalem Post Magazine, 21 February 1994

Few Jewish travelers are more welcome than at the 400-year-old Pardesi Synagogue in Cochin, a port city near the southwestern tip of India.

"By the grace of God, foreign Jews show up so we can have a minyan (quorum for prayers)," said Jackie Cohen, the 77-year-old caretaker of the Sephardi synagogue at the end of Jew Town Road.

Five decades ago, there were five synagogues and 2,500 Jews in Cochin. Today, the community numbers seven families with 22 members. They haven't eaten meat since the last kosher butcher departed 15 years ago.

Calcutta, the world's most densely populated city, once had 5,000 to 6,000 Jews, including small colonies of Jewish refugees from Germany, and later Shanghai and Singapore.

Among the remaining 80 Jews, one of the most visible figures is Nahoum Nahoum ("they call me Norman"), head of Nahoum & Sons Confectioners, the only Jewish bakery in India.

The business was founded 100 years ago by his grandfather, who came from Baghdad. When Norman, a 65-year-old bachelor, passes on, it will be the end of the line.

The store still produces handmade matza and even hamatashen, but had to discontinue its line of bagels for lack of demand.

"Even 20 years ago, I catered for bar mitzvas and weddings, but there's little business now, though recently

(continued on page 3)

A STORY OF SURVIVAL

by Sue Fishkoff

excerpted from the Jerusalem Post Magazine, 9 July 1993

Ted Nevins, 24 returned to New York after a year in Bombay as the Joint Distribution Committee's first full-time youth and community worker in India. Today, only about 5,500 Jews remain in India, down from a high of 30,000 in the mid-1960s when the JDC and ORT began their outreach there. Most of the Jews belong to the Bene Israel community, supplemented by about 250 former Iraqi Jews and 24 elderly Jews from the area of Cochin, leftovers of the Spanish expulsion of 1492.

Aliya and assimilation have cut deeply into the Indian Jewish community, which is now centered in Bombay, although far-flung pockets exist in isolated farming villages along the Konkan coast.

India is not a priority on the world Jewish scene. The numbers are small, antisemitism is nonexistent, and the community faces no imminent threat. In 1991, the JDC earmarked just \$140,000 of its \$67 million in total program funds and support services to India's Jews. But the story of this community is the story of Jewish survival in the Third World, where traditional cultures face the growing pressures of modernity.

When Nevins arrived in Bombay in December 1991 clutching his degree in international relations from Clark University in upstate New York, there was not much happening. Except for soup kitchens and relief funding for 200 elderly and impoverished Bombay Jews, the JDC had no ongoing social or educational outreach programs. The Jewish Agency has one local representative, who Nevins says is "not

(continued on page 4)

PASSAGE FROM INDIA

by Vera Weisz

excerpted from The Jerusalem Post Magazine, 9 July 1993

In the living room in a modest Haifa apartment vociferous discussion is under way. Stories are told of being dumped in far-flung areas with no job opportunities; of religious olim dealing with secular society; discrimination due to color or accent; and difficulties getting along with other communities. Absorption bloopers are recalled with the humor of hindsight. A common enough setting in Israel, but something within this small group stamps them as uniquely Indian, an accent perhaps, or turn of phrase.

The participants in this heated debate are from the Indian community, known as Bene Israel, and they are members of the executive committee of the Association of Indian Jews in Israel (AIJI), who range in age from early 20s to late 60s. Many of them switch easily and frequently from Hebrew to English, reflecting their first-hand experience of British colonialism.

The discussion eddies around several topics, simultaneously. Issues of their history and customs are uppermost in people's minds, with an eye towards the future.

"In India," related Benjamin Jacob, chairman of the AIJI, "we were (traditionally) farmers, and we often worked with the oil presses to make sure we had the oil we needed for candle-lighting for Sabbath; coconut oil is what we used."

"We have to preserve our customs," insists David Saralkar, another member of the group. "All our customs are traditionally Jewish, and now that the youth are less interested in ritual these things are getting lost! In

(continued on page 5)

From the editor:

No thoughts, no profundities — just another issue chock full of curiosities for the tenth year in a row. (Sorry it's late.) Hope you enjoy it.

Anson Laytner

Correction:

In the last issue of Points East, the Book Nook section mistitled Reno Krasno's book as "Strangers Alone." It is entitled Strangers Always: A Jewish Family in Wartime Shanghai.

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Anson Laytner, **Editor**
 Editorial Office: 1200 17th Avenue East,
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The Sino-Judaic Institute
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 (415) 323-1769

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IN THE FIELD**• BOARD CHANGES**

Prof. Wu Yuan-li has resigned from the Board of the Sino-Judaic Institute. His contributions to our work have been much appreciated and his presence will be missed by all.

• ISRAEL'S VOICE IN CHINA

Yisilie Tongxun (Israel Newsletter) is the magazine of the Israeli Embassy in Beijing. It is distributed to over 5,000 people all over China, including many leaders and ministers in Beijing and in the provinces. Many Chinese are writing articles about Israel for the magazine.

• SUNDAY SINGLES SPEAKER'S SPEECH ON SINEWS AND SINO-JUDAICA

Prof. Mark Sommer, professor of political science at St. Jon's University and Seton Hall University, spoke on "The 'Sinew-Plucking' Religion — The Ancient Chinese Jewish Community" (in conjunction with the Sino-Judaic Institute) at a gathering of Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis' Hineni Heritage Center's Sunday Singles Social Program last November. It is one of a number of lectures that Prof. Sommer has been giving on the subject.

• TIENTSIN JEWISH SCHOOL RE-UNION PLANNED

Varda Yoran is holding a reunion of former schoolmates of the Tientsin Jewish School at her home in Kings Point, Long Island, New York on Saturday, the 24th of June, 1995. She asks that those who plan to attend bring a few memories — vignettes from the past, tidbits from the present, photographs, memorabilia, etc. If enough written material is received, a booklet or newsletter might be published. For more information, contact any of the following individuals:

Kurt Weinbach, 70 Stanford Drive, Rochester, NY 14610, (716) 288-9471;

Ted Baron, 2300 Lindenmere Drive, Merrick, NY 11566, (516) 623-9882; or

Varda Yoran, 12 Cove Lane, Kings Point, NY 11024, (516) 466-8209, Fax (516) 466-1310.

Varda Yoran's article on the TJS will appear in the next issue of Points East.

FROM OUR READERS:

[Apologies to Prof. Grunfeld, whose letter is just now being published a year and a half late!]

September 23, 1993

To the Editor,

I just got around to reading the latest issue of Points East (Oct. '93, Vol.8, No. 3) and noticed your editorial query about other Jews in China other than those mentioned in this issue.

In fact the list of political active foreigners, who also happened to be Jewish, is quite long. This list that follows includes only those names I can think of off the top of my head.

For those who stayed in China after 1949 or who went there after that date there is, of course, Rittenberg and Sid Shapiro and Israel Epstein. This list should include Sam Ginsbourg, Julian Schuman, Gerry Tannebaum, Ruth Weiss, Sol Adler, David Crook, Trude Rosenberg and a member of the British CP who died just a few years ago and whose name - I think - was Mike Shapiro.

For those who were politically active prior to 1949 there is Borodin (Mikhail and Fanny) and also Rayne Simons Prohme and her sister Grace Simons Glass. The latter was married to Frank Glass, Shanghai's most prominent Trotskyite, who may also have been Jewish. There were Harold and Viola Isaacs, Manny and Grace Granich and a Jewish dentist in Xi'an who was aiding the communists and was killed during the Sian Incident. And there was Milly Bennett whose autobiography I have just edited and annotated. (On Her Own, Journalistic Adventures From the San Francisco Earthquake to the Chinese Revolution, 1917 - 1927 M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1993).

Undoubtedly there are others and talking to those who are still around could probably dredge up considerably more names.

Just to set the historical record straight, Sidney Rittenberg was the first American citizen to join the CCP. George Hatem (born and raised in Buffalo, NY) was the first American

to join. I recall that he acquired Chinese citizenship before he joined. Also in the article on Sidney Shapiro

Product: \$4.17 trillion) has taken a sharp upturn since the 1991 Gulf War, Israel represents a fraction of a fraction of Japan's \$600 billion in bilateral trade worldwide. And the Japanese don't believe in rushing things, cautions Max Livnat, minister for economic affairs at the Israeli Embassy in Tokyo.....

Even though commercial relations between the two countries expanded over the years, there was always something secret about it. That created anomalies: Until the mid-1980s, Israel was one of the few countries of the world that officially exported more to Japan than it imported. That figure was only on paper: At the time, many of the Japanese exports to Israel, such as automobiles and electronic goods, were listed as imports from their point of transshipment in Singapore, Hong Kong or a European country. That is why official Israeli figures show jumps in imports from Japan from around \$200-\$220 million in the early 1980s to \$500 million in 1987, \$650 million in 1988 and over \$800 million by the early 1990s....

Things picked up after the 1991 Madrid Mideast conference, but the real push came in 1993. The era of impending peace, says one well-placed Japanese source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, "is a time to do business."

Since then, Livnat notes, "I have been seeing dozens of top Japanese businessmen," talking about economic opportunities and sending high-level delegations to Israel for a close-up look. In Tokyo, Livnat says, he sees five times the number of people he saw before the Gulf War.

The bulk of Israel-Japan trade is taken up by two products: Israeli diamonds, which in 1993 accounted for \$486 million, or about two-thirds of the almost \$700 million total of exports to Japan; and Japanese automobiles, \$629 million of \$1.05 billion in Japanese goods imported to Israel (60 percent). Much of the remainder of imports comes from TVs and other electronics, blandly titled "machinery" in official statistics.

Livnat and other officials expect total bilateral trade with Japan, around \$1.7 billion in 1993, to exceed \$2 billion this year. That prediction seems borne out in figures for the first nine months of 1994 from the

EXCERPTS OF MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING SINO-JUDAIC INSTITUTE

I. **Treasurer's Report** — The first order of business was the treasurer's report. As indicated, total income was approximately the same as expenditures. The largest outlay was to pay the Institute's share for the printing of Mike Pollak's The Jews of Dynastic China: A Critical Bibliography. The suggestion was received from a member that the treasurer's report be distributed to the membership of the Institute. It is required by state law under which the Institute is registered that a copy be made available to members upon request, and it was decided that information to that effect be printed in Points East.

II. **Report on Membership** — There are at present 292 dues-paying members inclusive of all categories, 21 associate members, and eight libraries which receive gratis issues of Points East. This is a gratifying increase over last year, and in the last four months, there were more new memberships issued than in the entire previous year. The ten gift memberships are to be attributed to the Hanukkah letter. It is proposed to survey the remaining 17 new members to ascertain how they came to join the Institute, so that we can better understand what we should be doing in reaching even more potential members. Finally, it has been suggested by a member that we publish a directory of the members including information concerning their interests, so as to facilitate communication and more activities in the various localities where there are clusters of members. In the discussion, there was some concern expressed about invasion of privacy. It was decided to publish a list of names and cities, leaving out street addresses, so that advertisers would not be likely to pick up the list for their purposes, but that with a minimum of effort, anyone interested in organizing some activity with fellow members in any area might do so without too much effort. At the same time, it was also decided to give thought to compiling a directory containing information concerning experience and interests, but with the individual members retaining the option of not being included. A form might be sent asking for topics of interest to the member, other Asian Jewish interests, relevant affiliations, and comments. Appended would be the statement that the Institute does not provide membership lists to other organizations, and to say that if the member wishes their address and telephone number to appear, to indicate that.

Israel-Japan Chamber of Commerce, which show Israeli exports, at \$681 million, up 18 percent over the first nine months of 1993. Imports from Japan have dropped 18.8 percent to \$691 million - at least in part because the strong yen has made Japanese cars expensive. That equals a trade gap of \$10 million, a figure for Western countries to envy.

Of course, things must be kept in proportion. The entire Middle East represents a couple of percentage points, and Israel is barely visible among the columns of Japanese trading figures: Israel's \$1 billion in imports and \$776 million in 1993 exports are less than one-third of 1 percent of Japan's hundreds of billions in trade.

Still, Israel is encouraged by a change on its side of the balance: the decreasing role of diamonds, which are mined elsewhere and processed here, and therefore have little added value, in bilateral trade. Chemicals (\$90 million in 1993, up 50 percent over 1992) and machinery (up 35 percent, to over \$70 million) increased their share of total exports. Major players include Dead Sea Bromine, which has the lion's share of chemical exports, high-tech printing technology from Indigo and Scitex, and Iscar's precision cutting tools.....

But while commerce is up, only a few Japanese companies have made direct investments in Israel — notably Taheto Chemicals (a plant near the Dead Sea); Nikken Sohonsa (Nature Beta health-food plant in Eilat) and Toyo Ink (Indigo, Scitex and digital print technology firms.....

It all comes in stages. The Japanese want to establish imports and exports before moving on to joint ventures....

The Japanese have come to Israel in increasing numbers over the last year. This fall, there was a delegation headed by the chairman of the Tempurin shipyard, and delegates to a viotech conference. But, Livnat notes, the Association of Japanese Securities Dealers still does not authorize investment on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange.

What about Japanese banks? "First," says the Japanese source, "there must be Japanese businesses."

With reporting by Margo Lipschitz Sugarman

INDONESIA: ISRAEL'S NEW TRADE HOT SPOT

by Neal Sandler
reprinted from the
The Jerusalem Report,
18 November 1993

Look for Indonesia to replace India as the reigning hot spot in Israel's fast-growing trade with the Far East.

Following Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's quickie stopover in Djakarta on October 11, 1993, for talks with President Suharto, news has surfaced of growing trade with the world's largest Muslim country (200 million population). Among those drumming up business are two state-owned firms: Israel Chemicals, which is seeking new markets for its fertilizers, and Agridev, which plans to set up an experimental farm in Indonesia. This should open the way for major imports of agricultural inputs. "We have a logistic advantage over most Western producers," says one IC official, "because we can ship directly from Eilat."

There are no official statistics on Israel-Indonesia trade. But some Israeli firms, mainly in the defense field, have been quietly trading with the Asian island nation for years — mostly via intermediaries in Singapore. More recently, there have been successes by civilian companies, including Koor and ECI Telecom.

Energy Minister Moshe Shahal has just confirmed that Israel has purchased Indonesian oil, and Djakarta is interested in selling coal, which Israel uses to generate electricity, as well. But so far such a deal has not materialized; Israel will only accept an open, public agreement, which Djakarta has so far been unwilling to make.

Trade is expected to get an additional boost from the easing of Indonesian restrictions on Israeli companies wishing to do business.

With markets in Europe and North America crippled by recession, the Far East has become a major growth area for Israel. Trade with the region jumped from \$500 million four years ago to \$2.5 billion in 1992. Trade Ministry officials expect it to double again within three years.

ISRAEL, SOUTH KOREA SIGN CIVIL AVIATION AGREEMENT

Israel and South Korea have initialed an aviation agreement that will launch civil aviation between the two countries, the Transport Ministry announced in January 1994.

The agreement was signed in Jerusalem following a series of discussions on aviation between the two countries, the ministry said.

At present, about 10,000 tourists, mostly members of South Korea's large Christian community, visit Israel every year.

In another development, the Transport Ministry announced that Israel and Thailand had signed the aviation agreement which the two countries had earlier agreed to in principle.

SINGAPORE WANTS TO BOOST ECONOMIC TIES WITH ISRAEL

by David Makovsky
reprinted from the
Jerusalem Post, 9 May 1994

Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew pledged to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin yesterday to upgrade the economic links between the two countries, Israeli participants in their meeting said yesterday.

Other Israeli officials, however, are adopting a wait-and-see attitude, since the volume of trade between the two countries lags behind Jerusalem's economic ties with three other southeast Asian countries — Hong Kong, Thailand, and the Philippines. Last year, Israel exported \$107.6 million worth of goods to Singapore, which included military equipment, high-tech products, and fertilizers. Israel imported \$84.6 million worth.

Lee, who noted that his country is considering aiding the nascent Palestinian Authority, also urged Rabin to establish joint Israeli-Palestinian business ventures in southeast Asia, saying such efforts would be welcomed. As the Middle East peace process progresses, Malaysia, a strident critic of Israel, will also establish links with Israel, Lee predicted.

Rabin was joined at the meeting by top officials from the Defense, Finance, Education, and Foreign ministries. Israel has long-standing military links with Singapore.

Despite criticism of some Singapore's authoritarian methods, Rabin admires Lee for his great economic success as prime minister, a Rabin aide said. The prime minister invited Singapore to join multi-lateral efforts for Middle East regional cooperation.

Lee's five day trip marks the second time he has visited Israel. The first time he came was in the early 1960s in an unofficial capacity, Israeli officials say, but has refrained from making subsequent trips in order not to anger Singapore's Moslem neighbors.

EHUD BARAK IN CHINA

Chief of General Staff Lt.-Gen. Ehud Barak visited in China in July 1994 on the first visit ever by an IDF senior officer to China.

Barak, who had previously postponed his visit to China twice, the last time because of the Hebron massacre, was invited by the Chinese Defense Ministry. He is meeting top level defense officials and senior Chinese People's army officers.

Barak is also scheduled to meet the head of COSTIND - the Chinese State Committee on Scientific and Industrial Applications for Defense - a body regarded as the most important of China's defense establishment. Both Prime Minister and Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres met the head of COSTIND during their visits to China.

RISING SUM

by Hanan Sher and Neal Sandler
excerpted from The Jerusalem Report, 15 December 1994

One word of advice to Yitzhak Rabin, for the prime minister's mid-December visit to Japan: patience.

Although bilateral trade with the world's second-largest national economy (1993 Gross Domestic

it refers to him as "the only foreigner" to be a member of the CPPCC. This is incorrect for there are several foreigners serving along with Shapiro including Israel Epstein and Ruth Weiss.

Although I don't do any research on Sino-Judaic topics, and have no plans to do so, some of my research and writing does deal with Jews in China although the Jewishness of these individuals I am interested in is incidental to the history I am trying to write. Nevertheless, I find Points East interesting and encourage you to keep up the good work.

Sincerely,
A. Tom Grunfeld
Associate Professor of History
Empire State College, Suny
666 Broadway, New York, NY 10012

[Huang Ming-Hsin, of Shanghai, in an article in Global Stamp News, Dec. 1994, mentions two other Jews of note:

"There were some outstanding Jewish people who fought against the Japanese aggressors during WWII in China side by side with the Chinese people, i.e. Mr. Hans Heber, a German Jewish writer and journalist. He left Shanghai in 1939 and joined the New Fourth Army led by the Communist Party of China (CPC), dieing {sic} in a battle on November 30, 1941 in Shantong.

Dr. Jacob Rothenfield, an Austrian Jew, left Austria for Shanghai in 1939, and joined the New Fourth Army in 1941. He then joined the CPC and became the foreigner who got the highest rank in the army of CPC. Perhaps these two important Jewish people will appear on the Chinese stamps in the future."

Ed.]

December 23, 1994

To the Editor:

Over the past year Points East has been fascinating and a delightful benefit of my membership in SJI.

However, there is one aspect of membership that I am disappointed in: Since SJI does not exist in the physical sense, members outside of the Bay Area have been limited to interact with each other by means other than the newsletter.

What I would very much like to see is a Membership Directory, so that I can find others with similar interests in this field, and contact them directly.

Also, I expect that SJI, as a non-profit organization, should print its financial statement for the benefit of the members who support it.

influence, as well as traces of Kabalistic symbolism.

A reevaluation of the earliest accounts of Jewish settlement in China (Elad-Hadani, Benjamin of Tudela, Marco-Polo, the Jesuit and the Muslim travellers) suggests new points for consideration.

The difficulties in ascertaining the function of the Kaifeng Temple: A temple or a synagogue? According to biblical and archeological evidence.

Sincerely,
Guy Shaked
Chel-Haavir St. 41/7
Pisgat-Zeev
Jerusalem, 97535 Israel

INDIAN JEWS PREDICT THE END OF THEIR MILLENIUM

(continued from page 1)

we had a couple of mixed marriages." Nahoum said.

"We'll disappear in five to 10 years," he said, a sentiment echoed by 75-year-old Benjamin Elias.

"I feel a sense of tragedy that our number is dwindling," Elias said. "But much larger Jewish communities have also perished. You have to set it in perspective."

In New Delhi's only synagogue, the tiny Judah Hyam Prayer Hall, a recently affixed plaque marks a reverse flow in customary Diaspora-to-Israel giving. It notes that "Air Conditioning for the Synagogue was donated by the Israel Business Delegation during the Visit of His Excellency Shimon Peres - 17 May 1993."

The establishment of an Israeli embassy in 1992 has given the Jewish community a shot in the arm. Ambassador Ephraim Doweck took up his post in November of that year.

While the last Indian census was in 1981 and all population figures in this teeming subcontinent of close to 900 million people are suspect, it is estimated that 3,500-4,000 Jews live in Bombay, where they work mainly as businesspeople, professionals or in government service.

Although there isn't a single full-time rabbi in India, three good-sized

To some extent Frank Shulman's "List of Individuals Interested in the Jewish Communities of Asia" has addressed the issue of a Membership Directory. But that list is not the same group of people as SJI, and they do not necessarily share the same sphere of interests as SJI members.

I had asked about a SJI member list earlier this year, but was only offered the names and addresses of people living in my area, which is limiting.

A complete SJI Membership Directory should allow members to include any specific interests or autobiographical information they would like to share, as well as contact information. It would help increase the sharing of bits of isolated information on Sino-Judaica, including some that might otherwise be lost or forgotten. This will also help generate more information for the newsletter, and archives, and increase the group spirit of the whole membership.

If some members do not want to be included in the Membership Directory, they should be given that option.

Please give the Membership Directory, and printing of the Financial Statement, your careful consideration.

Andrew Nulman
2 Linden Drive
Providence, RI 02906-4825
tel: (401) 831-1221;
fax: (401) 728-8210

To the Editor:

I am an M.A. student of musicology in the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

I have recently completed a study of the Jews of Kaifeng and their manuscripts which I hope might be of some interest to you. Here is a summary of my study:

'Masoret Hateamim Etsel Yehudei Sin' [The Masoretic Accents Tradition of the Chinese Jews]. (70pp). The Kaifeng Manuscripts of the Bible and prayers have a number of unique features. The Masoretic accents in them suggest an ancient style of cantillation of the Bible. The names of God in these manuscripts have unique shapes, suggesting Chinese

synagogues and half a dozen smaller ones still operate. Each Passover, two Habad rabbis fly in from New York to conduct services.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee maintains an active welfare program for the aged and indigent in a community which, historically accustomed to the charitable munificence of its wealthiest families, has evolved no real structure to take care of its own.

The Bombay Zionist Confederation meets three or four times a year while ORT (Organization for Rehabilitation through Training) still operates separate boys' and girls' schools, though few Jewish students remain.

Similar conditions apply to the Sir Jacob Sassoon School, located in a once predominantly Jewish neighborhood.

Its Hindu principal, Bulboo Sen, said that although only 10 percent of the school's 700 students are Jewish, all the youngsters participate in a daily Jewish prayer assembly and an annual Seder.

The school is closed on Jewish holidays. Only Jewish students, she said, attend the daily, one-hour Hebrew classes.

During the last two decades, the Jewish populations of Bombay and India have largely stabilized. Those remaining usually have relatives in Israel but feel comfortable enough, economically and psychologically, to stay put . . .

"Ten to 15 years from now," Cohen predicted, "there will be no more Jews in Cochin and we'll turn this synagogue over to the Indian government as a museum."

The modern watershed year in the millennium-long history of Indian Jewry was 1948, when the establishment of Israel heralded to the subcontinent's deeply religious Jews the promised return to Jerusalem.

A year earlier, the blood-drenched birth of an independent India, and the fear of a socialist government, had propelled the country's Jewish merchant princes to depart for Britain and other English-speaking nations.

Within a few years, nine-tenths of India's Jews had left their native coun-

try, dropping from roughly 50,000 in 1947 to 5,000 now, with the overwhelming majority settling in Israel.

This mass migration was unique in Jewish history because it was not rooted in persecution or discrimination by a hostile majority.

The three main segments of India's once highly stratified Jewish society joined in the exodus. The poorer went en masse to Israel, while the wealthiest Jews, who identified most closely with the British colonial regime, opted mainly for London, Sydney and Canada . . .

Until the 1948 exodus, each of these subcommunities maintained its own synagogues and rigid social boundaries, but shrinking numbers have led to desegregation by default.

"If we were to discriminate now, there wouldn't be anybody left," said one prominent Baghdadi in Bombay.

A STORY OF SURVIVAL

(continued from page 1)

very active," and Habad/Lubavitch send in people about once a year.

Three years ago, the JDC sent its first foreign workers into India, two volunteers who ran Hebrew and Jewish-studies classes, a young-leadership development course, and after-school, weekend and summer-camp programs. The community's enthusiasm for these programs inspired JDC to fund its first full-time worker in December 1991.

Nevins was charged with organizing a full schedule of classes for the community's burgeoning population of children, the first time such a task had been tried in India. But before he could even think about planning youth-group outings, he had to think of a way to let people know he was there. "So I went to weddings," he says. "They're enormous, 500 or 600 people."

He would circulate, handing out his card, and telling people of an upcoming Hanukka party or Zionist lecture run out of JDC's Bombay office. Very quickly, word got around.

Many of Bombay's Jews live in Byculla, a mostly Moslem neighborhood where Hindu-Moslem clashes

have occurred. While no Jews suffered directly during the violence, a synagogue was inadvertently bombed in an act of anti-Moslem terrorism.

The synagogue was located on the top floor of the Rodeph Shalom building, which also houses the JDC main office. A Moslem family living on the first floor was the apparent target of the bomb, which was lobbed into their apartment, and then burned a hole through to the top floor, destroying the synagogue's roof. Nothing was salvageable, Nevins says. The JDC office suffered only minor smoke damage, and was soon back in operation.

No one was seriously hurt in the explosion, but the Moslem family has subsequently moved out.

JDC activities in Bombay were put on hold during the worst period of the violence, when the neighborhood was under curfew; now activities have fully resumed.

Nevins' status as a foreigner helped his campaign. In this close-knit community, where intermarriage is almost unheard-of and most weddings are still arranged by a young couple's parents, Nevins' presence as an American and a Jew was immediately noticed.

He even got a few discreet inquiries about his marriage eligibility from parents eager to wed their daughters. One of the major logistical problems facing India's Jews is that, as their community shrinks, it becomes more and more difficult to find suitable Jewish mates. Most of the remaining community is related by close blood ties. Barring the occasional young Israeli who travels back to Bombay to seek a traditional bride, the Bene Israel are dependent upon their own dwindling resources. Despite the offers, Nevins says quickly, he is still single.

The Bene Israel are largely young, mainly working class and very traditional, but not, Nevins explains, Orthodox in the Western sense. They are not Shabbat-observant, and the men do not wear *kipot* except in synagogue, but most families keep kosher and maintain a local ritual slaughterer.

There is no rabbinical tradition. In

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL NOTES

MALAYSIA MAKING PEACE OVERTURES TO JERUSALEM

by Andrew Silberberg

reprinted from the Washington Jewish Week, 21 July 1994

Asia's Muslim nations have long been hostile to Israel, none more so than Malaysia. But is that all about to change? With the fruits of the Israeli/Palestinian peace accords plain for all to see, Malaysia appears to be making careful, behind-the-scenes overtures to Jerusalem.

In mid-June, Tunku Abdullah Abdul Rahman, the brother of Malaysia's king and chairman of the large Malaysian investment company, Melewar Corp., visited Israel at the invitation of an unidentified Israeli businessman. The sultan's schedule included meetings with Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres. The talks were, according to a Foreign Ministry official, "exploratory."

"The brother of the Malaysian king was here. He did meet with the prime minister. I would term the talks exploratory in nature. There were preliminary discussions about diplomatic relations, but nothing advanced. His main interest was economic issues," said an Israeli Foreign Ministry official after the visit.

The visit comes hot on the heels of an admission by Malaysia's Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamed, that an exchange of letters recently took place between Rabin and Mahathir. After Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho, Rabin sent three letters to Mahathir urging that the two countries establish diplomatic relations.

Mahathir replied that it was too early for official ties because Malaysia was "not yet convinced that everything is settled between the Israelis and the Palestinians."

Both Mahathir and his deputy prime minister, Anwar Ibrahim, claimed ignorance of Tunku Abdullah's visit to Israel, saying that the government had nothing to do with it. Diplomats in both Kuala Lumpur and Jerusalem say, however, that it is most unlikely that such a prominent Malaysian would have visited Israel without bringing a personal message from Mahathir.

Mahathir publicly endorsed the Rabin/Arafat peace accord after its signing in Washington last September. He also made promising statements about the prospect of a rapprochement between Israel and Malaysia, saying: "If Israel has changed its attitude, we need to review our stand, especially since the Palestinians themselves have recognized Israel."

His comments on the peace process aside, Mahathir's record on Israel is not heartening. A long-time supporter of the Palestinian cause, Mahathir claimed in 1986 that: "The expulsion of Jews from the Holy Land some 1,000 years ago and the Nazi oppression of the Jews have taught them nothing. If at all, it has transformed the Jews into the very monsters that they condemn so roundly in their propaganda materials. They have been apt pupils of Dr. Goebbels."

During the stouch this March over Malaysia's banning of Schindler's List, Mahathir loudly proclaimed his opposition to "Zionist expansionism." Professor Michael Leifer, a South East Asian expert at the London School of Economics, argued at the time that "Mahathir's fixation with a Zionist threat would seem to go beyond its domestic political utility . . . and the need to outflank Islamic fundamentalism at home."

In light of the entrenched antipathy towards Israel in Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur's apparent overtures towards Jerusalem have come earlier than expected. What motives could lie behind the slight warming towards Israel? One view has it that Kuala Lumpur wants to avoid the tag of international laggard in its recognition of Israel. Other Asian Muslim states, such as Kazakhstan, have recently recognized Israel, or in the case of Indonesia, are forging trade links. In late June, the Maldives, a member of the Organization of Islamic Conference, agreed to let Israeli passport holders visit.

The prime motivation, however, is trade, according to Yitzhak Shichor, a Malaysia-watcher at Jerusalem's Hebrew University. Israel is one of the world's leading producers of high-tech equipment and has established itself as a major player in the world's communications, agricultural, medical and military industries. Malaysia is keen to buy such technology.

The importance of the trade angle is borne out by comments made in the Malaysian press last year. In September 1993, Berita Harian Malaysia quoted Malaysia's Deputy International Trade and Industry Minister Chua Jili Meng as saying the Israeli market would be a new area for Malaysian investors to expand their operation. Chua went so far as to say that his ministry has identified sectors for Malaysian investment.

Before Malaysian funds flow into Israel, Kuala Lumpur will need to lift the trade ban it enforces in its dealings with Israel. In 1992, trade between Israel and Malaysia totaled a puny \$1 million (U.S.). A recent survey by the Israeli Manufacturers Association, however, estimates that Malaysia could absorb \$4.9 billion (U.S.) of electronics alone. Malaysia will also have to lift the travel ban it enforces against its citizens visiting Israel. In early July, the director-general of Malaysia's immigration department, Mohd Zakri Abdul Rashid, said any Malaysian found to have visited Israel would have their passport confiscated. The immigration department would then wait for "further instructions" from the Home Ministry, he said.

In April, Israel's ambassador to Singapore, Danny Megido, visited Kuala Lumpur as part of a two-man delegation to the International Co-operatives Association conference. One of the first Israelis to visit Malaysia, Megido came away saying that he had been treated courteously and with respect.

two. Since the narrow dimensions of the board didn't leave room for a human figure to be depicted in its entirety, it resulted in the then-daring innovation of cutting off parts of the body. Only about 1,500 different prints were produced over the next hundred years, when the pillar print style abruptly and mysteriously died out.

"It's unique in art history," says Pins about the prints, the style of which later influenced painters like Manet and Degas. "I wanted to know more about pillar prints, but there was no book about them." So he wrote his own, "The Japanese Pillar Print: Hashira-e," published in London in 1982 and considered the catalogue raisonne of pillar prints.

"When he started collecting, nobody was interested in these prints," says Israel Museum director Martin Weyl. Now, because Pins has decided to bequeath his collection to the museum after his death, it "will have one of the most important collections in the world."

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CHAI TO THAI

reprinted from Lubavitch International, Winter 1994

The traffic crawls at a pace slower than Manhattan's rush hour, the air is denser than LA's smog, and the oppressive heat is incessant. In Bangkok, finding an elephant on the road or being delayed in traffic because the king is visiting, are all in an ordinary day's experience. So, too, are the megadeals that are cut every hour as precious gems change hands, attracting foreign businessmen to this Buddhist metropolis in Thailand.

It was not the lure of business that drew Yosef and Nechama Kantor to Bangkok. Rather, it was a Jewish community of about 200 families in need of Jewish revitalization that had them packing their bags last May, as they said good-bye to the comforts of family and home in California.

Although the Kantors found two synagogues serving Bangkok's Jewish community, neither had a rabbi. The two rabbis preceding Rabbi Kantor lasted only several months. "During the Vietnam war, the community had a succession of rabbis stationed here to serve the U.S. troops," explained Ruth Gerson, a congregant. "But in 1974 that stopped, and we've had many temporary people, and sometimes no one at all." When the leaderless congregation requested help from Chabad-Lubavitch last Chanukah, Lubavitch Headquarters sent Rabbi Kantor to visit the community for several weeks. As a result, Rabbi Kantor now fills the position of rabbi in both these synagogues, while also acting as the *schochet* (ritual slaughterer), making kosher poultry available to the local community.

In the six months they have been there, the Kantors have dramatically raised the level of Jewish awareness, commitment and activity. Upon their arrival, only a few women made use of the *mikvah*. As a result of Mrs. Kantor's women's study programs, the use of the *mikvah* has grown six-fold. Through dynamic educational programs and study groups (which include daily adult educational classes, holiday celebrations, Shabbatons and a Talmud Torah serving some 30 children), in a city where no Jewish school previously existed, Bangkok's Jewish community is quickly shaping up.

"The bottom line," says Mrs. Kantor, "is education." Its absence, in any form, zeros in on the essential void of Bangkok's Jewish community. "All the Jewish children here go to British or other International schools. They have had absolutely no Jewish education while in Bangkok." The Talmud Torah, where Mrs. Kantor teaches, is a first in formal Jewish education in Bangkok. And that's only a beginning. Next, Mrs. Kantor is preparing to open a preschool.

As Chabad representatives to Thailand, the Kantors have responded to the needs of a transient Jewish element in the country: Jewish business people, many of them in need of kosher food and Shabbat accommodations, and Israeli youth just out of the army. Because of its cheap travel deals, Thailand serves as a starting point for those Israelis who regularly go backpacking in the Himalayas upon completing their army service. An estimated 30,000 Israelis pass through Bangkok each year.

1992, JDC sent a Canadian rabbi to work with the children and provide counseling services, the first time the community has had a full-time rabbi. Synagogue services are in Hebrew, although few of the participants can negotiate much beyond the prayerbook. The local Jewish language is Marathi, but most also speak English. Their Hebrew skills, Nevins admits, are "rather weak." Sephardi ritual is predominant, combined with local customs dating back centuries. "Some of their customs are a window onto Jewish life thousands of years ago," Nevins notes.

On Pessah, for example, a family slaughters a goat, dips a hand in the blood and presses it to the wooden front door of their home, leaving a dark handprint to ward off the Angel of Death. On Yom Kippur, the men wear white caftans and undergo strict purification rituals that suggest the ablutions of the high priest during the days of the Second Temple.

Elijah the Prophet is a much-loved figure among India's Jews, many of whom display his picture in their homes. According to tradition, Nevins says, Elijah visited the community 1,000 years ago.

Indian Jews hold a *melida* service to mark auspicious occasions, such as a wedding or the visit of a family member now living in Israel, or simply during a *havdala* ceremony to herald the coming week. The *melida* is a rich dish of rice, coconut and cardamom, topped with an overflowing assortment of fruit and flowers.

Nevins focused his efforts on the 800 youngsters living in Thane, a middle-class suburb of Bombay that is the center of the community's next generation of Jews. Most of his educational efforts were informal, such as running a Purim carnival or painting a mural outside the room used for classes. Nevins also found himself teaching groups of young girls how to bake *halla* and *hamantaschen*, which were both unknown in the community. He also organized youth groups, summer and weekend learning camps, and taught two weekly classes on Jewish culture and recent Jewish history.

As India has no history of antisemitism, Nevins found most of

the young Jews he met were unaware of the Holocaust, or of the history of threatened Jewish communities elsewhere in the world. "They knew Jews had been killed (during World War II), but they didn't know why," he recalls. "One girl asked me, 'Why do people in other countries hate Jews?' Even the name Hitler drew blank stares."

What are the young Jews of Bombay interested in? "Israel," Nevins states. "They are very Zionist. The best students in my class were interested in going to Israel as soon as they could." For the past 10 years India's aliya rate has stabilized at 100 to 200 each year, but those who move on retain very close ties to the families and friends they leave behind, often returning for months at a time to the "Old Country." Very few of India's Jews are able to afford visits to Israel, so their attachment is grounded in stories told them by these returning relatives.

Soon after his arrival, Nevins started India's first regular Jewish newsletter, *Kol Bombay*, which he distributed to 1,000 households. It included educational material, information on JDC activities, notices of *tefillin* or matza sales, and other such tidbits. Because many of the Bene Israel are scattered in faraway villages, this newsletter was the Jewish community's only organizational link.

The Jewish community of India, although small, will probably exist for many years to come, given the high birthrate and absence of societal pressures that would lead to large-scale aliya. "Assimilation will be more a problem, as their Jewish education is still very weak," Nevins says. "Hopefully, with our help, Jewish education will be encouraged among the youth, and we will continue to promote new leaders for the Jewish community, and care for the elderly."

He fingers a photograph of a group of village children playing in the dust. "These children will be last generation of Jews in India's villages," he said. "They will all grow up and marry boys and girls from the city."

PASSAGE FROM INDIA

(continued from page 1)

India we didn't have this secular-religious divide, all these stereotypes . . ."

"Who knew what ultra-Orthodox was?" cuts in Ruth Sankar. "My relatives were sent to Beit Ya'acov schools because they were told it was Jewish. Now they're haredi."

"We need to get the young people involved, to give them more drive to move ahead," says Saralkar. "That's why we're arranging study grants from the AIJI. Even though it's not much money, it's an incentive."

"It's a great pity that none of our youth seems to be politically minded," interjects Jacob. "The study grants should help them become more aware."

He relates how attitudes have changed since the Indian Jews made Aliya in the early Fifties. "Then they told me in the grocery, when I asked for white bread, 'you're black, you should take black bread,' relates Jacob, who arrived in Israel with Youth Aliya at the age of 13. "At first, we didn't quite catch the humor," he recalls ruefully, "and we were easily hurt. But we gradually realized that no harm was intended."

He is known affectionately and respectfully as "our Moshe Rabenu." The title is not given lightly. A tall, imposing man in his sixties, Jacob is the AIJI's chairman, and one of the main shakers and movers of the community here. In addition to working as a microbiologist at Ichilov Hospital in Tel Aviv, he is a judge on the Histadrut's disciplinary committee.

He is currently spearheading the National Communal Center for Indian Jews, a project due for completion this fall.

The AIJA is particularly involved in making the youth more politically and socially aware. More than 100 study-grant applications are received each year, more from women than from men. It operates on a minimal budget from the Jewish Agency and is staffed entirely by volunteers. "The most important thing is contacts," says Jacob, "and imagination."

The noise level is high. Voices are raised. It takes a while to realize that

Most of the people in the room are not arguing.

Attempts to reach consensus, to find ways of accommodating others, show their cultural character. "We're not pushy," says Jacob, "we're friendly, we get on well with others."

At the other end of the country, in a large spotless office empty of everything except absolute necessities - table, chairs, telephone - moshavnik Yitzhak Elia echoes this view. Elia is in his late forties, although as with many Indian Jews, he looks much younger. He is the director for the Center for the Heritage of the Jews of Cochin. The setting is very different. Moshav Nevatim, an agricultural settlement near Dimona and very much off the beaten track, is home to about 130 families of Cochin origin.

"Although we stay together as a group, we get on with most people. Nevatim is a Cochin settlement, we don't take people from other communities, but they aren't really interested in coming here," he continues. "But our children are regular Israelis, they marry whom they please, believe as they please and go to live wherever suits them."

Cochin Jews were religious when they arrived in the country. "People in Cochin were really shocked when the aliya emissaries arrived in the late 1940s," relates Sarah Yochanan, who is responsible for public relations and marketing for the center. "They smoked on the Sabbath! And some of them even traveled on Shabbat!"

But the community seems to have come to terms with the fact that the youth are not religious, explains Elia. "Sure we know they travel on the Sabbath," he says, his knitted kippa attesting to his own religious views, "but they don't drive through the center of the moshav. They're considerate."

"We wanted to stay together, so we chose agricultural settlements and farming," says Elia, whose parents were among the first settlers who came to Nevatim in the early 1950s. They had owned an orchard in India and traded the produce, like many of their friends and neighbors.

In this country, Cochin Jews chose to get their hands dirty. Nevatim was barren and untended. Groups of Iraqi and Romanian settlers had come - and gone.

"The Jewish Agency didn't push us into it, whatever you might have heard," insists Elia. "We really wanted to live here! It's flat," he continues, "like Cochin, and it's near Beersheba, the town of Abraham the Patriarch. That's very important to us."

Nevatim is definitely still flat, but far from barren. There are large grassy areas, and many houses have grass borders and well-tended flower beds. Some look more ramshackle and less well tended than others, reflecting the economic inequality in the moshav....

Many of the Indian Jewish youth were sent to boarding schools, which gave them the knowledge and skills to take over the running of the agricultural settlements. The schools instilled a strong team spirit into their graduates.

Traditionally, communal team spirit for Indian Jews was nurtured through the synagogue, where all important events took place. "Everything happened there," says Elia, "prayer, of course, but also registration of births and deaths, distribution of alms to the poor, celebrations and wedding processions."

Yochanan, who was six years old when she arrived in Israel, recalls the excitement of wedding festivities in Cochin. People would dance in the streets on the day itself, and would continue the celebrations for three weeks. Bride and groom wore silken garments embroidered with gold thread. Some of the younger, more educated women would wear exotic saris, others would wear the traditional "podva" (an ankle-length wrap-around skirt), and men would wear the "kapa" (a silken coat) and large embroidered skullcaps. "People don't wear these things much any more," Yochanan says with a trace of wistfulness.

But some elements of past festivities have been preserved in the Nevatim synagogue, as a living heritage.

When residents of Nevatim set about building a synagogue in the early 1970s, they planned an aver-

age-sized functional building, nothing elaborate. Their plans changed drastically when the few remaining Jews in Cochin decided to ship the main elements of their ancient synagogue to Israel, as the synagogue was falling into disrepair.

As a result, the synagogue in Nevatim now houses the original doors and frame of the holy ark, which date back to the 14th century, and the upper and lower pulpits for the cantor and Tora reader, dating back to the 16th century. The upper pulpit for Tora reading is a unique Cochin tradition. Moses went up Mount Sinai and read the Tora from its heights to the people below; Cochin Tora readers follow suit. The wood is delicately carved and painted in cream, blue and gold.

The pillars and facade were decorated in traditional Cochin style by Cochin artist Meir Shabbat, with intricately worked designs and strong blues and greens blending into gentler pastel hues. Artistic metalwork around the ark provides the main, striking focus and blends all the elements, old and new, into a harmonious whole. This work was carried out by Benny Winkler from Omer, who is not of Cochin origin.....

In a synagogue in Kiryat Bialik there is more prayer than chatter as a group of men gather for evening services. The atmosphere is very different, less that of an historical synagogue, and more suited to a regular house of prayer. This is the Keili Ya'acov Eini synagogue, home to 60 Indian families of Iraqi origin....

In India, the Baghdad community kept to itself, especially vis-a-vis the Bene Israel, something that resulted in resentment between the groups. According to Dr. Shalva Weil, one of Israel's leading experts on Indian Jewry and chairperson of the recently formed Israel-India Cultural Association, the Baghdad community was better versed in Halacha, whereas the Bene Israel had been cut off from mainstream Judaism.

This resulted in differences in halachic and Jewish learning. In addition, the Baghdad community received honorary European status from the ruling British, and mixed freely with the British in their clubs

documentary differs from previous films about the Jewish refugees in Shanghai in that it will rely heavily on archival documents and present hundreds of photographs that have never been publicly seen. The award-winning filmmakers are currently researching publications, correspondence, diaries, and government documents from Shanghai that are held in archives in the U.S. and Europe, as well as looking at the personal collections of former refugees.

"We're committed to bringing across the complexity and intensity of what kind of place Shanghai was, and how the refugees survived there," said Ms. Grossman. "There's a tremendous amount of material that has never been used in any other film. We're very excited about this project." With the flurry of recent books on the subject and the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Pacific War, the filmmakers hope to tie into the growing interest in this little-known piece of history.

Concurrently, a group based in Vienna is planning a conference called "Refuge in Shanghai" that will take place May 26-28 this year in Salzburg, Austria, and be Europe's first public symposium on the Jewish refugees in Shanghai. Speakers from the U.S., China, Israel, and various European countries, including Rena Krasno, Ralph Hirsch, Steve Hochstadt, Pan Guang, Irene Eber, Françoise Kreissler, Maisie Mayers, and many others will present the Jewish experience in Shanghai, as well as the historical conditions that created it. Special emphasis will be given to the Austrian refugee experience.

The three-day symposium will also feature an exhibition of paintings by Friedrich Schiff, the Jewish-Viennese artist who portrayed Shanghai and its Jewish communities. The organizers of this event also plan to mount a large exhibition on the Jewish refugees in Shanghai in Vienna in 1996-7.

"Many Austrians have no idea where the Jews who escaped Hitler went," said Matthias Kron, one of the conference's organizers who is spending a year working at the Leo Baeck Institute in New York. "The flight of refugees to Shanghai is an amazing story about how far people had to go to save their lives."

The filmmakers and conference organizers are cooperating with their research efforts. Although the projects are separate, they share a mutual interest in preserving this piece of history. Both projects welcome inquiries from interested parties, as well as information regarding original photographs, film footage, and writings from Shanghai.

For information on the documentary film, contact Joan Grossman, 18 Cheever Place, Brooklyn, New York 11231, ph & fax (718) 855-9836.

For information on the conference, contact Matthias Kron, c/o Leo Baeck Institute, 129 E. 73rd Street, New York, New York 10021, ph (212) 744-6400, fax (212) 988-1305. Accommodations at the conference center and kosher meals are available.

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PINS' JAPAN HOUSE

by Felice Maranz

excerpted from *The Jerusalem Report*,
15 December 1994

Although an artist himself, 77-year-old Jacob Pins is less well-known for his own woodcuts and bright-colored canvases than for the art works he has collected. Neither wealthy nor trained in Japanese art history, Pins nonetheless dedicated the past five decades of his life to building up one of the world's finest collections of Japanese prints and writing scholarly texts about them.

He now lives in a large, century-old house on Jerusalem's Ethiopia Street, where hundreds of visitors a year come to enjoy the fine prints and sculptures that usually line his living room, its high ceiling green flecked with gold.

Some 200 of his objects — worth an estimated several million dollars — are now on display at the Israel Museum, in a show which opened in November titled "The Jacob Pins Collection of Japanese Art."

The Israel Museum exhibit, and Pins's house, are currently the only places in Israel where art lovers can view fine Japanese works. The once-elegant, though small, Tikotin Museum of Japanese Art in Haifa has been closed for the past five years, a victim of theft and administrative feuding, with no reopening in sight....

A trip through the Israel Museum exhibition, or even the elegant catalogue that accompanies it, reveals sharp and finely drawn figures in elaborate costume, and landscape scenes with sea and sky a vibrant blue. There is also a selection of large, watery eighteenth-century paintings, made with dark ink on golden paper, and a small courtyard filled with glass cases containing graceful sculptures.

The bulk of the show is made up of Pins's some 150 pillar prints, their shape a rigid 70 by 12 centimeters (28 by 5 inches), designed to hang on the interior pillars of a Japanese home. The prints present courtesans, lovers, families, even a woman warrior on horseback.

The pillar print was invented in the mid-1740s by a printmaker who economized by splitting a wooden board in

BOOK NOOK

BETWEEN JERUSALEM AND BENARES: COMPARATIVE STUDIES IN JUDAISM AND HINDUISM by Hananya Goodman, Editor, State University of New York: 1984 \$18.95 pb, \$57.50 hc, 344 pages

This book stands at the crossroads between Jerusalem and Benares and opens a long awaited conversation between two ancient religious traditions. It represents the first serious attempt by a group of eminent scholars of Judaic and Indian studies to take seriously the cross-cultural resonances among the Judaic and Hindu traditions.

The essays in the first part of the volume explore the historical connections and influences between the two traditions, including evidence of borrowed elements and the adaptation of Jewish Indian communities to Hindu culture. The essays in the second part focus primarily on resonances between particular conceptual complexes and practices in the two traditions, including comparative analyses of representations of Veda and Torah, legal formulations of *dharma* and *halakhah*, and conceptions of union with the Divine in Hindu Tantra and Kabbalah.

* * * * *

THE CIRCLE CLOSES: THE "EMIGRANTEN ADRESSBUCH" RETURNS TO SHANGHAI by Tess Johnston

In October 1993 I attended a reunion in Shanghai of former Jewish residents of the city. There I learned there was in existence a listing of refugees, primarily from Germany and Austria, who had fled the Nazi regime and wound up in Shanghai prior to the end of 1939. Imagine what a valuable resource this could be for those tracing their roots, for refugees seeking to recall names or origins of their Shanghai friends and neighbors, for Holocaust survivors, for researchers and historians. As I fall into the latter category I longed to see this book.

Peter Witting of Australia was fortuitously at the reunion and heard my

plea. A few months later he sent me a photocopy of the Emigranten Adressbuch of 1939. The Shanghai publisher, reportedly a German Jewish refugee surnamed Klaus, had also wound up in Australia. When he died no one knows what became of his books, but luckily Mr. Witting had obtained a copy of this one from someone who had photocopied the now-lost original. The book's arrival closed the circle: from Shanghai back to Shanghai.

I felt then and I feel now that this list should be made available to the world at large; the few copies which now remain are buried in obscure library stacks or in a private home or two. I believe it is fate that sent the book back to Shanghai and into the hands of two people who have both the facilities and the interest in again publishing this document for historians of the past and for future generations.

Such a sad story it contains, so many names and behind each name a heartbreak, an uprooted life, a lost family. The magnitude of the losses and the fact that the Holocaust occurred in this theoretically-enlightened century is almost impossible for the mind to grasp. How can one ever calculate the loss to mankind of the fine minds and limitless talents that perished — and in our lifetime? We feel that this book should be a memorial to those who perished as well as a documented history of those who, through their escape to Shanghai, did not.

In cooperation with the Old China Hand Press in Hong Kong and its Shanghai Editor, Erh Dongqiang, we plan to reissue this Emigranten Adressbuch in a facsimile edition and to make it available through the Press's Hong Kong office. We want to inform everyone who has a personal connection with Shanghai's Jewish refugees, or who is interested in their history, of the existence once again of this historic document, reproduced as it originally existed in 1939.

Readers can assist us by spreading the word and by making this address

known to any who are interested in this little facet of history, Shanghai's Jewish refugees. For further information, write to: Old China Hand Press, P.O. Box 54750, North Point P.O., Hong Kong.

[The Old China Hand Press also publishes a fine little review of new materials on "Old China." It's called, not surprisingly, The Old China Hand Gazette. Write for a copy. Ed.]

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THE JEW IN THE LOTUS: A POET'S REDISCOVERY OF JEWISH IDENTITY IN BUDDHIST INDIA by Rodger Kamenetz

While accompanying eight high-spirited Jewish delegates to India for a historic Buddhist-Jewish dialogue with the Dalai Lama, poet Rodger Kamenetz comes to understand the convergence of Buddhist and Jewish thought.

NEW DOCUMENTARY FILM

New Documentary Film, Plus Europe's First Conference & Exhibition about Jewish Refugees in Shanghai, Planned

Filmmakers from New York and Austria are working together on a new documentary film focusing on the Austrian and German Jews who fled to Shanghai in the late 1930s and stayed throughout World War II. Joan Grossman of Brooklyn, New York and Paul Rosdy from Vienna, Austria are co-directing and producing this project with the intention of funding the film through a variety of public and private sources in the U.S. and Europe.

The film, tentatively entitled, **DESTINATION SHANGHAI; The Forgotten Jewish Ghetto of W.W.II**, will include scholars, former refugees, and other people who lived in Shanghai during the war. This

and schools. Although the Bene Israel were also a favored group, they were still regarded as native Indians, and the distinction was galling, Weil says. The Indian caste system also led to differences between the communities. Both groups were displeased when couples intermarried.

During the past 50 years, the antagonism has waned. Only 5,000 Jews are left in Bombay, including representatives of both communities, and it is in everyone's interests to let old wounds heal, according to Weil. In addition, the Bene Israel are now fully accepted into mainstream Judaism, and both British influence and the Indian caste system are no longer relevant, especially in Israel.

All antipathy seems to be forgotten and cooperation is the buzz word. "We lend the Bene Israel our Tora scrolls whenever they need them," says Eliahu, indicating the collection of over 30 scrolls in the ark. "Our people gave their own closets to build that ark!" he adds with pride.....

The National Communal Center is sponsored by the Association of Indian Jews in Israel. It will function as a synagogue, and is to include both a permanent exhibition and a mobile exhibition on the culture, tradition, folklore and way of life of the Jews of India, and a hall commemorating those from the community who died in Israel's wars.

A comprehensive library to contain all published matter dealing with the Indian Jewish communities will also be in the complex, and a hall has been allocated for studying and lectures. The roof, offering a splendid view of Haifa's coast, is to be used for festivities and parties, weather permitting. Benjamin Jacob is in constant contact with the Cochin and Baghdad communities here to ensure their involvement and representation in the center. It's about half an hour's drive from Kiryat Bialik, situated on Mount Carmel overlooking the sea.

KOBE JEWISH COMMUNITY ESCAPES EARTHQUAKE

by Riffka Rosenwein
excerpted from
Jewish Telegraphic Agency

The tiny Jewish community of Kobe managed to escape serious harm from the devastating earthquake that struck western Japan last week.

"It was just lucky, that's all," said Simon Elimalah, the president of the Kobe synagogue, by telephone.

While no one among the community's 30 families was seriously injured, at least one family lost its home, and several other homes and businesses sustained serious damage, he said.

The Ohel Shelomoh synagogue itself, built in 1970, suffered minor damage.

Rabbi James Lebeau, spiritual leader of the synagogue in Tokyo, also reached by telephone, described the Kobe shul as a "beautiful Sephardic synagogue" situated in a hillside neighborhood overlooking the city.

"The earthquake was very selective," said Lebeau, who has visited Kobe and was in touch with members of the community there this week.

The Tokyo synagogue, which has about 150 member families, and the one in Kobe are the only two synagogues in Japan, the rabbi said. The Kobe shul does not have its own rabbi.

Elimalah said tablets depicting the Ten Commandments, made of marble and hanging in the Kobe shul, fell during the quake and were shattered.

Despite the relative good fortune of the Jewish community, Elimalah, sounding tired and depressed, described the general scene in Kobe as horrific.

"It looks like after World War II," he said. "Food is hard to get, gasoline is hard to get.

"And it's still going on," he added. Because of structural damage sustained during the quake itself, "every day, another building falls down. Some of the buildings—you wouldn't believe they could come down."

At least 5,000 people were killed and 21,000 injured in the earthquake, the worst to hit Japan in more than 70 years.

The Kobe Jewish community was formed in the 1930s mostly by Russian immigrants who established import-export businesses, according to Lebeau.

During World War II, Lebeau explained, the community swelled with the influx of some 1,500 refugees from Nazi Europe, including almost all the students and faculty of the Lithuanian Mir Yeshiva.

These refugees spent most of the war years in Shanghai. But in a little-known chapter of the Jews of Shanghai, their first port of entry was Kobe.

They had arrived in Japan with visas issued by Sempo Sugihara, the then-Japanese consul general in Kovno, Lithuania. Sugihara was awarded a posthumous Righteous Among the Nations award by Yad Vashem in 1984.

Last year, Japan, whose war-time government had opposed Sugihara's actions, acknowledged his heroic role and agreed to include his story in its high school textbooks.

Today most of the Europeans have left Kobe and the Jewish community is largely Sephardi, composed of Jews of Iraqi, Syrian and Moroccan descent. These Middle Eastern Jews were attracted to Japan primarily for business reasons.

The synagogue, which is Orthodox, holds Shabbat and holiday services. It serves the entire Kansai region of Japan, which includes the cities of Osaka and Kyoto, according to Lebeau.

Elimalah, president of the synagogue, said that many Jews who do business in the area, especially Israelis, also attend the synagogue regularly, but he did not have an accurate count for them.

Elimalah himself was born in Morocco and came to Japan 12 years ago by way of Israel. He runs what he described as the first Moroccan restaurant in Japan.

The restaurant suffered serious damage from the earthquake, he said. Both the Tokyo and Kobe synagogues have begun raising funds to aid the victims of the quake.

Elimalah said he was housing a family whose home was badly

damaged. There were also reports that the synagogue would be offering an apartment above the sanctuary as a refuge for those in need.

Several American Jewish organizations have also started relief efforts in Kobe, which is Seattle's sister city in Japan. They include the American Jewish World Service, B'nai B'rith International, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

These funds will be distributed to Jews and non-Jews alike, according to the organizations.

Those wishing to contact the Kobe synagogue directly can write to: The Jewish Community of Kansai; 12/12 Kitano-cho 4 chome; Chuo-ku; Port P.O. Box No. 639; Kobe, Japan 651-01.

THE UNWANTED IMMIGRANTS

by Yossi Klein Halevi

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When Yehudah Gangte was a boy in Imphal, capital of the state of Manipur in northeast India, he dreamed of living in the Land of Israel. There he could be a Jew among fellow Jews, without being taunted by classmates for not eating pork, or stared at by suspicious neighbors when he helped his father build a shack outside their home on Sukkot.

The overwhelming majority of the 2 million members of Yehudah's tribe, the Chikims, are Christians; but Yehudah's family is among the perhaps 5,000 Chikims who over the last few decades have adopted a makeshift form of Judaism, convinced they are descendants of the lost Israelite tribe of Menasheh. Yehudah's father, a regional administrator in Manipur, even turned a room in the Gangtes's spacious home into a synagogue. Congregants prayed from a standard Orthodox prayer book, translated into the tribe's Mizo dialect by a member who had studied Judaism in Israel; a Jerusalem rabbi sent a child's Torah scroll, made of paper

instead of parchment, which Yehudah cherished as if Moses himself had been its scribe.

Three years ago, at age 22, Yehudah left Manipur University, where he'd begun studying liberal arts, for Israel. He enrolled in a yeshivah and converted to Judaism — one of some 150 young Chikims who've been brought here in the last five years by a small Jerusalem organization called Amishav ("My People Returns"), which seeks traces of the 10 lost tribes.

Yehudah, tall and wiry, with the smile of a young man at once shy and aware of his own attractiveness, wears a knitted yarmulke pinned to his longish black hair. Like other Chikims he looks Burmese, not Indian: dark skin and Oriental eyes.

The transition of this unusual Orthodox Jew into Israeli society hasn't been easy. People stare at him on buses. His claim of descent from the tribe of Menasheh is dismissed by almost everyone he meets. And Israelis' infatuation with Western culture has disoriented him: "I came to integrate into Judaism," he says in fluent English, "but I found that many Israelis weren't proud of their own culture."

Still, Yehudah is slowly adjusting. His Hebrew is improving, he has Israeli friends, and he is about to be drafted — and wants, he says, to be a "fighter." After the army, he intends to play guitar in a wedding band: Hasidic music is his passion.

He is even getting used to Israeli rudeness. "I realize now that people don't stare because they're hostile, just straight-forward. I appreciate Israeli frankness."

Yehudah admits that people's doubts about his Israelite origins have confused him. But whether or not his ancestors were Israelites, this much he does know: that, having been raised as Jew, formally converted and now living a strict halakhic life, no one can take away his Jewishness.

And yet some are trying to do just that.

Last August, a group of 57 young Chikims arrived to undergo a conversion course, sponsored by the Chief Rabbinate; and the reaction was vehement. Uri Gordon, the Jewish Agency's immigration director,

suggested amending the Law of Return — which guarantees Israeli citizenship to all Jews and their children or grandchildren — to prevent groups like the Chikims, "who have no connection to the Jewish people," from moving here. Minister of Absorption Yair Tsaban proposed sarcastically that the 10 lost tribes wait for the messiah to bring them to Israel. Foreign Ministry officials invoked the prospect of "300 million" impoverished Indians descending on Israel in search of Western prosperity.

The Bnei Menasheh, or Sons of Mannaseh, as Chikim Judaizers call themselves, are hardly fortune seekers. Like Yehudah Gangte, many come from homes prosperous by Indian standards. Some worked as civil servants or small businessmen; the tribe has the second-highest literacy rate of any national group in India.

"I came to Israel to live a full Jewish life," says Gideon Manlun, a 32-year-old urban planner from Manipur who lives, along with several dozen Chikims, in a mobile-home park in the West Bank settlement of Kiryat Arba, on the outskirts of Hebron. "When journalists ask me about economic motives, I feel so ashamed."

Many of the Bnei Menasheh have moved to the territories. Though the reason is largely pragmatic — the only religious communities that welcomed them are located there — group members are in fact most comfortable among Orthodox settlers, whose messianic Zionism closely resembles their own faith and whose austere settlements are far closer to their Biblical vision of Israel than the Western prosperity of Tel Aviv. "I wake up every morning and look out at the hills and thank God for gathering the exiles as He promised," says Zalman Zadeng, who owned a clothing store in India and now sweeps the streets of Kiryat Arba.

The Nahalat Hatzvi yeshivah is located in Jerusalem's Kiryat Moshe neighborhood, near the bus station. Founded by circles close to the settlement movement, the yeshivah draws prospective converts from around the world. Here one finds Chinese, South Americans — and

several dozen Chikims, wearing knitted yarmulkes and *tzitzit* hanging from their jeans. Ordinary weekday prayers have the intensity of a Yom Kippur service. There is no talking; the young men sway slowly and concentrate on each word, as if in awe to be praying in Hebrew.

"I've been deeply moved by their love for Judaism and Israel," says Myer Samra, an anthropologist at the University of Sydney who has traveled to India to research the group. Indeed, Samra has been so moved that he's gone from merely studying the Bnei Menasheh to advocating the integration of its converts into the Jewish people, writing hostile Israeli officials on the group's behalf.

Despite the outcry against their presence here, Bnei Menasheh members reject bitterness. When pressed to speak about his absorption problems, Yehudah Gangte says only, "I won't speak *lashon hara* ('gossip') about the Jewish people." And though two teenage members of the group were injured last year in terrorist stabbings on a Gaza settlement where they were studying to convert — one of them, Stanley Sharon, was stabbed the day after his conversion — none of the young people thought to return to India. Instead, they saw the stabbings as a kind of covenant, binding them closer to Israel.

In 1951, a Chikim farmer named Chala claimed to receive a vision that his tribe was of Israelite descent. He attracted several thousand followers, who eventually left Christianity and founded the Bnei Menasheh movement. In 1979, Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail, head of Amishav, established contact with the group, sending books and religious articles. And he recently arranged with the Chief Rabbinate for select young Chikims — many of whom, like Yehudah Gangte, had been raised from childhood as Jews — to be brought here for conversion, since there are no rabbis in India.

The Bnei Menasheh are unique among groups asserting lost-tribe status. Not because their claim is necessarily more compelling: The evidence they offer for their Israelite

origins — for example, that pre-Christian Chikims called themselves "the sons of Menasi" — is considered by scholars to be at best scant and inconclusive. But they have developed, on their own initiative, Judaic communities whose practice closely resembles normative Orthodoxy — and they are willing, indeed eager, to undergo rigorous conversion.

"The Bnei Menasheh's admission into Israel has nothing to do with their lost-tribe claim," notes Samra. "They are being converted because they have proven their commitment to Judaism."

On the whole, their absorption here is proceeding well. Several of the young men are serving in elite combat units; and five young women, one of them Yehudah Gangte's older sister, Leah, have married North American immigrants, to whom they were introduced by their yeshivah rabbis. Initially shy, the Chikims quickly open up to strangers who appear sympathetic. Despite their piety, they are hardly somber: They seem to be constantly laughing among themselves.

But for some Chikim youth, the pressure of transition to a new life is overwhelming. In mid-October, Malka Menashe, 17, hung herself in the bathroom of the yeshivah where she was studying. Friends say she'd been depressed about being rejected twice for conversion, and anxious about an impending third try.

The shivah mourning period was held in the dormitory of Ma'ayan Binah, the women's division of the Nahalat Hatzvi yeshivah. A dozen young Chikim women, in long skirts and sandals, moved into a single room, their mattresses piled neatly in a corner, huddling together for comfort. Some quietly recited Psalms, others studied Torah; one young woman read a bridal magazine in Hebrew.

Several young Chikim men sat quietly on a bench, separating themselves modestly from the women. "Israel is still our dream country," one of them told a visitor. "But it is a very

Postscript

Israel Cancels Visas for Would-Be Indian Converts

by Yossi Klein Halevi

Tourist visas for 50 young Indians, who were set to come to Israel to study for conversion to Judaism, have been abruptly canceled by the Israeli Foreign Ministry. The prospective converts, members of the 5,000-strong Bnei Menasheh movement of northeast India, who believe themselves descended from the lost tribe of Menasheh, were intending to join 150 members of the group already here, more than half of whom have recently converted and become Israeli citizens.

The reason for the cancellation is the Foreign Ministry's fear of a mass immigration of indigent Indians claiming lost-tribe status — up to 300 million, according to the Israeli ambassador in New Delhi, Ephraim Dubek. Dubek raised that figure, The Jerusalem Report has learned, after he was contacted by 125 families from the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, claiming descent from the lost tribes of Dan and Ephraim and seeking to immigrate to Israel. The group, which calls itself the "Council of the Eastern Jewry" and is unaffiliated with the Bnei Menasheh, is drawn from the caste of untouchables, who total some 300 million people throughout India.

One member of the Council, Yehoshua Jacobi, a 23-year-old biochemistry student, was recently converted by Israeli rabbis and is living in Jerusalem. But he dismisses the notion of a mass Judaic movement among untouchables. "None of the untouchables outside our small community claim Israelite descent," he says.