

Jewregated area; and. 5) a monument expressing and recording the strong surviving confidence and will of the Jewish people to survive.

The study of the SJC provides a new angle of view for the study of "foreign newspaper history" in China. Short of case study and short of understanding of the diversity and complexity of foreigners residing in China and of foreign language newspapers in modern history of China, Chinese study of "foreign newspaper history" has taken the route of oversimplification. "Foreign newspaper" is the result of the combination of Chinese and Western culture in modern Chinese history, an important social phenomenon occurring in the process of Chinese social transformation from feudal society to modern society, and from being closed to opening up. Studying foreign newspapers from this angle would provide Chinese scholars an even better understanding of the foreign communities and foreign cultures existing in the land of China and widen their field of view. Adopting embracing and inclusive policies, they would get a wide-open worldview.

Selected Comments by Chinese Reviewers of the Doctoral Thesis:

For many years, I have been doing research on Chinese Jewish people, particularly those living in Shanghai, but I have never seen such an excellent thesis analyzing a Jewish newspaper so comprehensively, so deeply and so systematically. This thesis has filled several gaps in Jewish history, Shanghai history, Sino-foreign journalism communications history and cross-culture communications history etc. It has signifi-

cant academic value.

Pan Guang, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences

This is a doctoral thesis having a distinctive style with profound content and abundant literary grace...This thesis not only opens a new angle of view and creates a new method for the study of journalism history, but also provides a reference for people to observe and analyze the contradictions and conflicts in the real world. Cheng Mei, Renmin University of China

With a large field of vision, ample materials, solid work in file and document consultation, and correct historical conclusion, this thesis is well grounded in study. This article is one of the most excellent doctoral theses on Chinese and foreign journalism history I have read in recent years.

Liu Jianming, Qinghua University

Another characteristic of this thesis is its full and accurate use of data and materials. They are all valuable first-hand and original materials. The author demonstrates the role of the newspaper in public opinion leadership, information communication, economic activity and increasing the Jewish people's confidence in survival. This thesis has a correct point of view...It has actually created new value.

Xu Hong, Beijing University

From subject selection, material collection, investigation and study, repeated deliberation to forming the thesis in three-plus years, the author has done a lot of hard work. Success would not betray a person

with high aspirations and determination. Such scientific research results in filling the gap of Chinese and foreign journalism history and cross-culture communications history...This is an excellent academic thesis.

Bai Runsheng, Central Nationalities University

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Jews of the entrepreneurial diaspora who, after leaving the Ottoman empire, underwent a remarkable process of Anglicization but nevertheless maintained strong links with their Judeo-Arabic heritage. The concluding article by Marcia Ristaino, presents a unified interpretation of the Baghdadi Jewish experience in South, Southeast and East Asia and proposes an innovative and challenging framework to explore and understand the Baghdadi experience in these areas of the world.

Price is \$25; \$20 for members. There is a charge of \$2 for postage and handling for each copy; \$5 for mailing overseas.

Chiara Betta. The Baghdadi Jewish Diaspora in Shanghai: Community, Commerce and Identities.

Marcia R. Ristaino. Reflections on the Sephardi Trade Diaspora in South, Southeast and East Asia.

This may well be the first scholarly attempt to weave together an integrated picture of the diaspora of Baghdadi Jews in India, Singapore and China between the middle of the nineteenth century and the middle of the twentieth century. The articles by Joan Bieder, Joan Roland, Caroline Plüss, and Chiara Betta focus on issues related to the overlapping identities of Baghdadi

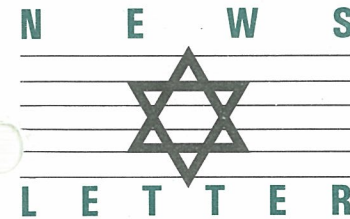
#### We wish to announce the publication of *Sino-Judaica: Occasional Papers of the Sino-Judaic Institute, volume 4 (2003)*. India, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Shanghai: Identities of Baghdadi Jews of the Diaspora.

The contents are:

Joan G. Roland. Baghdadi Jews in India: Communal Relationships, Nationalism, Zionism and the Construction of Identity.

Joan Bieder. Jewish Identity in Singapore: Cohesion, Dispersion, Survival.

Caroline Plüss. Sephardic Jews in Hong Kong: Constructing Communal Identities.



# Points East

## 中國-猶太學院

Vol. 18 No. 3  
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A Publication of the Sino-Judaic Institute

### 2003 TRIP TO ISRAEL: A RENEWED BEGINNING

by Xu Xin

In the year 2003 I made my fourth trip to Israel, traveling to accept the highest honor in my life: the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Honoris Causa, from Bar-Ilan University. The citation explicates the reason that Bar-Ilan University bestows the honor upon me: "for establishing the academic framework for the teaching of Jewish history and culture in China, and for encouraging the development of Sino-Israel ties." What an honor and compliments!

En route, I could not help but recall my first trip, in 1988, long before there were any formal relations between our two countries. Although it was considered a very brave for a Chinese scholar to take such an ice-breaking trip, I must say that the purpose was quite simple—to start my journey into Jewish studies with a personal glance at the sole Jewish country on our planet.

With scant knowledge of Israel, I had no idea what I would see and was unable to predict the outcome of the visit. The result was a visit that changed my life and encouraged me to travel further down the road of Jewish studies, making my small contribution to the development of Sino-Israel ties. Since then Israel became a subject for my research and study, signifying an academic addiction to it as a country and as a people. Any news from radio, reports from TV, articles from papers, anything related to Israel catches my attention. As a result, I returned twice after the first trip. Although I expected further trips, I never dreamed that I would one day come back for such an honor.

The degree, conferred at a festival ceremony held at the newly-completed Dahan Family Unity Park on May 28, was also the day designated to dedicate the Park. Many of my Israeli friends attended. Chinese diplomats on a mission in Israel also came to congratulate me. In a fulsome response, I thanked the University's Board of Trustees and Senate for the honor, recalled the beginning of my journey on the road of Jewish studies, and expressed my happiness, gratitude, and future plans. (For details, please see the attached text). The great, moving and happy event celebrated friendship, a culmination of Chinese and the Jewish relations.

During the ceremony, I had opportunity to meet Moshe Katzav, President of the State Israel, who was also a recipient of a Bar-Ilan honorary doctorate. He received the honor for "his extraordinary personal accomplishments and exceptional achievements as a leader in the political arena who strives for unity, social justice and peace for the Jewish nation." He is the fourth Israeli

(continued on page 4)

### THE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON JEWISH DIASPORA IN SEOUL

by Pan Guang

I was surprised to receive an invitation to attend the International Symposium on Jewish Diaspora in Republic of Korea because, although I have traveled and lectured widely on Jews in China in North America, Israel, Europe and Australia; I had no knowledge of any institution engaging in Jewish Studies in Korea.

On May 25, with the strong desire to know the present situation of Jewish Studies in Korea and to establish links with counterparts there, I came—without any SARS infection—to Seoul by air from Shanghai, a city haunted by the appearance of SARS, to attend the 4<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Jewish Diaspora sponsored by the Israel Culture Center in Korea.

Dr. Ho-Jin Chung, one of Directors of the ICC, who studied in Israel and speaks fluent Hebrew, met me at the Seoul airport. According to Chung's introduction, the ICC was founded in March 2000 with the financial support from ROK's entrepreneurs, especially from Bae and Kim families. It is under the auspices of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Israel. Its attentions are focused on the promotion of Jewish and Israeli Studies in Korea and ROK's cultural exchanges with Israel and Jewish communities all over the world. He said in a modest way: "Our Jewish studies, which have just started, have large gaps in comparison with China's, and therefore we would like to learn from our Chinese counterparts, especially from your Center for Jewish Studies Shanghai (CJSS)."

On May 26, 2003, the 4<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Jewish Diaspora opened in the Kon-Kuk University, Seoul. Three keynote speakers, i.e. Professor David Harman from Israel, Professor Michael Chlenov from Russia, and I were invited to address the International Symposium.

The program of the Symposium was well organized. After welcoming speeches by Mr. Uzi Manor, Ambassador of Israel, and Mr. Youngdeok Lee, Chairman of ICC, at the opening ceremony, the symposium divided into three sessions. The first session was entitled *Jew in China: Legends, History and New Perspective*, for which I was the keynote speaker; the second session, entitled *Israel and Jewish Diaspora: A Tale of One People with Numerous Nationalities*, had Professor David Harman as the keynote speaker; and the third session, entitled *Jewish Diaspora in Russia* featured Professor Michael Chlenov. Every keynote speech lasted one and a half hours and then opened to the question and

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Taiwan	1
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>310</b>

## FROM THE EDITOR

At 5 a.m., when I get up to do my extracurricular activities—volunteer work such as editing this newsletter—which I do in addition to my full-time job of directing a local human service organization and teaching at Seattle University, I sometimes find myself too tired to think of something profound to write.

But re-reading Xu Xin's article, in which he recalls his early days in this field, reminded me of how far we have come in close to twenty years of work. Then, we were a handful of American Jews with a crazy idea. Today, we have counterparts in China and Israel, and in points north, south and west, in addition to east. Then, there was only a tenuous connection with Hebrew Union College, through its Kaifeng manuscript collection. Today, many academic institutions—Chinese, American, Canadian, Israeli, European, Japanese—join hands in fruitful cooperation. For years we labored to host just one conference on Jewish-Far Eastern Relations; today such conferences are almost routine occurrences.

It is time to shep a little nachas (take some joy or comfort) in this child of ours. Together we are doing wonderful things. Thank you for your interest and your support, whether it is of time, energy, or money (and preferably all three). A good, Jewish, New Year to you all.

Anson Laytner

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

I have just come across a wonderful article in your website about my great uncle, Two Gun, Moisha Cohen. My grandmother was his beloved elder sister Rose. She emigrated to what is now Zimbabwe before he ran away to Canada and eventually China, and died there 3 years before he passed away in Manchester. Last year, I also had the opportunity to visit his grave. The visit brought back my wonderful memories of him. He really was a strong character, and I was privileged that he sometimes visited us in Zimbabwe. I thought I would just share these thoughts with you. Kind regards,

### Points East

Anson Laytner, Publisher

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## FINANCIAL REPORT AVAILABLE

SJI members interested in receiving a copy of the annual financial report should send a self-addressed envelope to: Shelton Ehrlich, Treasurer of the Sino-Judaic Institute, 755 Northampton, Palo Alto, CA 94303.

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travel to various parts of the free world via Japan. In 1940, most of them had proceeded to Kobe and Yokohama, where Jewish committees, once again, helped the refugees. Although these visa-holders were allowed to remain in Japan for no more than 21 days, the Japanese officials were very considerate in Kobe and Yokohama, and extended their stays from two to eight months. With the help of the JDC, HIAS, and Jews from Yokohama, 4,600 refugees were helped by the local committees.

In the last few months of 1939, Yokohama became a transit point for Jewish emigrants from Germany proceeding by land route via Lithuania, then across Soviet Russia via Vladivostok or Manchuria to North America and other overseas countries. In view of this, a Jewish Committee for the assistance of refugees, headed by Mr. Mund, had been organized in Yokohama. The committee rendered the refugees both moral and financial support.

The first several hundred East European Jews to pass through Kobe were not refugees. I had met many of them in Kobe. They had a valid visa in their passports for somewhere in North and South America.

Kobe was only a way-station en route to an embarkation at Yokohama. At that time very little was left of the Yokohama Community consisting of only twelve families, mostly German and some Russian Jews. The Jews of Yokohama were very generous, like those in Kobe, giving away their time, energy and kindness during the initial rescue period of the refugees in transit.

Shanghai became increasingly the most realistic alternative for the Jewish refugees stranded in Kobe and Yokohama. Moreover, the Kobe Jewish Committee was closing down . . .

At a meeting held in Tokyo on May 19, 1939, which was sponsored by the Nippon Mythological Epoch Research Society, the Jewish question, particularly in the Far East, was discussed. Of all the reports delivered, Captain Inazuka's report on the Jewish question was of particular interest . . .

Captain Inazuka reported that since 1931, of the Jewish refugee masses that had been streaming into the Far East, about several thousand refugees had passed through Ja-

pan by way of transit through Kobe and Yokohama. In 1939, there were already one thousand three hundred Jewish refugees residing in Japan, who were allowed to remain in the country until October of that year. "The Japanese Empire", emphasized Captain Inazuka, "adhering to the Principle of Brotherhood of nations, would in no way undertake any measures of oppression against those unfortunate wanderers, but on the contrary, following this principle was helping them in every way, fulfilling the duty of hospitality, in so far as the Jewish refugees did not abuse Japan's trust and did not act contrary to Japan's aspirations.

In 1942, during World War II, foreigners, as well as all the Jews, were ordered out of the Yokohama area, as Japan declared Yokohama a closed city. Everyone moved to Tokyo and remained there till the end of the war. The small Jewish Community of Yokohama had no complaints to the Japanese government. They were all treated well by the local Japanese administration and were grateful to the Japanese for everything.

## BOOK NOOK

Title: *Shanghai Youtai jishibao yanjiu* [A Study of the "Shanghai Jewish Chronicle"]  
Author: Rao Lihua.  
Publisher: Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 2003. 313 pp. RMB 26.00.

Reviewed by Al Dien

The volume opens with an introduction to Jewish history leading to the flight of the large number of Jews who sought refuge in Shanghai just before the outbreak of World War II. The German language newspaper began publication in 1939, first as a weekly and then as a daily. This study is based on 231 issues that appeared between July 1943 and March 1944 in the Hongkew ghetto and which are preserved in the Shanghai Municipal Library. An analysis of the contents during those years indicates that 45% of the contents dealt with international news, 20% with that of Hongkew, 18% with Shanghai and China, 8% announcements, 4% personal notices, and 5% with miscellaneous items and literature. Each of these, as well as such cat-

egories as relief efforts, economics, education, culture, religions and advertisements are discussed in some detail with translations of selected items. The volume closes with a chapter discussing the social utility and historical significance of the newspaper. Interestingly, the bibliography lists 40 works in Chinese, 45 Chinese translations of Western works (from America, England, Israel, Austria, Australia, and France), and 3 in English. The author, in her foreword, criticizes as over-generalizing those Chinese writers who see the foreign press in China to have represented the interests of imperialism and colonialism, and she demonstrates the validity of her point in this fine study.

Comments by the Author:

The *Shanghai Jewish Chronicle* (SJC) was a German newspaper run by the Jewish refugees. During the Second World War, large numbers of Austrian Jews fled from the persecution of German Nazis to Shanghai. The Jewish refugees ran a batch of

newspapers in Shanghai. At that time when the Jewish people's existence was in peril, such newspapers played an important role in maintaining national solidarity and in carrying forward national traditions. The SJC was a newspaper published and issued in the segregated area established by the Japanese invaders in Shanghai's Hongkou District. It was the only one newspaper that remained for the Jewish refugees.

The SJC provides valuable first-hand materials for the study of the history of Shanghai Jewish segregated area. The SJC records a history of specific period, a specific place, and a specific community, providing a new angle of view for analyzing the Jewish people and Jewish civilization. Short on data and materials, the study of the Shanghai Hongkou Jewish segregated area has been a weak link in the research of Shanghai Jewish refugees.

The social role and historical significance of the SJC is that it served as 1) a concentrated incarnation of nationality in the



which I am still continuing, stemmed from our mutual interest in the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible. Could manuscripts from far-off China reveal hitherto unknown facts about the development of the apparatus of the Torah? A careful review of the features of these priceless documents might reveal new pathways in Masoretic study.

All through this period, I had read about the Jews of Kai Feng, the place of origin of these rare Scriptures. However, for many decades, it was only a dream to be able to visit that city. The reason was that travel for American citizens to the People's Republic of China was forbidden. Therefore it was a particular pleasure and one of the highlights of the trip to go there and see the museum and the setting where Jews had flourished for so many centuries. An unforgettable occasion was the invitation to the home of the head of the Jewish Community, Mr. Moshe Zhang, his wife, and son . . .

## The Jews of Yokohama, Japan

by Joe Lerner  
excerpted from Bulletin-Igud Yotsei Sin – Sept/Oct 2003

In 1854, thanks to Commodore Perry, an American naval Officer, Japan's ports were opened to the world. Jewish merchants and adventurers arrived at Yokohama from Syria, India, Iraq, Germany, England and France. Those visiting Yokohama today can find the first Jewish tombstone in the international Cemetery in Yokohama which dates back to 1865, and one of the most famous early arrivals in Yokohama was Elias Sassoon, the son of David Sassoon, who first opened branch offices of his father's firm in two port cities of Japan – Yokohama and Nagasaki.

The close ties of prominent Jews with leading government and financial officials of Japan proved to be most valuable in the years from 1917 to 1920. It was during these years that the Yokohama Jewish community became the center of Jewish life in Japan, since Yokohama was one of Japan's main ports and attracted a considerable number of Jewish traders since 1854.

Then, in 1899, an English Jew, Morris Rosla, organized a Jewish Benevolent Society, whose main purpose was to help refugees arriving from European Russia and Siberia. The Society maintained a hostel for refugees, whose limited facilities at the time, were insufficient for the large num-

ber of Jews who arrived in Japan after the Russian Revolution of 1917, and the terrible anti-Semitic conditions all over Siberia.

Perhaps today some Japanese historians or scholars of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 are aware of the fact that Jacob Schiff, the Jewish financier who emigrated from Germany and settled in New York in 1865, assumed the risk of a two hundred million dollar loan for the Japanese government. The loan was of vital importance to the Japanese military establishment in the war against Russia. Schiff hoped and believed that Japan would come out victorious and the financial risk would be vindicated . . . Following the defeat of the Russian army in Port Arthur and Mukden, and the Russian navy in the Tsushima Straits, Schiff was honored at the Imperial palace and decorated by the Emperor of Japan . . .

In 1917 HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) decided to send to Japan its managing director and the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Samuel Mason. Jacob Schiff was very popular in Japan and was an important supporter of HIAS. The letters Samuel Mason carried with him made his difficult job easier. In January, 1918, Mason arrived in Japan. At that time a serious situation had arisen with hundreds of women and children stranded in Yokohama, waiting to join their husbands who had preceded them to the United States. A sudden change in US immigration policy made it impossible for the consular officials in Yokohama to grant visas to these women and children. However since their husbands were already in the United States, they were no longer considered the citizens of any other nation. The entire interpretation turned out to be a misunderstanding. This clarification was contained in a letter from the State Department signed by Frank C. Polk addressed to Jacob Schiff in January, 1918. The issuance of visas was left to the local US Consul and, of course, raised hopes of the refugees that they would not have to remain longer in Japan.

The Jewish community in the Far East remained in danger because of unsettled conditions in the entire Far East. One such example was the Jewish community in Vladivostok. There were not many Jews in the city. However, power in Vladivostok at that time, was wielded by General Semyonoff, a White Russian general, who was a notorious anti-Semite. He received

some of his political support from the Japanese army in Siberia. The Japanese joined the United States to protect the Jews in Vladivostok through Count Uchida, Japan's Foreign Minister, who ordered General Yizamura, the Commander-in-Chief of the Japanese troops in Siberia, "not to permit any outrages against the Jews."

The Japanese displayed a strong positive attitude on the Jewish question when their delegates came to the disarmament conference held in Washington. One of the chief Japanese delegates, Prince Iyesato Yokugawa in his speech said, "We, the Japanese, treat the Jews the same way as we do all foreigners. For us an American Jew is the same American as an American Protestant or Catholic."

These statements and actions in behalf of the Jews are all to the credit of the Japanese government.

Even though Japan had been one of the first countries in the world to endorse the Balfour Declaration and to ratify the Palestine Mandate, not many Japanese understood the purpose of Zionism. Japanese newspapers published fantastic and incredible stories about Zionist meetings held in Yokohama and elsewhere in Japan.

In 1923, the great Kanto earthquake hit Japan. Life in Yokohama came to a sudden standstill. It was a terrible disaster for Japan. Even the Jewish community newspaper – The Universal Review – ceased publication. The earthquake brought to an end the continuing development of the Jewish community of Yokohama. Although the Japanese government treated the Jews of Yokohama very well, the Jews of the city slowly left. Some twenty-five families found refuge in Kobe, where traders from Iraq and Iran had already established a small colony of Jews in Kobe before World War I. They were later joined by a few Russian merchants who had had the vision to come to Kobe for business. These Russians were of great help to the refugees who escaped from Tsarist Russia during the First World War.

As time passed, Yokohama and Kobe became important again to the Jews in Japan. The enormous influx of Jews and the flood of refugees started to pour into Japan from July 1940. Europe was closed because of World War II. But the Trans-Siberian Railroad still operated as usual. There was an influx of refugees, with the so-called "Curacao" visas, who hoped to

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR (continued)

John Bernstein  
jonbatia@bezeqint.net

Dear Rabbi Laytner,  
I enjoyed reading your recent issue of Points East. However, I was puzzled by the correspondence of Rene Goldman and Professor Avraham Altman in the column Letters to the Editor. Both of them speak about a Japanese sect called Makoya that Rene Krasno probably mentioned in her review. No sect by such name ever existed in Japan. What the honorable writers had in mind was the sect called Makuya. It is difficult to believe that such renowned scholars made such a gross mistake, so it is probably some editor who consistently changed the right spelling into the wrong one. Or am I mistaken?

Ben-Ami Shillony  
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem  
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Editor:  
I am always amazed at the number of new and interesting articles that you come up with on the subject of Sino-Judaic relations. Keep up the good work!

I am writing to take exception to the "Letter to the Editor" by Mr. Altman in the July 2003 issue of "Points East" where he is critical of Rena Krasno's review of the book "The Mir Yeshiva", stating that the Japanese "occupied Shanghai after the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 8, 1941".

In fact, the Japanese had been in control of Shanghai since around 1937-1938 except for the International Settlement and the French Concession, which they then invaded and controlled with the outbreak of war with the US on December 8, 1941.

Walt Fraser  
Grass Valley, CA USA wjfraser@gv.net

Dear Rabbi Laytner,  
I thank you for mentioning my book, *From the Rivers of Babylon*, in your latest edition of Points East. I would, however, like to point out two errors.

My book specifically traces the history, culture, and customs of Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai. It also describes their relationship with the Ashkenazi Jews and the wider community in the International Concession of Shanghai. This is not clear in your publication. My publisher is the University Press of

America. Hoffmans is my distributor in the USA.

I look forward to receiving *Points East* and find the articles extremely interesting.

Best wishes  
Maisie Meyer  
mjmeyer@email.com

To the Editor:  
I am Dr. Jianping Wang, a specialist on Islamic studies who used to work at Institute of World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, China. I have changed my job and moved to Shanghai for a new position. The following is my new address:

Dr. Jianping WANG  
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If there are any Jewish scholars who would like to visit my institute in Shanghai, they are the most welcome. We look forward to the cooperation on the field of Judaism.

Sincerely yours,  
Jianping Wang

Dear Rabbi Laytner,  
As usual I began to read, and with great interest, the July edition of *Points East*. That interest heightened immediately, when I noticed the excellent article by M. Frank about the Shanghai Volunteer Corps, as I was an active member of the SVC from 1939 to 1941. My brother, Kurt, and I probably were the only members of the Corps from the Hongkew Jewish refugee group. We both served as truck drivers in the Corps, transporting military style sentries to and from their posts in Shanghai on a 24-hour basis. As this was a strictly voluntary job, we did not expect and never received any remuneration for our services, but—we got paid anyhow, and far, far better than we had ever expected.

Although I had a good job at that time, food was always a high item on our list of daily needs. And food we got at the SVC! While serving there, we could eat as much as we could put away and, after we had

finished our tours of duty, we were handed a big bag of surplus food to take home to our families, food that lasted us for 2 or 3 days.

Truck driving, in those days, was a highly risky job, especially when we had to travel through the smaller streets of the Chinese sections of Shanghai. Rickshaws and uncountable bicyclists, but mainly pedestrians, who did not care where they walked, created constant highly hazardous traffic situations. I am happy, and also proud, that neither my brother nor I ever had an accident.

When I read about Mr. I.I.Kounin's documentary on the SVC, it really gave me goose bumps. In 1939, shortly after our arrival in Shanghai, I was immensely fortunate to get a job at one of the best advertising agencies in Shanghai, call "ADCRAFT". One of their most profitable customers was the German pharmaceutical company Bayer. It soon became my job to design and to build advertising packages for that company...Now the owner and general manager of that ad agency was a gentleman by the name of I.I.Kounin. When I told him then that I had joined the SVC and needed a full day off every month, he not only agreed, but also always paid my full monthly salary without any deductions. Today I finally know why he did so, as he obviously was himself highly interested in the actions of the SVC.

Another item of interest might be the fact that the art director of ADCRAFT was a highly experienced, White Russian artist by the name of Yaron. The last Shanghai reunion that my wife, Harriet, and I attended, took place several years ago in Palm Springs, California. At that meeting, a separate room for the exhibit of Shanghai-period documents was opened. It became a focal point of the meeting. You can imagine the chills it gave me when I suddenly saw a whole group of portrait sketches that were very familiar to me. And then I noticed the name "Yaron"! At that table, I met a man who introduced himself as Alexis Yaron, the son of my former art director in Shanghai. He informed me that his father had passed away already but that his mother was still alive in Palm Springs.

Hoping that this report will be of interest to you, and wishing you all the best, I remain with best regards.

Sincerely,  
John L. Isaack, Diamond Bar, California



### 2003 Trip to Israel: A Renewed Beginning (continued from page 1)

president I have met, following different introductions to Isaac Navon, Chaim Herzog, and Ezer Weizmann during the last 10 years.

The trip was too short, lasting only 11 days, but I was filled with an eventful schedule. It was a good time to meet officials of Bar-Ilan: Prof. Mina Teicher, Vice President for Research, Prof. Y. Yeshurun, Rector, and Prof. Joshua Schwartz, Dean of the Faculty of Jewish Studies, and discuss with them possible cooperation and exchange programs between Bar-Ilan and Nanjing University.

I also had met with 12 Chinese scholars who are currently doing post-doctorate studies at Bar-Ilan on the Fred Kort Program. Coincidentally, Fred Kort, a US entrepreneur and philanthropist, donated funds to set up fellowship for Chinese scholars to do post-doctorate studies at Bar-Ilan after he participated "The First International Conference on Jewish Culture in China" organized by the Center for Jewish Studies at Nanjing University in 1996. What a pleasure to see so many Chinese scholars from various parts of our country studying at Bar-Ilan, which is obviously a strong sign of academic ties and friendship between the two countries and peoples.

Additional meetings were arranged for me during my stay. For instance, Rosalie Lurie, Executive Director of Western Region of Tel Aviv University American Council, arranged for me to proceed to Tel Aviv University to meet Prof. Dan Laor, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, and other officials of the University. The meeting was fruitful and an arrangement has been made for one of our young scholars attend Tel Aviv University to do his post-doctoral work in the academic year 2003-4.

On May 29, Prof. Menachem Friedman, a well-known sociologist at Bar-Ilan University and a top scholar on Ultra-Orthodox studies, who was one of three instructors who taught at the Workshop of Jewish History and Culture I organized in summer of 2002 in Nanjing, picked me up from Dan Tel Aviv Hotel to visit an Ultra-Orthodox neighborhood of in Jerusalem. Under his guidance, I had a very interesting visit to the area and learned a great

deal about the community. He also took me to visit the Mir Yeshiva, perhaps the best-known yeshiva to Chinese scholars in the field.

I was kindly invited to spend a Sabbath with Prof. Aaron Demsky of Bar-Ilan, who participated the International Symposium on the History of Jewish Diaspora in China organized by the Center for Jewish studies at Nanjing University, and his family in Efrat, a Jewish settlement in the territories on the West Bank. He showed me around the settlement and told me its history. Most people who live there are religious professionals. I attended both Sabbath evening and morning services there. In the late afternoon, Prof. Demsky invited over 20 his colleagues and friends home to meet me. It was a lovely experience.

Like many of the trips I have taken outside of China in the last several years, this one was also filled with talks. Besides a "formal" lecture at Bar-Ilan on the day of the ceremony, I was invited to deliver three talks in Jerusalem and one in the city of Ra'anana. It was exciting to see many people attend, which is no doubt a sign of friendship between our two peoples.

It seems to me that things like this happen almost everyday, beginning when I jumped into the field of Judaic studies. After this trip, I feel luckier than ever, really privileged and blessed that Jewish people and their culture have become major sources of achievement, fulfillment and enjoyment in my life.

#### Xu Xin's Remarks at Bar-Ilan University

Dear Mr. Chancellor, Mr. President, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen:

What an extraordinary moment. What an extraordinary journey this has been. Who could ever have predicted that learning English via the Voice of America, moving from a study of English and American literature to a study of Jewish American Authors, and most important, transferring from a study of Jewish literature to exploration of Jewish civilization, would lead to such a moment.

I can hardly believe that I am standing here — not only in Israel — but at this celebrated university, an institution where the wisdom and legacy of the Jewish people are explored and taught in addition to the academic studies of science and humanities.

#### Points East

As I receive the highest honor of my life — far beyond what I ever could have expected or predicted — I must most gratefully thank the University's Board of Trustees and Senate. What a privilege!

But I would be an ingrate, indeed, if I did not today give special tribute to the person, and the family, who started me on this road, while I am taking this opportunity to express my sincerest thanks to all individuals and organizations that have provided me with all kinds of much needed and timely assistance and support for my various programs of Jewish studies in the last decade. Seventeen years ago, Prof. James Friend was the first Jew I ever met — even though I was at the time teaching a course in Jewish American Authors at Nanjing University. Following his teaching stint in China, Jim invited me to Chicago to assume a teaching position at his school: Chicago State University, and I was even more fortunate that he invited me to live with him and his family, sharing their day-to-day secular and religious lives. Through them, I had an opportunity to become immersed in Jewish life and culture, and I came to see the many contributions of Jews to the world civilization in general and to Western civilization in particular. These opened my eyes to the many possible lessons for Chinese. It is not an exaggeration to say that for me Jim's family exemplified the wisdom of the Jewish people and the beauty of their legacy, which eventually led me to travel so extensively down the road of Jewish studies. I can attest to the fact that one man can make a difference. The late Jim Friend and his family have made a world difference of me. Whatever I may have achieved in the field of Judaica originated with them.

While I happily accept this honor, I must not accept it alone, but on behalf of all Chinese scholars who have been involved in Judaic studies in China during the last 15 years. Due to their untiring efforts, the study of Israel and Jewish subjects in China, which revived in the 1930's, accelerated in the 1990's, and is racing full steam ahead into the new century. Contributions by these scholars not only bring our two peoples and two countries closer but also help more and more Chinese realize how important an understanding of Jewish culture is as an essential step in preparation for the challenge faced by Chinese as they move towards a more active world role. The whole world has been stirred by Jewish thought. Virtually no civi-

#### Points East

Nevertheless, the Yeshiva students required other, rarer books for their studies, a problem for which they could think of no solution since there was no Hebrew printing press in Shanghai. Nevertheless, this obstacle was soon surmounted.

Shanghai was a city where little, if any, attention was paid to copyrights and pirated books flourished. An extraordinary lithographic process using a special type of stone, cheap chemicals and photography had been invented. Thus a large number of old, precious books could be reprinted at very low cost and their publication was officially celebrated: "...On the evening of Lag Ba'Omer the Jewish Club in Shanghai was packed with people. Important members of the community were present. All wore *kippot* decorated with the Star of David. The stage was decorated with flowers. This was the dinner in honor of a historical event: the printing of the *massechet* (tractate) Gittin (of the Talmud) in 250 copies...which the Shanghai Ashkenazi Community had given as a gift to Mir Yeshiva and to the Havurah Lubovitz (which had some 30 members)...."

Among the speakers were Rabbi Meir Ashkenazi; Mr. G. Shifrin, a leader of the Shanghai Russian Jewish Community; Rabbi Shmulovitz, head of the Yeshiva; and Rabbi Shimon Wissoker of the student body. All were acknowledged with enthusiastic applause. "... Now members of the Yeshiva had the golden opportunity to print any sacred book they wished. They rejoiced with full hearts.... they formed a "Printing Committee"...Every single sacred book brought from Lithuania was reprinted in many hundred copies - complete libraries...It was the first time in history that (Jewish) sacred books were marked "Published in China".

Indeed, at this point in time, China became an important center for the publication of Jewish religious books. Among the books printed in Shanghai were the Torah, *siddurim*, parts of the *Shulchan Aruch*, sections of the *Mishnah*, books of *halacha*, *Sefer Hassidim*, and many others, including a number written by famous rabbis. Now, everyone of the some 400 *yeshivabocher* had at his disposal the books he required for his studies. "...The wonderful upswing in the printing of sacred books did not diminish during all the Shanghai days. Its dynamism never abated..."

### From Hebrew Union College to China

by Dr. David B. Weisberg  
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excerpted from "The Chronicle" 2003 Issue 62

In the fall of 2002, I received an invitation from Mr. Robert Daly, of the Johns Hopkins-Nanjing Center for Chinese and American Studies, in Nanjing, People's Republic of China, to visit for a week's time, lecture, and meet with students.

The Hopkins-Nanjing Center, located at Nanjing University, is one of the leading places in China for Western scholars to meet Chinese colleagues. The University, which is separate from the Center, is also the home of our learned colleague, Professor Xu Xin, foremost authority on the history of Chinese Jewry, and his wife, Kong Defang. Nanjing University is also the alma mater of HUC-JIR/Cincinnati graduate student, Bo Yang.

The principal interest at the Center is international studies. The invitation to a scholar focusing on the ancient Near East would afford faculty members and students an opportunity to contrast an unfamiliar but important discipline of human history in an ancient landscape and a distant place. Having been told that "Chinese historians like nothing better than a narrative involving 'intrigue,'" I decided on the lecture topic: "The Grandeur that was Babylon (625-539 BCE): Culture, Religion and Political Intrigue in an Ancient Capital."

At the Nanjing Center, I was welcomed by American Director, Mr. Daly, and Chinese Director, Professor Chen, who were most gracious. I met professors from the University faculty, as well as students, and visitors — principally from the US, but also from France, Africa, and elsewhere. Most, but not all visitors, spoke Chinese — while a few, like myself, spoke only English, which most everyone at the Center understood. The lecture was illustrated with slides and a few artifacts. It was very well attended and heartily received — and I taught two classes besides. My time at Nanjing University was enriched by a week of lively athletics and other wonderful experiences. One morning, while setting out for a jog, I noticed students playing basketball on outdoor courts near the track. I was invited to join in and had some

fine games during these days. The students all knew about Houston Rockets center, Yao Ming.

There was also a small banquet in my honor, and professor and Mrs. Xu Xin graciously extended an invitation to their home. Moreover, Professor Xu Xin took time from his busy schedule to take me on a tour of the city that included historical sites of exceptional interest . . .

Following the week in Nanjing, I flew to Lhasa, Tibet. After getting me settled in my hotel, my guide took me to Jokhang Temple the central focus of visits for devout Tibetans. I heard the famous chanting of the monks (which does not resemble our familiar Torah trop!) and saw the banner-festooned halls and rooms.

In following days, we took an excursion to the fortress-like Potala Palace of the Dalai Lama, built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and went on tours to the great monasteries of Drepung and Ganden, massive, citadel-like ecclesiastical retreats.

There is much to see in Shanghai, one of the three wealthiest cities of today's China, but of major significance to the Jewish traveler is the "special interest tour" of the old Jewish neighborhood, with its museum, former "Russian" synagogue, and reconstruction of a typical apartment of a refugee family that had fled Germany for the safety of China in the late 1930s. Outside the museum, when I paused to take a photo of the building, the guard, in military uniform, gestured for me to wait, and after running inside, came out to pose holding a small Israeli flag!

A short flight took my wife, Ophra, who was now able to join me, and me to Xi'an, where the highlights were an all-day excursion to the monumental Qin Dynasty excavations with over 6,000 life-sized terracotta warriors unearthed from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. In the evening — which happened to be our anniversary — we attended a concert of Tang Dynasty court music and dance.

For many years, the late Dr. I.O. Lehman, Curator of Manuscripts, and I labored on a project involving investigation of the biblical manuscripts of the Chinese Jews of Kai Feng which are preserved in the Dalsheimer Rare Book Room of HUC-JIR's Klau Library. (A debt is gratefully acknowledged to Dr. Herbert Zafren and Dr. David Gilner, for their support.) Our project,



taken over by the Japanese army. "...For the thousands of Jewish refugees in Shanghai, this was not good news. Japan was an ally of Germany and the refugees now very much feared Nazi influence on Japanese authorities ..."

The person who kept up the spirits of Mir Yeshiva was Rabbi Yehezkel Levinstein. "...He did not 'permit' them to worry. 'Just be strong in your faith', he would say. 'We must busy our minds only with the Torah. We are not to worry about what the day will bring, what will happen and what will be the end'..." And thus yeshiva studies continued with full intensity.

All ways out of Shanghai were now closed. Unexpected help came from the Polish government-in-exile, whose seat was in London. They came to aid all *yeshivabocher* who held Polish citizenship by attempting to get them visas to Australia or Canada. Furthermore, as a result of intensive negotiations between Great Britain and Japan, an agreement had been reached to exchange some foreign citizens trapped in Shanghai for Japanese detainees in England. The Polish government-in-exile used this opportunity to obtain diplomatic passports for 43 Polish citizens in Shanghai and they were allowed to sail to Lorenzo Marquez (Mozambique). Among the 43 were four orthodox Jewish rabbis: two representatives of the Mir Yeshiva, one of the Hachamei Lublin, and one from Agudat Israel. They left for Lorenzo Marquez on August 17, 1942.

One of the four rabbis eventually traveled to Palestine, where he reported on conditions in Shanghai: "...900 refugees from Poland live today in Shanghai. Among them are 450 members of *yeshivot* and 18 rabbis. The *yeshivot* students are composed of 3 big groups, the largest of which is the Mir Yeshiva, to which were added other students from Lithuania...Their *yeshivot* lack funds, but in spite of that, the students persevere in their studies, and the sound of the Torah can be heard in Shanghai..."

Another of the rabbis reached South Africa, for which he had a visa. In Johannesburg, he was met by a delegation led by the Chief Rabbi. He gave a report on the difficult situation of Jewish refugees in Shanghai, after which South African Jews generously promised to help them.

In the meantime, in Shanghai, food became scarcer and *kashrut* more and more difficult to maintain. The situation of Jewish refugees kept deteriorating. Moreover, in the French Concession, the Japanese arrested a number of Russian Jewish old-timers: "...among those arrested is the President of the Jewish Community in Shanghai (Boris Topas, RK) and some members of important families. The authorities stressed that they had not been arrested because they were Jews, but for individual reasons. Nevertheless, one could already feel a wind of change towards Jews."

Now that the United States was at war with Japan, funds could no longer be transmitted from the U.S. to enemy-occupied countries. Shanghai was, of course, included in this category. The funds that had been sent prior to Pearl Harbor were rapidly dwindling. At this point, Rabbi Itzhak Sternbuch and his wife, Risha, citizens of the Swiss city of Montreux, offered their invaluable aid. They were Orthodox Jews supported in their efforts by the Etz Hayim Yeshiva - one of the largest Torah centers of Western Europe.

Rabbi Sternbuch's wife managed to create a secret network that smuggled Jews across the borders into Switzerland and obtained permits of stay for them. Her success was due to her excellent connections with highly placed Swiss officials. A number of Christians also participated in this life-saving enterprise. Among them was the police chief of a canton who prevented the arrest and expulsion of a large number of Jews, and the representative of the Vatican in Switzerland, who helped extend residence permits for Jews and saved many caught illegally crossing the borders from Nazi countries.

When Rabbi and Mrs. Sternbuch found out American funds would be cut off from thousands of Jewish refugees in Shanghai, they immediately undertook to save them. A "help organization for Jewish refugees in Shanghai" - HIJEFS - was organized and a campaign to raise money was launched. Then Risha returned to anonymity and pursued her work behind the scenes. Other well-respected members of the Jewish community took over the management the funds. Due to Switzerland's neutrality, money transfers could continue to Shanghai.

Unfortunately, the Jewish community in Switzerland was relatively small and the funds raised were insufficient for the needs of thousands of Jewish refugees in Shanghai. As a result, steps were undertaken for money from U.S. Jews to be transferred to HIJEFS and, from there, to Shanghai. Jews in other neutral countries, with the help of sympathetic diplomats, also participated in the secret transfer of funds to Jewish refugees in Shanghai. This involved great dangers in the Japanese-occupied city. One Rabbi writes: "...It was clear to the Japanese that the *yeshiva* survived from monies pouring in from abroad, but it would be dangerous for the Jews if the Japanese discovered that the funds came from America..."

To keep communications absolutely secret, no code was used but all information was hidden in references to the Torah, other religious writings, names and quotations. Thorough knowledge of religious facts and terminology was imperative to decipher these messages. Of course, to the Japanese they meant nothing.

The rabbis considered these monthly transfers of large sums of money "under the nose" of the Japanese a miracle. One rabbi claims that even a powerful U.S. organization like the American Joint Distribution Committee, which extended important aid to European Jewish refugees in Shanghai, was not as successful in organizing such widespread intercontinental connections.

#### (Part IV)

A matter of utmost importance to the Mir Yeshiva was its collection of sacred writings. In spite of all obstacles and dangers, one of the students, Rabbi Israel Margalio, managed to save the precious *Ezrat Torah* books in his possession. He had hurriedly packed them up and ordered a special cart to transport them to Vilna. The books accompanied the Yeshiva to the Far East through Vilna, Kovno, Vladivostok, Kobe, before finally reaching Shanghai. The *yeshivabocher* also carried an ornate *Sefer Torah* since they firmly believed that, in a business center like Shanghai, they would be unable to find any items of spiritual validity. Thus, great was their surprise when they reached the Beth Aharon Synagogue, to discover a good basic library of sacred books that had been assembled by Hacham Abraham.

lization has been untouched, no history of western civilization can be recounted without considering the Jewish component: what Jews have thought, felt, written and achieved.

Mr. Chancellor and Mr. President, this honor you have just kindly bestowed upon me is an enormous encouragement for Chinese scholars to further promote the study of Jewish subjects in China. Although much has been achieved in the field, we still have long way to go, and much still needs to be done. Chinese scholars need to deepen their study of, and research in, Jewish culture. How to improve their scholarship in general, and how to make unique contributions to the scholarly study of Jewish subjects in particular, are the challenges we currently face. As my colleagues and I attempt to courageously meet these challenges, we also hope to produce fruitful results of value to our colleagues in Judaic studies worldwide.

While one might say that an honorary degree is the culmination of one's work, for me it is a milestone of encouragement — marking a renewed beginning.

Toda Raba.

### The International Symposium on Jewish Diaspora in Seoul

(continued from page 1)

comments for about half an hour, much more time than usual. During the breaks between sessions, students in the Hebrew Department of the Kon-Kuk University sang Hebrew songs while accompanied by a Jewish orchestra, which created an atmosphere of Jewish culture.

If this kind of symposium were held in Shanghai, the participants would not exceed 30 to 40 persons. I was full of doubts and curiosity to know how many people were interested in this topic in Seoul. Upon entering the meeting venue, I was surprised to find hall was crowded with about 400-500 people in the audience.

According to my investigation, the audience could be divided into five categories of people: faculty and students of the Hebrew Department of the Kon-Kuk University; experts and scholars from other uni-

versities or research institutions; businessmen doing business with Israel and Jewish counterparts in the world; government officials; Christians, both lay people and clergy. According to my observation, most of them were not Judaic experts, as they knew little about Jews in China. Therefore, I tried to deliver my speech in simple terms while I showed some 40 slides of Jewish life in China.

After my speech, the audience took the floor to ask me questions. The main questions included: Why were the Jews in Kaifeng assimilated? Why had Shanghai become the inhabitation of the Jews? Were there any similarities and differences between Confucian culture and Jewish culture? One young scholar suggested that the Chinese and Korean scholars should begin a joint research project on Jews in Korea, because, in his opinion, the Jews in China might have come to Korea in the past.

What was most surprising to me was the fact that this event was hosted by the Hebrew Department, which I took the time to visit. China, a vast country with more than 1.2 billion people, has no Hebrew department so far, while only Peking University offers one Hebrew specialty with a few students. It is beyond my expectation that the Republic of Korea, a country with only 50 million people has a Hebrew department with 80 students and 5 professors.

After the close of the symposium, I had made a special visit to the Israel Culture Center in Korea. Although the Center only employs three staff members and is just at its initial stage of its development, it still manages to sponsor and organize a Jewish Cultural Exhibition, Israel Book Fairs, and Jewish Music Festivals, etc. in addition to four well-organized symposia in the past 3 years. Comparatively speaking, the weak link of the Center is academic studies. However, these have the bright prospect for future development because the Center is linked with the Hebrew Department of Kon-Kuk University and it is supported by the government and enterprise community.

Through this visit, we established contact with the Korean counterparts. We should strengthen our cooperation and learn from and help each other in our joint efforts to promote the development of Jewish & Israeli studies in China and Korea.

### Life of the Jews in China According to the 1512 Stone Inscription

by Tiberiu Weisz

The 1512 Stone inscription found in Kaifeng was an enigma to many researchers and readers. The fact that it does not provide much additional information that was not already conveyed in the 1489 inscription relegated this document to second in importance. Donald Leslie pondered "the 1512 inscription adds comparatively little and it is not clear why it was written" (*Survival* pg 29).

My research led me to take a fresh look of the original Chinese text. As I kept reading the text I could not shake the impression that Zuo Tang, the composer of this text, used neo-Confucian terms to explain the success of the Israelites in China. Even though the title of the inscription contained the word Temple; the content encompassed the general Israelite population in China rather than just the synagogue. The issue of whether or not he was a Jew was raised and even questioned, but judging by the writing, there are several indicators that point to his Jewishness.

First of all, he was aware that the religion of those who follow the Dao (see below) was inseparable from their Scriptures. Very few Chinese could claim such insight. It also appeared to me that the purpose of this inscription was neither a portrayal of the synagogue nor an account of Jewish history in China, but rather a sketch of the life of the Jews in China.

Second, he had skillfully interwoven a fragmentary part of a prayer that he might have still remembered ("Praise and bless the Heaven above, Creator of all creatures") with the Chinese Classics in such a way that they became almost indistinguishable. I also wonder if the last passage, about which Donald Leslie said in *Survival*: "it has some definite peculiarities of grammar", was written or composed by the same author as the rest of the text. The sentence structure, grammar and style were not quite consistent with the body of the inscription. This section could be seen as an attempt to reconstruct or compose a Biblical passage that was neither Confucian, nor Daoist, nor Buddhist. I made a complete new translation of the Chinese text and hope to publish it in the near fu-



ture. This article will provide an overview of the life of the Jews in China according to the 1512 inscription.

After the introduction of the people who composed, wrote and engraved the stele, the 1512 Inscription opened with a statement that was, with almost certainty, seen as referring to the Chinese Classics. And indeed, a very good case could be made that the introduction referred to the Chinese Classics and not the Hebrew Scriptures. Here is the opening statement of the stele as translated by Charles White in *Chinese Jews*: "It is commonly said that the (Chinese canonical) Scriptures were for the purpose of communicating (knowledge) of the Way. What is the Way? It is a principle of daily usage and common practice which has been followed by all men from antiquity to the present." In the footnote, White reiterated that the Scriptures referred to the Chinese Classics and not to the Hebrew Scriptures.

This translation was quite adequate, though in comparison to the Chinese text I think that there was more of a personal appeal than seems to meet the eye. Therefore, I translate it as follows:

"It is often said  
The Scriptures are full with Dao.  
But how about (those who follow) Dao?  
They use it every day.  
People in antiquity and today gathered together  
To follow its principles (*li*)."

This translation of the text addresses two important issues that were overlooked previously. First, the text referred to the followers of the Dao, a concept that took on a new meaning in the neo-Confucian thought. The basic meaning of Dao was following the course of nature irrespective of circumstances or peoples' beliefs. The *Doctrine of the Mean*, a classical text that the neo-Confucians incorporated into the *Four Books*, (Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean and Mencius) defined Dao as: "Heaven mandated it and is called Nature. Complying with nature is called Dao. Cultivating Dao is called teaching. Those who follow Dao, (they) cannot depart (from it) even for a single moment. (If one) can depart from it, that is not Dao". Dao is everything, Dao is nothing, Dao is everywhere, Dao is nowhere. Since the word Dao was untranslatable, I kept it that way throughout the text.

Second, I treated the word "principles" (*li*) in a neo-Confucian context. *Li*, a term that was used at the time to explain the Chinese Classics in terms of rational reasoning, was a very common concept that influenced Chinese thought by the so called neo-Confucians (*li xue*) during the late Tang (8<sup>th</sup> century) and lasted for over one thousand years, well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The neo-Confucian movement started as a protest against the commercialization of Confucian ideas through the examination system and also as a protest against the penetration of Buddhism into the daily life of China. In other words, the neo-Confucians wanted to go back to the pure Confucian principles and re-instate it as it was before the invasion of Buddhism. But, in making their arguments, the neo-Confucians used a new style of discourse that was based on logical thinking. To achieve the desired effects and stamp on their legacies, they supplemented the Chinese Classics with line-by-line commentary. The discourses and reasoning of the neo-Confucian commentaries contained many similarities with the *Mishne Torah* and *Guide of the Perplexed* (*Moreh Nevuchim*) of Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon (1135-1204), commonly known as Maimonides (Rambam in Hebrew). In a relatively short time, the neo-Confucian commentaries became an inseparable part of the education system and a scholar who took the Examinations was required not only to memorize the classics but also be well versed in the text of at least two commentators, along with their logical explanation (*li*). The introduction of reasoning led to new interpretations of previously used concepts and words. Thus, Dao, "mind" or "wisdom" (*zhi*) and "reason" or "principles" (*li*) took on new connotations.

With this in mind and the fact that Chinese prose usually started with a general statement, I think that the composer of this inscription used the neo-Confucian meaning of the word Dao to refer to the way of life of the Israelites as described in the Scriptures (Torah). Those (Jews) who followed the Dao (Jewish way of Life) used it every day, they lived by it and gathered together to practice it. The composer tried to tell us that they were observant Jews complying with the commands of the Torah in their every day life, they went to the synagogue every day to pray and they prayed in groups—a reference to a *minyan*. The Scriptures incorporated big and small principles (*li*). The big ones contained similar concepts to the Chinese moral obliga-

tions, while the small principles dictated every aspect of their life. Then the composer made a statement that, from a Jewish point of view, was even more significant: "Though Dao without the Scriptures cannot exist, The Scriptures without Dao cannot be implemented... (without it) people will be reckless, they will not know what to do" (*my translation*). In other words, the composer was aware of the fact that Jews could not and would not exist without the Torah. While this point was very obvious to any Jew, I am not sure if it was that obvious to the Chinese.

A case in point, a while ago I had a discussion with some Chinese colleagues about Judaism. As we discussed various aspects of Judaism, the Chinese proudly displayed articles that they wrote and books that they had translated into Chinese about Judaism. They were predominantly articles and books about Jewish philosophy or philosophers. I found them to be fascinated with Jewish thought. But the more we talked about the subjects, the more I felt that something was missing. And then just out of curiosity, I asked if any of them had read the Torah. Their reaction revealed more than what they did not say. They considered the Torah as another book that, instead of solid philosophical discussions and ideas, contained stories about the origin of Judaism (Exodus, David and Goliath etc.). It was an awakening for me. I told them: "Do you realize that there would be no Jewish people or Judaism without the Torah?". My comment was viewed first with skepticism and then with disbelief, so I translated our conversation to my colleague and he, an East European *bocher* (scholar), said "No Torah, No Jews". The room became silent. I think it started to sink in that the Torah was not just another book; it was the Dao of Judaism.

The cornerstone of neo-Confucianism was: benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*i*), principles/reason (*li*), knowledge (*zhi*). While it is true that these concepts constituted the core of human relationship of Confucian thought, the neo-Confucians redefined them and used them extensively in their commentaries on the *Four Books*. Incidentally these four concepts were used in the 1512 inscription, not once but twice. Carsun Chang in his book *Neo Confucian Thought* summarized these terms as used by the neo-Confucians. Benevolence (*ren*) was as a standard for love which varied in different cases: the love of individual has

for his parents, wife, brother, sister, child friends, and country. *Ren* meant love on a rational basis that was to be measured and suited to each case. Righteousness (*i*) meant the right way of dealing with persons and problems and the right way of dealing with matters. The original meaning of *li* was ritual and it also implied good manners, modesty, and consideration. The neo-Confucians associated *li* with rational thinking, and called it heavenly reason. And knowledge (*zhi*) was associated with intellect and wisdom. These four virtues were the fundamentals of human life. Or as the inscription put it: "Nothing is greater in Dao than benevolence and righteous...; nothing is greater in Dao than rites and wisdom" (*my translation*). Had the composer of this inscription heard of one of the treaties of the Talmud called *Pirkei Avot*, he undoubtedly would have said: "This is what is called compatible". (A recurring phrase on the 1489 inscription.)

After reiterating some of the principles of Judaism, Zuo Tang, the composer of the inscription, showed us how the Jews had completely integrated in the Chinese society. "Look at today" he said, the Jews are scholars, who "bring glory to one's parents and they became celebrated". And indeed, some of the Chinese Jews were not only ordinary scholars, but ones with the highest possible degrees and honors. A scholar set for an advanced degree (*jin shi*) took his final exam in the Forbidden City, composed an essay that was believed to be made up by the emperor himself. And those who passed were invited to a banquet at the Imperial Palace—not to mention the high honors and the high offices that they were offered. People with *jin-shi* degrees were quite influential in China. And Zuo Tang and at least another Jew held such a degree.

Then there were merchants, both local vendors and others doing business with foreigners. As local vendors they joined the other thousands of vendors that served the appetite of vibrant cities. I think in addition to serving the general public, some of the local merchants catered to the Jewish population, who made their best efforts to comply with the laws of *kashrut*. The text made it clear that the teachers of the religion reminded the members not only of pending holidays but also of what was permitted to eat and drink. They also served as intermediaries between the Chinese and foreigners. As the text says "they were diligent in far away places and

prominent on the rivers and lakes... they benefited from communicating in other dialects".

The Chinese could have been suspicious of the allegiance of sinicized foreigners but the inscription addressed this point by inserting: "never forget that their loyalty was to the Prince". The question of loyalty was reinforced by the quote: "utterly loyal to the country". This quote was of particular significance, as it was tattooed on the back of a five-year old child called Yue Fei by his mother. Yue Fei (1099-1129? AD) became a general who raised an army that included many non-Chinese (including quite a number of Jews) and defeated the Jurchen "barbarians" in battles. But four jealous traitors plotted his downfall. He was arrested, accused of treason and beheaded. Later the plot was discovered and he was posthumously reinstated and commemorated as one of the most loyal person of all times in China. Those soldiers who joined the army proved themselves in battle. Thus some of them rose in ranks to become offices in charge of garrisons. As the text recorded, when Jewish soldiers and officers returned to Kaifeng, they did not fail to go and visit the synagogue. Though by this time they were completely assimilated, they "did not forget for a moment" that they were also members of the *Dao Jing Synagogue* (Way of the Scriptures Synagogue). As such they were also involved in community organizing; they made good deeds not just within the community but at the village level as well. As farmers, the Jews paid taxes like everybody else and as artisans they were very skilful in their craft and did it "for the public use without being weary".

Socially, the Jews were completely integrated into the local customs and since the Jewish Scriptures were "in harmony" with the Chinese doctrines, there was very little conflict.

The Jews regarded themselves first of all as Chinese subjects. They followed the local customs, and in addition to being law-abiding citizens and "accumulating virtues in secret", they also followed the way of their ancestors and were "teaching their sons and grandsons" (compare to Deut. 31:19). In other words they considered themselves Chinese first, Confucian second, and following a Jewish way of life (Dao) third. In the assimilation process, they were no different than American Jews are today. It was likely that very few of the

Chinese neighbors knew about Judaism or were aware of the fact that their neighbor might have been an Israelite. Not that it would have mattered. A Chinese person may follow the teaching of Confucius, the teaching of Buddha and the teaching of Laozi (founder of Daoism) at one and the same time without any feeling of incongruity. Buddha represented the spiritual aspect of life, Confucius the social and Laozi the natural. They were all in harmony. So it was not peculiar, from a Chinese point of view, that their neighbors also practiced their way of respecting and honoring their ancestors and scriptures. And if that particular religion happened to be called, *yizuleye* (Israel), it deserved the same veneration as any other ancestor worship.

### Mir Yeshiva (PART III & IV)

by Rena Krasno

**Note by Rena Krasno:** I wish to clarify that these articles are not the result of my personal research or opinions. They simply combine summarized extracts and direct translations, taken from a book of memoirs. My purpose was to share with readers the different impressions of a special group of Polish refugees in Shanghai.

At the end of November 1941, feverish efforts were made to obtain U.S. visas for members of the *yeshivot*. Unexpectedly, a number of students were officially notified that they should quickly come to the American Consulate. However, this notification arrived on a Thursday afternoon and the next day was a U.S. national holiday, so the Consulate was closed. Then came Shabbat, which the *yeshivaboche* themselves decided not to desecrate. Thus, they missed the ship that sailed at the beginning of the week for San Francisco.

Soon after, in December, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and the Pacific War broke out. Later, Shanghailanders found out that the ship that the *yeshivaboche* had wanted to take had been captured by the Japanese Navy. All passengers and crew who were enemy nationals or stateless were taken prisoner. Some were even tortured.

Japanese troops overran Shanghai. Trucks loaded with Japanese soldiers sped through the main streets and key sites were