



## Israel-Asia Center's Leaders Fellowship Course

By Larry Luxner

*Excerpted from The Times of Israel, 2 June 2017, timesofisrael.com*

Saurabh Sharma, who's pursuing a master's degree in environmental studies at Tel Aviv University, wants to develop eco-friendly solutions to manage municipal waste in his native India.

Peter Jiang, a one-year exchange student at Jerusalem's Hebrew University, hopes to promote Jewish and Israel studies at Chinese universities upon his return to Beijing.

Vietnam's Linh Ha, a senior at the Eastern Mediterranean International School in Ramat Hasharon, is passionate about sharing Israel's startup experience with the world. She recently helped write a documentary about Israeli education produced by VTV1, Vietnam's national TV channel.

The three are among 11 promising young leaders from eight countries enrolled in the Israel-Asia Center's ([www.israelasiacenter.org](http://www.israelasiacenter.org)) 2016-17 Israel-Asia Leaders Fellowship program — a program now in its sixth year.

"As a Vietnamese studying in Israel, I see a huge lack of information about Israel in Asia in general, and in Vietnam in particular," said 18-year-old Linh, the program's youngest fellow ever and clearly one of its most enthusiastic.

"People don't know really what's going on there, what makes Israel as a startup nation. I feel it's my responsibility to fill this gap and to bring more information about this country back home," she said. "There's just so much to learn about Israel: the innovation, entrepreneurship, mentality and the chutzpah."

... Rebecca Zeffert, founder and executive director of the Israel-Asia Center (IAC) [said]: "We've put 62 people through the program from 12 different countries — including countries that have no diplomatic ties with Israel such as Indonesia and Malaysia. Our alumni are heading up the Asia operations of Israeli companies and vice versa, establishing Asian accelerators in Israel, working for Israeli embassies in Asia, and setting up Israel-Asia ventures."

Collectively, she said, these alumni have organized more than 60 delegations of investors and journalists, launched 10 Israel-Asia ventures, coordinated 51 conferences and events, and secured tens of millions of dollars of investment from Asia in Israeli companies.

"When we first founded the Israel-Asia Center, we were thinking about how we could make a real impact," said Zeffert, who launched the Jerusalem-based nonprofit in 2009. "If Israel is to develop long-term strategic partnerships with countries in Asia, we need to invest in the very people who'd be driving that relationship forward in the years to come — whether in business, government, culture, education or innovation."

She added: "Many Asian students who choose to come and study in Israel were living in foreign students' bubbles on campus and

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## Israel PM Visits China, Marking 25 Years of Diplomatic Relations

*Excerpted from Jewish Times Asia 12:1, April 2017. [www.jewishtimesasia.org](http://www.jewishtimesasia.org)*

After an historical visit to Singapore and then to Australia in February, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrived back in Asia and made an official three-day visit to China in March, accompanied by his wife Sara.

The visit followed an invitation by Chinese President Xi Jinping, and marked 25 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Chinese President Xi Jinping met with Prime Minister Netanyahu in Beijing on 20 March and hosted an official dinner. Netanyahu also met with his Chinese counterpart, Prime Minister Li Keqiang.

In Beijing, Netanyahu was welcomed in the Great Hall of the People by Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang. The national anthems of China and Israel were played.

The visit stressed the continued strengthening of economic co-operation with the Chinese government, increased Israeli exports to China, attracting Chinese investments in Israel, and increased industrial and research co-operation between Chinese and Israeli companies.

Prime Minister Netanyahu was accompanied by a senior business delegation of dozens of Israeli businesspeople from the various industries and companies active in China, as well as from companies interested in penetrating the Chinese market. The Prime Minister was accompanied the Environmental Protection Minister Zeev Elkin; Economy and Industry Minister Eli Cohen; Science, Technology and Space Minister Ofir Akunis; Health Minister Yaakov Litzman and Agricultural Minister Uri Ariel...

The two Prime Ministers, Netanyahu and Li, held a working meeting that was a break-through in bilateral relations. At the meeting, they agreed to hasten the establishment of a free-trade zone between Israel and China and the work of the special economic co-operation committee (NDRC). Prime Minister Netanyahu, Chinese Prime Minister Li and ministers in their governments signed a series of agreements across many sectors, including the employment of Chinese foreign workers in Israel, aviation co-operation and the establishment of joint laboratories.

While visiting china, Netanyahu also met with the heads of China's largest corporations. Among those present at the meetings were the chairpersons of Wanda, Alibaba, Wahaha, Lenovo and Baidu.

On 21 March, Prime Minister Netanyahu also met with Chinese Vice Premier Liu Yandong at the official guest house in Beijing, and attended the Third Meeting of the China-Israel Joint Committee on Innovation Co-operation. The two held a meeting (with their

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Forthcoming

The Chinese Jews of Kaifeng

**FROM THE EDITOR**

Why do some Chinese authorities seem so intent on obliterating the identity of the Kaifeng Jewish descendants, this miniscule group of people?

For over a thousand years, there has been a Jewish community in Kaifeng. After China opened up in the 1980s, Chinese authorities allowed, or at least turned a blind eye to, Western Jewish efforts to help resuscitate the community and the Kaifeng Jewish descendants were beginning to connect with their Jewish heritage in a significant and more knowledgeable way. Unfortunately, this was not to last. In 2015, certain authorities began a crackdown on all aspects of Jewish life in Kaifeng.

Whatever the precipitating factor, China has a "Jewish problem" that goes back to the early years of the People's Republic.

At the heart of China's "Jewish problem" is a contradictory policy first set down in 1953 by the Central United Front of the Communist Party which decreed that "Kaifeng Jewry should be treated as a part of the Han nationality" along with the caveat that the authorities should "educate the local Han population not to discriminate against or insult them. This will gradually ease away the differences they might psychologically or emotionally feel exists between them and the Han." However, simply by stating the issue in this way showed that a distinction in identity existed in the authorities' minds, just as it did with the Kaifeng Jews, who time and again self-identified as Chinese Jews.

The 1953 document legitimately denied the Kaifeng Jews ethnic minority status in China. Given their tiny population, the Kaifeng Jews do not warrant ethnic minority status. That is the Government's prerogative and we must respect it.

But the Kaifeng Jews have survived for over a thousand years as a distinct group and so they would seem to merit some arrangement that would enable them to reestablish and maintain a connection with their Jewish heritage. The only way this can be accomplished initially is if they are allowed to connect with foreign Jews and learn from them. Ultimately more knowledgeable Kaifeng Jews will be able to lead their own community members in an effort to revive the distinctive Sino-Judaic culture that is their patrimony.

After Chris Buckley of the New York Times published his major piece on the crackdown in Kaifeng, one would have hoped that American Jewish organizations and the Israeli government might have made some inquiries on behalf of that beleaguered

**Points East**

Anson Laytner, Publisher

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Switzerland	2
Indonesia	1
South Africa	1
Taiwan	1
Total:	220

community. Either efforts are being made to help them that demand the utmost secrecy or no body is willing to risk troubling Jewish/Israeli – Chinese relations for the sake of a thousand or so Jewish descendants. I pray that the former is the case but sadly suspect it is the latter. What ever happened to kol Yisrael averim zeh b'zeh (all Jews are responsible for one another)—or does this not apply to the Chinese Jews?

Anson Laytner

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Rabbi Laytner,

Regarding the essay by Jordan Paper, March 2017, I agree with him that Judaism is not matrilineal. However I strongly object, indeed, find it extremely offensive, that he describes Jewish culture as “misogynist.” Wrong.

Misogynist is a word bandied about these days, (used incorrectly, in my opinion); the word sexist seems to have fallen out of favor. However, a misogynist, almost always a man, is someone who hates women, someone who beats women, someone who rapes, even tortures women, and someone who, will even, murder women. This is not Jewish culture nor does this describe Jewish men.

In addition, if the ancient Chinese cosmology of yin and yang can be brought into this discussion as an example of female representation in Chinese culture, than one might bring in the kabbalistic idea of the “Shekinah,” held to be the divine female aspect of God. And let us not forget: right from the beginning, in the Torah, male and female were created in the image of God.

Also, an orthodox Jewish woman is protected (unlike some other religions) by a get, a contract by which she must give her consent to a divorce asked for by the husband. And a Jewish woman can sue for a divorce in a rabbinical court.

Also, if the king of the Khazars said, let's convert, then that is conversion; he was the king! (And I bet there were rabbis in the kingdom.)

I think the Professor Paper could have made his point about Judaism not being matrilineal and the present requirement today for individual conversion in a shorter essay, but he seemed to want to take Judaism in general to task. If I am in error on this or any other points, kindly correct me.

Cordially,

Diane Rabinowitz

wenwutaichi@cox.net

Dear Sino-Judaic Institute,

I just discovered your website few days ago. I am contacting you to inform you about my research because I studied both Hebrew and Chinese at the Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations (INALCO) in Paris. Now I teach an introduction to history and thought of ancient China through to the Han Dynasty at the New Sorbonne University in Paris.

I try to compare several texts from the Hebrew kabbalah such as Sepher ha-Bahir, Sepher ha-Zohar, and Taoist texts such as Daodejing, Zhuangzi, and some other classic texts. I note there are some convergences or resonances between these two [modes of] thought, particularly metaphysical resonances. Every year since 2011, I take part in a colloquium in France and I give a lecture on this subject.

I have a blog in French <http://voyageintemporel.wordpress.com> that you might be interested in reading.

Kind Regards,

Muriel CHEMOUNY

[muriel.chemouny@univ-paris3.fr](mailto:muriel.chemouny@univ-paris3.fr)

## In the Field

### • SJI Awards Grants

SJI awarded three grants this spring. One for \$1000 was given to Amelia Allsop, who has been working at the Hong Kong archive of the Kadoorie family, to support her research on Jewish refugees in Hong Kong as part of her PhD thesis. A second, for \$2000, went to Kevin Ostoyich of Valparaiso University, who has been working on the Shanghai Jews for a number of years, to support a group of connected research and publication projects. A third grant of \$2000 was awarded to the Center of Judaic and Chinese Studies, Sichuan International Studies University, Chongqing, for its ongoing program. See next item.

### • Report from the Center of Judaic and Chinese Studies, Sichuan International Studies University, Chongqing

Fu Xiaowei, the Center's Director, reports that in 2016 the Center began to collaborate with the University Youth League. Because of its participation, especially its innovative publicity techniques and activities, the Jewish/Israel study paper

contest was a big success. They had more participants and more excellent papers than ever before. (Details in Chinese are available at <http://column.sisu.edu.cn/cjis/info/1071/1118.htm>.) The contest, which includes three academic salons, a collection of excellent papers and a DVD, has been approved to continue in 2017. Funds were also used for two lectures and a forum for graduate students. Dr. Fu thanks SJI members for their support over the past 6 years. Seed money from SJI helped start the Jewish/Israel study program among graduates and undergraduate students and made it a well-known program in China and even in Israel.

### • French Book on Kaifeng Jews is Published

Caroline Elisheva Rebouh writes “I’m glad to let you know that my book about Jews of Kaifeng, China has been published in French by Editions Persée and is available through Amazon. Its title is *Les Juifs de Chine: Histoire d’une communauté et ses perspectives*. She has translated it into English and Cambridge University Press is planning to publish that version. More on this as information becomes available. Ms. Rebouh may be reached at [caroline.rebouh@gmail.com](mailto:caroline.rebouh@gmail.com).

### • Two Chapters of Interest

Jonathan Goldstein writes to let us know about two chapters of interest to our readers in a new book: Alan Steinweis, Philipp Gassert, and Jacob S. Eder, eds. *Holocaust Memory in a Globalizing World* (Göttingen, Germany: Wallstein Verlag, 2017). ISBN: 978-3-8353-1915-8. *Beiträge zur Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (ed. by Norbert Frei), vol. 22, 278 p., dust jacket, 34,90 €.

-Yulia Egorova, “Memory of the Holocaust in India: A Case Study for Holocaust Education,” pp. 215-27; and

-Jonathan Goldstein, “Holocaust and Jewish Studies in Modern China: Functions of a Political Agenda,” pp. 228-44.

### • Shanghai Guest Speaker

Prof. David Stern, Director of the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University, who has a longstanding interest in the Kaifeng Jews, gave a talk on “The Ancient Treasures of the Jewish Community of Kaifeng” on 7 June at the Shanghai Jewish Center. Where should we start digging?

## Fellowship Course

(continued from page 1)

didn't have access to high-level professional networks. They were going back to their home countries, entering senior positions in their fields, but their connections to Israel were being lost."

To remedy that situation, for the past six years, the IAC has been training a select number of young Asians on an annual basis who show potential to be future leaders in their fields. The eight-month comprehensive program runs in parallel to their existing studies, she said, and includes seminars with government officials, diplomats and business executives as well as skills workshops, field trips, networking events, mentorships and one-on-one consultations.

"This program generates trust, mutual understanding and partnerships for life," Zeffert said. "These are young people committed to strengthening Israel-Asia relations."

In his keynote speech, Mark Sofer, Israel's former ambassador to India, who became head of the Israeli Foreign Ministry's Asia-Pacific Division after his post in India, said Israel took a conscious decision 15 years ago to "pivot toward Asia" — which accounts for 30 percent of Earth's land mass and 60% of its population.

"It's clear to all of us that Asia is the present and the future," he said. "China and India together have 2.8 billion people, but there are other huge countries in Asia," like the Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia, with hundreds of millions of people. But unlike Europe, which is more or less a monolithic bloc, "when you hit Asia, you hit a complete and utter heterogeneous bloc, and it's very difficult to find the lowest common denominator."

"Israel urgently needs people who speak Mandarin, Japanese and other Asian languages and Israel has still a long way to go in developing its relations with these countries, said Sofer, who's been named Israel's next ambassador to Australia...

"We are still in the process of learning," he noted. "These relationships are fairly new; 25 years in the history of China or India is a blip."

Larry Luxner is a Tel Aviv-based journalist.

## About the Israel-Asia Center

The Israel-Asia Center (Israelasiacenter.org) is a non-profit organization dedicated to building a shared future between Isra-

el and Asia. It develops and invests in the future leaders of Israel-Asia relations, and is growing dynamic networks to maximize their continued engagement and build new paradigms of cooperation.

Rebecca Zeffert is the Founder and Executive Director of the Israel-Asia Center.

Prior to founding the Israel-Asia Center, Zeffert worked for more than a decade in media, public relations and public affairs, with multinational companies, media organizations, NGOs and educational institutions in China, Japan, Israel and the UK. Prior to that, she established and headed the international public relations department at the Citizens' Accord Forum between Jews and Arabs in Israel, an organization founded by Member of Knesset Rabbi Michael Melchior to promote relations between Israel's Jewish and Arab citizens. For six years, she also handled the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's international media relations.

### IAC currently has four programs:

- **Israel-Asia Leaders Fellowship**

An 8-month program focused on building future leaders in Israel-Asia relations.

75% of our alumni are now directly engaged in strengthening Israel-Asia relations in their professional fields, across 10 countries in Asia and securing tens of millions of dollars in investment from Asia to Israel.

- **Israel-Asia Events**

The Israel-Asia Center holds thought leadership events exploring the future of Israel-Asia relations, and the biggest challenges facing Asia in the next decade and how we can work together to co-innovate solutions.

- **Scholarships to Asian Students**

The Israel-Asia Center provides a limited number of scholarships to Asian students to study MBAs in Israel — as part of special tracks on the Israel-Asia Leaders Fellowship that also include seed funding for Israel-Asia ventures, or employment with Israeli/Asian companies after the program.

- **Israel-Asia Micro Grants**

Powered by Start-Up Nation Central (start-upnationcentral.org), Israel-Asia Micro Grants provide alumni of the Israel-Asia Leaders Fellowship with ongoing engagement opportunities and seed funding for events, ventures and other initiatives connecting Israel and Asia in different areas of innovation and entrepreneurship.

## Rabbi Marvin Tokayer Honored

By Masha Leon, z"l Excerpted from The Scroll, Tablet Magazine, 17 February 2017

"Good evening! Kambawa!" exclaimed Rabbi Marvin Tokayer to a crowd of nearly 100 guests after Japan's Ambassador in New York, Reiichiro Takahashi, presented him with the prestigious Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays. During the award ceremony, which took place at Takahashi's Manhattan residence on February 6, Tokayer was lauded by the Ambassador for having "enlightened and deepened the understanding between the Jewish and Japanese people," the Ambassador concluded with a hearty "mazal tov!"

"I never anticipated the highest honor afforded by the Government of the Emperor of Japan!" beamed Tokayer, who was stationed as a U.S. Air Force chaplain in Southern Japan in 1962, then returned in 1968 to serve as the only English-speaking, university-educated rabbi for Jewish communities in the Far East.

Tokayer recalled: "In 1967 I was about to get married, went to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Schneerson, for a blessing and, out of nowhere, he said: 'You're going to Japan as the rabbi for the Jewish community.' My reaction [was that I knew it] wasn't my cup of tea—foreign language. 'It's your destiny,' insisted the Rebbe. 'Japan will recognize you for your contribution to the Jewish People, to Japan; and Japan for helping the Jewish people.' That was fifty years ago. We went for two years and forgot to come home."



Japanese Ambassador Reiichiro Takahashi with Rabbi Marvin Tokayer

## Diplomatic Relations

(continued from page 1)

delegations) in which they discussed the importance of tight bilateral co-operation in promoting technological innovation.

The first such conference was held in China in 2015, and the second was held last year in Israel with the attendance of a Chinese Deputy Prime Minister. The business / economic forum was attended by well over 600 Israeli and Chinese businesspeople.

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### Come Buy with Me: *Blackstone's Schwarzman and Chinese M&A Deals*

Excerpted from *Week in China* (369) [www.weekinchina.com](http://www.weekinchina.com), 9 June 2017

Backed by archaeological studies, Chinese historians claim that jiaozi, meaning "exchange paper", are the world's earliest bank notes. The printed money came into circulation about a thousand years ago in Kaifeng, a city in Henan province. According to a documentary on state television, the paper currency was a "conduit for Chinese financial wisdom" to pass along the ancient Silk Road. Other scholars have suggested the contrary: that jiaozi were indeed an innovation, but that they were introduced by Jewish merchants who had settled in Kaifeng, rather than by the Han Chinese...

The Jewish community thrived for several centuries in China before being assimilated almost entirely into local society. Several hundred Kaifeng residents can still trace their ancestry back to Jewish roots, however, and some of the 'Kaifeng Jews' have emigrated to Israel over the last 15 years.

Seven years after the first of those departures, Xi Jinping took over as Chinese president and proclaimed his determination to revive the ancient Silk Road via the Belt and Road Initiative.

That plan has seen a swathe of Chinese firms embark on ambitious overseas expansions. And where they've looked to buy foreign companies and real estate, it is coincidentally enough an influential Jewish dealmaker that has been taking their modern day jiaozi in exchange for assets. Step forward Blackstone Group's chairman Stephen Schwarzman. Following a slew of sales by his private equity firm, Schwarzman has become the go-to man for Chinese buyers. But why him?

The New York-listed private equity fund announced last week that it had agreed to sell European logistics firm Logikor to China Investment Corp (CIC), China's sovereign wealth fund, for 12.25 billion (\$13.8 billion) including debt. The sale is the largest of its type in European real estate.

Logikor owns and operates a portfolio of more than 600 warehouses and distribution centres across 17 countries. Most are located along primary transport corridors and in close proximity to large European cities, and CIC's investment is being hailed as a bet on growth in e-commerce and the distribution networks that support online sales – likewise by facilitating trade it can also be positioned within the Belt and Road theme.

Blackstone has built Logikor via 50 acquisitions since 2012 and seemed destined to IPO the London-based property firm...

#### Blackstone's links with China

Blackstone has taken on a more influential role in Beijing since the Chinese began diversifying portions of their foreign exchange reserves away from low-yielding US government debt a decade ago.

CIC, the sovereign wealth fund, was set up as part of that asset reallocation process and its first commercial transaction was to invest in Blackstone itself.

In 2007, when China's forex reserves stood at \$1.2 trillion, China's sovereign wealth fund paid \$3 billion for a 10% stake in Blackstone, boosting the money manager's valuation ahead of a New York listing. Blackstone's founder Schwarzman described the deal as a "historic event that changes the paradigm in global capital flows".

That paradigm didn't look too promising initially, however, because CIC was soon staring at a 50% paper loss after Blackstone's stock price flopped spectacularly during the global financial crisis. CIC came under heavy fire from domestic critics for making a mess of its first overseas investment (in 2014 a vindicated Schwarzman told a conference in Beijing that CIC's gross returns owning Blackstone's shares had reached 35%)...

#### Blackstone's other Chinese VIPs

In spite of the shaky start (occasioned by the disastrous initial performance of its stock after the 2007 IPO), Schwarzman has struck up healthy relationships with senior figures in Chinese business and politics.

For example, in 2007 Blackstone bought a 20% stake in China National Bluestar,

a chemicals firm, for \$600 million. The investment was relatively small but it brought together Schwarzman's firm with Bluestar's then chairman Ren Jianxin...

Blackstone also became an advisor on a number of megadeals by state-owned firms, including China Development Bank's 12.2bn investment in Barclays in 2007. A year later the American firm would set up an office in Beijing and in 2009 it launched its first fund denominated entirely in renminbi, which resonated with the wider push to promote international usage of the Chinese currency.

M&A (mergers and acquisitions) - mad insurer Anbang has proved to be another of Blackstone's key counterparties in recent years, giddily snapping up assets. In a parallel to Japan's financial firms in their 1980s heyday, Anbang has been hungry for commercial property and Blackstone has had much to offer the insurer from its own portfolio.

Anbang made its first bold foray into global M&A in 2014 when the then little known firm acquired the iconic Waldorf Astoria hotel in New York for \$2 billion from Blackstone-controlled Hilton Worldwide. A few months later it bought the office portion of 717 Fifth Avenue from Blackstone for \$415 million and the building is now the Chinese insurer's New York headquarters... And in May 2016 – just three months after Blackstone acquired Strategic Hotels and Resorts – the private equity giant flipped the portfolio of hotels to the insurer in a \$6.5 billion sale...

#### Schwarzman's personal connections

Some of Anbang's shareholders are believed to be powerfully-connected relatives of China's former leaders. One of its board directors Chen Xiaolu is the son of Chen Yi, a legendary figure from the People's Liberation Army, and its chairman Wu Xiaohui is the grandson-in-law of Deng Xiaoping. So Schwarzman has established a rapport with some of the most influential businesspeople in the country. The Blackstone billionaire helped Anbang to arrange a recruitment event at Harvard in 2015, for instance, during which Wu described him as a "good friend". In another speech in New York Wu revealed that Schwarzman's staff had offered help when his father was seeking medical treatment in the US.

Schwarzman's dealings in China have also taken on a philanthropic focus. In 2013 he announced the \$300 million Schwarzman Scholars programme. Modelled on the Rhodes scholarships at Oxford University, the endowment will fund study for foreign

students at Beijing's Tsinghua University, the alma mater of Xi Jinping and other senior leaders. "The motivating reason for me is to help create leaders from around the world who can learn about China and go back and explain China to their countries," Schwarzman told Xinhua.

The Blackstone boss also admits that his affiliation with Tsinghua has been an important part of his firm's success. In particular, he says that his position on the board of the university's school of economics and business has served as "a feeder into the senior levels of the Chinese government"...

### The HNA Group

The Hainan-based aviation conglomerate is among China's most acquisitive firms and once again Blackstone has been the counterparty on many of its deals.

In June last year HNA bought a controlling stake in Tysan Holdings, a thinly-traded construction company in Hong Kong, from Blackstone for about \$340 million. HNA has since used it as its property flagship in the former British colony, snapping up four sizable residential projects for more than \$3.5 billion.

A few months later HNA acquired a 25% stake in Hilton Worldwide from Blackstone for \$6.5 billion. Around the same time Blackstone agreed to sell the China-based IT outsourcing firm Pactera to a unit of HNA's for \$675 million.

In February, when the Jewish Museum of Manhattan held its annual ball, HNA's co-founder Wang Jian was a major honoree. Schwarzman presented him with a crystal bowl decorated with two roosters, while Wang called Schwarzman "a god of fortune" and "the key to opening up the chest of treasures"...

"How the paths of a Jewish museum and a Chinese company converged is in some ways a familiar tale: the mix of business and culture is a pillar of philanthropic fundraising," Bloomberg noted at the same event, which the newswire described as the "coming-out party" for HNA in Manhattan...

### Other Blackstone deals in China

In March it agreed to sell its remaining 21% stake in SeaWorld Entertainment, a leading theme park operator, to China's Zhonghong Zhuoye Group for about \$449 million. Last year Blackstone sealed the \$1.9 billion sale of its commercial property holdings in China to Vanke, at a time when the Shenzhen-based developer was entrenched in a hostile takeover battle.

Simply aggregating the deals mentioned in this article means that Blackstone has been involved in the sale of about \$32 billion of assets to Chinese buyers – and that's just over the last two years. With data from Dealogic, the Wall Street Journal reckons that Blackstone or its portfolio funds did at least \$16 billion of business with Chinese buyers in property assets alone between 2014 and 2016. Indeed, the newspaper classes Blackstone as one of the biggest beneficiaries of "China's global shopping spree".

### The Musical Shimmer (A Story of Jews in Shanghai)

In 1941, a ship fully occupied by Jews berths at a wharf along the Bund in Shanghai. They have escaped from the Nazi's persecution, landing in Shanghai. Though the war has brought the world pain and separation, in the darkness, the gleam of Shanghai lights the world. The Shanghainese and Jewish people forge a profound friendship, fighting together against the fascists. A Jewish young man, Sterne, comes across a Shanghainese girl, Lin Yilan, and between them a wartime life-and-death love starts. The dim gleam can light the darkest night. Love can pass through the dark and heavy clouds, lightening the hearts of those destitute and homeless, letting hope sprout in a burning land.

It premiered at the Heichal Theater, Airport City, Israel, on March 29, 2017. The musical was followed by a conference "Academic Exchange on Religion and Culture: How does belief form culture? How does religion become habitual?" on March 30th at Royal Beach Hotel in Tel Aviv. The closed conference included pre-invited Chinese and Israeli scholars. Bar Ilan University was a co-sponsor and organizer.

### Background about the Sponsor: Shanghai HYX Drama

In Jan. 2013, HENGYUANXIANG Group set up Shanghai HYX Drama Development Co., Ltd and promoted a new brand of drama culture: HYX Drama. Targeted at creating high-quality dramas and musicals, the company is striving to be the first, to be unique and to be a part of history.

Founded in Shanghai, China in 1927, HENGYUANXIANG Group is so far one of the largest consumers of wool both

in China and the whole world. HYX has spared no efforts in building and developing brand culture to yield striking achievements: it was the sponsor for 2008 Beijing Olympics, the sponsor for Chinese Olympic Committee, and the only sponsor for 2015 Laureus World Sports Awards Ceremony

## Chinese Judaica

By David Zvi Kalman

Excerpted from Tablet Magazine, 8 December 2015.

<http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/195557/china-dolls>

I learned about Chinese Judaica because of a \$25 billion IPO. This was in September 2014, when the financials were abuzz with Alibaba's impending public offering, which turned out to be the world's largest. Alibaba is a massive Chinese e-commerce platform; its website, which looks a lot like eBay, is essentially the front page of the East Asian manufacturing sector.

Everything, I knew, was made in China. That probably included Judaica. When news of the IPO brought me to Alibaba, on a whim I typed "kippah" into the search bar. Up popped a page full of kippahs: suede, leather, knitted. Among them one style stood out: It was knitted, two shades of brown in a swirl pattern, and I was wearing it on my head at that moment. The minimum order was 1,000 units; the supply ability was 30,000 units a month. The company was called Ever Better.

It was past midnight on the East Coast but mid-afternoon in China. Ever Better had a phone number—why not call and ask about ordering 100 duplicates of the kippah I was wearing?

"Hi, does your company make kippahs?" It had taken a while to be transferred to someone who spoke a little English.

"Yes," said the man on the other end.

"How many different kinds does your company make?"

He laughed. "Many, many. Which material do you want? Satin, velvet, or knit?" He explained how price could differ by style, by thickness of thread, by whether the kippah was made by hand or machine. He knew

the nuances of the various designs better than I did.

Then he asked, "Where are you?"

"I'm in the United States. Philadelphia."

"United States," he said approvingly. "It's a big market."

This is how I began investigating the scope of the Chinese Judaica market. Its role is somewhat hidden by imperfect labeling practices and Israeli middlemen. Even some Judaica retailers I spoke to weren't fully aware of their products' origins.

To understand the market, I needed to talk to the distributors and importers. In October, I ended up on the phone with one Alex Rosenthal, the president of Rite Lite, one of America's largest distributors of Judaica. Like many sellers of Jewish ritual objects, Rite Lite was literally a mom-and-pop operation, established by Rosenthal's parents in 1949. Once upon a time, such a business meant staying in touch with a network of Jewish craftsmen, skilled in making everything from candlesticks to dreidels. But Rosenthal's principal business travel for the past 15 years has been to China.

Rosenthal suspects he's purchased close to a million menorahs in his life—a mere fraction of them made in the United States. American mass production of Judaica has all but evaporated, Rosenthal told me. It was long ago eclipsed by lower prices overseas, first in India and now in China. These two countries have a lock on "low-end" Judaica, which Rosenthal defines as items retailing for \$75 or less. If an object isn't handcrafted and it isn't one of the few objects that Jewish law specifically mandates be made by Jews, it's probably from East Asia.

How much of "low-end" Judaica in America is produced in those countries? According to Rosenthal, three out of every four pieces of Judaica sold in America. Another Judaica distributor told me the number was closer to nine in 10. In other words: Unless that mezuzah case you bought was particularly fancy, it was likely made on the other side of the world.

The history of Rite Lite is the history of the American Judaica market. Rosenthal's company is now mainly an importer, but it began as a manufacturer...Today, 90 percent of Rite Lite's menorahs are made

in China. When asked about the shift, the younger Rosenthal was unsentimental. "You can't live in the past," he told me. It's admirable to support local business, but market forces rule the day. He compared it to the rise of machine-made matzo. When the machines were invented, there were initially protests, and many 19th-century rabbis condemned their use. Then the machines won. "Nothing stands in the way of progress."

Of course, not all Judaica can be exported. The chief obstacle is Jewish law, which mandates that certain objects—especially Torah scrolls, tefillin, and the parchment inside the mezuzah—be made by Jews. (Tallit and tzitzit are in this category, too, but only the strings, not the garment itself; the way the disparity between the two affects tallit production and taxation is a story for a different time.) Kippot can theoretically be made by anyone, but some manufacturing has stayed in America for a different reason: logistics. If you need to order 100 customized kippot for a bar mitzvah, there's no time to get them from China; even if you did, your order would be too small to be worth filling. These quirks keep four or five American kippah makers, all in the New York area, in business...

A year after I first called China to inquire about kippah-making there, I called again, this time with the aid of a phone translator. I was able to confirm what I already suspected and what Judaica merchants had told me repeatedly: The people working in Chinese factories knew everything about the kippah market but almost zero about what they were making. "I think it's for weddings?" one woman told me.

The Chinese indifference to the meaning of the Judaica they make is, to me, breathtaking. Both manufacturers and distributors told me that the Chinese do not care one whit about the meaning of the Judaica they construct. No Chinese firm specializes in Judaica at all; objects get made all over the place, always alongside a dozen other unrelated product lines. In Qingdao, Ever Fortune makes kippot alongside baseball caps, winter hats, and hundreds of other kinds of headgear. In Yiwu, Shangrao Knit Crochet Craft Factory makes challah covers, kiddush cups, and crocheted kippot alongside Muslim headgear, baby bibs, and hammocks.

Hangzhou Bodenda Tin Co. mainly manufactures small metal containers, but they will sell you menorahs if you order at least 10,000, or enough for every Jewish family in Cincinnati...

In the course of my research, every Judaica dealer I spoke with asked me the same question: Why do you care where your kippahs are made? Rosenthal said about buying Judaica, "It's not a religious experience, unless you call bargains a Jewish trait." Why should the origins of a tallit bag matter any more than the origins of an iPhone?

The answer, I think, is that everybody thinks about iPhone in basically the same way, whereas nobody who makes menorahs thinks much about them at all, except for the end user. My anxiety around Chinese Judaica stems from the fact that the material artifacts of faith—the mezuzah on the door, the menorah on the mantle, the candlesticks on the bureau—are not just artifacts of faith because they exist in another context as well, and in that context a menorah is just another product line that happens to sell well in America.

At the point of sale, a menorah has two histories. In one, it is linked to its seven-branched Temple prototype, and Macabean revolt, and the story of the miracle of the oil. In the other, it is a specialty tin can. One history is sacred, the other profane—the menorah has no opinion on the matter. For me, being aware of Chinese Judaica means being aware of the fragility of holiness, of our power to choose not only which history to prioritize but to add ourselves to that very history, imbuing those objects with memories of our own.

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## BOOK NOOK

**Shanghai's Baghdadi Jews: A Collection of Biographical Reflections**  
By Maisie Meyer. Blacksmith Books, 2016. \$22.95. 479 pages.

Reviewed by Gao Bei

Following a series of influential articles on the subject, the publication of Maisie Meyer's first book in 2003, *From the Rivers of Babylon to the Whangpoo: A Century of Sephardi Jewish Life in Shanghai* (University Press of America), secured her position as the authority on the history of Sephardi/ Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai. Meyer's new book, *Shanghai's Baghdadi Jews: A Collection of Biographical Reflections* (Blacksmith Books, 2016), takes a different approach than her previous study and focuses on the first-hand experiences of people from this unique community in the modern city. *Shanghai's Baghdadi Jews* uses personal histories to provide readers with a vivid and accessible account that will complement existing scholarship by giving this community a human face.

In recent years, as the lives of wartime European Jewish refugees in Shanghai have drawn increasing attention from both scholars and general public, numerous Shanghai survivors have published their stories in memoir form. Scholars have also employed the personal and biographical approach in relating their experiences. For example, Irene Eber's 2009 volume, *Voices from Shanghai: Jewish Exiles in Wartime China* (University of Chicago Press) translated and edited many of the former refugees' letters, poems, stories, and diaries. Steven Hochstadt interviewed more than 100 of these Shanghai-landers and published his transcripts in *Exodus to Shanghai: Stories of Escape from the Third Reich* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). Maisie Meyer's *Shanghai's Baghdadi Jews* makes yet another contribution to this genre by examining individual lives within a community of Jews who established themselves much earlier in the burgeoning metropolis.

In *Shanghai's Baghdadi Jews*, Meyer asks "To what extent did the Shanghai Baghdadi Jews identify as Baghdadi Jews and how secure were they in their identity? What enabled them to preserve their identity and ethnicity, in spite of cultural accommodation to the British? What factors underpinned their heightened sense of community? What was the character of their Jewish communal institutions? How did the community contribute to the development and administration of the Treaty Port? How did they represent themselves to

the wider society and to Jewish communities worldwide?" (46) Meyer grapples with these questions carefully in the book's introduction/overview. In doing so, she breaks little more new ground than she did in her 2003 study. However, in addition to her thorough description of the origin, uniqueness and development of the Baghdadi Jewish community in Shanghai, this portion of her book introduces the biographical accounts around which the volume is constructed and explains how they serve as evidence to support her argument, that "Each contributor provides a different aspect of Baghdadi Jewish life in Shanghai." (48)

As for the archival sources on which the author relies, Meyer exploits materials regarding Sir Elly Kadoorie from the Hong Kong Heritage Project, which was founded by the Kadoorie family in 2007. The Hong Kong Heritage Project itself has, since 2010, published several slim studies concerning the Kadoories, among them *Shanghai, Hong Kong, the Kadoorie Family*. Meyer also obtained access from the Sassoon family to Sir Victor Sassoon's diaries from 1927 to 1961. Currently, Southern Methodist University's Degolyer Library houses a collection called "Sir Ellice Victor Elias Sassoon Papers and Photographs." This consists of 35 diaries, correspondence and 15 photograph albums from the years 1928 to 1961. It would be valuable to know whether this collection has duplicated or holds different materials than the one belonging to the Sassoon family.

In sum, *Shanghai's Baghdadi Jews* is a welcome addition to the popular literature on this under-appreciated subject. It is lively and engaging, and the author has a sharp eye for personalities and revealing anecdotes. As the author notes, we need to bear "in mind that memory is not history, but a past seen from the perspective of a present, its value lies in the fact that it individualises the larger historical picture, allowing readers to see events through the lives of men and women who played a role at the time..." (51)

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### **The Image of Jews in Contemporary China.**

Edited by James Ross and Song Lihong. Academic Studies Press, 2016. ISBN: 9781618114204. \$79 USD. 256 pages  
Reviewed by Bev Friend

What a wealth of fascinating information is housed in these eleven varied contributions, many of which had re-

ceived prior publication in English or Chinese academic journals and are now fortunately available to a wider reading public. Citing chapter titles offers a glimpse into the broad scope covered, often noting but always going far beyond the usual stereotypes – rich, brainy, and overwhelmingly successful. Insights abound. One I found most fascinating – noted by Lihong Song in the book's concluding essay – is that among all the Jewish studies in China, there is no study of Jewish liturgy.

A brief overview of what is covered can only serve as an introduction. Each essay is worth a close reading.

- "Perceiving Jews in Modern China," by Zhou Xun, offers an analysis of contemporary images (positive and negative) and discusses the growth of the Jewish community in Beijing with its modern mikvah, and thriving kosher restaurants.

- "Images of Jews in Contemporary Books, Blogs and Films," by co-editor James R. Ross, focuses on popular culture examining specific authors and works that spread stereotypes and misunderstandings. Are these evidence of philo-Semitism rather than anti-Semitism?

- "Distinctiveness: A Major Jewish Characteristic," by Fu Youde, examines the differences between Chinese and Jewish ways of thinking, especially on such topics as freedom and equality.

- "Chinese Policy toward Kaifeng Jews," by Xu Xin, traces changing historic reaction from ancient times to the present, explaining why the government has denied the Kaifeng Jews recognition as an ethnic group. It is especially interesting to learn the designation "descendants" rather than "Jews" was chosen because it shifts emphasis by "denying Kaifeng's connection with the Jewish people and Israel as a Jewish state."

- "Sukkot and Mid-Autumn Festivals in Kaifeng: Conundrums at the Crossroads of Sino-Judaic Cultural Identity," by Moshe Y. Bernstein, follows and is a welcome continuation of Xu Xin's essay as he delineates the various factions now present in the city. This description lays the groundwork for some understanding of what is currently happening in Kaifeng and a changing government policy that is now inhibiting Jewish life and tourism there. (For further information in this, see <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/jewish-troubles-in-kaifeng-china/>)

- "Understanding the Bible among the General Public in Mainland China: A Survey on the 'Bullet Curtain' of the Bible," by Meng Zhenhua, notes that Chinese are learning more about the Bible from television than from printed sources. "Bullet Curtain" refers to interaction from viewers as they react – shooting metaphorical bullets. All Chinese translations are the work of Christians and in-

clude both Old and New Testaments.

- "The Changing Image of the State of Israel in the People's Daily, During the Cold War," by She Gangzheng, points out how changes are linked to domestic fluctuations in China, including the economic reforms of the 1980's.
- "The Reception of Contemporary Israeli Literature in China," by Zhong Zhiqing, examines popular and classical works citing translation data: 114 books and anthologies, 74 works of prose, 5 books of poetry and 27 children's books – and doubtless even more since this writing. A highlight was the visit of Israeli author Amos Oz in 2007.
- "China's Relationship with Israel, Opportunities and Challenges: Perspectives from China," by Chen Yiyi, breaks new ground by examining the implications of China's rapid economic growth in the past 10 years and the resulting purchases of Israeli technology in agriculture, water purification and telecommunication.
- "Holocaust Studies and Holocaust Education in China," by Glenn Timmerman, was one of the first studies of this topic, and illustrates the increased interest when coupled with studies and exhibits on such atrocities as the Nanjing Massacre. As of now, there are no institutes with Holocaust Studies but a study of Shoah is included in most Jewish Studies programs.
- "Reflection of Jewish Studies: A Comparative Perspective," by co-editor Song Lihong, asks a provocative question: "Should we face inward toward satisfying academic colleagues, or should we face outward and endeavor to leaven an undistorted, meaningful, and accessible knowledge of the Jewish people to a broader Chinese audience?"

Certainly, this fine volume is a first step towards providing such knowledge for all potential audiences.

*Beverly Friend, PHD, is Executive Director of the China Judaic Studies Association, a Board Member of the Sino Judaic Institute, and has been honored by the Diane and Guilford Glazer Institute for Jewish and Israeli Studies at Nanjing University for her work in promoting*

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## Forthcoming:

### *A History of the Kaifeng Israelites*

*By Tiberiu Weisz, Outskirts Press, August/September 2017*

The central thesis of *A History of the Kaifeng Israelites* is to identify references associated with Judaism and Israelites in ancient Chinese literature. Once these sections were translated in a joint Chinese and Jewish context, the author retraced the Israelites' presence in China to the earliest times.

This book weaves the story of the Kaifeng Israelites from original archives, memorials to the emperors, and local articles with Western sources. For the first time readers are exposed to the activities of the "seventy clans", as the Chinese Jews considered themselves "all offspring of Jacob were seventy persons" (Ex 1:5) in dynastic China. This small Israelite community believed they were the sole remnants of "all Israel" (klal Yisrael). They lived in the outskirts of China in administrative enclaves that encouraged sinoization. Chinese sages such as Laozi quoted them, Confucius referred to them while Mencius described them, possibly had a discourse with one of them, and later literature treated them as natives. After the 2nd century CE they settled in China proper and Chinese literature mentioned them in the Han, Sui, Wei, Tang and Song dynasties where they lived in monastic anonymity. They joined the exodus from China during the Great Religious Persecution in the Tang Dynasty when all non-native Chinese religions were expelled. The Israelite community returned to the Western Regions, where

they lived until the Song Emperor invited them back. Despite their prolonged absence from China proper, they remained truthful to both China and to their biblical roots.

*A History of the Kaifeng Israelites* is an in-depth study of a small group of Israelites who migrated after Exile from East to farther East, all the way to China. Ever since this community was discovered in 1605 in Kaifeng, it generated controversy due to lack of communication, formidable language barriers, misunderstandings and prejudiced observations. Westerners wrote about the Kaifeng Jews based on rudimentary understanding of China, while works of Chinese scholars were based on superficial knowledge of Judaism.

*A History of the Kaifeng Israelites* combines Chinese and Jewish sources, in conjunction with the stone inscriptions to present the story of the Kaifeng Israelites in dual Jewish and Chinese settings. To that end, the author has translated texts from ancient Chinese literature that attest to the presence and activities of Jews in ancient China. The book also correlates the Chinese version of the origin of the Kaifeng community with Hebrew and Western sources, the role of the inscriptions in the life of the Kaifeng Israelites and analyses the various visual accounts of Chinese travelers to Kaifeng in early 20th century.

### *The Chinese Jews of Kaifeng: A Millennium of Adaptation and Endurance*

Edited by Anson Laytner & Jordan Paper  
Lexington Books, forthcoming.

This volume brings together select classic essays reprinted from long out-of-print volumes of Sino-Judaica with new essays written especially for this book. Contributors include: Nigel Thomas, Donald Leslie, Mathew Eckstein, Irene Eber, Moshe Bernstein, Alex Bender, Andrew Plaks, Mohammed al-Sudairi, Erik Zürcher and Kong Xianyi. Anson Laytner and Jordan Paper co-wrote the introduction and also contributed original essays to the volume.

## Sino-Judaica Returns with New Volume

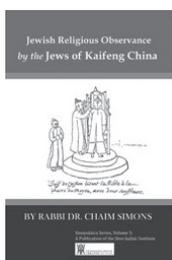
Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of SJI Board member Dana Leventhal, SJI's academic publication, Sino-Judaica, has been revived. Sino-Judaica Volume 5 is devoted to a single academic

monograph, "Jewish Religious Observance by the Jews of Kaifeng China" by Rabbi Dr. Chaim Simons of Israel. This work connects the actual observance of the Kaifeng Jewish community in its heyday with their sources in halacha (Jewish law).

It is available immediately at the following stores:



Interested readers can do a Google Book Search in order to preview the book on Google Books.



# 中國-猶太學院

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The Sino-Judaic Institute is a non-denominational, non-profit, and non-political organization, founded on June 27, 1985, in Palo Alto, California, by an international group of scholars and lay persons, to promote friendship and understanding between the Chinese and Jewish peoples and to encourage and develop their cooperation in matters of mutual historical and cultural interest. Its objectives are:

- 1) The study of the ancient Jewish community of Kaifeng and assisting its descendents as appropriate.
- 2) The study of Jewish life in Shanghai, Harbin, Tianjin and elsewhere in the 19th and 20th centuries.
- 3) The support of Jewish studies programs in China.
- 4) The study of cultural intersections between Chinese and Jews, for example adoptions, literature, diasporas, etc.
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