

KOL MEVASSER

Silent No More

By Machla Abramovitz, from AMI Magazine

The scene at New Montefiore Cemetery in West Babylon, New York on the wet and chilly afternoon of December 15 was nothing less than surrealistic. Mingling sociably with over 100 Iraqi Jews who had come from far and wide was Lukman Faily, Iraq's new ambassador to the United States, as well as dignitaries from the Iraqi Ministries of the Interior, Foreign Affairs and National Security Council who had flown in from Baghdad for the occasion. Also attending was US State Department Director of Near East and African Affairs Anthony Godfrey and Doris Hamburg, Director of the National Archives and Records Administration preservation program (NARA). They had come to bury close to 50 fragments of damaged Torah scrolls and *Megillof[t] Esther* that were beyond repair and had been part of the collection that has come to be known as the Iraqi Jewish Archives.

Dr. Stanley Urman, executive vice president of Justice for Jews from Arab Countries (JJAC), was at the cemetery. "In the midst of continuing controversy over ownership of the Iraqi Jewish Archives," said Urman, "it was quite startling to see them handling these Jewish artifacts with respect, symbolically laying to rest the heritage of a now-defunct Jewish community as *Tehillim* were being recited." The burial of the fragments was negotiated by Maurice Shohet, president of the World Organization of Iraqi Jews (WOJI). The day had been long in coming. It had taken close to five years of negotiations for the Iraqi

government, which claims patrimony over these sacred fragments, to agree to bury them. These, together with thousands of priceless Jewish artifacts rescued in 2003 from the flooded basement of Saddam Hussein's intelligence headquarters, had been brought out of Iraq only after an agreement between NARA and Iraq's interim government was signed, legally binding the US to return the materials to Iraq by June 2014....

This agreement, however, has ignited a battle. Many Iraqi Jews have galvanized into action to fight the return to Iraq of these priceless artifacts of their history. Citing security concerns that would prevent him and fellow Iraqi Jewish expatriates from accessing these materials should they return to Iraq, Edwin Shuker was just one of many who publicly voiced his opposition. But Iraq was not prepared to listen. "The Iraqi government will not give up any part of these documents. This is an Iraqi legacy owned by all the Iraqi people and it belongs to all the generations, regardless of religious, ethnic or sectarian affiliations," declared Ali al-Moussawi on behalf of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

This position, though, wasn't set in stone. Reports had been floating that a separate delegation would soon arrive to discuss a long-term loan of the archives to the US. Many hope this indicates a shift towards a new and more accommodating Iraq. "This is a statement by the government and people of Iraq that we are here to respect the heritage of the Jews," Faily said following the burial.

(Continued on page 2)

KJ Schedule Parashat Bo

Erev Shabbat

Friday, January 3rd

Shaharit/Morning Prayer	6:30 am
Shir Hashirim	4:25 pm
Shabbat Candlelighting	4:38 pm
Minhah/Arbith	4:38 pm

Shabbat / Parashat Bo

Saturday, January 4th

Shaharit/Morning Prayer	8:30 am
Minha, Seudah Shlisheet, Arvit	4:00 pm
Motzei Shabbat / Havdallah	5:42 pm

Weekdays

Sunday, January 5th

Shaharit	7:30 am
----------------	---------

Monday to Friday, January 6th to 10th

Shaharit	6:30 am
----------------	---------

Erev Shabbat Shira

Friday, January 10th

Shaharit/Morning Prayer	6:30 am
Shir Hashirim	4:25 pm
Shabbat Candlelighting	4:44 pm
Minhah/Arbith	4:44 pm

Readings: Shabbat Bo

Torah: Exodus / Sefer Shemot
Hertz edition pages 248 to 262

Haftara Yirmiyahu/Jeremiah pages 263 to 264



David Kelly Youth Choir

Rabbi Batzri, Director

Next Meeting January 12th

12:00 noon, b"H

(Continued from page 1)

Whatever the motivation, the change didn't happen overnight. There had been indications for the past two weeks that both the Iraqi government and the State Department, the two major players, were beginning to soften their positions, and that the latter was prepared to facilitate a compromise between Iraq and WOJI, the representative body of world Iraqi Jewry. There is no question that Jewish advocacy played a key role in sensitizing these players and the public at large to what many saw as an injustice in returning Jewish property to the very country that had looted it....

Gina Waldman, president of Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North America (Jimena), says they are exceedingly grateful to NARA for its invaluable work in repairing and preserving the archives, which would otherwise have been lost. Still, she said, "The agreement was signed without any consultation with Iraqi Jews or representatives from any Jewish organization. It was based on a flawed premise that the archive is part of 'Iraq's national heritage.' In fact, it is the patrimony of Iraqi Jews and must be returned to its lawful and rightful owners. Although [the artifacts] have no particular monetary value, they are extremely important to the community from which they were confiscated."

What price, indeed, can be placed on black-and-white photos, glimpses of a past frozen in time?

Edwin Shuker is fortunate that his graduation certificate is one of 24 artifacts currently on display at the Washington exhibit. The attached photo captures not only his young self, but an entire era that was lost. For Babylonian Jews, he says, theirs is a heritage to be treasured for what it was, the longest existing Diaspora community in the world, but one that came to an

(Continued on page 3)

Shabbat Kiddush

is sponsored
in memory of

Rebecca Mizrahie, z"l

by

The Mizrahie & Jonah Families

Seudah Shlisheet

is sponsored
in loving memory of

Maurice Zekaria, z"l

by

The Zekaria Family

Refuah Shlemah

Moselle Amron/Mazal Tov bat Salha Matana
Tilda Levy / Tilda bat Miriam
Joseph Sharaf / Yossef ben Jamila
Maurice Ovadia / Moshe ben Noosha
Pnina Herzbrun / Pnina bat Esther
Michael Herzbrun / Michael Baruch ben Sarah

Please renew these names each week, as we will be regularly updating the list. If you would like to remove a member's name from the list or to add a member's name to the list please call 310-474-0559 or e-mail dafna@kahaljoseph.org

Mr. Joseph Samuels
Shabbat Guest Speaker

*Saturday, January 18th
during morning services*

Dvar Torah for Parashat Yitro on
"The Ten Commandments:
The Jews Gift to the World"

Condolences

to the loving family and friends of
Joseph Abdel Wahed, z"l
Founder of JIMENA

In Memoriam

We remember these yearzeit anniversaries for January 4 to 11, 2014. It is customary to light a memorial candle, donate tzedaka, and attend services the preceding Shabbat.

4 Shevat / Sunday, January 5th

Khorshid Farzaneh Farahi *Rahel bat Esther*

6 Shevat / Tuesday, January 7th

Albert Gaub *Avner Avraham ben Khatoon*
Maurice Jacob Jonah *Maurice ben Yaacov*

7 Shevat / Wednesday, January 8th

Samuel Saul Aaron *Shmoel ben Shaul*

8 Shevat / Thursday, January 9th

Ezra Ekaireb *Ezra Sion ben David*
F. Ellis Meyer *Eliyahoo Faraj ben Avraham Shalom*
Rebecca Mizrahie *Rivka bat Toba*
Edward Shashoua *Sion Edward ben Elisha*

9 Shevat / Friday, January 10th

Saul Zakoo *Shaul Hai ben Ezra Zakoo Halevy*

10 Shevat / Shabbat, January 11th

Naima Dabby *Naima bat Chahla*

(Continued from page 2)

end. ...“My assumption is that they wanted to subjugate and humiliate the Iraqi Jews,” said Urman. “They wanted to make sure they didn’t have these records to be able to document their longstanding presence, their history, their community institutions and their assets.” Similarly, the transfer of the Jewish Archives to the Mukhabarat speaks volumes about the underlying anti-Semitism of the Saddam regime.

These archives, Shohet points out, comprise only a fraction of what was left behind...there are reportedly 350 [torah scrolls] in the Iraqi National Library alone....Marriage records are housed in the community center in Baghdad but are inaccessible; the center is closed for security reasons because of al-Qaida operatives in the area.

Given the treasures and materials already in Iraq that are effectively ignored, why was its government so determined to get these back? “They claim they want to show their people that there was once a rich Jewish history in Iraq. Through this material, the new generation will know this community’s contribution to the building of the country and its culture,” Shohet told Ami. But knowing that the items were looted, what’s their justification? “They say it was the Saddam regime that did these things, not them.”

William D. Cavness, Jr., a retired Foreign Service officer who served as the liaison between NARA and the media, paints a somewhat different picture of Iraqi considerations. “[The archives] were like a football being kicked around in Iraqi political circles,” he explained during the NARA panel discussion. Many Iraqis saw the issue as an opportunity to stridently assert their anti-Israel and anti-American views and to confirm their Arab nationalism. Parliamentary debates centered on Israel–US conspiracies to rob Iraqis of their heritage....

On the other hand, he continued, there were “more thoughtful Iraqis who saw this...as a useful reminder to the people of Iraq about a long tradition of relative harmony among the various communities... Some senior officials were very emphatic about the importance of these materials coming back and using them as a kind of object lesson...to remind Iraqis of a time...when things were not as they are now.”

Dr. Saad Eskander, director of Iraq’s National Archives and Library, elaborated during an interview with the BBC. “It’s extremely important to recognize the suffering of the Iraqi Jews. The archives are a symbol of the ‘new Iraq.’ [They provide a forum in which] to discuss the past in order to prevent the reoccurrence of such horrible events in the future.”

But for Jimena and JJAC, stopping the archives’ return to Iraq involves more than future access; it concerns the patrimony of all [Middle Eastern & North African] Jews who have been robbed of their possessions and heritage. “Whatever happens to these archives will set a moral and legal precedent based on the principle that Jewish patrimony belongs to the Jewish community itself and not its country of origin,” said Waldman, a Libyan Jew.

For Shamash, who sits on the board of WOJI, the struggle is also about recapturing a pride that was effectively expunged from the Iraqi Jewish spirit. ... Advocacy efforts picked up speed about a year ago when NARA received the necessary funds to begin completing the project. ... It was then that the JJAC joined efforts with Jimena, the Kahal Joseph Congregation of Los Angeles, and WOJI to coordinate efforts. “Every possible avenue to ensure that the archives are returned to their rightful owners was being explored,” Urman says.

They began by reaching out to both the Jewish and non-Jewish media. According to Jimena

director Sarah Levin, a joint website, iraqijewisharchives.org, was created to provide background information. Media interest quickly exceeded expectations. National newspapers like *The New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* ran serious articles on the subject, and the question of rightful ownership was raised time and again, catching the attention of some significant political players....

Additional pressure has been exerted by the greater Jewish community as well. A statement signed by over 40 major organizations, such as B’nai B’rith International, the Conference of Presidents and the American Jewish Committee, was issued, citing the theft of the archive materials by Iraq and urging Secretary of State Kerry to consult with both Iraqi Jews and the Iraqi government “to ensure that these fundamental concerns will be addressed before any action is taken.”

This has led to some creative suggestions. California Representative Henry Waxman, for instance, working in conjunction with the Kahal Joseph Congregation, has floated the possibility of extending the Iraqi loan to the United States for 20 years. ... The recent burial of the fragments, Urman feels, closes one chapter in a saga that is still unfolding. Although he was moved by the way in which both the Iraqi and US delegations handled the proceedings, everyone present was made to understand that Jewish heritage as a whole must be respected. “While we laid to rest a fragment of Iraqi Jewish heritage with honor and dignity,” he said, “we also state clearly and unequivocally that Iraqi Jews still lay claim, as original owners, to all of the Iraqi Jewish Archives. This is their right. This is our responsibility.” Waldman agrees. “The best way for the Iraqi government to respect the heritage of the Jews is for them to return the archives to the people from whom they were expropriated. Doing that would truly reflect a ‘new Iraq.’”



Lunch & Learn

January 25, February 22
& March 29, 2014

following Shabbat Services

*Kahal Joseph invites our members
to a series of inspirational, informative
Shabbat Day lunchtime programs*

with Rabbi Daniel Bouskila, SEC Director

\$10 for members w/ required reservation

\$26 for non-members w/ pre-paid advance reservation

*Please call the synagogue office at
310.474.0559 to make your lunch reservation.*



Kahal Joseph Congregation

Norma & Sam Dabby Jewish Learning Center

Mommy & Me

February 2014

*For information contact
Dafna Ezran-Young, Educational Director at
310.502.8548 or dafna@kahaljoseph.org*



Tu B'shvat Celebration

at

Kahal Joseph Congregation

Join Rabbi Hagay Batzri as he performs an authentic, Iraqi Kabbalistic ritual:
planting magical seeds to strengthen existing relationships and to find new

Meaningful Relationships and Love

We will savor 30(!) different
fruits and taste four cups of
wine. These will be presented
with special blessings and medi-
tation according to the practice of
Rabbenu Yosef Haim, an ancient
master of the Kabbalah.

- * Songs of Eretz Israel
- * Live Music & Singers
- * Food, Wine & Dessert
- * Meditation

Meet new friends & Free your spirit!

Wednesday, January 15, 2014 @ 8 p.m

Kahal Joseph, 10505 Santa Monica Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90025

RSVP (310) 474-0559

Donation: \$18 pre-paid or \$26 at the door