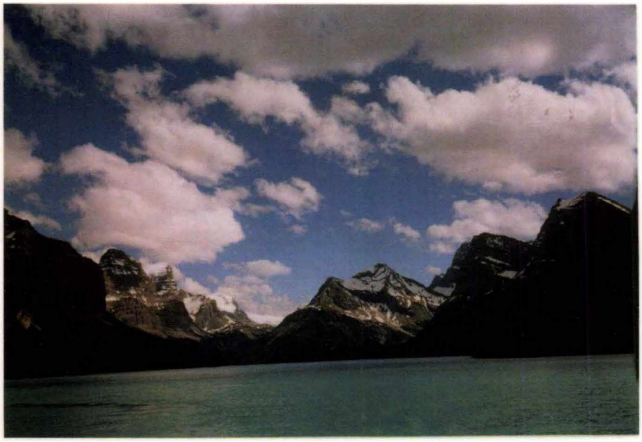


No Short Cuts to Far Horizons
Pioneering Paths from Jewish India



Rabbi Dr. Ezekiel N. Musleah

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IN MEMORIAM

MY BROTHER MEYER EZRA MUSLEAH

PIONEER, ENLIGHTENER, GUIDE
"THE SOUL OF MAN IS THE LAMP OF GOD" (PROVERBS 20:27)
MAY HIS LIGHT SHINE PERPETUALLY



(Below) The Ner Tamid (Eternal Light) at a Jerusalem synagogue, reflecting a double signification — one, that his life be perpetuated as exemplar of brilliance, courage and initiative, and two, that it beam a ray of attachment to the Land of Israel, which radiated through his life.

In Memoriam

My cousin Sammy Morris
Jewish Gentleman

"Lord, who may sojourn in Your tent,
who may dwell on Your holy mountain?

He who does what is right,
and in his heart acknowledges the truth …"

(Psalms 15:1-2)





How we wish to be remembered

Margaret and Ezekiel Nissim Musleah

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA

PREFACE

Everyday, we are called upon to make decisions. Some of them are inconsequential, involving nothing more significant than a choice between wearing one dress or another, or between a red necktie and a blue one. But some of them may be very fundamental decisions, involving the first step to a bad habit, involving a choice between honesty and dishonesty, involving the choice of one profession and another. Such decisions are critical, with far–reaching consequences, which fact reminds us of these words of Shakespeare: "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at a flood, leads on to fortune; omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and misery" (Julius Caesar, Act 4, Scene 3). Fortunate are they who recognize their tide for what it is and who make their decisions accordingly.

The decision to take some immediate advantage and to pay too big a price for it may be a cause of missing the tide, which would have led on to the high seas of achievement. The decision to accept an opportunity when it is presented, regardless of the consequences, regardless of the immediate cost, is another impediment to making a vital decision, but many who have been confronted with a critical decision, and who have counted the personal sacrifice too great, have retreated, and the tide has gone on without them, and out of their lives.

Some decisions have to be made, of course, without our personal choice, such as at birth, infancy and adolescence, though some of these may be ultimate factors in our lives. With adulthood, however, we must apply our own discernment to recognize the decisions that matter little and those which are vital. My critical decisions came to me early. I applied courage and insight to watch for tides that led on to far horizons, and took the pioneering paths they offered — tracks that are fundamentally sound, regardless of the immediate cost or consequences. Those decisions made me ride high on to the tide at which I jumped, which, I believe, led on to success. I had ever endeavored to raise my head high above the common level and exerted inherent strength to maintain myself in places of high principle.

I feel I had made the right decisions at the right times and in the right way, and had recognized my tide for what it was. Most of my decisions took me to pioneering trails.

I had decided to study for the rabbinate — a precursor — despite local differences and the prolonged absence from home it entailed.

I had returned to my hometown to serve as the first Western–oriented rabbi, despite and contrary to the advice of my teachers and well–wishers, and the adverse pressures of influential associations.

My twelve–year ministry in Calcutta was a dream fulfilled, overriding all the initial preliminaries. I felt I had to live the part I wanted to play. A life in time is a composite of all that had gone into its making. There is no room for smallness of spirit or for self–pity. But when I began to suspect my time there was spent, I seized the opportunity to relocate in the United States.

My publications are a reflection of the needs of my parochial community, each one a first. "On The Banks Of The Ganga," my doctoral dissertation and major historical treatise; the cemetery register, which found a way, unsolicited and surprisingly, in another published work; "Read After Me" for mourners and observers of Yartseits; "Kol Zimra" for a meaningful chanting of age–old melodies; the High–Holyday and Simhath Torah pamphlets — all fit that pattern. I took first steps toward my coveted goals and tackled bravely obstacles in the way. I was certain it was going to be difficult but glorious to see them through — of such are the real substance of labors of love.

It has long been known that a picture is worth a thousand words. To make this work express what would have taken much longer, and then not as well, close to two hundred images have been carefully selected to add pigment to my words and thoughts and some of the events described. A number of these are images of two Calcutta synagogues, Bethel and Maghen David, representing the talented effort of Dr. Maurice Gubbay on a nostalgic visit to his native city. I heartily take note of his dedication to architectural finesse and artistic details meticulously taken.

And to facilitate the use of this volume, a lengthy index appears with the names of every person mentioned.

I want to warmly acknowledge the patient aid of Joy Cohen of Elkins Park, Pa, in bringing the manuscript, stage by stage, to publication.

Cordially, I make special mention of Adam E. Laver, good friend and well–wisher, whose pursuit of Judaic studies and observance I hold in high esteem. A graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary's Joint Program with Columbia University, he practises law at the prestigious firm of Blank Rome Comisky & McCauley, is on the board of Temple Beth Zion–Beth Israel, as well as other Jewish and civic institutions in Philadelphia.

With the grace of Almighty God, the prudence of past generations, and the understanding and sweet inspiration of Margaret in her mission as wife and mother, I have been blessed to live through my precious tide — the long, high road to far horizons — and have found life to be good and fulfilling, and the pioneering achievements satisfying. No matter how strenuous it seemed at times to live life in all of its fundamental soundness, both of preparation and practice, it is, in reality, the easy way, because no other way would have been half as satisfying.

I commend my work to readers in the spirit of the act of the great sage, Nehuniah ben Hakkanah, of the second half of the first century C.E. Before he entered a place where he taught, he prayed that no obstacle should prevent him from imparting the truth, and on leaving, he gave thanks for his lot.

Ezekiel N. Musleah
Hanukka 5764 — December 2003
Philadelphia, Pa, U. S. A.

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA
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For Bob and Debbie
You are very special; moreso at B2B!
How good + pleasant it is for friends to be together.
May you serve synagogue + community
for years to come
With best wishes
Shirl 'n Marshall
Kathy

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA
ADDENDUM

MIRIAM JILL HYMAN Z"L 1972-2005

To see death gently pronounce its benediction upon a fullness of years is a hallowed experience. But to see death hover over the fairest youth whose life is crowded with plans and prospects and who should be confident in the promise of many days to come, is quite another thing.

Miriam was fatally struck by the bomb that blew up London's No.30 bus on July 7, 2005. Her parents were clinging to the hope that their daughter had survived, as she called them to say she was safe after being evacuated from King's Cross Tube station. She was missing for four days until they learned that she was one of the victims of the terrorist attack.

We are proud that Miriam, living in a generation of uncertainties, filled her life with improving her mind, training her hands with fresh skills, and preparing herself for new opportunities.

She worked at the British Broadcasting Corporation Books for seven years as a picture researcher and project managed picture research. She was ready to channel her talents towards self-sufficiency on a freelance basis. She learned to value high character on a level with intellectual sharpness. She learned to avoid intolerant dogmatism, never assuming her education was complete.

Philadelphia cousin Rahel writes: "We are scattered all over the world, our family; from Baghdad and India we had spread out to England, Australia, Canada, America and Israel. Throughout my childhood, I yearned for more family connections, and so did Miriam. The few times we saw each other in our lifetimes we immediately felt the distance of miles dissipate. Closeness was natural with Miriam. She was a giver of hugs, dispensing warmth like a faultlessly sunny day.... she nourished others with the love she herself feasted on."

To Miriam and her family, spirituality, morality, ethics and an insatiable hunger for truth superseded ritual.

Resh Lakish, a rabbi who lived in the third century CE, eulogized his pupil by quoting the biblical Song of Songs: My beloved has gone down to his garden...to browse in the gardens and to pick lilies. God (the Beloved) comes down to take for Himself exceptional beings as one prefers to gather lilies in a garden of flowers.

When Rabbi Eliezer, who lived in the second century CE, fell ill, his students went to visit him. They asked him: "Master, teach us the path of a life that would lead us to eternity." He replied: "Be concerned for the welfare of your fellow beings."

Well done, Mim. Would that others in your generation might follow in your footsteps!

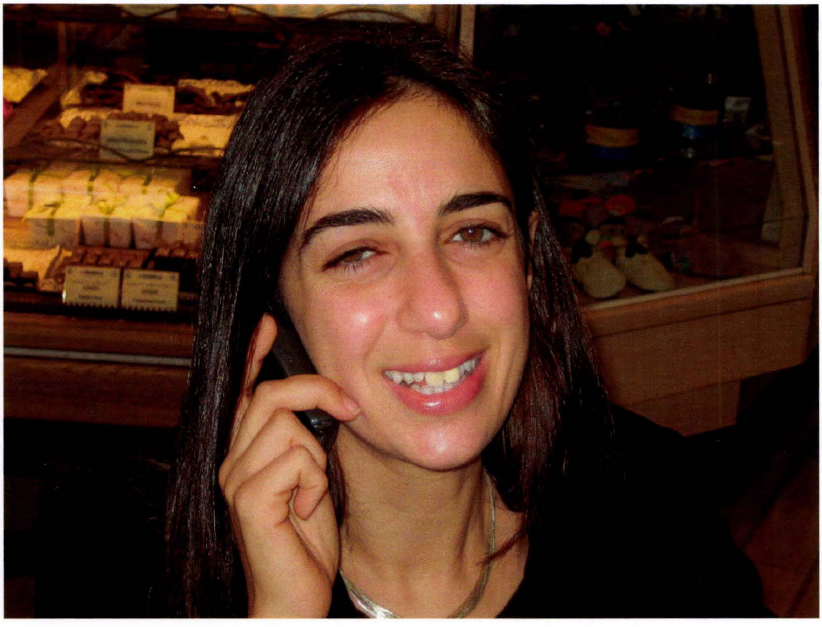
TWINKLE ON, BRIGHT LITTLE STAR,
OH SEE, HOW BEREFT WE ARE!

Mystic alchemy created your soul,
Inspiring a presence even with no roll,
Radiating a gift of atmosphere and goal.

In duty bound you brighten up, you enrich
A spark, emanating beauty, dignify afresh.
Midst a globe so grossly vicious, so greatly harsh.

Join the choir invisible of immortals
In minds made better by your wit, bonhomie.
Like a work of art, an unfinished symphony,
Like a star, gladden our hearts' portals.

Ezekiel



Miriam Jill Hyman Z"L 1972-2005

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA
CHAPTER 1
BAGHDAD BAGGAGE

In the second decade of the nineteenth century, a tiny community of Jews from Syria and Iraq lived in Calcutta, India. The first of these, Shalome/Aaron Cohen emigrated from Alleppo, Syria in 1798 and was joined by others from the Middle East, among them Hakham Eliyahu, son of Hakham Yehezkel, son of Hakham Rav Saleh Musleah, who held the prestigious position of Nasi (president) of Baghdad Jewry from 1778 to 1785. Saleh had two sons, Nissim and Yehezkel, both learned in Torah and active in community leadership. On the death of both Hakham Eliyahu's father and uncle before 1820, the grand connection with the late Nasi, Hakham Rav Saleh Musleah was no longer beneficial. Moreover, persecution clouds began to emerge over Baghdad and the sunshine of favorable economic and political conditions in British India started to beckon. Hakham Eliyahu decided to leave Baghdad, a city that had been home for generations of family Musleah.

HAKHAM ELIYAHU/YEHEZKEL MUSLEAH MIGRATES

Not, however, without considerable mental and heartfelt anguish. His memories filled with happy events relating to his grandfather as Nasi, the many subjects of Torah he had learned from his father,Yehezkel, and the proud moments he spent in synagogue and at home as his family sang the religious songs composed by his grandfather and his uncle, Nissim.

He meditated on the ancient practice in Baghdad requiring the Pasha or Governor of the city to appoint a Jew to the position of Nasi, a high honor to head both religious and secular branches of Iraqi Jewry, and therefore, of all Eastern Jewry. The appointee at first enjoyed recognition as a descendant of David, King of Israel. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, however, the inherited office became the prize of a venerated resident of the Jewish community by virtue of his learning and wealth. An influential emissary between the secular government and Jews of Iraq, the official held wide powers and strong influences. His court imposed fines and other punishments on Jewish citizens with full approval of the government, and its decrees were accepted as the last word in Jewish law even by co–religionists in faithful dependencies like Yemen, Persia (today's Iran), and as far east as India.

Hakham Eliyahu could have reminisced about his grandfather's rabbinic commentaries which we know today after they appeared, not in self–contained tracts, but scattered in other published works, such as the Calcutta volume of חֲנֻכַּת הַבַּיִת לְדָוִד, a tract on the laws of Hanukka by the Baghdad–born Hakham Shelomo Abid Twena, himself a biblical and rabbinic expositor and preacher par excellence, who settled in Calcutta in the early 1880's [Page 41a]: "I have come across in the writings of our wonderful rabbi and teacher, Saleh Musleah, may his memory be for the life of the World to Come, commenting on the verse in Proverbs 24:17–18:

'בִּנְפֹל אֹיִבְךָ אַל תִּשְׂמָח וּבִכָּשְׁלוֹ אַל יָגֶל לִבֶּךָ, פֶּן יִרְאֶה ה' וְרַע בְּעֵינָיו וְהֵשִׁיב מֵעָלָיו אַפּוֹ' 'If your enemy falls, do not exult, if he trips, let your heart not rejoice, lest the Lord see it and be displeased and avert his wrath from him …' I have accepted his interpretation as correct."[1]

1. Hakham Shelomo also penned a brief biographical sketch of Hakham Rav Saleh in his Hebrew-Arabic weekly, Maggid Mesharim, volume 1:39, 1890. For a remarkable description of the life and works of Hakham Shelomo, see the publication "The Hacham from Baghdad in Calcutta," in Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic, by Professor Yitzhak Avishur, Tel Aviv, Israel, 2002 published in two volumes by "Magen Aboth" for Calcutta Jews. For English

Hakham Eliyahu must have contemplated how his grandfather served on the Baghdad Beth Din as member, and later as head, and signed legal documents together with his predecessor in the seat of Nasi, Hakham Rav Sadka Hussein and other colleagues. He might have recalled how Sadka Hussein perished in the cruel plague that hit Baghdad in 1773, three months after two of his sons succumbed in that fateful visitation. Was it not irony, Hakham Eliyahu must have thought, that his grandfather succeeded to the seat of the rabbinate in Baghdad on the heels of the tragic death of his close associate?

The migrant must have also brought to mind the many occasions when Hakham Saleh was asked to witness a wedding and honor the bride and groom with his signature on their Ketubah. One such event Hakham Eliyahu could not have remembered because he was still an infant in 1764. But he surely would have recalled another in July, 1781 in the rule of Abd il–Hamid, particularly if he could look ahead to a future family happening in Calcutta. The 1781 Ketubah was co–signed by a junior contemporary of his grandfather's, Hakham Rav Sason/Mordecai/Moshe Shindookh (died 1830), whose direct descendant is my wife, Margaret. We were married in Calcutta in 1955, 174 years after our distinguished forbears affixed their signatures to that marriage document, as though making a propitious forecast to a forthcoming union![2]

The Shindookh–Musleah fellowship was evident in yet another sphere. Baghdadis had a practise of inviting guests to the seven days of wedding festivities at which collections, called Kirsh Rumi, were made in favor of rabbis appointed by the Beth Din. The families of Musleah–Shindookh were designated as recipients in the fourth quarter of the eighteenth century, and their descendants continued to enjoy equal shares. It was not uncommon for individual members of their respective families to sell shares to cousins and others. Did Hakham Eliyahu own shares of Kirsh Rumi, and if he did, were they sold before he left? We do know, however, that the right of performing wedding ceremonies, a rite distinct from Kirsh Rumi, was, in 1810, officially entrusted to Hakham Sason/Mordecai Shindookh and his representatives. So Musleahs in Baghdad realized that they were enjoying less and less of the pie, and it could have contributed to Hakham Eliyahu's departure from Baghdad.

Hakham Rav Saleh Musleah must have spoken at family meals of his extensive correspondence with Iraqi communities as well as those of Syria, Persia (Iran), Kurdistan and other Jewish centers, dealing with Jewish law and diverse community affairs. His family might have pried into, and proudly ingested, the honorific designations of the Rabbi contained in these letters, reflecting his imposing authority and widespread influence. Here is a sampling of those

יְחִיד מֻמְחֶה בְּדוֹרוֹת הַמַּאִיר לָאֶרֶץ וְלַאֲדִירִים ... מוֹצִיא לָאוֹר תַּעֲלוּמָה בְּנֹעַם אֲמָרָיו ... וְהֶלְכוּ גוֹיִם לְאוֹרוֹ אוֹר תּוֹרָה
דּוּלָה וּמַשְׁקֶה מֵימֵיהָ לְצַמְּאוֹן ... תָּם וְיָשָׁר ... תְּהִלָּה לוֹ נָאוָה. בַּעַל הָעֲנָוָה. שָׁחַר טוֹב וּמְבַקֵּשׁ אֱמוּנָה

"Singular and Master in his generation, sheds his light and teaching on the commoner and the elite ... reveals the hidden Torah meanings with his charming expression ... (even) the non–Jewish peoples tend to follow his Torah dictums as he draws from the waters of his intellect and quenches the thirst of the inquiring mind ... blameless and upright, to praise him is comely for one so modest, a lover of the good and a seeker after honesty."

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readers, it includes a preface by the author, an introduction by Sunoo Twena, a great-grandson of Hakham Shelomo, and a table of contents of selected stories from Hakham Shelomo's works.

2. We have a photostat of Manuscript #205 David Sassoon's collection, Ohel David, Vol,1:377, page 6 (Fig 1.)

One of the fondest reflections of Hakham Eliyahu's must have been the Baghdad synagogue where generations of Family Musleah worshiped, and it was there that three generations — his uncle Nissim, his grandfather, Saleh, and his great–grandfather, Yosef — served as Hazzanim. Localities preserved the hoary tradition that this, the largest and most venerated of Baghdad houses of prayer called Slah il–Kibeeri [= The Great Synagogue of the Nasi, for it was the venue for the Nasi to join in community prayer], was built on the same spot where Yekhoniah, the last king of Judah, erected a sanctuary with materiel brought by the exiles from the Land of Israel. The tradition is based upon a teaching in the Babylonian Talmud (Rosh Hashana 24b) referring to a synagogue in Nehardea, now Baghdad, called Shaf ve Yathib [= moved and settled from the Land of Israel]. Destroyed in 1855, it was rebuilt later that same year.

Hakham Eliyahu brought with him to India a keen knowledge of the Pizmoneem the family would sing in synagogue, communal halls and at home, especially in the family Sukkah, in their reputedly pleasant singing voices which touched the hearts of listeners everywhere. Many of those songs were composed by his grandfather, Saleh, and uncle, Nissim, who were considered among the most prominent authors of religious poetry called Piyyut and Pizmone. Their compositions bear the acrostic of their names — צ א ל ח ח ז ק and נ ס י ם ח ז ק.[3]

With these gnawing reflections, Hakham Eliyahu, born about 1760 in Baghdad, arrived in Calcutta with his wife Reemah around 1820, and immediately was hailed as a leader in halakhic, ritualistic and liturgical matters. Moses Dwek Cohen, the virtual founder of Calcutta Jewry, ran community affairs with Hakham Eliyahu's assistance, but the partnership was short–lived by the death of Hakham Eliyahu. They were so close that Moses Dwek, honorary minister, chose to be at his seriously ill friend's bedside on the seventh day of Passover than attend synagogue services.[4] Musleah died two weeks later, May 2, 1824. His tombstone inscription:[5] This marks [the tomb of] the pious and humble Eliyahu, son of the honored Rabbi Yehezkel Musleah, may his soul be bound in the bond of eternal life. Died Sunday 4th Iyar 5584, here in the city of Calcutta.

OTHERS IN THE FAMILY

Having been spurred on by flourishing business prospects in India, Hakham Eliyahu began a commercial venture in which his older son Yehezkel, endowed with superior business acumen, excelled. He became expert in the indigo trade to the extent that his services were utilized by the East India Company, an English company formed for trade with India and the Far East and in 1858 transferred its possessions to the British crown. We have a seal ring of his which he used to put his stamp on indigo containers earmarked for overseas including China. Like the more opulent traders, David Joseph Ezra and Elia Shalome Gubbay, profits were invested in real estate whose values soared. Many years later this led his great nephew Meyer Ezra Musleah, who came to possess the seal ring, to recount a commonly held view, "much of the real estate in the Calcutta suburb of Kidderpur, adjoining the dock area, belonged to Yehezkel Musleah."

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3. About half of their number is still in manuscript, and the published ones are available in books which saw the light of day in Baghdad, Israel and in Oriental countries such as India
4. See my "On The Banks Of The Ganga," page 26.
5. צִיוּן שֶׁל הַזָּקֵן הֶחָסִיד הֶעָנָיו אֱלִיָּהוּ בֶּן כה"ר [כְּבוֹד הָרַב] חַכָּם יְחֶזְקֵאל מֻצְלִיחַ תנצב"ה [תְּהִי נִשְׁמָתוֹ צְרוּרָה בִּצְרוֹר הַחַיִּים] נִפְטַר יוֹם א' ד' לְחוֹדֶשׁ אִיָּר שְׁנַת התקפ"ד לִיצִירָה פֹּה עִיר כַּלְכַּתָּה

The inscription on the seal ring reads: בְּעֶזְרַת הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ [בּוֹטֵחַ יְחֶזְקֵאל אֵלִיָּהוּ מַצְלִיחַ [= בעה"י "With the help of the blessed God: One who trusts [in Him], Ezekiel [son of] Eliyahu Musleah." The inscription on Yehezkel's tomb takes note of his prominence in the community. "This tablet marks the grave of the eminent, noble and honorable (who was over sixty years old), of illustrious and scholarly ancestry, Ezekiel/Eliyahu Musleah, rest in Eden, may his soul be bound in the bond of eternal life. Died Monday night, 19th Adar 5599, here in Calcutta [= March 5, 1839]." [Born in Baghdad around 1778[6].] His mother Reemah predeceased him by a little more than two years.[7]

Hakham Eliyahu Musleah had three other sons who moved to Calcutta in close succession:

Joseph, born in Baghdad around 1785, married there Dinah, daughter of Hannah, born about 1795;

Abraham, born in Baghdad about 1795, married Rachel, daughter of Jacob Jonah, a prominent early Calcutta settler.[8]

Joseph and wife Dinah were parents of three sons and two daughters. The oldest, Eliyahu was born in Baghdad in 1823. Joseph unfortunately, did not succeed in business; one of the reasons, according to his grandson, Meyer Ezra, was that he fell victim to unfair dealings of an individual who remains anonymous and was buried alongside Joseph as a gesture of reconciliation.[9] Joseph died in his 50's on 4th Iyar 5600 [= 2 May 1840], the same Hebrew date as that of his father Hakham Eliyahu. [10] Joseph Musleah's tomb inscription: "This tablet marks the grave of the noble and honorable, of illustrious and scholarly ancestry, Joseph/Hakham Eliyahu/Hakham Yehezkel Musleah, rest in Eden, died Wednesday night, 4th Iyar 5600 [= May 7, 1840] .[Born Baghdad around 1785.]

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6. On The Banks Of The Ganga, pages 27,29,30, 35,36,40,48,159ff,178,205,266.
זֹאת מַצֵּבֶת קְבוּרַת מַעֲלַת הַגָּבִיר הַיָּקָר הַמּ' [הַמְּפוּרְסָם] הַזָּקֵן הַנִּכְבָּד בַּר אַבְהָן וּבַר אַרְיֵן כה"ר יְחֶזְקֵאל אֵלִיָּהוּ מַצְלִיחַ נ"ע [נוֹחוֹ עֵדֶן] תנצב"ה נִפְטַר לֵיל ג' תִּשְׁעָה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ אֲדָר שְׁנַת התקצ"ט לִיצִירָה פֹּה כַּלְכָּתָה תְּהִי מְנוּחָתוֹ כָּבוֹד

7. She was born in Baghdad around 1765.

8. Ezra born in Baghdad around 1780 died a bachelor in Calcutta in 1823. Hakham Eliyahu also had a daughter, Rebecca, born in Baghdad around 1790. She too remained unmarried and died in Calcutta in 1838. A number of the grandsons and nephews of Hakham Rav Nissim were employed as assistants in the presses of local Jewish printers from 1841 until the end of the 19th century presumably because of their expertise in the knowledge of classical Hebrew texts. Abraham and his wife Rachel were married on August 18, 1828 and raised a large family of seven sons and one daughter. Two sons died in infancy, the rest died in Calcutta between 1876 and 1908. Abraham and Rachel left Calcutta for Bombay where their oldest son Ezekiel's son, David Hye, assumed such prominence in the Bombay Jewish community that he signed the ketubah of two top families in India -- Elia/David/Joseph Ezra from Calcutta and Mazal Tov (Mozelle), daughter of Abdulla/David Sassoon from Bombay. Abraham and Rachel probably died in Bombay. (Ohel Daweed, Catalogue of David Solomon Sassoon).

9. Joseph at least lived to see the marriage of his daughter Mazal Tov at age 14 to his cousin Ezra, son of his brother, Yehezkel. The marriage was not blessed; Mazal Tov died in 1865 at age 39 without issue. Ezra died in 1881 from strenuously moving an iron safe, according to my grandfather, Meyer Ezra Musleah.

10. זֹאת מַצֵּבֶת קְבוּר' הַיְקָר וְנֶעֱלֶה בַּר אַבְהָן וּבַר אַרְיֵן הַמּ' כה"ר יוֹסֵף חֲכָם אֵלִיָּהוּ חֲכָם יְחֶזְקֵאל מַצְלִיחַ נ"ע נִפְטַר לֵיל ה' ד' אִיָּר שְׁנַת הת"ר תנצב"ה

CALCUTTA MUSLEAHS – DIRECT LINEAGE FROM HAKHAM RAV SALEH MUSLEAH

The family connection of Calcutta Musleahs with Hakham Rav Saleh Musleah, Nasi of Baghdad 1778–1785 is confirmed by two 10–1/2" x 11" metal discs in our possession, originally attached to the top of the Sefer Torah case made in Calcutta. [page 62 (Chap 3, Fig 29.)]

Right hand plate:[11] Translation: I await for Your deliverance, O God [Gen. 49:18]. This is the Teaching that Moses set before the Israelites [Deut. 4:44]. These are the laws, norms and directions that the Lord established through Moses, between Him and the Israelite people [Lev. 26:46]. Moses is true. In the year [continued on left hand disc].[12]

I await Your deliverance, O God. [Aramaic rendering of the biblical verse in Genesis.]

This [wooden] case [overlaid with silver] and the Sefer Torah with it was dedicated by the respected Ezekiel son of Eliyahu son of Hakham Rav Saleh Musleah in memory of his father [who died in Calcutta 4 Iyar 5584]. May his soul be bound in the bond of eternal life. — 1826.

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11. לק"י [לִישׁוּעָתְךָ קִוִּיתִי ה'] (Genesis 49:18)
וְזֹאת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר שָׂם מֹשֶׁה לִפְנֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵלֶּה הַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים [מ] אֲשֶׁר נָתַן ה' בֵּנוֹ [בֵּינוֹ] וּבֵן [וּבֵין] בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּהַר סִינַי בְּיַד מֹשֶׁה מֹשֶׁה אֱמֶת בִּשְׁנַת
12. לס"י [לְיִשׁוּעָתְךָ קִוִּיתִי ה'].
תִּיק זֶה וְסֵפֶר תּוֹרָה שֶׁבּוֹ הִקְדִּישׁ אוֹתוֹ הַיָּקָר יְחֶזְקֵאל [בֶּן] אֵלְיָהוּ [בֶּן] ח' [חֲכָם] יָחֶזְקֵאל [בֶּן] חֲכָם רַב צָאלֵחַ
מַצְלִיחַ עַל נִשְׁמַת אָבִיו אֵלְיָהוּ תְּהִי נִשְׁמָתוֹ בִּצְרוֹר הַחַיִּים התקפ"ו

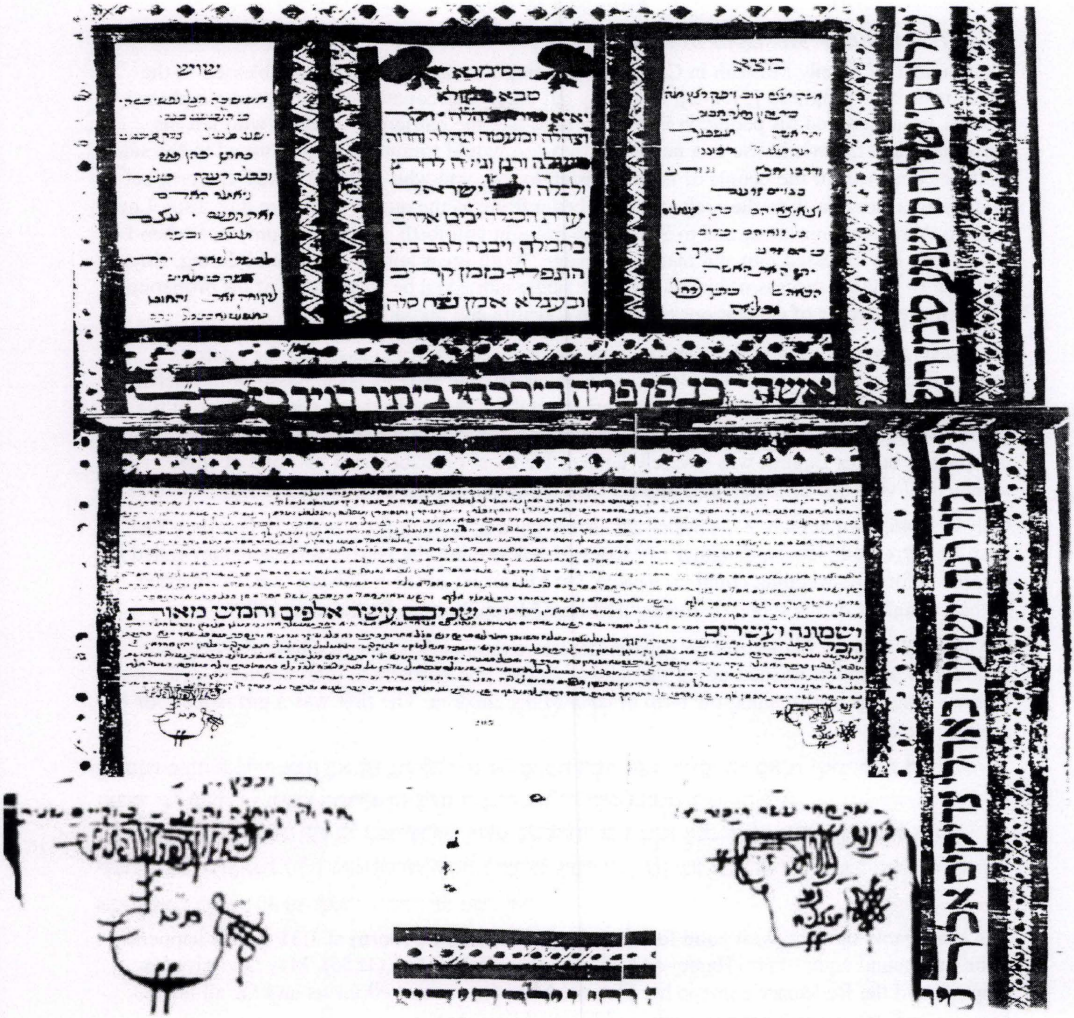


Figure 1. Print of a Baghdad Ketubah.

Print of a Ketuba dated 1781, Baghdad, bearing the signatures of the forbears of Ezekiel N. Musleah — Saleh ben Yosef Musleah (right), and his wife, Margaret, Sassone ben Mordecai (Shindookh). The signatures are enlarged.

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA

CHAPTER 2

FOUNDED IN INDIA

ELIYAHU/YOSEF MUSLEAH BUILDS A FAMILY

The founder of Family Musleah in Calcutta was Joseph's son, Eliyahu. Amply blessed in the spirit of Isaiah's prophecy [51:1–2], he slowly but surely surmounted obstacles and weathered storms. Isaiah assured his people in Babylonia that, like the patriarch Abraham who left his native land and father's house to a new land, they too would triumph if they returned to the same land, since named for the people of Israel. "Listen to Me, you who seek the Lord," the prophet told his audience, "look to the rock you were hewn from, to the quarry you were dug from. Look back to Abraham your father and to Sarah who brought you forth. For he was only one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many." With great faith, courage and daring, Eliyahu set forth to make a success of his life from the single individual he was, proud of his progenitors, to become generator of generations to come in Calcutta and abroad.

Only seventeen years old at the demise of his father Joseph, Eliyahu assumed the onerous responsibility of maintaining his mother, a widow at 40, and siblings Isaac Sassoon 8, Rachel 6 and Jacob Raphael 3. The next six years were crucial for the survival and development of the family. There is no evidence of how he managed. He could have sought employment at British companies, but his English was severely limited. He most probably tried his hand at small commercial ventures of export and import, then a popular means of earning a living.

Only in 1846, then already 23, Eliyahu felt secure enough to look for a bride. In February that year, he betrothed Nemila, daughter of Moses Abookaya, but the betrothal (Kiddushin) ended in divorce before the wedding could take place. On March 1st of the following year, he married Esther, daughter of the scholarly Ezekiel Hakham Moshi, born in Baghdad in 1829[1].

Eliyahu and his wife Esther had no children for more than eight years. We have the original manuscript on which Eliyahu noted partially in Arabic and partially in grammatically defective Hebrew language and spelling the birth of each of his children. The first was a girl named for his mother, Dinah.

בְּסִימָנָה טוֹבָה וּבְמַזָּלָה טָבָה בָּא לָנוּ בַּת לַיְלַת א' אֶל סָאעָה וַחֲדָה וְנַצַף וְדַקִיקִי וְהִיִי בֶּאנַת תֶּאנִי לַיְלַת חוֹל
הַמּוֹעֵד שֶׁל סֻכּוֹת 18 תִּשְׁרִי הִתרי"ו. יְהִי רָצוֹן הקב"ה יִתֵּן לָהּ חַיִּים אֲרֻכִּים וּבְיָמֶ[י]הָ יָבוֹא
גּוֹאֵל. וּקְדֻמָּהָא כִּיר עֲלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל עַמּוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְיִזַּכֵּנוּ בְּשִׂמְחָתָהּ וּבְ חֶפְתָּהּ אָמֵן. וְלַיְלַת עֲרֶב שַׁבָּת קוֹדֶשׁ בֶּאנַת
שְׁמֹחַת הַתּוֹרָה וְכֶאנַת לַיְלַת סִתָּא וְקָרִיתִי שְׁמָהּ בְּיִשְׂרַאֵל דִּינָה. יְהִי רָצוֹן יְכוּן אִסְמָהָא דּוּם וְנִכְתֹּב סֶפֶּתָמְבֶּר סַנַת
1855בָּאנַת מַוָּאפֵק 30 18 תִּשְׁרִי בְּכִתּוּבָתָהּ אָמֵן. וְהִיִי

"As a favorable sign and with good fortune, we have a daughter (born) at 1:31 a.m. It happened to be the second night of Hol Hamo–ed Sukkoth, 18th Tishri 5616 (1855). May God give her long life and the Redeemer come in her lifetime. May she augur well for us and for all Israel. May we merit to witness her happiness and her wedding, Amen.

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1. Almost two years later, on January 8, 1849, his sister Rachel was married to Ezra Meyer, of the prestigious Baghdad family of Faraj Hyeem/Abdullah Yosef. The marriage lasted only till 1868 at Ezra Meyer's death. On his tombstone appears the distinctive appellation בַּר אַבָּהָן וּבַר אֶרְזִין in praise of his illustrious and scholarly ancestry. Rachel and Ezra Meyer are grandparents of Jacob Meyer, taxi driver in Calcutta, who made Aliyah with his family. His son, Faraj Hyeem (Freddy) lives in Israel.

The following Friday evening was Simhath Torah [Shemini Atsereth, really] and also her Sitti [= the sixth night of her life] and I named her DINAH. May her name be long–lasting and destined to be written in her Ketubah, Amen. 18th Tishri corresponding to 30th September 1855. Their second child was a son named for his father, Joseph, born May 15, 1858 (3rd Sivan 5618). The Berith Meela was performed on the 38th day, signifying that the child suffered an illness from which he presumably did not recover. Sadly he lived only thirteen months and ten days, and died June 25, 1859.

It was melancholy all over. Eliyahu now had to look after his ailing mother, a widow for almost twenty years, whose condition steadily worsened. She died February 13, 1860 at age 65. Her tomb inscription:

"The tombstone of the pious, honest and righteous woman DINAH, wife of the deceased [though the appellation is erroneously for a living person] Joseph/Eliyahu Musleah, died Sunday 20th Shevath 5620. May her soul be bound in the bond of eternal life."

Within two weeks came some comfort with the birth of their second daughter, and she was named for his mother's mother HANNAH. He noted:

בְּסִימָנָה טָבָה בְּשָׁעָה טָבָה בְּשָׁנַת חֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת[= חֲמֵשֶׁת אֲלָפִים] וְשֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת וְעֶשְׂרִים לִילַת אִסְרוּ חַג שֶׁל פֶּסַח אֶל סָעָה

פִּי 10 וּדְקִיקִי 10 הקב"ה נָתַן לִי בַּת. 23 נִיסָן התר"ך וּפִי לֵילַת עֶרֶב שַׁבָּת קוֹדֶשׁ 28 נִיסָן הנז' קָרָאתִי שְׁמָהּ בִּישְׂרָאֵל

חַנָּה. יְהִי רָצוֹן תִּכְתֹּב לְחַיִּים טוֹבִים וּבְיָמֶ[י]הָ יָבֹא גּוֹאֵל. וְיִזְכִּינוּ לְנַחֲכָה[?] לְחֻפָּתָהּ בְּעֹשֶׁר וְכָבוֹד אָמֵן כֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן. מֶוָאפַק אַפְּרִיל 1860 . מֶוָאפַק 7 כיסאג 1267

"As a favorable sign and with good fortune in the year 5620 the night of Isru Hag at 10:10 p.m. God gave me a daughter, 23rd Nisan 5620. On Thursday evening 28th Nisan I named her HANNAH. May she be destined for a good and long life and the Redeemer come in her lifetime and we merit to bring her to the wedding canopy with wealth and honour, Amen. Corresponding to April (14) 1860 and to 7 Kissag 1267 [in the Muslim calendar]." another daughter was named SIMHA in the hope that she would presage happiness for the family. Noteworthy is the father's prayer for a son after the birth of three daughters and the loss of their infant son.

בְּסִימָנָה טָבָה בְּשָׁעָה טָבָה בְּשָׁנַת חֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת[= חֲמֵשֶׁת אֲלָפִים] וְשֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת וְעֶשְׂרִים לִילַת אִסְרוּ חַג שֶׁל פֶּסַח אֶל סָעָה פִּי 10 וּדְקִיקִי 10 הקב"ה נָתַן לִי בַּת. 23 נִיסָן התר"ך וּפִי לֵילַת עֶרֶב שַׁבָּת קוֹדֶשׁ 28 נִיסָן הנז' קָרָאתִי שְׁמָהּ בִּישְׂרָאֵל חַנָּה. יְהִי רָצוֹן תִּכְתֹּב לְחַיִּים טוֹבִים וּבְיָמֶ[י]הָ יָבֹא גּוֹאֵל. וְיִזְכִּינוּ לְנַחֲכָה[?] לְחֻפָּתָהּ בְּעֹשֶׁר וְכָבוֹד אָמֵן כֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן. מֶוָאפַק אַפְּרִיל 1860 . מֶוָאפַק 7 כיסאג 1267

In the Hebrew year 5622 as a favorable sign and with good fortune the night of 29th Tebeth, God gave us a daughter. May the Redeemer come in her lifetime and may she augur well for us and for all Israel, Amen. And may we soon merit worthy sons, providing them well and bringing them to the wedding canopy with wealth and honour and with a full heart and satisfaction without trouble, for the merit of our ancestors, Amen. I named her SIMHA. May God make us happy, Amen. So be His will. Corresponding to 6th January 1862 and to 18 Pus 1269 [in the Muslim calendar].

Eliyahu and Esther had, however to experience the birth of yet another daughter before his prayer for a son was granted. In his note, more cryptic this time, he hoped more specifically to be rid of economic travails and to maintain viable business deals. He traveled to Rangoon, Burma a year earlier to contact potential partners to promote his export/import trade.

בְּסִימָנָה טוֹבָה וּבְמַזָּלָה טוֹבָה הקב"ה נָתַן לִי בַּת יוֹם עֶרֶב שַׁבָּת קֹדֶשׁ קֹדֶם חֲצִי הַיּוֹם 10 לְחֹדֶשׁ שְׁבָט בִּשְׁנַת חֲמֵשֶׁת אֲלָפִים וְשֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת וּשְׁלֹשָׁה [= וְשָׁלֹשׁ] התרכ"ג וְקָרָאתִי שְׁמָהּ בִּישְׂרָאֵל לֵאָה. יְהִי רָצוֹן בֵּימֵי[נ]וּ בָּא גּוֹאֵל וְיִפְדֵּינוּ מְצַעֲר[וֹת]ינוּ בְּקָרוֹב בִּמְהֵרָה בְיָמֵינוּ. אָמֵן כֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן. מוּאפֵק 30 נַנְוורי סנת 1863

"As a favorable sign and with good fortune, God gave me a daughter on Friday before noon, 10 Shebath 5623 and I named her LEAH. May the Redeemer come in her lifetime and redeem us soon from our troubles in our lifetime, Amen. Corresponding to 30th January 1863." [No corresponding Muslim date.]

Hopes for higher spirits and cheerfulness were partially fulfilled with improved business happenings in which both Eliyahu's brothers joined. So it was time for Isaac Sassoon and Jacob Raphael to marry. They did so within a week of each other – their wives being cousins from the Lanyado family. Jacob Raphael's wife was SIMHA, daughter of Isaac/Aaron Lanyado, married March 1, 1863 [= 10 Adar 5623]. Isaac Sassoon married Sarah, daughter of Moses/Aaron Lanyado on March 8, 1863 [= 17 Adar 5623]. But tragedy awaited Jacob Raphael. His bride of twenty–one days succumbed to an undisclosed illness and her husband never recovered from the inexorable blow of destiny. He left Calcutta for Rangoon to be at the other end of his brother's business deals. In the record book of commercial transactions are letters in Arabic Eliyahu wrote to Jacob Raphael. But the young husband kept pining for his lovely wife, for over seven years, when suddenly on June 2nd, 1870, when he arrived in Calcutta to spend Shavuoth with the family, he took his own life two months short of his thirty–third birthday.

Concern for the continuity of the male line of Musleahs took a jolt when a son of Isaac Sassoon and Rahma Mittana, named for his father Joseph, born January 31, 1864, died in infancy. The couple would have no more children. When the wife passed child–bearing age, they dedicated a Sefer Torah in 1888 at Maghen David Synagogue, Calcutta, to perpetuate their memories. We now have the wooden case, initially covered over with blue satin cloth streaked and pocked with silver bands and flowers. The satin was replaced by blue paint, leaving the silver embellishments intact. The family endearingly relate blue to the color of his eyes, a rarity in Baghdadi stock. The original well–worn scroll had to be replaced in the United States.

Meanwhile, concern for Musleah sonship continued. With the birth of his fourth daughter, Eliyahu is said to have made a Neder [= vow] in the traditional formula: "If God gives me a son, I will name him Meir, after Rabbi Meir Baal ha–Ness [the reputed miracle worker], and Ezra Sopher," [venerated by Iraqi Jews who would flock to his tomb in Azer, a village near the port city of Basra, declare a wish and utter a prayer for its fulfillment.] It is not known in what circumstances the Musleah pledge was made and carried forward, but certainly Eliyahu and/or Esther did not make a trip to Iraq. They supposedly were counseled to envision themselves on sacred pilgrimage. Significant it is that it took five years for Esther to conceive again, during which time advice and prayers on their behalf were sought of rabbinical authorities in Iraq and the Holy Land. Our presumption may be justified, because Eliyahu was appointed Gabbai to collect funds in India for the Yeshiva, and the preservation of the tomb, of Rabbi Meir in Tiberias, an honor enjoyed by the next two generations of Musleahs in Calcutta.

The birth of a son was the source of great gratification and jubilation in the family. The father's note brimmed with gusto:

בְּשֵׁם הַשֵּׁם נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִצְלִיחַ אָמֵן כֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן. בְּסִימָן טוֹב וּבְיוֹם טוֹב וּבְשָׁעָה טוֹבָה וּבְמַזָּלָה טוֹבָה לְכָבוֹד הקב"ה נָתַן לַיי בֵּין [= בן] יוֹם ד' 11 כְּסְלֵו בְּשָׁנַת חֲמֵשֶׁת אֲלָפִים וְשֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת וְתִשְׁעָה[= וְתַשַׁע] וְעֶשְׂרִים התרכ"ט בְּשָׁעָה שְׁלִשָׁה[= שָׁלֹשׁ] וְחֲצִי וּהְיִי פָּרָשַׁת וַיֵּשֶׁלַח. וּבֵין[= וּבֵן] שְׁמֹנַת יָמִים עָשִׂיתִי לוֹ מִילָה וְהוּא יוֹם ד' 18 כְּסְלֵו התרכ"ט וְקָרִיתִי[= וְקָרֵאתִי] שְׁמוֹ בִּישְׂרָאֵל מֵאִיר עֶזְרָא. יְהִי רָצוֹן הקב"ה יִשְׁ[מְ]רֵהוּ וְיַעְזְרֵהוּ. וְיהִי רָצוֹן יְזַכֵּינוּ לְתוֹרָתוֹ וּלְחֻפָּתוֹ וּלְמִצְוֹתָיו בְּלֵב שְׂמֵחָה וּבְעֹשֶׁר. וּמִזָּקֵן 11 כְּסְלֵו נז' כָּאנַת 25 נוֹבֶמְבֶר 1868. יוֹם מִילָה 18 כְּסְלֵו 2 דִיסֶמְבֶּר 1868

"In the name of God we work with success, Amen. [meaning "we shall succeed" has the same root as the family name Musleah, the successful one, alluding to the opportunity to continue the prized name Musleah.] With good fortune and in an auspicious day and at a good and fortunate time for our well–being, God gave *me* a son on Wednesday, 11 Kislev 5629 at 3:30 [a.m. or p.m.?]. This was (the week of) Parashat Wayyishlah. On the eighth day I had him circumcised on Wednesday 18th Kislev 5629 and named him MEIR EZRA. May God protect him and help him, make him worthy of Torah, Huppah and Miswoth, with a joyful heart and wealth. 11 Kislev corresponding to 25th November 1868. Circumcision on 18th Kislev corresponding to 2nd December 1868."

Eliyahu's and Esther's children received a good Torah education. Though rare for girls to be so taught, Dinah began learning Torah with Calcutta Istahd [= Arabic, teacher] Elazar at age three. A book belonging to her —Pirke Aboth (Sayings of the Fathers), bound with the Book of Ruth, both with Arabic translation and unvocalized, dated June 4, 1871 [= 5 Sivan 5631], is in our library. She was 151/2 at the time. She got married three years later. We also have a prayerbook in which she signed her name, and used well.

Hannah too was well–read. She showed off her erudition in a workbook preserved by her brother. הֲאדָא In her own handwriting in square Hebrew characters, she wrote on the first page in Arabic: [= הַשֵּׁם יִשְׁמְרָהּ וְיִחְיֶהָ] דַּפְתַּר מַאל גַּנָּאנִי הִנְדַסְתָּאנִי תְּכָצָה אֶל סְנְיוֹרָה חַנָּה בַּת אֱלִיָּאוּ יוֹסֵף מַצְלִיחַ הי"ו4 February 1875 הַיּוֹם

"This book belongs to the Hindusthani girl, Miss Hannah, daughter of Eliyahu/Yosef Musleah. May the Lord preserve and keep her, this day 4th February, 1875."

The book has but two pages of a prayer in poetry in square Hebrew characters, but Arabic language of 29 lines, and a similar prayer in poetry in Rashi script. We reproduce excerpts of the Arabic and translation.

חביב אל'[= אללה] אלייהו. עזיז אל'[= אללה] אלייהו.
ארסל יא ואחד והדאני. אלייהו יעלי שאני.
נרגו יא אלאה אל דנייא. יכפא אומתך אל מגלייא.
אגמע שמלנא אל כולייא. פי ציון כייאר לאוטאני.
יא קאעד עלא כורסי אל חק. אפתכר עקידת יצחק.
ארחם נסלהו אל אסייאק. יברא זרחי ונמשי האני.
פרגנא עלא ישמעאל. ועלא קום אל אדום אל ערל
אבני אל מקדש ולגליל. בל יאקות ול יאמאני
רוד אל כוהנים לל קרבן. ולוים עלא אל דוכאן.
פהלחין עבאדין אל צולבאן. ילתפקו אל כל חיראני.
יפרחו אוולאד ישראל. יום אל תפני עדאהום בל קתל

ואבעת להום מלאך רפאל. וגהו
ישרק מתל אל דהבאני.
ארסל יא רב אל פוקאני. אלייהו
אל מבשר אל חקני.
שוף יא רב בעין אל רחמא.
לקומך אל פצל עלא כול אומא.
ערבהו אל נקמא. אדום עובדים
אל צלבאני.
לנא יעיירו אל זהל. ואעינא מן
שרת להואל.



Figure 2. Descendants of Dinah Musleah Cohen. Grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Dinah Musleah Cohen: (On floor): Diana Levi Meyer & her brother, Ezekiel Levi, (2nd from left), & Diana's daughters, (at edges of the sofa): Esther (r), & Mozelle (l). With ENM and wife Margaret, Norah David (on floor), and a friend, (between the men on the sofa).

אסרע גיתנא מן דל אחזואל. סרחני מן דל אסדאני.
ואנגאר עלא אסמך אל עדים. ורומא קדמהא תהדים.
ואל מסזן מן זמאן אל קדים. יכרג ויפני לעראני.
מולאנה יא רב אל קודרא. אסרע אלבם תוב אל חמרא.

Oh Elijah, the beloved of God, Oh Elijah, the endeared one of God.
Oh the One and Only God, we pray send Elijah, to raise a case (?) for us.
Oh Master of the universe, we hope he will reward Your exiled people by gathering us all in Zion, the chosen land.
You Who sits on the throne of justice, remember Isaac's binding;
Have mercy upon his oppressed descendants.
May our bruises heal so that we walk joyously.
Save us from Ishmael and from the uncircumcised Edom.
Rebuild the glorious Temple with sapphire and hyacinth.
Return the Kohaneem to the sacred service and the Leviyeem to their podium;
For today the worshipers of the cross join every outlaw.
The Israelite people will rejoice the day You diminish their enemies.
Send them the angel Raphael whose face glows like gold.
Oh exalted Lord, send Elijah, the just herald.
Look out with a merciful eye for your chosen people.
[We look forward to the day] when the scion of David, royally crowned, sits on his throne of governance with leaders of the world as his subjects.
In his time, by his nobleness, our life and our mission will be uplifted.
His holiness will rule perpetually, his dominion ever established.
O Lord, cast Your claim over the gentiles …
Our beloved herald will embellish us, he will cheer our fearful hearts.
Brace yourselves, oh oppressed of hearts; the long–due and just salvation is here.
Praised is God, the One and Only, Who created the world single–handed and crowned it with speech and language.
We duly thank Him for His work of excellence, and that which He created as He wished.

He created our ancestors and selected them; he whispered fear of God into their hearts.
Elijah is among them: Praise the Mighty One for creating him.
He will soon bring the good news of the arrival of redemption over his land.
Drawn to his Lord, he bestowed his spirit over the strayers, and saved his people from death.
For centuries since, I still yearn for the merciful God to send good news of Elijah's release.

[Translated by Ilana Sasson of Teaneck, New Jersey, a scion of Iraqi forbears, with some advice from Dr. Arnold Franklin, a professor of Jewish and Islamic history at Brooklyn College. I gratefully acknowledge their help.]

Meyer Ezra was even better qualified when he concluded his schooling in 1887 at age 19. Apparently Istahd Elazar, the local Hebrew and Bible teacher, [Istahd is Arabic for teacher] expanded his school to include a secular department. We have two workbooks of Meyer Ezra — one for English grammar, writing, reading and arithmetic, and the other for Hebrew/Arabic. He was demonstrably weak in Math. One problem tells us the year he worked on it. In what year will Elias who was born in 1873 be as old as the Queen of England is now [= 1883] who was born in 1832, and how old will she be then? Meyer Ezra's working:

1883	1873
1832	51
51	1924

The teacher's remark: Only 1/2 done! And she fills in the other half::

1924
1832
92

The next problem was too tough for the student: Divide 1344 amongst 14 children, 23 women and 18 men, so that each woman will have twice as much as women and children together? Meyer Ezra's working:

14	
46	
54	
112	1344
	12

The teacher remarks: WRONG and supplies the right answer:

1 x 14	14	
2 x 23	46	
6 x 18	108	
	168	1344
		8

Two years later Meyer Ezra still could not figure out this type of problem: When will A who was born in 1839 be as old as B is now (1885) who was born in 1813 and how old will B then be?

Meyer Ezra:

1885	1885	72
1813	1839	46
72	46	26

WRONG

The teacher's correction:

1885	1839	1911
1813	72	1813
72	1911	98

Two years still later, Meyer Ezra remained in a quandary over this problem: In what year will A who was born in 1851 be as old Ax is now (1887) who was born 1823, and how old will he be then?

MEYER EZRA:

1887	1852
1823	64
64	1915

Teacher's comment: only 1/2 done.

1915
1823
92

When an arithmetical problem was correctly done the teacher wrote: RIGHT

ART WRITING

Examples: Obedience first

Speak the truth

Perseverance wins

Learn diligence and you will reap the fruits

GRAMMAR: Correct the following errors ...

PARSING

READING: From THE ROYAL READER Questions and answers:

What sort of youth was Henry V when he was Prince of Wales?

He was a very wild and riotous youth.

What sort of companions did he mix with?

He mixed with low companions who let him do many base and foolish acts quite unworthy of a Prince.

What did the Prince say when one of these was sent to prison?

When the Prince who was in court heard the sentence he fell into a great rage. He spoke very rudely to the judge and commanded him to let his friend off.

What did the judge reply?

You have no right to speak thus to the King's judge

What did the Prince then try to do?

The Prince getting more enraged then tried to set the prisoner free himself.

When the judge told him to cease from such riot and it was none of his business. What did the judge order?

The judge ordered the officers of the court to size (sic!) the Prince and take him to prison with his friend.

How did the Prince then behave?

On hearing this, the Prince was very much ashamed of himself. He had not a word to say, but laying down his sword, he bowed to the judge and walked quietly off to prison.

What did the King say when he heard this?

Happy is the King that a judge so fearlessly enforces the laws, and a son who knows how to submit (sic!) to them.

How did the Prince treat his former companions when he became king?

The King told them that he had given up his foolish ways and advised them to do the same.

MEYER EZRA did well in English but remained weak in Math. So his parents figured he would be better off married and got him a wife who could compute their ages, their income, and the number of their children! That year he married Masuda, daughter of Isaac Meyer. He was 19 and she was 12!! Their married home, 12 Parsi Church Street, became the family residence for 37 years. Ten children and two grandchildren were born there.

The Musleah family attended religious services at the old Neveh Shalome. They transferred to Maghen David, built in 1883–84 by Elia Ezra in memory of his father David. Elias/Moses Dwek Cohen, the fourth generation of his family to hold the post of Hazzan, issued permanent seats to families who chose to worship at the new synagogue. Eliyahu Musleah was allocated two seats in the first Hekhal at the south–west corner overlooking the window. Rev. Cohen's grand design, now in our possession, mentions simply: Eliyahu Yosef Musleah Way–Ibnu [= Elias Joseph Musleah and his son, that is, Meyer Ezra, then 15].

South–West–Corner Window

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son Hilali	Eliyahu Hyeem Hilali		son MEYER EZRA	EJM
		M I B D E D N L C E H		

A sacred custom debarred sons from sitting in the seats previously occupied by their fathers. MEYER EZRA continued to squat in his original seat, while his oldest surviving son, Isaac Sassoon began using his grandfather's seat. Isaac's brother, Elias Hyam sat in the first seat of the middle bench until the early '30s when Eliyahu Hyeem Hilali, incapacitated, stopped attending services at Maghen David in favor of services at his home. Sifrei Torah, from Maghen David, were dispatched to Eliyahu Hyeem's home. MEYER EZRA's grandsons, MEYER EZRA (Jr.) and Ezekiel Nissim took over a part of the middle bench. Grandpa's seat (died 1941) remained vacant until EZEKIEL NISSIM returned to Calcutta after ordination. Another Eliyahu Hyeem, my Uncle Elias, began occupying that seat.

ELIYAHU MUSLEAH'S BUSINESS DEALINGS

Thanks to a record book of mercantile entries in the mostly import trade of Eliyahu Musleah, a close look of that trade is made possible. The book, tracking transactions from 1867–1880, was written in two parts: the first in English by an Englishman, hired because Eliyahu's English expression was not Up to par, and the second in Rashi–script Arabic by Eliyahu himself and rarely by brother Isaac Sassoon, addressed to Jewish clientele in other cities in India as well as in Rangoon, Burma, leaving no doubt that the business began years before and after those dates.

Each indent for goods in the English segment was addressed to an overseas individual or company in England or France principally:

H. Ireland, Esquire, 141 Rue du Palais Gallien, Bordeaux, France.
I. Bondel, Esquire, 66 Rue de Bundy, Paris.
John Watson & Co., 34 Frenchurch Street, London, B.C.
In Moulmein, Burma – A. Holiday
In Dinapur, India – I.E. Burrows, Esquire, B. Bose & Co.
Arabic–speaking agents in Burma and India included
Eliyahu Arzooni, Shaul Moshe Aharon Lanyado (Rangoon), Eliyahu Ezra Elia, Moshe Yosef Yaakob, David Hye Shelomo Moosa & Co., Yehezkel Yitshak Eliyahu, Yosef Abraham Taazi (Tassie), Ezekiel Hyeem Abraham Cohen.

List of goods imported from H. Ireland, Bordeaux, France – 21 June, 1867 –

Capsules, empty, [supplied to pharmacies and druggists to fill their medicines] urgently required.
Silver embroidering
Playing cards. Should they be approved, I shall be able to send you extensive orders for them.
10,000 plain capsules
10,000 flowered capsules
A dozen playing cards as sample
Exshaw and Castillian brandy. Send me prices. If the prices are reasonable, I shall be glad to order my requirements through your good self.
Bourbon Cossack brandy – 30 dozens
Eau De Fleur d Orange – to be shipped directly from Marseilles
4 boxes each containing 5 packs Pailletes Dor/Silver Gold color. as per sample enclosed.
No.1 and 2 brandies
Turpentine
Rowards Quinine
Wine glasses, assortments. This glassware to be posted with care and good deal of straw carefully shipped and packed with strong crates.
[This item was the source of a wide variety of cups, chalices and tumblers, some of which EJM saved for his family's Passover use. Some are still being celebrated by the fifth generation of his family. A set of red glasses he reserved for Hanukkah is an intimate and treasured appurtenance used by me, EZEKIEL NISSIM, more than 100 years after his passing. I hope and pray that it remains in active use as a family heirloom for yet unborn generations.]
Indent of goods required from France dated October 1867.
12 dozens Orange Water. I wish this to be the same quality that you sent out for Ruckett Co. in 1865.
12 dozens Brandy from the Associated Vineyard Cultivation.
10 cases of 20 dozens lavender glass stopper
2 cases of 4 dozens lavender cork stopper
2 cases of 12 dozens lavender glass stopper for smaller bottles
2 cases of 12 dozens lavender cork stopper for smaller bottles
4 cases of 24 dozens lavender cork common quality in wooden cases
2 cases of 50 dozens Macassor oil
1 case of 20 dozens Essence of Peppermint

4 cases of 100 dozens Macassor oil Fabrique de River at Paris price about 3 francs per dozen
5 cases of 100 dozens Can Decologne
10 cases of 10 dozens Prinas glass stoppers
The following not to be purchased from Nelson Depoy but elsewhere
5 dozens fruits in Noyaux
5 dozens fruits in Syrup
20 dozens Bonbon Cossack, same as last time but labels to be more attractive
10 dozens assorted candied fruits, glass stopper
10 dozens Brandy fruits, glass stopper
10 dozens Brandy fruits, cork stopper
10,000 plain capsules #14
10,000 flowered capsules #14
1 dozen round black felt hats, middling quality
1 dozen drab black felt hats, middling quality
50 dozens Exshaw #2, sold here by Scall Co at 15/8 [= fifteen and a half rupees] only if you think it would pay at this rate, not otherwise
5 cases 100 gross special safety matches. This can be shipped direct from London
5 cases assorted wooden toys, various kinds such as birds, animals, good quality, price about 100 francs per case
5 cases of above, inferior quality, about 60 francs per case

This is an enormous order indicating a flourishing business and EJM's willingness to take risks within self–imposed limits. It should be pointed out that the record book of about 500 pages registered 275 pages of European orders written in English and about 175 pages to Indian and Burmese customers written in Arabic with Rashi–script. A comparatively few pages are still legible, but enough to gauge the extent of EJM's commercial ventures. All letters for orders would be signed "E.J. Musleah," written by his employee, and for the record also in Rashi–script אי גי מצליחה, but letters to to Jewish customers he would sign in Rashi–script such as:

(ELIYAHU YOSEF MUSLEAH EREB ROSH HASHANA 5628 = 1867)

EJM would dispatch European imports to places like Dinapur, on the Ganges river, as on 18th September 1867 to Messrs. B. Bose & Co:

> "I have the pleasure to acknowledge receipt of your letter 12th September, and as desired to deal with me on credit .... I have dispatched 6 cases ... white capsules and 2 cases flowers and 1 case Curocove (?) to the address of S.M. Lanyado [= Saul Moses Lanyado who later served as Hazzan in Bethel Synagogue, Calcutta]. Total for the indent – 141 rupees and 14 annas [16 annas made a rupee]."

Another typical letter, dated 30th October 1867, is reproduced here to demonstrate the highly prosperous dealings EJM was pursuing. The rupee figure could be multiplied perhaps 15 or 20 times for values a hundred years later.

> "Your esteemed favour of 18th ultimo duly came to hand with invoice for goods shipped on my account per 'Reunion' and your draft for Rs. 9,045.3 has been duly accepted.
>
> H. Ireland, Bordeaux. I find of late Messrs. Chorne Kilburn & Co are not getting my consignments of Castillian and Exshaws brandy of the usual celebrated marks which I believe you used to send them and most of which I was buying from them and my customers

having got accustomed to these brands would therefore not use any others although I have supplied them with Castillian and Exshaws brandy of other makes but have been disappointed. I am therefore asking the favour of your sending me by the first sailing vessel

20 dozs of your usual mark Comrite Castillian brandy 1795

100 dozs of your usual mark Comrite Castillian brandy 1835

25 dozs of your usual mark Exshaw Brandy #1

25 dozs of your usual mark Exshaw Brandy #2

20,000 plain capsules #14

10,000 flowered capsules #14

10 cases 20 dozs lavender glass stopper

10 cases 6 dozs " " " small

10 cases 6 dozs " cork "

10 cases 10 dozs assorted liqueris

10 cases 10 dozs Rose Liquerice

10 cases 10 dozs Prunes glass stoppers

In the invoice of goods per 'Reunion' I find there is no discount allowed on capsules. Should this be an omission, please rectify and oblige."

In September of the following year, the same supplier received an order for a total of *500 dozens* of glass and cork stoppers, Mecasser oil, essence of peppermint, Decologne, and candied brandy fruits stoppers.

By the end of 1869, Exshaw and Martell Hennessey brandies were still in great demand. EJM ordered 100 dozens of each at 22 to 24 francs per dozen together with 50 dozens of Common Cogniac "with neat labels" at 7 to 8 francs per dozen. At the same time, he inquired about I. Labordes brandy and indented for 50 dozens Eau de Cologne at 2 to 21/2 francs per dozen. "You will also do me the favour of giving me early advices of the shipment of brandies and indeed everything you ship for me, which will be a great service for me, and I trust you will always do so."

In March 1871, brandies were still the most popular product. EJM ordered:

100 dozs Exshaw #1
20 " " #2
75 dozs Hennessey
75 dozs F. Martell
30 dozs Cructson (?) curacas
30 dozs Milton Rose liqueur, quart bottle
20 dozs " " " pint "
50 dozs Anisette, fine red and white
and a total of 300 dozens of oil peppermint and Eau de Cologne and stoppers.

Letters bore no specific address for EJM — simply Calcutta. On 8th November 1871, for the first time, the letter carried an address — 17 Pollock Street — in a district called Murgihatta, a bazar for the sale of chickens, and a stone's throw away from the synagogues. Was he affluent enough to afford to buy a property? In any case, in the next two or three years he owned two other properties, 12 Pollock Street and 16 Ezra Street, which he began renting out at fifty and

twenty–five rupees per month respectively. EJM apparently tried his hand at specimen receipts for the tenants of his two properties as well as sample receipts for domestic servants or other employees at six and twelve rupees per month. He also drew up a list of weights and measures, local equivalents of British standards.

In February 1872, EJM received two drafts totalling a very handsome 3,322 rupees. At the same time, his dealings with the London firm of John Watson & Co. picked up steam. He submitted a tender of some article with the proviso "but if procurable at two shillings less ... I shall be able to hand you another shilling for, say, 2,000 dozens ... Trusting we shall have large transactions with you always."

"P.S. Please inform me the price of While's Sherry and Port Wine. Also wools of assorted colours ... source pans, kettles, coffee mills and writing ink 3/11/6 a dozen." Then in EJM's own handwriting: Messrs. John Watson & Co, 34 Frenchwich Street. He wrote an indent, then scribbled "Cancelled" all over, which leads us to conclude that despite the growing degree of his commercial ventures, he was ever careful of the quality of the products he ordered.

Within two weeks of each other — 18th June and 2nd July 1872 — EJM acknowledged two drafts of over one thousand rupees on the Bank of India. In the second letter, he commented: "I regret to say that the market for wine and beer being so very dull here that there is every probability of my suffering a heavy loss. Please therefore cancell all indents for wine and beer."

Fear of losses began to weigh on him. in a letter dated 7th March 1873, he wrote to I . Bondel, his Paris agent, that his letters to them were not being acknowledged. "I am at a loss to conceive the reason." "Regarding the parcel of spangle which I have returned, I hope you have been able to dispose of it without any serious loss to me, and soon to be favoured with account sale of the same." This letter was signed by EJM's brother, Isaac Sassoon, who was 40 years old at the time. ISSACK S. MUSLEAH as well as in Rashi script:. ISM signed other letters dated 18th July 1876, 5th January 1877, and April 1877.

EJM must have served as agent of other businessmen dealing with overseas companies for which he received his commission. Here is a specimen:

> 5th November 1975 addressed to E.D. Joyce Esq, London. "... Please ship the magnets of 8th October at your limit. Please ship ... Looking Glasses from S. Joseph & Son ... 6 dozs Clapping Dolls ... with china heads." Signed, S.C. Cohen

On March 23rd 1877, there is an interesting indent for earthenware from Staffordshire England. If earthenware is china, which EJM insisted should be well packed and shipped, family Musleah got its stock of Passover crockery, some of which is still being used.

Next, we set down a letter which reveals EJM's commission in all his transactions.

> 21 August 1877 Messrs. John Watson & Co, London
>
> "... As regards the commission, I will accord you the same rate as I do others at 6% only, but in case of a large quantity of purchases, they charge me at a reduced rate ..."
>
> We do not know for sure when and why the import business that thrived for between eighteen and twenty years, ceased to be. Did it gradually decline by a steady downturn in commercial fortunes? Or did it collapse without warning by a major failure in foreign markets? Or was EJM fraudulently done out of large capital funds that brought to an end further participation in business enterprises of worth? He may have ended the same way he

started — with small dealings enough to keep body and soul together. After 1887, with the marriage of son Meyer Ezra, he and his wife had no dependants living with them, and living off the rentals of two properties or on the interest of the sale of those properties as well as the income of a limited business.

From a course of action adopted by EJM in his later years, one could infer deception over misadventure. MEYER EZRA would say that his father used to ask to be called to the Fifth Aliyah on Parashat Ha–azinu if it fell on the Shabbath between Rosh Hashana and Kippur. That portion of the Torah invokes punishment on evil doings and workers of iniquity. "Were they wise, they would think upon this, gain insight into their future, … Ah! The vine for them is from Sodom, from the vineyards of Gomorah; the grapes for them are poison, a bitter growth their clusters … .Lo, I have it all put away, sealed up in My storehouses, to be My vengeance and recompense, at the time that their foot falters. Yea, the day of their disaster is near, and destiny rushes upon them. [Deut. 32:29–35] [Vine, vineyards, grapes and clusters, symbolize Divine chastisement.]

Suffice it to say that EJM was not well–off at the time of his death in 1895, and his wife Esther moved in with the family of Meyer Ezra at 12 Parsi Church Street and occupied a room there till her own death in 1914.

COLLECTOR OF BOOKS AND APPURTENANCES

EJM assembled a large collection of religious books and appurtenances as well as home ware which his son, grandchildren and great–grandchildren meticulously preserved.

Twelve years after EJM's death, a Sefer Torah was dedicated at Maghen David Synagogue, Calcutta, in his memory. The donor is not known for sure, but it could have been his grandson, Ezra Meir, oldest son of his daughter, Simha, wife of Eliyahu Rahameem/Isaac/Mordecai Cohen, of Rangoon, Burma, whose family business was thriving at the time. The wooden case is overlaid with filigree silver, the top panels being mirrored glass bordered with a colorful floral design. The scroll is of leather encased in wooden box overlaid with silver. The inscription, under floral–designed glass panels:

On the right panel תִּיק זֶה וס"ת[= וְסֵפֶר תּוֹרָה] שֶׁבּוֹ לְמִנּוּחַת[הַמְּרוּחָם הַזָּקֵן אֵלִיָּהוּ יוֹסֵף מַצְלִיחַ נ"ע [= נוּחוֹ עֵדֶן] שְׁנַת תרס"ז[הַיְשִׁישׁ over–70} Eliyahu Yosef Musleah, rest in Eden, in the year 5667 [= 1907].

On the left panel: וְזֹאת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר שָׂם מֹשֶׁה לִפְנֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵלֶּה הָעֵדוֹת וְהַחֻקִּים[ם] וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִ[ים] וְהַתּוֹר[וֹת] This is the Teaching which Moses set before the Israelites [Deut. 4:44]. These are the exhortations, laws, and norms (that Moses addressed to the People of Israel) [Deut. 4:45].

On paper stuck at the bottom, the following inscription:

תּוֹרָה צִוָּה לָנוּ מֹשֶׁה מוֹרָשָׁה קְהִלַּת יַעֲקֹב מֹשֶׁה אֱמֶת וְתוֹרָ[תּוֹ אֱמֶת]

Moses charged us with the Teaching, as the heritage of the congregation of Jacob [Deut. 33:4]

Around the outside of the silver casing are two bands of inscription.

תִּיק זֶה וְסֵפֶר תּוֹרָה שֶׁבּוֹ לְמִנּוּחַת הַמְּרוּחָם הַזָּקֵן אֵלִיָּהוּ יוֹסֵף מַצְלִיחַ תנצב"ה = תְּהִי נִשְׁמָתוֹ צְרוּרָה בִּצְרוֹר הַחַיִּים[
בִּשְׁנַת תרס"ז עַל מְנַת בְּכָל מָקוֹם שֶׁיִּרְצוּ בַּעֲלֵי הס"ת לְהוֹצִיא[ו] וּלְהָנִיחוֹ לִמְקוֹמוֹת אֲחֵרִים הָרְשׁוּת בְּיָדָם וּבְכ[בְדָם]

"This case and the Sefer Torah in it is in memory of Eliyahu/Yosef Musleah, may his soul be bound in the bond of eternal life. The year 5667 (1907). On condition that the owners and heirs reserve the right to remove it and place it any other place they wish."

A Mahwi [= Yad, Pointer] and a green mantelpiece with gold thread accompany the Sefer Torah.

הַמְּ [רוּחָם] הַזָּקֵן אֵלְיָהוּ יוֹסֵף מַצְלִיחַ נ"ע

Mantelpiece: זאת הַמִּטְפַּחַת הִקְדִּישׁ ה"ר עֶזְרָא מֵאִיר אֵלְיָהוּ רַחֲמִים יִצְחָק מָרְדְּכַי הַכֹּהֵן הי"ו לְעִלּוּי נר"ן [= נְשָׁמָה רוּחַ וּנְשָׁמָה] הַזָּקֵן הַיָּשִׁישׁ הַמְּרוּחָם אֵלְיָהוּ יוֹסֵף מַצְלִיחַ נ"ע נלב"ע[= נִפְטַר לְבֵית עוֹלָמוֹ] יום ה' ט"ז אֱלוּל התרנ"ה תנצב"ה

"Ezra Meir (son of) Eliyahu Rahameem (son of) Isaac (son of) Mordecai Cohen dedicated this mantelpiece for the repose of the soul of Eliyahu/Yosef Musleah who died on Thursday, 16th Elul 5655. May his soul be bound in the bond of eternal life."

The Sefer was taken from the synagogue in 1964 by his great–grandson, EZEKIEL NISSIM, in a PASUL state, that is, it was not being used because its lettering in many places needed repairs by an expert scribe unavailable in Calcutta, and brought to the United States. After being attended to, it is now being used in public worship under the care of EZEKIEL NISSIM's daughter Flora and her husband Arthur Yavelberg. The children of EZEKIEL NISSIM and Margaret — Flora, Rahel and Aliza — read from it. The Yavelberg children, Aaron Musleah and Joel Nissim, EJM's great–great–great grandchildren, read from it during services. When their youngest son Benjamin Musleah will be Bar–Mitsva in 2004, he too hopes to use it.

Incidentally, EJM's brother, Isaac Sassoon's Sefer Torah, whose scroll was beyond repair and lying unused for many years in Maghen David Synagogue, was brought to the United States by EZEKIEL NISSIM in 1997. A fresh Sephardi scroll to fit the blue case dedicated by Isaac Sassoon Musleah and his wife Rahma Mittana in 1888, was purchased by EZEKIEL NISSIM, and the Sefer is now in keeping of daughter Rahel and is used at religious services. Rahel's daughter, Shira, another of EJM's great–great–great grandchildren, read her Torah portion from it at her Bat Mitsva in January 2000, more than 80 years after EJM's death. ISAAC SASSOON MUSLEAH and his wife left no children, but his beloved grandnephew and namesake, Isaac Sassoon/Meyer Ezra Musleah's children, grandchildren, and great–grandchildren, diligently perpetuate their memories as their forbears solemnly wished.

A distinctive ornamentation at Musleahs' Sukkoth has been the FANUSE, Persian for lamp. It occupied pride of place at the center of each of the ten arches in the Sukkah, originally lit by oil wicks but with the introduction of electricity, by colored bulbs. The oldest Fanuse, a purple one, initially bought by EJM early in his married life, surprisingly has a date on it — "Registered 10th March 1857!" A matching Tirya top, used by EJM's wife, Esther, subsequently held a Tirya of seven oil wicks memorializing seven female family members in Maghen David on Kippur, as did a green–topped one whose wicks were lit for deceased male members. EZEKIEL NISSIM and wife Margaret still use the purple top to crown their own Tirya, ninety years after great–grandma's death.

Two other Fanuses, a green and a blue, hang through the year at the Musleah home in Philadelphia. A cherished yellow Fanuse, applied by the Family Musleah to memorialize the head of the household's father, transported to Sydney, Australia, by ISAAC SASSOON MUSLEAH (Jr)'s daughter, Ruby Musleah Mordecai and her family, unfortunately did not

arrive whole. Yet another yellow Fanuse was taken by Mavis Morris Hyman, daughter of MEYER EZRA's daughter, Mozelle, to London, England, where it proudly hangs all year round in the Hyman living–room. The rest of the Fanuses at the Calcutta residence of the Musleahs, partially broken or otherwise defaced, were not salvaged.

EJM's library of books signified his ownership by his last name only — מ׳צ׳ל׳י׳ח meem , saddi, lammed, yode, heth, in Rashi script. The volumes include a gamut of reading material, from Zohar and Bible study to daily and Festival prayers and edification. One tract, a manuscript, deserves special mention. It bears the signature of EJM's father, Joseph, אֲנִי גּוֹאֵל אַחֲרוֹן הַצָּעִיר יוֹסֵף אֵלִיָּהוּ מַצְלִיחַ יצ"ו [= יִשְׁמְרֵהוּ צוּרוֹ וְגוֹאֲלוֹ] with the inscription: I am the last to own [literally to redeem] this volume. Yosef Eliyahu Musleah, May his Redeemer and Rock preserve him.פ The manual which can be considered a talisman, consists of mystical writings of three tomes bound in a single volume copied in Baghdad in 1766 by one, Yosef ben Shai Hyeem.[2]

Before he died, EJM had twelve grandchildren: Dinah's daughter Mazal Tobe [= Mozelle], with husband Abraham/Mordecai Cohen; Hannah's sons Saleh and Eliyahu Rahameem, with husband Moses/Saleh Moses; Simha's children Ezra Meir, Isaac Faraj, Abraham Shalome, Toba, David Hye and Maurice, with husband Eliyahu Rahameem/Isaac /Mordecai Cohen; and son Meir Ezra's children, namesake Eliyahu (died of burns six months later), Esther and brother's namesake, Isaac Sassoon, with wife Masuda/Isaac/Meyer.

His tomb inscription:[3] This marks the grave of the over–70 ELIYAHU YOSEF MUSLEAH, may he rest in Eden, died Thursday night 16th Elul 5655. May his soul be bound in the bond of eternal life.

Alongside EJM's grave lies the remains of his grandson and namesake, ELIYAHU, firstborn of Meir Ezra Musleah and wife Masuda, who died of burns during the Hindu festival of Divali, a celebration of the god of fire, observed by the use of fire crackers, February/March 1896. The tomb is unmarked.

ISAAC SASSOON/JOSEPH MUSLEAH 1832–1918

The role of grandfather was assumed by EJM's younger brother, Isaac Sassoon, about nine years his junior, born in Calcutta, 22nd Shebath 5592 [= January 24th, 1832], the first immediate family member to be born in India. He read his Maftir on Shabbath Hanukka, 30th Kislev, 5604 [= 23rd November 1843, two months short of his 11th birthday. His great–nephew and namesake was born 51 years later almost to the Hebrew date. EJM's grandchildren, his son Meir Ezra's children, never knew their grandfather, so they called their great–uncle, Chchota Dada, junior grandfather. Having lost their only child in infancy, he and his wife adopted his nephew's children as their own and would spend much time with them, entertaining and being entertained.

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2. The three sections: 1. SEFER URIM VE TUMMIM (The Book of Aaron's Breastplate, based on the twelve precious stones mentioned in Exodus 39:8-21 and bearing the names of each of the tribes of Israel. 2. SEFER GORALOTH (The Book of Questions) written by the Spanish biblical commentator, Abraham ibn Ezra, recording a list of twelve questions put to the constellations in twelve different areas, and their responses: a) One's needs b) Marriage c) Children d) Journeying e) Business f) Prison g) Illness h) Enemies i) Property Loss j) Agriculture. Questions are also asked of sixty Biblical characters from Adam to Ezra the Scribe and their answers. 3. SEFER HA BAL-EE. Questions posed to the stars, sun, moon, thunder, lightning, clouds, rain and fire from heaven.

3. צִיּוּן שֶׁל הַז [הַזָּקֵן] הַיְשִׁישׁ הַמְ [הַמְּהוּלָל] נִלְבַ"ע [נִזְחוֹ עֶדְנָן] נִפְטַר לְבֵית עוֹלָמוֹ [לַיְל ה' טַ"ת] אֵלִיָּהוּ יוֹסֵף מַצְלִיחַ נ"ע [נִזְחוֹ עֶדְנָן] נִלְבַ"ע [נִפְטַר לְבֵית עוֹלָמוֹ] לַיְל ה' טַ"ת
אֱלוּל התרנ"ה תנצב"ה [תְּהִי נִשְׁמָתוֹ צְרוּרָה בִּצְרוֹר הַחַיִּים]

When the children would admire their grandfather's blue eyes, he would respond jovially: "What good is it? They will be filled with earth in the grave!" Still enjoying their company in his eighties, he once good–humorously instructed them: "When I die, wail after me: Way Dada! Way Dada! [= Alas, our grandfather!]" The youngsters liked the idea and immediately burst into chorus: "Way Dada!" Enjoying their joke (or was he superstitious?) the old man stopped them: "Not now. When I die!"

He married Sarah, daughter of Moses /Aaron Lanyado, of a reputable Baghdadi family, on 17th Adar, 5623 [= March 8, 1863]. She was renamed Rahma Mittana during a serious illness from which she recovered. Her new name hints at having been spared *by the grace of God [Rahma]* Who presented her loved ones with a *gift [Mittana]*. Was it coincidence that the Sefer Torah they תְּרַחַ"ם dedicated in their lifetime was in the year , the same Hebrew root as the Arabic, Rahma? Their 51–year marriage ended with her death on the seventh day of Pesah 1914 (April 17). "She died in Pesah?!" her 82–year –old husband exclaimed rhetorically in disbelief, a festive day, and one for which she ever worked hard to prepare.

The couple loved all their nephews and nieces, but treated ISAAC SASSOON MUSLEAH (Jr) as a son and requested the latter's parents for permission to let their son recite Kaddish for him in their parents' lifetime. So it was that, when Chchota Dada died on May 6, 1918 [= 24 Iyar] and Junior was out of town, the funeral was delayed a day for his return.

His tomb inscription:[4] "This marks the grave of the over–80 ISAAC SASSOON/JOSEPH MUSLEAH, born Monday 22nd Tebeth 5592 [= January 24, 1832] and died Monday 24th Iyar 5678 [= May 6, 1918]. He lived 86 years, 4 months and 2 days. May his soul be bound in the bond of eternal life.

The inscription of the ISAAC SASSON/RAHMA MITTANA Sefer Torah placed in Maghen David Synagogue.[5] The left panel:

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4. צִיּוּן שֶׁל הַזָּקֵן הַיָּשִׁישׁ הַמְּרוּחָם יִצְחָק שָׁשׁוֹן יוֹסֵף מְצַלִּיחַ נוּחוֹ עֵדֶן נוֹלַד יוֹם ב' כ"ב מַטְבֵּט הִתְקַצ"ב וְנִפְטַר לְבֵית עוֹלָמוֹ יוֹם ב' כ"ד אִיָּר הִתְרע"ח וְהָיוּ יְמֵי חַיָּיו פ"ו שָׁנָה ד' חוֹדָשִׁים ב' יָמִים תְּנֹצֵב"ה

5. זֶה הַתֵּיק וְס"ת[=וְסֵפֶר תּוֹרָה] שֶׁבּוֹ הִקְדִּישׁוּהוּ ה"ר יִצְחָק שָׁשׁוֹן יוֹסֵף אַלִּיהוּ מַצַּלִּיחַ הי"ו[=הַשֵּׁם יִשְׁמְרֵהוּ וְיִחַיֵּהוּ] וְאִשְׁתּוֹ ס"ו[=סִינְיוֹרָה] שָׂרָה הַנִּקְרֵאת רַחְמָה מִתָּנָה מב"ת[=מִנָּשִׁים בָּאֹהֶל תְּבוֹרָךְ] יז"ל[=יְהִיוּ זְכֻרָם לִבְרָכָה] שְׁנַת תְּרַחַ"ם צִיּוֹן אנס"ו[=אָמֵן נֶצַח סֶלָה וָעֶד] וְזֹאת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר שָׂם מֹשֶׁה לִפְנֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תּוֹרָה צִוָּה לָנוּ מֹשֶׁה מוֹרָשָׁה קְהִלַּת יַעֲקֹב אֵלֶּה הַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים וְהַתּוֹרוֹ[ות] אֲשֶׁר נָתַן ה' בֵּינוֹ וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהַר סִינַי בְּיַד מֹשֶׁה

This case and its Sefer Torah were dedicated by ISAAC SASSOON (son of) Joseph (son of) Eliyahu MUSLEAH, may God preserve him in life, and his wife, SARAH called RAHMA MITTANA, most blessed of women [Judges 5:24], may their names ever be for blessing, in the year 1888 (computed by the letters Tav, Resh, Chet, Mem: May the Lord have COMPASSION on Zion,) [Psalm 102:14], Amen, forever and ever.

The right panel:

This is the Teaching that Moses set before the Israelites [Deut. 4:44], when Moses charged us with the Teaching as the heritage of the congregation of Jacob [Deut. 33:4].

These are the laws, norms and directions that the Lord established, through Moses on Mount Sinai, between Himself and the Israelite people [Lev. 26:46].



Figure 3. Eliyahu/Yosef Musleah Appointed Treasurer In Calcutta.

Eliyahu/Yosef Musleah's appointment as Paqueed [=Treasurer] in Calcutta of the Yeshiva of Rabbi Meir Baal ha-ness, Tiberias, Israel, 1889.

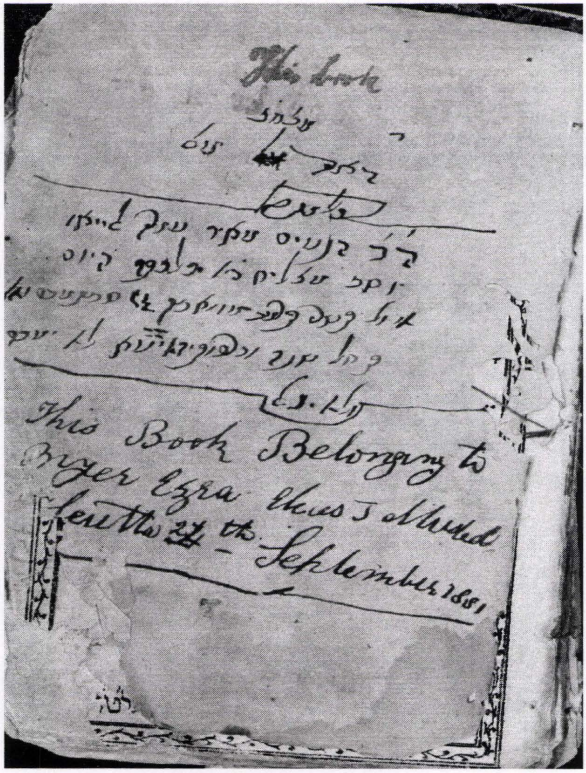


Figure 4. Meyer Ezra/Eliyahu Musleah's First Hebrew–Arabic Primer.

The first Hebrew-Arabic primer of Meyer Ezra/Eliyahu Musleah, 24th September, 1881 shortly before his Bar Mitsva.



Figure 5. Maghen David Synagogue Arkroom.

Maghen David Synagogue, Calcutta, built 1884. Background - Arkroom; semi-circular place for Duchan (Kohaneem Blessing); Tebah (Bimah); Side sections, left and right, men's seating; upper floor - ladies' section.



Figure 11. Maghen David, Calcutta.

(This and the other color pictures of the synagogue taken by Dr. Maurice Gubbay)

Maghen David Synagogue, Calcutta where four generations of Family Musleah worshiped and a fifth visited and worshiped on Shabbath morning.

The embellished floral designs atop the imposing pillars, a French import, look alike but on close scrutiny, their minute differences may be observed.

This is the first of several pictures taken by Dr. Maurice Gubbay, born in Calcutta, has a medical degree from Calcutta University, practised medicine in London, England, lives with wife, Mathilde in Rishon Le Zion, Israel.



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Hekhal #6

1. Yehezkel Hye/ Saleh/Hakham Moshi
2. Moshe/Saleh Hakham Moshi
3. His children
4. Aharon/Moshe ha–Kohen
5. His son [Moshe]
6. Yitshak Sassone [Yosef] Musleah
7. Eliyahu/Shelomo Hyeem Musleah
8. Shelomo Hyeem Musleah
9. Eliyahu/Yosef Musleah
10. His son [Meir Ezra] [Grandpa]
11. Sassone/Nissim/Abraham Barukh
12. Shimone Hyeem/Dwek ha–Kohen
13. Shelomo/Yehudah Ashkenazi
14. His son [Yehudah]
15. Moshe/Shelomo Hakham Moshi
16. Yehezkel/Shelomo Hakham Moshi
17. Eliezer/Binyamin/Eliezer [Musleah]
18. Nissim/Binyamin/Eliezer [Musleah]

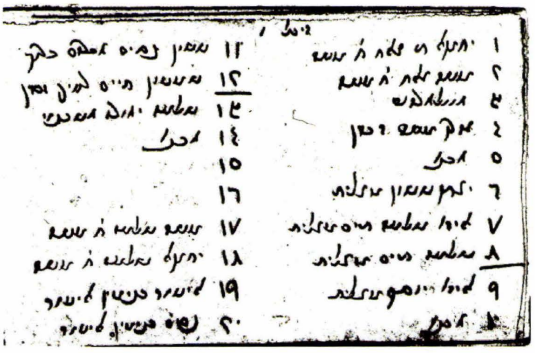


Figure 6. Rev. E. M. D. Cohen's Seating Designations.

Seating designated by Rev. E. M. D. Cohen, Hazzan, Maghen David Synagogue, September 1884. Section 6, #9 to Eliyahu/Yosef Musleah, and to his son [Meir Ezra] #10 (the last two on the column to the right).

#6 Isaac Sassoon/Yosef Musleah (6th in that column).



Figure 7. The Musleah Seats.

The Musleah Seats, 1997. Rahel seated where her grandfather, Isaac Sassoon Musleah would sit, originally *his* grandfather's seat. Grandpa, Meyer Ezra Musleah, occupied the seat to the right of his father's. I sat there when I returned as Rabbi.



Figure 8. Ladies Section, Maghen David Synagogue.

Family Musleah's seats in the Ladies' Section. My mother sat in the second row to the left. After I read my Maftir portion, I walked up here to kiss her hands and those of my grandmother and aunts as a gesture of respect.

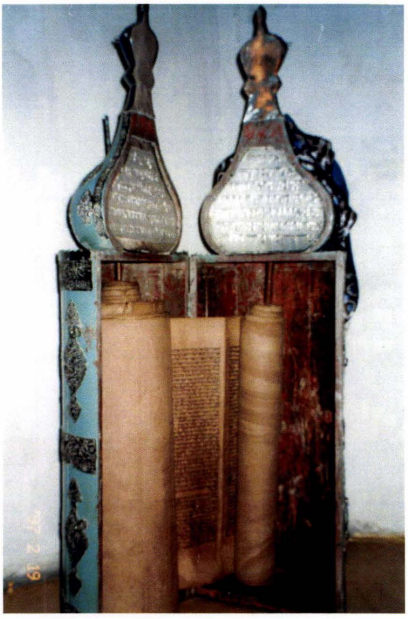


Figure 9. Sefer Torah Dedicated by Isaac Musleah – 1888.

(Left) The Sefer Torah dedicated by Isaac Sassoon/Yosef Musleah and his wife, Rahma Mittana in 1888 and placed in Maghen David Synagogue.

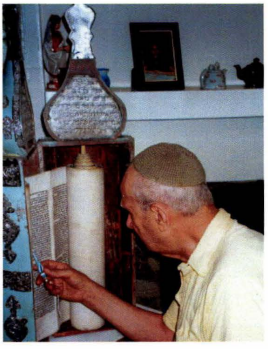


Figure 10. Sefer Torah in New Setting.

(Above) The Sefer Torah on new ground with a new scroll. Reading the Sefer for pleasure and indulgence in ancestral prescription.



Figure 11. Maghen David, Calcutta.

(This and the other color pictures of the synagogue taken by Dr. Maurice Gubbay)

Maghen David Synagogue, Calcutta where four generations of Family Musleah worshiped and a fifth visited and worshiped on Shabbath morning.

The embellished floral designs atop the imposing pillars, a French import, look alike but on close scrutiny, their minute differences may be observed.

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Figure 12. Maghen David Marble Flooring and Adornments.

Highlighting marble flooring, mosaic basis of the Tebah and Kohaneem platform, colored glass windows, and the approach to the Ark Room. The circular arches bear verses from the biblical book of Psalms, one of the many renovations of Rev. E.M.D. Cohen.



Figure 13. Maghen David Duchan.
Semi-circular space for Duchan (Kohaneem blessing).



Figure 14. Clock Tower — an Imposing Calcutta Landmark.

A red and buff imposing Calcutta landmark. The clock tower at the base of a 142-ft. steeple is a rare synagogue design.



Figure 15. Entrance to Maghen David.

Synagogue entrance. Three biblical verses welcome the worshiper:

"Enter His gates with praise, his courts with acclimation. Praise Him! Bless His name!" (Psalm 100)

"This is the gateway to the Lord; righteous shall enter through it." (Psalm 118:20)

"My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." (Isaiah 56:7)

The Hebrew words מגן דוד are enclosed in a Shield of David.

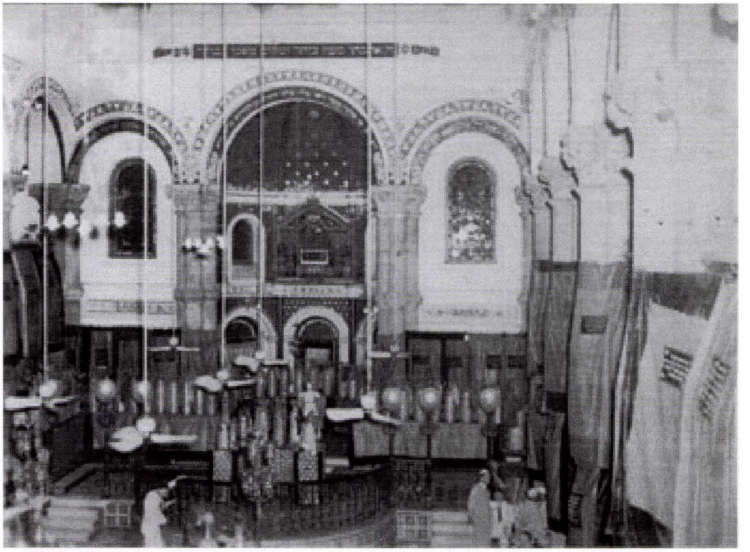


Figure 16. Sifrei Torah and Parochets Exhibited On Simhath Torah.

In honor of Simhath Torah, the seventy-five Torahs housed all year in the Ark Room, were displayed outside, as were the Parochets (curtains) usually used to cover the three entrances to the Ark Room.

Seen to the left, Dr. Maurice Gubbay's father, Elias, reciting the silent Amidah.



Figure 17. Dr. Gubbay in Same Pose as His Father.

On his Calcutta visit, Dr. Gubbay is taken in the same pose as that of his father 50 years before, reminiscent of Genesis 22:6, "Abraham and son Isaac walked together," that is, they kept the same traditions.



Figure 18. The Menorah, Ner Tamid and Dome.

A picturesque decoration over the entrance to the Hechal (Ark Room) - a collection of Judaic symbols: a crown depicting God's sovereignty, the Ten Commandments, a rod signifying the Ark of Covenant, the Kotel (Jerusalem's Western Wall), the Menorah, and some mystical representations.

To the right, in a red bowl, is the Ner Tamid (Eternal Light.)

The Dome is symbolic of a starry sky.



Figure 19. View from Ladies Gallery, Rear Section.

The women of Family Musleah sat in the fourth Hechal (section) from the end (at the small chandelier.)

The cut-glass, 30-lights electrolier in the center, originally in Calcutta's Grand Opera House, was presented to the synagogue by Rev. E.M.D. Cohen in 1918.

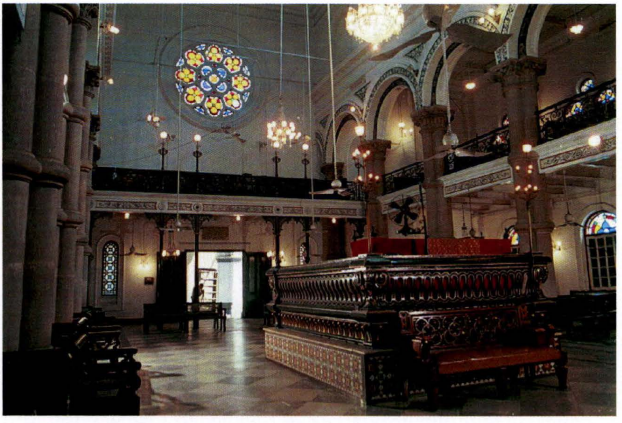


Figure 20. Ladies' Gallery Below the Stained–Glass Window.

The Ladies' Gallery rear section below the beautiful, large, stained-glass window.

Musleah men occupied the first Hechal to the right.

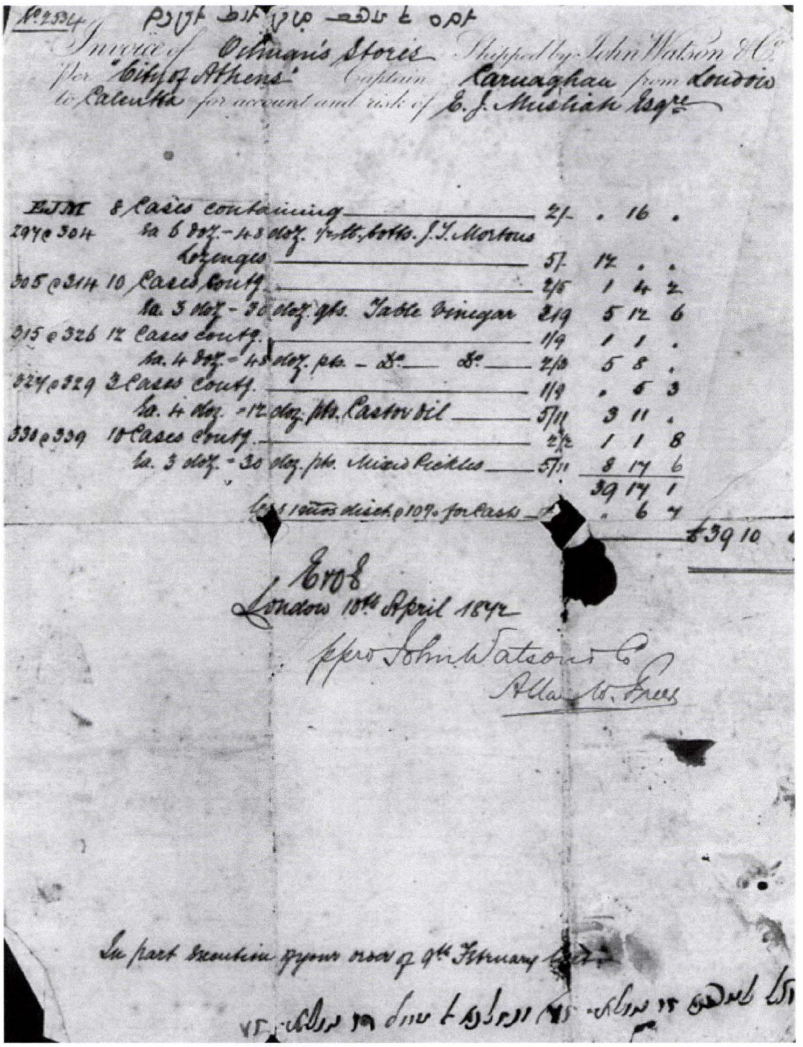


Figure 21. 1872 Invoice for Goods Shipped to Eliahu/Yosef Musleah.

Invoice of Oilman's Stores, London, England, shipped by John Watson & Co., per "City of Athens" from London to Calcutta. 10th April 1872 for E. J. Musleah, "In part execution of your order of 9th February last."

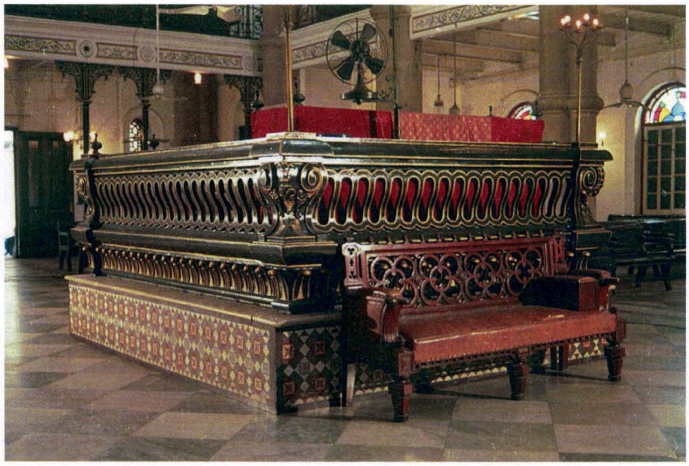


Figure 22. The Tebah with Wooden "Rimoneem".

The Tebah, from where I conducted services, 1958-1964, pictured with wooden "rimoneem," used on weekdays. In years past, on Shabbat and Festivals, embossed silver "bells" would adorn the Tebah, the gift of Sir David Ezra's mother, Mozelle Ezra. These have since been given to Kahal Yosef Synagogue in Los Angeles, CA. Distinguished guests, especially religious dignitaries, as well as grooms on Shabbat after their wedding, were honored by being seated on a cushioned bench in front of the Tebah.



Figure 23. Dr. Maurice Gubbay in Ark Room.

Dr. Maurice Gubbay before an open Sefer Torah in the Ark Room.

This Sefer, together with that to the right, were donated in memory of David Joseph Ezra and his son Elia, who had the synagogue built at his sole expense.

According to Rule 16 of the Synagogue's Constitution, David Joseph Ezra's Sefer must be used as Sefer Kol Nidre. In addition, it must be the Sefer for the second day of Rosh Hodesh, and Elia's Sefer for the first day.



Figure 24. The Platform for Synagogue Ministers.

The Tebah, from where the ministers of the synagogue conducted services:

E.M.D. Cohen, 1884–1927: E.R. Levi, 1884–1917, (Jr.)

Joshua E.R. Levi, 1902–1905 (Jr.); Ezra Meir E.R. Levi, 1905–1926, (Jr.); Albert F. Morris, 1926–1946; D.H.J. Cohen, 1946–1957; Rabbi Ezekiel N. Musleah, 1957–1964.


קונטריס

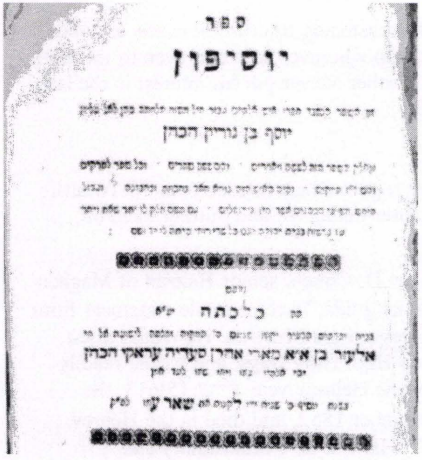
אמרי שבו

כלכתא

Printed at "Jewish" Press, 32, Ezra Street.

Figure 25. Publication Against Transportaion On Shabbath.

Imrei Shabbath — a publication of the Calcutta printer, Yehezkel Hakham Silliman at the Jewish Press, 32 Ezra Street. 1874. The author is Hyeem Yaakov Hakkohen, a Shaliah from Safed, railed against the use of 'railway' (=trams or trolleys) on Shabbath.


ספר

יוסיפון

כלכתה

Figure 26. Sefer Josippon.

When my history professor at the Seminary, Alexander Marx, came to know that I was returning to India, he drew my attention to this edition of Sefer Josippon originally authored by Yosef ben Gurion ha–Kohen and published in this Calcutta edition by Elazar ben Mari Aharon/Saadya Arakie ha-Kohen in 1841. Marx indicated that the Seminary was prepared to pay whatever it cost. I did send the Seminary a complimentary copy.

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA
CHAPTER 3

FAITHFUL PRESERVERS

MEYER EZRA MUSLEAH 1868–1941

My grandfather loved reading religious texts. They included: 1. שְׁנַיִם מִקְרָא וְאֶחָד תַּרְגּוּם every Friday. This entailed starting with the Parasha of the week, going on to the Targum or Aramaic interpretation, and repeating the Parasha. 2. Because of his fluency with Parasha, he could read parts of the Torah from the Sefer Torah. 3. חֹק לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, biblical and rabbinic excerpts for each day of the year (in our library). 4. מַעֲמָדוֹת that is, apart from Levitical and Priestly duties, ancient law required twenty–four groups of lay Israelites to participate in the sacrificial system. After the destruction of the temple, a series of readings was drawn up for pious individuals who wished to perpetuate the lay share in the Temple service (in our library). 5. Yartseit readings for parents and other close relatives, such as brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles; the anniversaries of Moshe Rabbeinu and Yitshak Luria, the ARI, 7th Adar and 5th Av respectively. 6. Mystical readings called תִּקּוּנִים during the month of Elul and עֲשֶׂרֶת יְמֵי תְּשׁוּבָה, the Ten Days between Rosh Hashana and Kippur. 7. He supervised and participated in the נְבִיאִים כְּתוּבִים biblical readings with the family every Shabbath.

He occupied a room by himself, so he went about undisturbed and uninterrupted with his own program of study. He cared little for the goings–on around the house.

We have his workbook dated 1881 with Arabic translations of Hebrew sentences and English exercise books used in school, alluded to earlier.

Pious, simple and reticent, from his meager salary earned as clerk in the Jewish commercial firm of E. D. Sassoon & Co., he would put aside the house rent and give the rest to his wife. He was wont to say: 'If you are hungry, nobody will know; if you are homeless, the world looks down upon you.'

After the birth of his tenth child, his wife Masuda insisted they stop sharing a bedroom. From age 44 in 1912, he had a room to himself where he got dressed, read and slept.

He was enthralled with courts of law. He spent hours there listening to criminal cases, and did not hesitate taking his first grandson and namesake with him wherever he went, even to the High Court. Fellow spectators were aghast. Is that where my brother Meyer got his interest in the law — a Bachelor of Law degree and training as a solicitor?

Examples of Grandpa's piety:

Removed shoes before entering the Ark room of the synagogue, which housed over 70 Torahs. He wore laceless shoes so he didn't have to touch them after taking off and putting them on, which would have required him to wash his hands.

Fully knowledgeable about synagogue ritual, the Rev. E.M.D. Cohen, senior Hazzan of Maghen David Synagogue for 53 years, once told him: "You are my guide," a remarkable statement from one whose oldest son was a mere four years older than Meyer Ezra Musleah. He would assist Hazzanim of Maghen David in the conduct of services on High Holy Days, and would readily give of his advice. [Interesting: EMD Cohen was born in the Hebrew year תרי"ג [5]613, the traditional number of laws and practices in Judaism, December 1852, and died in the Hebrew year, תרפ"ז [56]87, פַּז meaning pure gold, January 1927.] His was an extraordinary and

distinctive life — a staunch Jew, a Kohen, for whom Judaism was תורי"ג, a fount of opportunities for good. It proved also to be פַּז, pure gold, worthy of the highest accolades for dedicated Jewish living by exceptional leadership. See the testimonial he was awarded on completing fifty years in the service of the old Neveh Shalome and Maghen David synagogues. [pages 65-66 (Fig 33.)]

Grandpa corresponded with the Baghdad and Tiberias Rabbinate. To the former, he put the question of deaths that occurred in Adar and Yartseits that fall in "leap" years. The response: Yartseits are to be observed in Adar I; happy dates like Purim, in Adar II. He received a letter from Tiberias, September 1912, as treasurer of Rabbi Meir in Calcutta, requesting that funds collected for 'Rabbi Meir' should not be sent through third parties but directly to the rabbis in charge of the Yeshiva. Unauthorized 'emissaries,' possessing false testimonials, frequently visited the city to collect funds for institutions of the Holy Land when all they represented was themselves.

Grandpa never posed for a picture, warning against desecration of the command against idolatry. The pictures we have of him were taken without his knowledge or awareness. It also points to his simplicity.

He made his own wine for Kiddush because he didn't trust the Kashrut of the local Jewish manufacture, despite being under the auspices of Bethel Synagogue. Before soaking raisins he would say: בְּשֵׁם הַשֵּׁם נַעֲשֶׂה וְנַצְלִיחַ. In the name of God we undertake this project and will succeed. [The last word coincides with our name Musleah.]

Before he agreed to move, his only criterion for the new house was: Is there space for a Sukkah? His attraction to tradition made him dress the way his father and forbears attired — in Arabic garb of the Jews of Baghdad.

He awaited eagerly, anxiously, for his seventieth birthday, for he believed that people who pass that milestone age don't return in another human birth. In December 1938, the family got together at 11 Bowbazar Street for a small celebration in what Grandpa considered to be the happiest day of his life. Readings, prepared in entirety by his son, Isaac Sassoon, reflect the latter's proclivity to scribble his notes on any scrap of paper in hand. Part of the verses he penned hurriedly at work found its way on the back of an envelope, 3x6 inches, in which were originally enclosed movie tickets of Calcutta's Metro cinema, and whose face advertised future movies: "Metro's parade of hits proudly marches on. Watch for these great pictures: Nelson Eddy — Jeanette MacDonald in the supremely magnificent musical, 'Sweethearts,' and Clark Gable — Myrna Loy in 'Too Hot To Handle,'" together with printed photos of the actresses. Name [of purchaser]: Cohen [that is, Ellis A. Cohen, Senior Accountant of National Tobacco Co. who bought the tickets as a favor to his Musleah cousins]. Day: Sunday 5/10 [5th October 1938].

Seats 020–23 at 1/2 [=one rupee, two annas each] =Rs.4/8 [=four rupees, eight annas].

Dad read the first set of Biblical verses and prayers, his father followed with the next set.

נוֹדֶה לְךָ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ וּלְזַמֵּר לְשִׁמְךָ עֶלְיוֹן שׁוֹמֵר הַבְּרִית וְהַחֶסֶד שֶׁהֶחֱיִיתָנוּ
עַד הַיּוֹם.
מִי אֵל כָּמוֹךָ עוֹשֶׂה נִפְלָאוֹת תִּפְאֶרֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלּוֹת לְתֵת
תְּפִלָּה וּתְחִלָּה לָאֵל נוֹרָא עֲלִילָה.
עוֹשֶׂה נִפְלָאוֹת לְבַדּוֹ כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ עַד אֲשֶׁר זְכִינוּ הַיּוֹם לָחוּג אֶת חַג
יוֹם מִלּוּאוֹת אָבִינוּ

לְחַיִּים טוֹבִים לִשְׁנַת חַשְׁבָּעִים לְחַיָּיו כֵּן יְזַכֵּהוּ הָאֵל לְהוֹסִיף שָׁנִים רַבּוֹת
עַל שָׁנָיו
בָּרִיא בְּגוּפוֹ שָׁלֵם בְּתוֹרָתוֹ וּבְדַעְתּוֹ אָמֵן

We give thanks to You, O Lord our God, and sing to Your name on high Who keeps the covenant and steadfast love, and has brought us to witness this day.

Who is like You, doing wonders, Glory of Israel, Who hears prayers and praises, and is held in awe for His acts.

His mercy endures forever. We are fortunate today to celebrate the completion of seventy years in the life of our dear father.

May he live to celebrate many more years in good health and dedication to Torah, Amen

אָנָּא הָאֵל אָב הָרַחֲמָן עוֹשֶׂה צְדָקוֹת עִם כָּל בָּשָׂר וְרוּחַ וּמַפְלִיא חַסְדּוֹ
וַאֲמִיתּוֹ עִם כָּל בְּרוּאָיו
הִגָּעְנוּ גַּם אֲנַחְנוּ בֵּין קְרוֹבֶיךָ וְאוֹהֲבֶיךָ הַשּׁוֹאֲפִים אֵלֶיךָ לְהוֹסִיף יָמִים עַל
יָמֶיךָ
חַיִּים נָעִימִים אָרְךְ יָמִים וּשְׁנוֹת חַיִּים אָמֵן

O Merciful Father, Who executes righteous acts for all mortals, we are here, family and loved ones of our father fervently praying for his long and pleasant life.

גַּם אִם אָמַרְתִּי אֲסַפְּרָה אֲשֶׁר גָּבַר חַסְדּוֹ עָלֵינוּ: לֹא יָדַעְתִּי סְפוֹרוֹת.
קָטֹנְתִּי מִכָּל-הַחֲסָדִים וּמִכָּל-הָאֱמֶת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אֵל נוֹרָא עֲלִילָה עִם
אָבִי כְּבוֹדִי וּמוֹרִים רֹאשִׁי.
קֹדֶם שְׁנָתַיִם שָׁנָה נָפַל לְאֶרֶץ כִּמְעַט כְּפֶסַע הָיָה בֵּינוֹ לְבֵין הַמָּוֶת.
וְהָרוֹפֶה לְכָל-בָּשָׂר וּמַפְלִיא לַעֲשׂוֹת הִצִּיל אוֹתוֹ מִכָּל-מַחֲלָה.
מָה אֲנַחְנוּ: מָה חַיֵּינוּ: אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ עִמָּנוּ חֲסָדִים כָּאֵלֶּה! וְלָכֵן אֲנַחְנוּ
אוֹמְרִים בַּעֲדוֹ בָּרוּךְ הַפּוֹדֶה וְהַמַּצִּיל וּבָרוּךְ הַגּוֹאֵל לְחַיָּבִים טוֹבוֹת
שֶׁגְּמָלָנוּ כָּל-טוּב

Our hearts pant to tell of Your beneficence, though we do not know how to tell it.

We are unworthy of all the kindness that you have shown our revered father, crown of our heads. Two years ago, he was thrown to the ground [by a motorcycle as he was returning home from synagogue] and was just a step away from death.

You, O Lord, miraculous healer, restored him to health. What are we that You have demonstrated so steadfast a love to us!

So we praise You on his behalf: Blessed are You, redeemer and saviour, who grants blessings on the undeserving, for on him have You bestowed good.

תְּרַנְּנָה שְׂפָתַי כִּי אֲזַמְּרָה לָךְ וְנַפְשִׁי אֲשֶׁר פָּדִיתָ

Psalm 71:23 My lips shall be jubilant, as I sing a hymn to You, my whole being, which You have redeemed.

וְנַפְשִׁי תָּגִיל בַּיי תָּשִׂישׂ בִּישׁוּעָתוֹ

Psalm 35:9 Then shall I exult in the Lord, rejoice in His deliverance.

וִירוֹמְמוּהוּ בִּקְהַל-עָם וּבְמוֹשַׁב זְקֵנִים יְהַלְלוּהוּ

Psalm 107:32 Let them exult in the congregation of the people, acclaim him in the assembly of the elders.

יוֹמָם יְצַוֶּה יי חַסְדּוֹ וּבַלַּיְלָה שִׁירוֹ עִמִּי תְּפִלָּה לְאֵל חַיָּי

Psalm 42:9 By day may the Lord vouchsafe His faithful care, so that by night a song to Him may be with me.

נָהָר פְּלָגָיו יְשַׂמְּחוּ עִיר אֱלֹהִים קְדוֹשׁ מִשְׁכְּנֵי עֶלְיוֹן

Psalm 46:5 There is a river whose streams gladden God's city, the holy dwelling–place of the Most High.

הַלְלוּיָהּ אוֹדֶה יי בְּכָל-לֵבָב בְּסוֹד יְשָׁרִים וְעֵדָה

Psalm 111:1 I praise the Lord with all my heart, in the congregation of the upright.

אָנָּא יי פְּנֵי אֵלַי וְחָנֵּנִי אֱלָהָא דְּרַבִּי **מֵאִיר** עַנֵּנוּ

תִּפְתַּח לָנוּ שַׁעֲרֵי אוֹרָה בִּזְכוּת אֲדוֹנֵנוּ **עֶזְרָא**

שְׁלַח **אֵלְיָהוּ** נְבִיאֵנוּ בִּזְכוּת אֲבוֹתֵינוּ

קוֹל אִישׁ **מַצְלִיחַ** בְּיָמֵינוּ יִפְרַח

מַה נָּאוּ רַגְלֵי הַמָּשִׁיחַ

We pray, O Lord, turn to us, God of Rabbi MEIR [worker of miraculous deeds], answer us. Open for us the gates of light for the merit of our master EZRA [the Scribe].

Send ELIYAHU our Prophet for the sake of our ancestors.

May the word of the successful man MUSLEAH flourish in our day.

How welcome would be the footsteps of the Messiah!

The following read by Meyer Ezra/Eliyahu Musleah

הוֹדוּ לַיי כִּי טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ

Psalm 107:1 Praise the Lord for He is good.

יי אֱלֹהַי אַתָּה אָרוֹמְמְךָ אוֹדֶה שִׁמְךָ כִּי עָשִׂיתָ פֶּלֶא עֵצוֹת מֵרָחוֹק אֱמוּנָה אוֹמֶן

Isaiah 25:1 O Lord, You are my God, I will extol You, I will praise Your name. For You planned graciousness of old, counsels of steadfast faithfulness.

חַסְדֵי יי אַזְכִּיר תְּהִלּוֹת יי כָּעַל כָּל-אֲשֶׁר גְּמָלָנוּ יי וְרַב טוּב לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר גְּמָלָם כְּרַחֲמָיו וּכְרֹב חֲסָדָיו

Isaiah 63:7 I will recount the kind acts of the Lord, the praises of the Lord. For all that the Lord has wrought for us, the vast bounty to the House of Israel that He bestowed upon them according to His mercy and His great kindness.

מֵאֵין כָּמוֹךָ יי גָּדוֹל אַתָּה וְגָדוֹל שִׁמְךָ בִּגְבוּרָה

Jeremiah 10:6 O Lord, there is none like You! You are great and Your name is great in power.

עֲנוּ לַיי בְּתוֹדָה. נַקְדְּמָה לַיי אֱלֹהֵנוּ. שַׁבְּחִי תוֹדָה

Psalm 147:7 Sing to the Lord a song of praise

Psalm 95:2 Let us come into His presence with praise and offer thanks.

אוֹדֶה לַיי בְּכָל-לֵבָב בְּסוֹד יְשָׁרִים וְעֵדָה

Psalm 111:1 I praise the Lord with all my heart in the assembly of the upright.

הַמֵּאִיר לָאָרֶץ וְלַדָּרִים גָּבֵר עָלֵינוּ חַסְדּוֹ הוֹפִיעַ אוֹרוֹ וְהוֹדוֹ

Morning prayer: Who brightens the earth and its residents

Psalm 117:2 Great is His steadfast love towards us He causes His light and majesty to shine.

מִי יְמַלֵּל גְּבוּרוֹת יַשְׁמִיעַ כָּל-תְּהִלָּתוֹ

Psalm 106:2 Who can tell the mighty acts of the Lord, proclaim all His praises?

אֵין קֵץ וְתִכְלָה לוֹ דּוּמְיָה וּתְהִלָּה

Psalm 119:96 You are beyond measure and limitation

Psalm 65:2 Praise befits You.

וְעַל כָּל-הַטּוּבוֹת זֹאת עוֹלָה אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר יִשְׂרָאֵל לְסְגֻלָּה

This [birthday] surpasses all other acts of [God's] goodness, even beyond His selection of Israel as His choice possession.

נִכְסְפָה וְגַם כָּלְתָה נַפְשִׁי

Psalm 84:2 I long, I yearn

לְזַמֵּר לָאֵל חוֹבָא רַכְיָא

to serve God as an obligation imposed upon me.

נְבָרֵךְ לֵאלֹהֵינוּ לְהוֹדוֹת וּלְהַלֵּל בָּרוּךְ שֶׁהֶחֱיָנוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לִשְׁנַת
הַשִּׁבְעִים הַשָּׁנָה

Let us now praise our God, give thanks and exult. Praised be God who has given us life and sustained us, and in His steadfast love let us reach this seventieth year.

כֵּן בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הָרַבִּים תַּעֲמִידֵנִי עַל עָמְדִּי וְתוֹסִיף לִי חַיִּים עַל יָמַי חַיִּים
טוֹבִים אֲרוּכִים וּנְעִימִים

So in Your great mercy, stand me up on my feet, add years to my life, a good, long and pleasant life.

וְתַבְרִיאֵנִי וְתַחֲלִימֵנִי וּתְחַזְּקֵנִי וּתְאַמְּצֵנִי וְגַם עַד זְקֻנָה וְשֵׂיבָה אַל תַּעַזְבֵנִי

Restore me to health and revive me; strengthen me; invigorate me.

Psalm 71: 18 Even in hoary age do not forsake me, Lord.

וּתְמַלֵּא מִשְׁאֲלוֹת לִבִּי לְטוֹבָה וְתָאִיר עֵינַי בְּתוֹרָתֶךָ

Fulfill in my favor the desires of my heart. Brighten my eyes in Your Torah.

וְתָשִׂים בִּלְבִּי אַהֲבָתֶךָ וְיִרְאָתֶךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹנְךָ כִּרְצוֹנֶךָ וְתַעְזְרֵנִי עַל דְּבַר
כְּבוֹד שְׁמֶךָ

Place in me love and reverence for You to do Your will as it should be done.

Help me for the sake of Your glorious name.

וְתַרְאֵנוּ בְּבִיאַת מְשִׁיחַ צִדְקֵנוּ יִרְאוּ עֵינֵינוּ וְיִשְׂמַח לִבֵּנוּ אָמֵן כֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן

Show us the arrival of the Messiah, our vindicator; our eyes will see and our hearts rejoice. Amen. May this be Your will.

Acrostic of MEIR EZRA MUSLEAH, HAZAK:

מְהֻלָּל אֶקְרָא יי מֵאוֹיְבַי אִוָּשֵׁעַ
אֲשִׁירָה לַיי בְּחַיַּי אֲזַמְּרָה לֵאלֹהַי בְּעוֹדִי
יַסּוֹר יִסְּרֵנִי יָהּ וְלַמָּוֶת לֹא נְתָנֵנִי
רַחֲמֶיךָ רַבִּים יי כְּמִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ חַיֵּינִי

עָזִּי וְזִמְרָת יָהּ וַיְהִי-לִי לִישׁוּעָה
זֶה אֵלִי וְאַנְוֵהוּ אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי וַאֲרוֹמְמֶנְהוּ
רְאֵה כִּי פִקֻּדֶיךָ אָהָבְתִּי יי כְּחַסְדְּךָ חַיֵּינִי
הוֹדִינוּ לְךָ אֱלֹהִים הוֹדִינוּ וְקָרוֹב שְׁמֶךָ סַפְּרוּ נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ

מַלְכוּתְךָ מַלְכוּת כָּל-עוֹלָמִים וּמֶמְשַׁלְתְּךָ בְּכָל-דּוֹר וָדוֹר
צַדִּיק כַּתָּמָר יִפְרַח כְּאֶרֶז בַּלְּבָנוֹן יִשְׂגֶּה
לְהַגִּיד כִּי יָשָׁר יי צוּרִי וְלֹא עַוְלָתָה בּוֹ
יַלְכוּ מֵחַיִל אֶל חַיִל יֵרָאֶה אֶל אֱלֹהִים בְּצִיּוֹן
חַיִּים שְׁאַל מִמֶּךָּ נָתַתָּ לִּי אֹרֶךְ יָמִים עוֹלָם וָעֶד

חַסְדֵי יי עוֹלָם אָשִׁירָה לְדוֹר וָדוֹר אוֹדִיעַ אֱמוּנָתְךָ בְּפִי
זַמְּרוּ לַיי חַסִידָיו וְהוֹדוּ לְזֵכֶר קָדְשׁוֹ
קַוֹּה אֶל יי חֲזַק וְיַאֲמֵץ לִבֶּךָ וְקַוֵּה אֶל יי

יִהְיוּ לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי פִי וְהֶגְיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ יי צוּרִי וְגוֹאֲלִי

II Samuel 22:4 All praise! I called on the Lord, and I was delivered from my enemies.
Psalm 104:33 I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; All my life I will chant hymns to my God.
Psalm 118:18 The Lord punished me severely, but did not hand me over to death.
Psalm 119:156 Your mercies are great, O Lord; as is Your rule, preserve me.
Exodus 15: 2 The Lord is my strength and might; He is become my salvation. This is my God and I will glorify Him, The God of my father, and I will exalt Him.
Psalm 119:159 See, I have loved Your precepts;
O Lord preserve me, as befits Your steadfast love.
Psalm 75:2 We praise You, O God, we praise You; Your presence is near; men tell of Your wondrous deeds.
Psalm 145:13 Your kingship is an eternal kingship; Your dominion is for all generations.
Psalm 92:13 The righteous bloom like the date–palm; they thrive like a cedar in Lebanon.
Psalm 92:16 Attesting that the Lord is upright, my rock in whom there is no wrong.
Psalm 84:8 They go from strength to strength, appearing before God in Zion.
Psalm 21:5 He asked You for life; You granted it; a long life, satisfying.
Psalm 89:2 I will sing of the Lord's steadfast love forever; with my mouth I will proclaim You faithfulness.
Psalm 30:5 O you faithful of the Lord, sing to Him, and praise His Holy name.
Psalm 27:14 Look to the Lord; be strong and of good courage! O look to the Lord!
Psalm 19:15 May the words of my mouth and the prayer of my heart be acceptable to You, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Grandpa lived about 2–1/2 years after this day.

He had been Gabbai of Maghen David Synagogue since 1926. Among his duties was the care and supervision of Sifrei Torah and Parochets [=decorative curtains] of the synagogue. Grandpa left a book containing lists of Sifrei Torah and Parochets dedicated to deceased persons or in honor of living donors. Of long–standing tradition, a Sefer Torah was read at least two times a year — once on the Yartseit mentioned on the Sefer panel, and a second time in rotation — Dara, in Arabic.

At one time, there were seventy–five Sifrei Torah and about 200 Parochets. A Parochet, on the Yartseit of its memorial, had to grace the center door to the Ark room. Grandpa's book contains two lists each of Sifrei Torah and Parochets — one for Yartseits and the other in rotation. A Sefer Torah was brought out also if a relative or friend of the deceased honoree bought a Maftir, for instance, at the synagogue auction.

"Sefer Yajeebu Yit`la", the auctioneer announces in Arabic — the buyer has the choice of his own Sefer. Grandpa was scrupulous about the accounting of the appurtenances. Some Sefarim became Pasool [=worn with age] and could not be used in public reading. Others, like #40, were sent to Jewish centers that needed Torahs. #31 has the comment: רֵאחַת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם [=It has gone to Jerusalem]. Some were "sent to the home of Eliyahu Hyeem Hilali," a long–time synagogue member of good standing whose failing health forced him to have services at home or attend Shaare Rasone Synagogue where the Torahs found a new home. #52 was sent directly to that synagogue.

Another duty of Gabbai was to record auction transactions in a book consisting of every possible privilege auctioned. Strips with names of prospective buyers and with different amounts were then put into appropriate pages of the book. The Gabbai had also to send out bills to the buyers. Here Grandpa's sons, Isaac and Elias, were of great help.

Grandpa attended synagogue twice a day. It was upon returning home on a Sunday evening about ten years later, that he was hit by a motor–cyclist about twenty–five yards from his home. He recovered sufficiently to attend to his simple daily routine, but was never again as mobile or well. He became increasingly frail and paralytic in the throat region.

Unbeknown to his family, he had his shroud and funeral instructions prepared fifteen years before his death in 1941, by inviting the women employees of the Hevra Kadisha, called locally Oseh Haised, to the synagogue to sew his shroud.

He left a letter to be read after his death [page 63 (Chap 3, Fig 30.)] In it, among other things, he excused his sons from reciting Kaddish on occasion of great inconvenience.

To commemorate his 128th birthday in 1996, I composed this poem with rhyming couplets in Hebrew:

Dear Grandpa!	סַבִּי הַיָּקָר,
My revered grandfather!	סַבָּא הַנֶּחְדָּר,
I sing to commemorate your spirit.	לְעִלּוּי נִשְׁמָתוֹ אֲנִי שָׁר.
He was righteous in his generation;	צַדִּיק הָיָה בְּדוֹרוֹתָיו,
Alas! He is no longer with us.	הָיָה וְאֵינֶנּוּ עִכְשָׁיו.
His wife and ten children	אֶת אִשְׁתּוֹ וְיִלָּדָיו עֲשָׂרָה
He loved uncompromisingly.	הוּא אָהַב לְלֹא פְּשָׁרָה.
Faithfully did he earn a living for family,	עָבַד לְפַרְנֵס בֵּיתוֹ בֶּאֱמוּנָה,
Never a complaint came out of his mouth.	מִפִּיו לֹא נִשְׁמְעָה אַף תְּלוּנָה.
A modest man, he bequeathed nothing	לֹא הִשְׁאִיר הֶעָנִיו נְכָסִים,
but his cupboard full of books.	רַק חֶדְרוֹ וַאֲרוֹן סְפָרִים.
He read the weekly parasha twice in Hebrew, once in Aramaic,	שְׁנַיִם מִקְרָא וְאֶחָד תַּרְגּוּם,
As he studied other parts of the Torah, morning till late at night.	עָשָׂה לֵילוֹת כַּיָּמִים לְלֹא קוֹם.
He cherished the performance of Mitzvoth;	אֶת מִצְוֹת ה' לְקַיֵּם הוּא אָהַב,
From his meagre means he gave to charity.	מִכַּסְפּוֹ מְצֻמְצָם לְנִצָּרְכִים נָדַב
Upright, he was ever satisfied with his lot,	תָּמִיד יָשַׁר לֵב שָׂמֵחַ בְּחֶלְקוֹ,

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With all his might he strove to learn Torah.	אִם רַק תּוֹרָה לָמַד בְּמְאֹדוֹ.
He bequeathed nothing	לֹא נִשְׁאֲרָה גַּם כְּבֶדָה,
But an envelope with his last instructions:	רַק מַעֲטָפָה מְכִילָה צַוָּאָה--
"My children! Should it be inconvenient	בָּנַי, אִם לֹא יִהְיֶה נוֹחַ לָכֶם
to read Kaddish for me, you are forgiven."	לִקְרֹא אַחֲרַי קַדִּישׁ, מְחוּל לָכֶם.
Thus did he leave memories of his character;	נִשְׁאַר כַּךְ זִכְרוֹן מִדּוֹתָיו,
We inherit pleasant remembrances of his simplicity.	יָרַשְׁנוּ זִכְרֵית נָעִם דִּבּוּרָיו.
Happily he was named Meir —	קָרְאוּ שְׁמוֹ בְּסִימָן טוֹב "מֵאִיר,"
He enlightens us as we recall his life.	בְּזָכְרוֹנוֹת חַיָּיו הֵאִיר.
The man was blameless and virtuous and feared God,	אִישׁ תָּם וְיָשָׁר וְיָרֵא אֱלֹהִים,
Modest and mild, he preferred being indoors.	אִישׁ צָנוּעַ וְהָגוּן יוֹשֵׁב אֹהָלִים.
Old when he died, he was called	בְּגִיל יָשִׁישׁ הָלַךְ לָעוֹלָמוֹ,
To continue devotion to Torah at the Yeshiva on High.	בִּישִׁיבָה שֶׁל מַעְלָה נִתְבַּקְשָׁה נִשְׁמָתוֹ;
May his eternal repose be in Gan Eden Above.	בְּגַן הָעֶלְיוֹן תִּהְיֶה מְנוּחָתוֹ.
Written by his grandson	
Ezekiel Nissim son of Isaac Sassoon Musleah.	יְחֶזְקֵאל נִסִּים בֶּן יִצְחָק שָׁשׁוֹן בֶּן מֵאִיר עֲזְרָא מַצְלִיחַ
on the 128th anniversary of his birth	י"א בְּכִסְלֵו תשנ"ז
	יוֹם הַהֻלֻּדֶת ה128 שֶׁל סַבָּא

11 Kislev 5757 — November 22, 1996

MASUDA MEYER MUSLEAH 1875–1958

An astute, quick–witted woman, hardly anyone could get the better of her. Once she decided to do something, it got done. One of eight siblings, she grew up fast. At twelve, she was married to nineteen–year–old Meyer Ezra Musleah, but soon fled her marital home because, she said, she was still a child and not quite prepared for intimate relations with her husband. She was back with her parents for over a year when she was persuaded to return to her husband. Before her twentieth birthday, she became a mother four times, and ultimately delivered ten children.

Her children had to toe her line. She brought them up without much spousal help, fed and clothed them within her husband's meager budget. She frequently had to borrow money from the Puddar — the neighborhood silversmith who had the unenviable task of keeping track of his loan accounts listed under the borrowers' first names. The trouble was that there were two women called Masuda living next door to each other, and when our Masuda needed a further loan, "she girded herself with strength" and rushed to the Puddar in a hurry. Confronted with the fact of her prior loan still pending, she promptly declared her innocence: "This one's not mine; it's the other Masuda's!" Overmatching the lender, she pocketed the second advance. She was ever ready to add that she dealt honestly in the long run — she paid up her loans, however long it took.

Her motherly instincts knew no bounds. "She rose while it was still night and supplied her household with food." Every morning she ordered the cook the day's menu and together with her daughters, prepared some of the ingredients for the meals. On Shavuoth mornings, she woke up before dawn to prepare the popular traditional dairy favorite, Kahee, for the family to enjoy when the menfolk returned from their 4 a.m. synagogue service.

She brought home rickshaw–loads of provisions, fruits and vegetables from shopping at Newmarket, the celebrated bazaar in Central Calcutta. She once explained her delayed return by telling the story of a shopkeeper's piety refusing to serve her in the middle of his meal: "If you gave me all the money in the world," he said, " I will not leave the food that God gave me, to honor a human being!"

Before Rosh Hashana, she took her string of little children to buy them clothes and shoes. Shopkeepers couldn't restrain their curiosity: "Madam, these are all *your* children?" "No," she quickly responded, "these are my sister's, these are my brother's, and only these three are mine!" She managed to outflank the evil eye.

She did play favorites. Her son's children took precedence over her daughters' offspring. In her eyes, I could do no wrong. Ask cousin Mavis. She dared not go to our grandmother to arbitrate our disputes. She inevitably became the victim of the matriarch's preferences. And if I didn't like a food cooked on any day, Granny promptly directed that something I liked be prepared! And in her eyes, her son, Isaac outranked by far her daughter–in–law, Flora, much to the latter's discomfort and unhappiness.

An offshoot of her partiality — how she did her darndest to keep her children with her, even if they remained unmarried. [The lucky ones got away!] Her son Elias is a prime example. No woman was good enough to be his wife, she seemed to have insinuated, or more truthfully, she didn't want to part with him, come what may. And he simple–mindedly obliged.

Perhaps her most irksome decision came back to haunt her. Her younger brother, Aaron/Isaac Meyer, a good dozen years her junior, became infatuated with her daughter, Esther, and threatened suicide if he didn't get to marry her. The discord generated heated controversy between Esther's parents. Masuda, much against the wishes and better judgment of her husband, Meir Ezra, ultimately sacrificed her daughter on the altar of fraternal affection, and lived to regret it. Esther died in child–birth at age 20, but four years after she married her mother's brother. This time Masuda's spousal eminence let her down.

Masuda witnessed the death of her daughter–in–law, Flora, aged only 39, leaving a heart–broken husband and three small children, whom their grandmother admittedly loved and painstakingly cared for. But she could not replace their mother. For what it is worth, Masuda was a widow for less than eighteen years, about the same span as her son and daughter–in–law lived as husband and wife. Destiny performs in strange ways.

ISAAC SASSOON /MEYER EZRA MUSLEAH 1894–1955

Possessed of a brilliant intellect; he was a wise and shrewd organizer; a resourceful developer, personally courageous, and confident but never overbearing.

Spoke Arabic and Bengali [the native dialect of the Indian State of Bengal] fluently, besides English and Hindusthani [colloquial Hindi], a rare combination of skills. Understood Hebrew, much of it self–taught, partly derived from his knowledge of Arabic. Read and understood the

קצור שלחן ערוך [Concise Code of Jewish Law] in Hebrew, a copy of which he kept by his bedside and read before falling asleep. In this always–handy volume, he recorded the birthdates of his children and grandchildren [in our library], very appropriately using the quote from Proverbs 17:6, עֲטֶרֶת זְקֵנִים בְּנֵי בָנִים וְתִפְאֶרֶת בָּנִים אֲבוֹתָם Grandchildren are the crown of their elders, and the glory of children is their parents. Though he came to know and like Margaret, and was aware of my intention to marry her, alas! he did not live long enough to see us married, or as was the tradition in the Musleah family, to marry us. He could read Zohar when only nine years old, and ultimately many Parashiyoth from the Sefer Torah. He once recited off–hand the first chapter of Isaiah, the Haftarah of Shabbath Eikha, which came to be the Haftarah of his Yartseit.

He learned Bengali to understand curse words of his peers at work. He transliterated them in a notebook, ascertained their meaning, and gradually increased his vocabulary of decent words and sentences he spoke with great skill.

He learned Arabic mostly by conversing with his mother's mother, Kumayra, who spoke little of any other language. For one whose father's family lived in India for five generations, fluency in Arabic was unusual. Hindusthani was the lingua franca of his generation before English increasingly became the medium of the Jewish community.

We have a current topics report written in Arabic entitled "אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה" [=Man and Beast] gathered from an American Jewish journal about the conduct of an American priest. Apparently the teacher demonstrated his/her satisfaction by grading it 10/10 and dated August 23, probably 1907 or 08, when Dad was 13 or 14. His father, too, was impressed because he saved the report with his other treasures.

He had comparatively little formal education. After the seventh standard in 1910, age 15, perhaps the equivalent of high school, he tried to attend classes at a college affiliated with the Calcutta University, without knowing where the fees would come from. True enough, he couldn't continue beyond the first semester for lack of money, much to the chagrin of professors who raved over his potential. His parents were too poor to maintain a family of eight children, so he had to supplement his father's income.

In a moving epistle he wrote me in New York, he attributes his "loving and humane spirit" to adversity as a young man, illustrating a rabbinic saying: טוֹב לַגֶּבֶר כִּי יִשָּׂא עֹל בְּנְעוּרָיו "It is good for a young man to carry a burden in his youth," [Lamentations 3:27] and describes the pinched family circumstances: "To be without a square meal for days together, to see a little brother and sisters … starving and poorly clad … for creditors to keep knocking at the door day in and day out … this is the picture of events in the home in which I was a tacit and helpless onlooker …

Suppose at that psychological moment when I, as it were, was on trial, I had failed to respond to duty and left things to drift into unnavigable channels, would I not have been directly responsible for the wreckage that ensued? In this desperate situation I took courage with both my hands and leapt into the breach. Further formal education for me would have been selfish and meaningless … and I would have betrayed my family at a time of greatest need … just as well I got a job on Rupees 50 a month at Kantapooker [ten miles away by cycle, where his lunch consisted of a guava washed down by a cup of water] — otherwise I had every intention to take a basket on my head and do a coolie's job [carrying loads for shoppers] in Tiretta Bazaar [the neighborhood market].

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I was fearless and my spirit indomitable. At the age of 17 years and two months, I went out into the world to face its grim reality, sans friend, sans money, sans education. All I could bank upon was my underdeveloped brain, which I made the best possible use of. Grandpa's three wishes, delivered to me without ceremony in his verandah in Parsi Church Street [where their home was situated] when I returned from my first day of work, I carried out religiously: 'Work honestly, break not your Sabbath, change not your name.' Today I am happy for having carried out his admonitions, and look back to recount God's wonderful feats on my behalf at every stage.

Despite opposition I went right up. It was not my learning or my strength that did it; it was my bare faith in Him that had helped me to conquer — עֲשֵׂה וְהַצְלַח Go do and succeed! … Whatever I have done was לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם, in the name of Heaven, and not עַל מְנַת לְקַבֵּל שָׂכָר, because of monetary remuneration. May He help me for the rest of my days, שֶׁלֹּא נֵבוֹשׁ בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה וְלֹא נִכָּלֵם בָּעוֹלָם הַבָּא, that we may not be ashamed in what we do in this world or the next."

He made up for his deficiency in English and formal education by reading newspapers he bought from his own meager earnings. He read them, he said, once for news, a second time for grammar and spelling, and a third time for "style." For him, perseverance was a basic trait. Proof of his proficiency in written English expression may be found in his communication with his children, Meyer and Ruby living in Israel, and Ezekiel, studying for the rabbinate in the United States. His letters, excerpts of which are part of this work, are treasures worthy of publication.

In school, he was way ahead of fellow students in Hebrew studies, which won him annual prizes, [in our library]. Once a distant relative seven years older with the last name Musleah was "given" the Hebrew prize rightfully awarded to Dad. The school administrators never suspected that the younger Musleah was old enough to be *that* skilled. The prize was a Festival prayerbook, and each time the relative would use it in synagogue, Dad would not hesitate to remind him: "Ezra, that book is really mine!"

In preparation for the Bar Mitsva of his brother Elias Hyam in May, 1917, he composed a five–page speech addressed to his "father and dear superiors" read by Elias. [In our library.]

Before he could afford to buy printed books, Dad copied whole volumes he thought were worthwhile. Reflecting a legal mind, he copied the judgment of the case between two Calcutta synagogues, Maghen David and Neveh Shalome, 1917, in excellent handwriting. Like his father, he was so taken to legal procedures, that he once said, in half jest, that if he had the means and the opportunity, he would have been a lawyer and who knows, could have become Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court!

As mentioned earlier, his son, Meyer Ezra, did get a lawyer's degree but never practiced.

Dad copied an intriguing epitome entitled "The Psalms — occasions when read." Some of the occasions mentioned — Psalm 2, To allay a storm at sea; 5, For evil spirits; 23, To request for a dream; 31, Against evil eyes; 112, To glory in your strength; 98, To pursue peace between a man and his neighbor; and 22, For all troubles.

He was a strict disciplinarian. I was once docked for some misbehavior and, before he left for work on Sunday morning, delivered my punishment:: I was not to go to the movies with the cousins that afternoon. My grandmother and aunts compassionately wrote a note and sent it by courier to my father requesting reconsideration of the penalty. Everyone who saw my father's reply read it as NO. When he came home his mother asked him why he had denied me enjoying the afternoon with the rest of the children. He demanded to see the note and pointed to his reply: I wrote, YES! He insisted. Indeed he compassionately wrote YES, but it looked very much like NO!

Dad worked from 1919 until 1955 for B.N. Elias & Co, an initially small Jewish firm that grew to national magnitude. One Simhath Torah day, Benjamin Nissim Elias set eyes upon Dad in synagogue, looking for a young, trustworthy employee for his nascent company. The potential employer approached Meyer Ezra with a question: "Would your son want to work for me?" Dad became only his second employee. From personal, unpretentious beginnings, he rose to the prestigious position of Sales Manager for all of India in B. N. Elias's company of National Tobacco, competing with an international outfit, Imperial Tobacco. Travelling widely and constantly for about ten years, appointing agents in every corner of the Indian sub–continent [including what became Pakistan] to stock and sell his company's cigarettes, he was accompanied by a faithful cook he called "Goat" [derived from his goatee] who supplied him with meals consistent with a Kosher regimen. Dad's travels once took him unwittingly at the risk of his life to the North–West Frontier Province [before Indian Independence] where a kindly Pathan, a member of an awesome militarist group, led Dad to safety, advising him that he was treading on no–man's land where a longer stay would result in certain death. Anxiously but wisely, Dad promptly retraced his steps.

At considerable sacrifice, he never worked for a living on Shabbath or the Jewish festivals. Very early in his career at a job interview recommended by an uncle from whom he borrowed a suit, he was very nearly hired on an exceptionally good salary. He turned down the job because management refused his offer to work on Sunday instead of Saturday. The would–be boss admired the youngster and wished him well, but the irate uncle who himself worked on Shabbath, upbraided his nephew in Arabic: "Mooth Joo," ["Now go, starve to death!"]

With an inquiring mind, personal courage and concern for fellow Jews, Dad's voluntary services to the local Jewish community were exemplary. As secretary of Oseh Haised, the Jewish Burial Board, he had three thousand tombs in the Calcutta Jewish cemetery in the district of Narkeldanga, spanning burials over 150 years, numbered, which this writer, his son, later catalogued for permanent record. This has proved to be of tremendous help to erstwhile Jewish residents, emigrated all over the world, on their nostalgic and emotional visits to the graves of their loved ones. For the convenience of Erev Rosh Hashana and Kippur transportation to the cemetery, Dad put the Oseh Haised bus at the disposal of the community at a time when public transportation was most ill–conditioned.

His most innovative and far–reaching action was the establishment of a welfare clinic where the impoverished received outdoor medical treatment five days a week. This activity entailed collecting funds and overseeing the clinic's day–to–day organization, while holding an enervating full–time job.

In the tradition of four Musleah generations before him, he advised Hazzanim of Maghen David Synagogue and assisted them in the conduct of High Holy Day services. In like manner, and with assistance from his brother, Elias Hyam, he served as Gabbai of Rabbi Meir Baal haNess Yeshiva in Tiberias, Israel.

He served on the board of another synagogue, Maghen Aboth, and of a free day school for boys, Elias Meyer Free School and Talmud Torah.

A devoted, self–sacrificing father, he undertook, on credit from his brother, Elias, to underwrite my expenses during my residence at the Seminary in New York, a loan that would be paid up only from his estate. And while I was there, he ordered me to send money orders, American food parcels and appliances to my brother Meyer and sister Ruby and their families in Israel to tide them over straitened times in the early years of the Jewish State. When I returned to Calcutta, I watched him weigh new clothes before air–mailing them to Israel.

When he breathed his last in my presence on 8th Av 5715 [=26th July 1955 after sundown], I cried out in the delirious words Elisha exclaimed at the ascent of his master, Elijah, by fiery chariot and horses to heaven in a whirlwind [II Kings 2:12]: אָבִי. אָבִי. רֶכֶב יִשְׂרָאֵל וּפָרָשָׁיו "Oh, father, father! Israel's chariots and horsemen!" Elisha characterized Elijah as the source of Israel's strength and forward movement. So did I believe in my father's dash and prowess.[1]

FLORA MOSES MUSLEAH 1898–1937

I was only ten years old when my mother died; how much of her could I remember? Her life, unfortunately, was tarnished by in–law victimization, preventing a very bright and good person from excelling in her unattested potential. Very intelligent and exemplary, her peers looked up to her. Admired by her teachers, she was awarded the unprecedented honor of both the Dux [first prize in Leadership and Academic Excellence] and Good Conduct medals in her last **two** years of high school. Mrs. A.B. Bryning, Principal of the Jewish Girls' School, made this comment in her annual report read at the annual prize–giving function December 22nd 1914: "Flora E.S. Moses is a *second time* both Dux medalist and Good Conduct medalist." These beautiful heirlooms have been bequeathed to her worthy granddaughter and namesake, Flora Musleah Yavelberg.

"She gave generously to the poor; her hands were stretched out to the needy." Her life was filled with kindness. I believe that if there were more of her type, the social structure of communities would not disintegrate, and their spiritual hopes and ideals would be uplifted. For instance, she had absolute control over the interest on her dowry. First she would buy clothing and shoes for her children. Then she bought **new** clothes for the poor; her castaway was just not good enough for her high, charitable standards. Whatever was left, she spent on herself.

The first festival during her engagement happened to be Hanukka, and in keeping with tradition, Dad presented her with a Hanukkiah, which they used every year thereafter. The Hanukkiah is bequeathed to her granddaughter, Aliza, who continues to use it. In one of Dad's letters, he recalled: "When I was engaged to your mother, she had a bout with small pox, a disease that leaves lasting marks on the face. I visited her throughout her illness and assured her that if the

1. See my remarks at his Shelosheem, page 325 (Chap 15.)

spots on her face remained I would still love her and remain attached to her." After they were married, she asked him: " If the marks don't go away, would you divorce me?" "I replied: 'I cannot imagine, once true love prevails, that anything in the world can shake it off.' The scars slowly cleared, leaving hardly noticeable traces."

We have a note–book, probably from the mid–1930's, where Mum wrote down her monthly accounts. Here are some of the items mentioned: Landlord ... Rupees 40, teacher [tutor for secular subjects] ... 25, master [for Hebrew reading] ... 15, St. James' School [Meyer and Ezekiel] ... 15, Jewish Girls' School [Ruby] ... 7, Milk ... 16, Zoo (including [cousins] Sam, Eric and Mavis) ... 10, Pictures [movies] ... 3, Allahdia [Muslim tailor, fitted and sewed men's suits and brought them finished] ... 10, Habeeba [Jewish woman, sold materials for ladies dresses] ... 10, Tailor [who sewed them] ... 7, Pillow–cases [slips] ... 9, Pinman [drycleaner, brought clothes to the house] ... 7, Meyer's throat and medicines ... 33, Meyer [pocket money] ... 1, Statesman [newspaper] ... 2/11annas, Car [hired for school transportation] ... 11, cobbler ... 4 annas, Wool [for Flora to knit] ... 12, Flora [to be spent at will] ... 15. [Daily shopping done by domestics ... averaging about 2 rupees a day.]

I was fortunate, at least, to have had my mother witness my "Maftir" — when a boy of pre–Bar Mitzva age is called to read the concluding portion of a Parasha — just a month before she died. The Shabbath prior to Sukkoth, she took me to the Ark Room after the morning service and listened to me read my portion, וּבַחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר. She detected a mistake — I said עָשָׂה instead of עָשָׂר. At home, she had this report for my father: "Ezekiel made a **big** mistake ...!" At the Maftir itself, I went upstairs to the ladies' gallery to kiss her hand and that of the other female elders, as was the custom demonstrating respect.

How did my parents interact? More often than not: My father came home late from work. In the living room [closest to the entrance door], my grandmother and aunts would fill him in about what Mum "did" that day. He would go into our room where Mum was and explode ... She would go without dinner. Otherwise, she went to the kitchen, helped herself, and ate dinner by herself in the south verandah, while the rest of us sat at the dining table.

Yet, my parents loved each other. Half her short life was spent in pregnancies, frustrating and debilitating experiences involving the loss of her new–born children days after birth, or still–born.

After one of those disheartening endurances, I happened to be standing by her as she stood at the window, looked skyward, and prayed for her life to be ended!

Dad once made a list in my presence of the seven losses he had in memory, including the miscarriage at #5 Chowringhee Lane, her sister Helen Moses Hallen's residence, which took the mother's life.

In her late–term pregnancy in January/February 1935, we have three letters written by Mum to Dad, on a business trip to Bombay. Here are a few extracts: "Tuesday, 29th January, 1935. My dearest Hubby, ... So far I think it is unnecessary to see a doctor as the swelling in my feet has gone down altogether. The pain in my heart has also disappeared and I am feeling quite strong [compared with my earlier condition]. Then I felt no movement, but now I do, though not as strong as one should feel in her sixth month. [Have no concern about my nourishment.] I am having fruit and tomato juice, fish kabab, and my usual vegetable foods for dinner with chappatis made of chakki flour. You may rest assured that as soon as I feel weak I shall see a doctor. I had

seen Dr Gaw [a reputable gynecologist] the last time. Could he do anything for me? Had I not seen him at all and confined at home, I would have fared better. You remember well in Ezy's time we called J.M. Dass [another top gynecologist] when, with his treatment, the baby was no better until we stopped his treatment. Doctors don't understand [to treat] jaundice [she mistakenly thought was the culprit that went against her viable deliveries]. You needn't add me to your worries at all. God Almighty will do the best for us all.

Love and best wishes for your prosperity and health. From your wife, Flo"

"Monday, 4th February, 1935. My dearest Hubby, I have just arranged with the Anglo–Indian lady sent by your sister Mozelle for her private car to take the children to and from school for Rs.15. She requested that we should not delay the car when she calls at 8:30, as she has other engagements at 9:00. Now that the arrangements are made, my mind is in peace. I think your sister Dinah is starting soon for MDP [Madhupur]. I have written enough for today, so Ta ta my darling, love, lots of kisses, from Flo

"7th February, 1935. My dearest Hubby, I always deem you my jewelled and diamond star. I always continually and wholeheartedly pray for your welfare and health, and good feeling for sacred love between us. [Dad must have insisted on her seeing a doctor, so she reports on her visit with Dr Sarkar of the Eden Hospital. His prognosis was that the baby was alive but very weak because of the weakness of her blood. Finally, she did lose the child at the end of March.] Heaps of love and kisses, from Flo"

One undated [probably the mid–1930s] birthday card from Dad to Mum is inscribed: To Dearest Flora, From Isaac Printed on the outside, in a heart, "Fond wishes", and below, "Love and best wishes to thee, dear, Sweet peace attend thy way." And inside: "A Happy Birthday. Life is a voyage, friend, we all must take, May thine be calm as summer's lake, May fortune's breezes fill thy sails and bear thy bark along 'neath azure skies and fair. Oh! may'st thou ne'er with storm and tempest cope. and may thy anchor evermore be Hope."

Mum was everloving, caring, and patient. I recall her calling out to me several times every evening to go to her to do my homework, which she tirelessly supervised. She would not venture out of her room to the hall outside where her in–laws were naughtily encouraging me not to respond to her repeated calls. And I, a child of seven or eight or nine, enjoyed postponing my hour of study. But I don't recall her upbraiding me for dallying.

I have lived to regret an even more poignant mischievous play of my childhood. The last time I saw her was maybe two weeks before she died. She made a very difficult trip to St. James's School to see my brother Meyer and me before she confined. She might have had a premonition of the finality of circumstances. Meyer spoke with her, but I, ever playful, ten–year old, fled from her presence. We never saw each other again!

After my Maftir, She left home in her full term of pregnancy for her sister, Helen Hallen's home to deliver her baby. Given the trauma and jeopardy of Mum's deliveries, her sister should never have dared to encourage her to confine in her house, a third story flat, with a flight of steep, endless steps. An amateur mid–wife performed the delivery, during which Mum bled to unconsciousness. Already too late to save her life, she was moved to the Eden Hospital where she breathed her last. Dying of complications, she repeated constantly in an unconscious state: "DARLING!" calling for her husband.

Greater whole–hearted love and dedication for husband and children is not easy to know.

We have an undated birthday card sent to her husband, probably on one of his business trips, [on the printed side]: "Heartfelt wishes for your birthday. From my heart I send a message, loving, tender, glad and true, wishing that this happy birthday may be very bright for you, that the years that lie in prospect bring you much of wealth and love, that the sun of joy and gladness shine upon you from Above." And on the reverse side of the post–card, she wrote::

"Let your thoughts for a moment stay
To one who is thinking of you today
If I had wings I fain would fly
Straight to home through the wintry sky.
But thoughts have wings
And I see you, dear
With many you love, far and near.
Of hearts that greet, and hands that press,
Wishing you joy and happiness.
And one will be warm more fond and true
From the absent one who is thinking of you.

To Isaac dearest, with love and best wishes, From FLORA"

Mum died on October 29th, 1937 [=24th Heshvan, 5698] (the Hebrew year eerily spells תִּרְצָה, the second word of the sixth commandment, "Do not **murder**." Could her death have been avoided?) I was considered too little to attend her funeral. The night she died, and before her body was brought home, I was taken to the third floor of #11, Bowbazar Street where my aunts Diana and Seemah resided, while the second floor was being prepared for the funeral. The three hours of the funeral and burial, I spent at the modest home of kindly family friends, Sillman Hamood and his wife, Gulshan, and their lovely family. Despite my tender age, I think I should have been allowed to attend my mother's last rites.

In his diary, Meyer wrote that I had leaned to recite Kaddish during Shiv'a in a very short time. But then I had to attend synagogue morning and evening. I remonstrated against being woken up at five every morning to be in synagogue at 5:30, come home by seven, and get ready for school at 8:15. Those were trying and unsettling days when I was not aware what had to be done. I knew I missed my free time — and my mother — sorely.

In Baghdad tradition, I read many Maftirs that year, when my father told me that it was fitting for mourners to do so and recite the Haftara Berakhoth, especially that I should think of my mother as I chanted וְלַעֲלוּבַת נֶפֶשׁ תּוֹשִׁיעַ Redeem the hapless soul.

Before I left for New York in 1947, I paid a farewell visit to the cemetery and composed this poem soon after:

Sing the tune of dreadful mourning, son,
As you turn your wretched back and done,
As you remember what your mother was,
As you feel Destiny's cruel claws.
Mourn for what you can no more attain,

Your mother is beyond your feeble train.
O how I long to feel her magic touch,
To look into her crystal eyes, now dust!
Woe to me for I am here bereft,
By my Rest, my Comfort, forlorn left.
In the silent brooding night I hear her voice,
Through the dark shadows of distress she sure appears,
And with tonic words my soul bestirs:
Fear not, my son, I am with you,
God appointed me to guard your ways.
Your life is consecrated to Almighty's Crest,
Your goal is glittered with precious success.
Lifted I my head to my mother greet,
Alas! She fled into ethereal retreat.
"Mother! Mother! Listen when I call,
I need your soothing presence lest I fall."

[I interrupt my writing with an appropriate story by our daughter, Rahel, making her generation fitting preservers of, and worthy links in, the Musleah tradition. Copyright reserved.]

CONTINUITY

By Rahel Musleah

Crows, my father told me, always pierced his memories of the Calcutta Jewish Cemetery. In 1953, as he pored over the cemetery's 3,000 graves to archive the community's history, their raucous cries punctured the silence, shattering the stillness of generations.

When we returned together on a visit to India 44 years later, the crows were still there. Their coarse calls echoed over the mute expanse of the cemetery, crowded with tombs that sprouted like a forest of blackened coffins above the ground. They circled overhead, miniature vultures ready to prey on memories of grandparents and great–grandparents, uncles and aunts and relatives I never knew.

The cemetery was much more than a factual catalogue of life and death for my father. After we entered the rusted iron gates, he strode purposefully past the maze of tombs and headed straight for his parents' graves, which he had visited only twice previously in the last 30 years. He fell on his father's grave, ignoring the spattered bird droppings, heaved one sob and kissed the stone. He fell on his mother's grave and kissed the stone. A weed between the graves caught his attention and he plucked it. Then he straightened and recited the Kaddish, the mourner's prayer, and Eshet Hayil, the selection from Proverbs praising "a woman of valor." I heard the cawing of the crows again, this time mixing eerily with the murmur of prayer.

I stood in the background, watching. Uncomfortably, almost surreptitiously, but aware of the rare opportunity I was encountering, I took pictures of my father leaning over the graves. His hands spanned both the graves — his right hand on his father's grave; his left hand on his mother's grave. His fingers spread over the mottled arches of the stones, tenderly. I could see the emotion transform his 69–year–old face to that of a boy of ten, the age he'd been when his mother had died, a month after he'd read his first Torah portion in the synagogue. I could see it transform his face to that of a young man of 27, the age he'd been when his father had died, a month before he was to marry my mother.

I never knew either of my grandparents, but I had heard many stories. I stepped forward and kissed the graves. I knelt down and traced the Hebrew words on the marble plaque that exalted my grandmother as the daughter of a king, honorable and honest, modest and pleasant in her deeds. Her life had been agonizing. She had had 10 babies in 17 years: three survived to adulthood; one died of meningitis at 13 months; three died of jaundice at less than six days; three were stillborn. I listened as my father explained that my grandfather had wished for a simpler, less flowery inscription. He had been a practical businessman who had supported his extended family with his earnings and guided his children to viable professions.

My mother stood behind me with the guide from the India Tourist Office who had accompanied us on a day of sightseeing that had ended at the cemetery. "His mother died when she was just 39," she whispered, trying to explain the jolt of emotion that charged the air. Her words shocked me as if she had blared them through a loudspeaker. I was 39. Was it an accident that I was kissing my grandmother's grave for the first time at the same age at which she had died?

After my father washed his hands, the ritual ceremony to cleanse the body and spirit upon leaving the cemetery, I hugged him and asked, "Are you okay?" He answered, "Continuity is a great thing."

I didn't realize the goosebumpy truth of his statement at the time. I had always planned to name my second daughter after my grandmother Flora. We named her Shoshana, which means "rose" in Hebrew. What I didn't plan was the date of Shoshana's birth. My grandmother died on October 29, 1937. Shoshana was born on October 26, 1992. I only made the connection when I returned home from India.

Continuity is a great thing.

On Mum's Yartseit in 1949, I wrote home from New York: "While I fast today, my thoughts go back twelve years and beyond. I ask myself rhetorical questions. Why, for example, was I and the rest of my family deprived of our association with my mother? Why was she taken away in the prime of her life, leaving behind a devoted husband and young children? If she were spared a longer life, how much more would she have won the love and confidence of her acquaintances? How else can I answer these disturbing questions than by attributing them to the mysterious workings of the Almighty Whose world is full of hidden secrets? There are greater tragedies, more awesome and terrible than mine, which occur everyday. But I thank God that He has blessed me with a wonderful father and loving relatives who tried their best to fill the gap, not without a great deal of merit. For my part, I reflect on the ten years I was privileged to spend with my mother, with a disturbed mind. I came nowhere near to an ideal son to her, one of whom

it could have been said, בֵּן כְּסִיל תּוּגַת אִמּוֹ A naughty son is his mother's sorrow [Proverbs 10:1]. I have no doubt I was the cause of her many sighs, her many exasperated expressions, and her silent complaints. Nevertheless, I am sure that her love for me was untiring, whole–hearted and unblemished by favoritism. One thing I will never be able to forgive myself for: I never did return her love in due compliment. I console myself, however, by referring to the lack of understanding and sense of appreciation impossible for me to have attained at that tender age. But I cannot rest with satisfaction: I once ask questions which I cannot answer: Why wasn't I given a chance to express my affection for her when I grew older? And so we go around in circles … Accepting my gruesome fate, I can only hope that by the work I do on this earth in the span of life I am due, people will see me and bless the memory of my mother with the words: אַשְׁרֵי יוֹלַדְתּוֹ Fortunate is she who bore him!"

November 23, 1949. From Dad in Calcutta. "I have read your letter dated 24th Heshwan at least three times and each time I broke down. That fateful day in the life history of our small family! I feel so overwhelmed by emotion at your sad fate in becoming motherless at that tender age that I consider it my duty to utter a few words of נֶחָמָה [comfort]. We read: [Deut. 32:4]: "The Rock! — His deeds are perfect, yea, all His ways are just [and true]. In that beautiful Rosh Hashana Piuth: חֲקוֹר פְּעָלָיו רַק אֵלָיו אַל תִּשְׁלַח יָדֶךָ [=Search God's deeds; only at His righteousness, spare your investigations.] It is indeed a sad thing for a boy of ten to lose his mother, because at that age he has not the intelligence or understanding to appreciate the merit of that valuable jewel that Heaven has placed at his disposal. But when you compare your case with the unfortunates that had never set eyes on their mother, how much better off you are? מַצִּיל "יָתוֹם" מֵחָזָק מִמֶּנּוּ God rescues an orphan from a worse fate of other orphans." [ENM: We were taught never to compare misfortunes; they ever miss their mark.]

Dad's letter continues: "Another aspect of her sad episode pertains to the deleterious effect her childbirth mishaps was having on her physical and mental health. It was hurtful to behold. No one can gauge my feelings or the quiet tears I shed for her, not in any sense of repentance — because I have nothing to repent for, but for her sufferings and her slowly deteriorating health.

"On the brighter side, מַקְדִּים רְפוּאָה לְמַכָּה Before the Lord strikes, He prepares the healing balm. Every act of the Almighty, no matter how harsh it may seem to humans, is tempered by mercy. God has been merciful to you and your siblings by means of a loving grandmother and aunts who stood by you and rendered exceptional love and service.

"My gratefulness to the Almighty for not tempting me toward remarriage these twelve years of my lonesomeness. The great love for my children prevented me from such a selfish step, because you, my children would have been the worse sufferers. I was content to endure silently than inflict pain on those whom I love and will continue to love. I am a simple man with no righteous deeds, but I have a legacy bequeathed to me by my ancestors, a legacy more valuable than gold or diamonds, a legacy of זְכוּת אָבוֹת the merit of my ancestors. May they stand before you as they have stood before me and mine.

"You, my son, will help your mother live again and make her name immortal with the aid of Torah you are pursuing so diligently. You shall carry light to humanity, and it shall be said of your mother וּמַה טּוֹב חֶלְקָהּ how goodly her portion to have borne and delivered so valuable a gift to this world."

Dad's awareness of the legacy of more than two hundred years of the Musleah traditions was ever inspirational. They had taught both him and us the best of what we came to know. Our forbears had instilled into the lives of each child of each generation the fundamental laws and virtues and truths which remain eternal — such things as the reality of the living God in whose image all human beings are created — such unalterable things as the reward of virtue, the necessity for honesty, the blessing of work, the axiom that nothing worthwhile can be had without effort and sometimes without sacrifice, the joy of service, the efficacy of prayer, and the meaning of countless other Judaic precepts and practices.

Our Musleah ancestors further taught us that we are the same humans at home or away from home, and whatever enters into our personal lives will become everlastingly a part of us, for good or otherwise, wherever we are. Dad and Mum exemplified that a person of honor does not change his code of honor with changing circumstances. A journey of miles, a seminary education, or other surroundings removed from home–ties, don't alter the obligations to live with high principle. Musleah children, it seems to me, who love and honor their parents, are persons in their personal lives as their parents hoped they would become. And we, their children, would want them to have a glimpse of the fruits of what they had planted in us.

So it behoves us to preserve their lives and their bequests. Margaret and I have done a bit by trying to guarantee the eternity of the values they lived for and by, in our personal lives as well as in other lives. Accordingly, we have planted in a Jerusalem synagogue a perpetual means "to study the Torah and teach its precepts, to follow its instruction and lovingly fulfill all its teachings." Dad and Mum and our loved ones before them left us living wills to heed their moral and religious words; we now attempt to keep them alive.

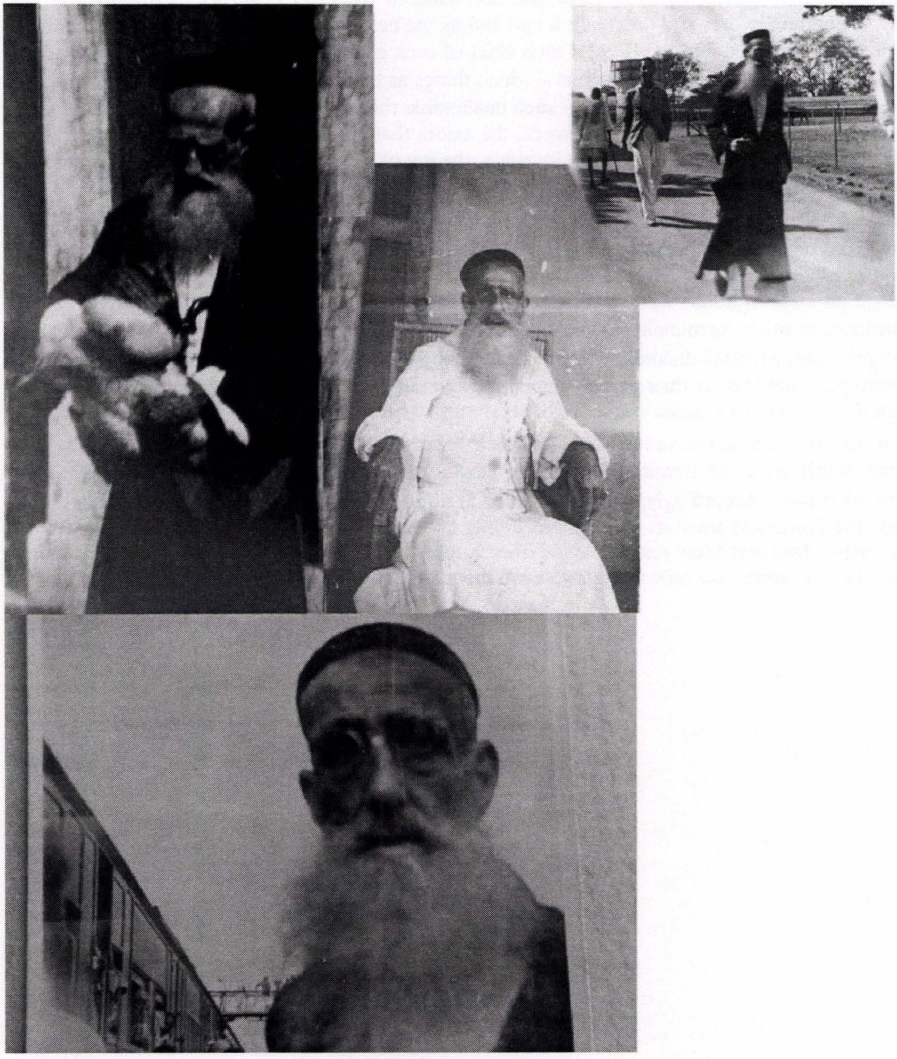


Figure 27. Meyer Ezra/Eliahu Musleah, 1868-1941.
(Clockwise) Testing for chicken fat; Resting in Sedaria and Kurti; Taking a stroll outside the Madhupur Dak Bungalow; At the Madhupur train station.

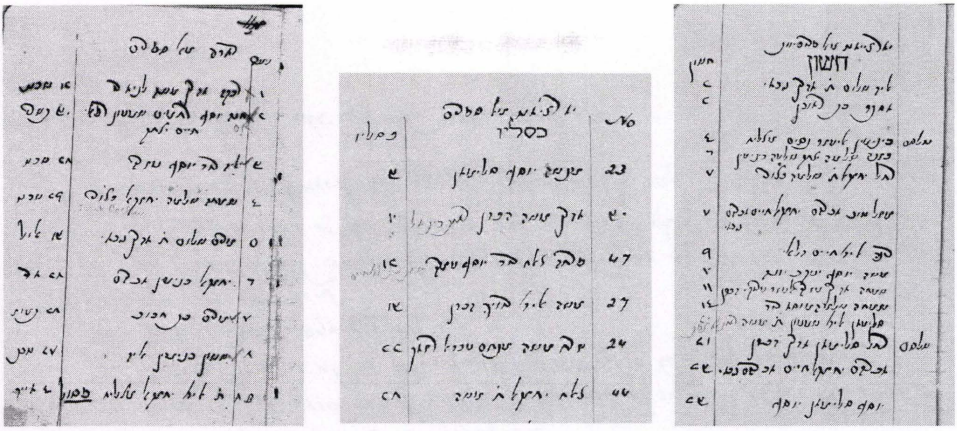


Figure 28. Meyer Ezra/Eliahu Musleah's Record Book of Sefers and Parochets.

(Middle) Yartseits of persons in whose name the Sefarim were donated:

2 Sent to Bethel Synagogue 3 Sent to the home of Eliyahu Hyeem [Hilali] (Left) Sefers Rotation 4. Sent to Cochin; 9.Sefer of Hakham Eliyahu/Yehezkel Musleah — Pasul [Cannot be used]; (Right) Yartseits of Parokhets: (in red ink) Sent to Safed (Israel). From the book of records of Sefers and Parokhets kept by Meyer Ezra/Eliyahu Musleah as Gabbai of Maghen David Synagogue.



Figure 29. Sefer Torah Panels Dedicated to First Musleahs in Calcutta.

Sefer Torah panels dedicated in memory of the first Musleah in Calcutta, Hakham Eliyahu/Yehezkel Musleah, from where we confirm our ancestry from the Baghdad Nasi, Hakham Rav Saleh Musleah. Died 4th Iyar 5624=1824.

Figure 30. Last Will of Meyer Ezra/Eliahu Musleah.

Last will of Meyer Ezra/Eliyahu Musleah, written in Arabic language but Rashi script, describing the route of his funeral so as not to pass Ezra Hospital where Jewish patients might be saddened over the death of a Jew; the procedure of the 'Hakafoth' in the cemetery before burial; and the instructions to his sons not to be overly inconvenienced to recite Kaddish; they are pardoned.



Figure 31. Masuda Meyer Musleah, 1875–1958.
In Rangoon, Burma, 1926, and testing chickens for fat, Madhupur, Bihar, 1930's.

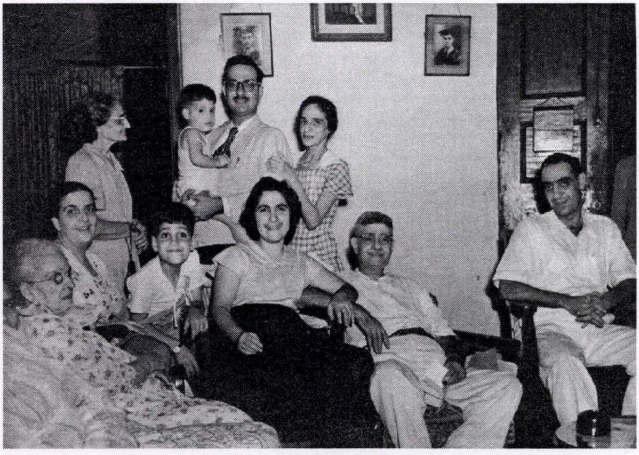
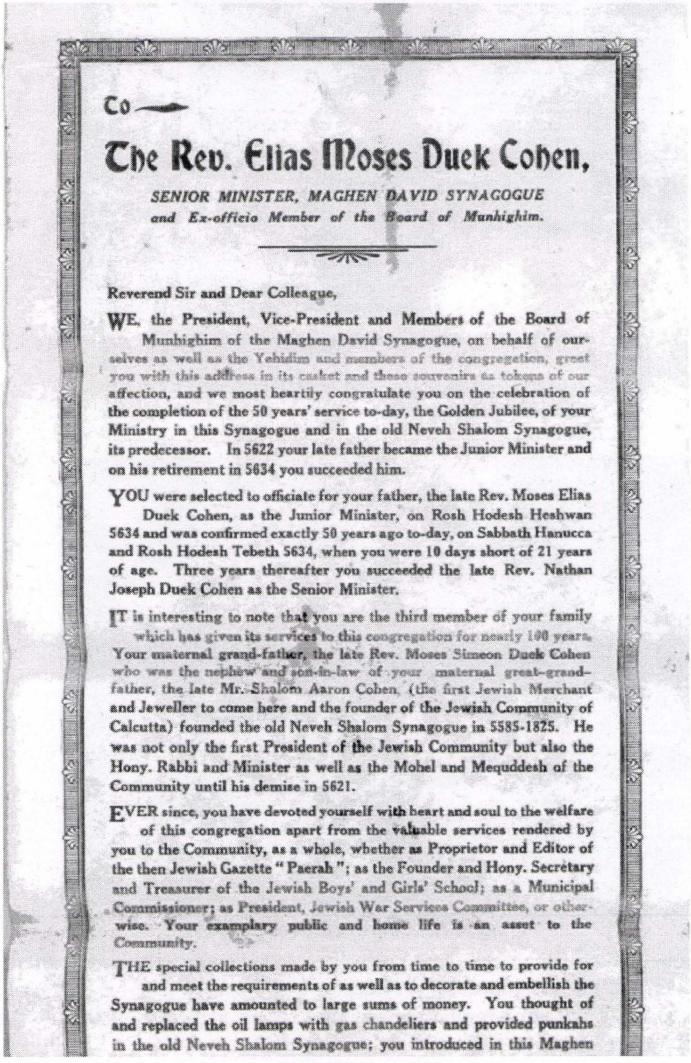


Figure 32. Four Generations, 1954.

Four generations - 1954. 1. Masuda (79) (left); 2. Isaac Sassoon (59)(on sofa, right); 3. Ruby (31) (Dad's left); 4. Michael Mordecai (8) (making a funny face). ENM is holding the other 4th generation, Isaac Sassoon Mordecai in his arms. Others in picture-(l-r)Aunts Rachel, Diana and Ramah, and cousin Sammy.

Figure 33. Rev. E. M. D. Cohen's Testimonial Honoring 50 Years As Hazzan (top).

It is with pride and esteem that I insert here the testimonial presented to Rev. Elias Moses Dwek Cohen, on the golden jubilee of his ministry by a grateful and appreciative community in December 1923. Rev Cohen was a topic of conversation at Musleah dinner tables especially on Festivals. I still observe his Yartseit as a member of my family.



To

The Rev. Elias Moses Duek Cohen,

SENIOR MINISTER, MAGHEN DAVID SYNAGOGUE
and Ex-officio Member of the Board of Munhighim.

Reverend Sir and Dear Colleague,

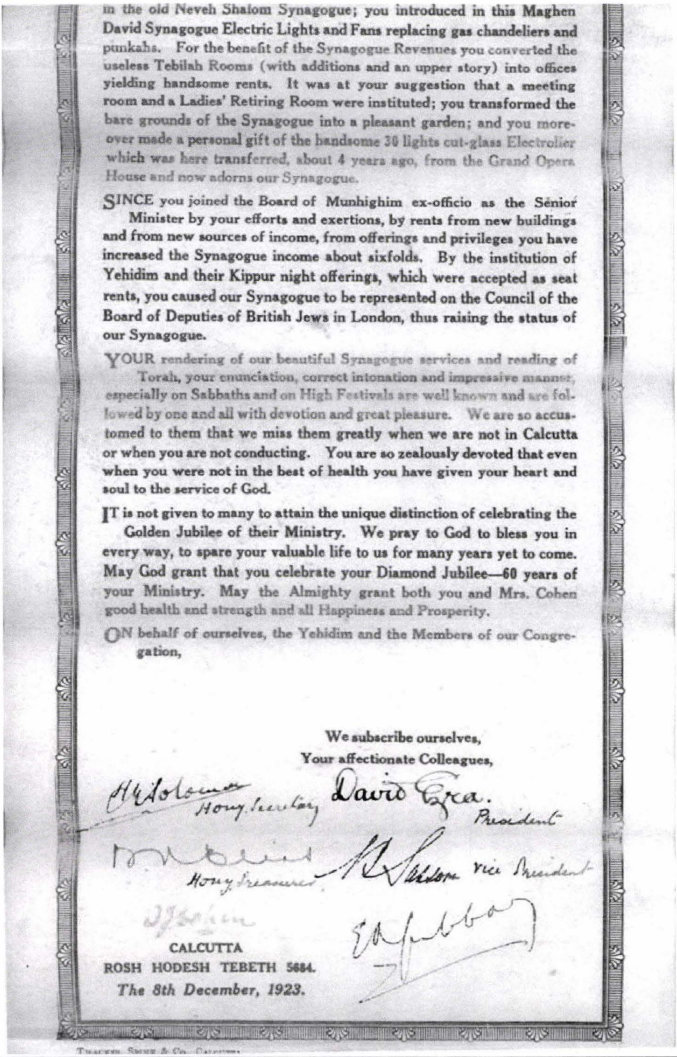
WE, the President, Vice-President and Members of the Board of Munhighim of the Maghen David Synagogue, on behalf of ourselves as well as the Yehidim and members of the congregation, greet you with this address in its casket and these souvenirs as tokens of our affection, and we most heartily congratulate you on the celebration of the completion of the 50 years' service to-day, the Golden Jubilee, of your Ministry in this Synagogue and in the old Neveh Shalom Synagogue, its predecessor. In 5622 your late father became the Junior Minister and on his retirement in 5634 you succeeded him.

YOU were selected to officiate for your father, the late Rev. Moses Elias Duek Cohen, as the Junior Minister, on Rosh Hodesh Heshwan 5634 and was confirmed exactly 50 years ago to-day, on Sabbath Hanucca and Rosh Hodesh Tebeth 5634, when you were 10 days short of 21 years of age. Three years thereafter you succeeded the late Rev. Nathan Joseph Duek Cohen as the Senior Minister.

IT is interesting to note that you are the third member of your family which has given its services to this congregation for nearly 100 years. Your maternal grand-father, the late Rev. Moses Simeon Duek Cohen who was the nephew and son-in-law of your maternal great-grandfather, the late Mr. Shalom Aaron Cohen, (the first Jewish Merchant and Jeweller to come here and the founder of the Jewish Community of Calcutta) founded the old Neveh Shalom Synagogue in 5585-1825. He was not only the first President of the Jewish Community but also the Hony. Rabbi and Minister as well as the Mohel and Mequddesh of the Community until his demise in 5621.

EVER since, you have devoted yourself with heart and soul to the welfare of this congregation apart from the valuable services rendered by you to the Community, as a whole, whether as Proprietor and Editor of the then Jewish Gazette "Paerah"; as the Founder and Hony. Secretary and Treasurer of the Jewish Boys' and Girls' School; as a Municipal Commissioner; as President, Jewish War Services Committee, or otherwise. Your examplary public and home life is an asset to the Community.

THE special collections made by you from time to time to provide for and meet the requirements of as well as to decorate and embellish the Synagogue have amounted to large sums of money. You thought of and replaced the oil lamps with gas chandeliers and provided punkahs in the old Neveh Shalom Synagogue; you introduced in this Maghen



in the old Neveh Shalom Synagogue; you introduced in this Maghen David Synagogue Electric Lights and Fans replacing gas chandeliers and punkahs. For the benefit of the Synagogue Revenues you converted the useless Tebilah Rooms (with additions and an upper story) into offices yielding handsome rents. It was at your suggestion that a meeting room and a Ladies' Retiring Room were instituted; you transformed the bare grounds of the Synagogue into a pleasant garden; and you moreover made a personal gift of the handsome 30 lights cut-glass Electrolier which was here transferred, about 4 years ago, from the Grand Opera House and now adorns our Synagogue.

SINCE you joined the Board of Munhighim ex-officio as the Senior Minister by your efforts and exertions, by rents from new buildings and from new sources of income, from offerings and privileges you have increased the Synagogue income about sixfolds. By the institution of Yehidim and their Kippur night offerings, which were accepted as seat rents, you caused our Synagogue to be represented on the Council of the Board of Deputies of British Jews in London, thus raising the status of our Synagogue.

YOUR rendering of our beautiful Synagogue services and reading of Torah, your enunciation, correct intonation and impressive manner, especially on Sabbaths and on High Festivals are well known and are followed by one and all with devotion and great pleasure. We are so accustomed to them that we miss them greatly when we are not in Calcutta or when you are not conducting. You are so zealously devoted that even when you were not in the best of health you have given your heart and soul to the service of God.

IT is not given to many to attain the unique distinction of celebrating the Golden Jubilee of their Ministry. We pray to God to bless you in every way, to spare your valuable life to us for many years yet to come. May God grant that you celebrate your Diamond Jubilee—60 years of your Ministry. May the Almighty grant both you and Mrs. Cohen good health and strength and all Happiness and Prosperity.

ON behalf of ourselves, the Yehidim and the Members of our Congregation,

We subscribe ourselves,
Your affectionate Colleagues,

H. E. Solomon Hony. Secretary
David Ezra. President
Hony. Treasurer
Vice President

CALCUTTA
ROSH HODESH TEBETH 5684.
The 8th December, 1923.

Figure 34. Rev. E. M. D. Cohen's Testimonial Honoring 50 Years As Hazzan (bottom).

This original document, as many others, was given to me by his daughter, Sara Curlender, whom I ever hold in high esteem. It was signed by: David Ezra, President; N. I. Sassoon, Vice President; H. E. Solomon, Hony. Secretary; B. N. Elias, Hony. Treasurer; E. A. Gubbay, & I. J. Cohen.



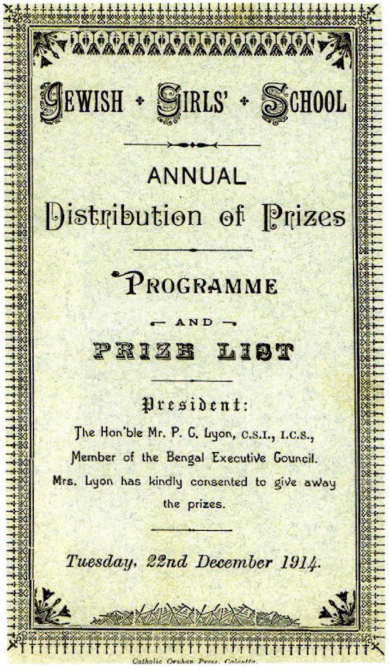
Figure 35. Isaac Sassoon Musleah 1894-1955.
My Father.



Figure 36. Flora Moses Musleah 1898-1937.
My mother.



Figure 37. Exchange Of Birthday Greetings.



JEWISH • GIRLS' • SCHOOL

ANNUAL

Distribution of Prizes

PROGRAMME

— AND —

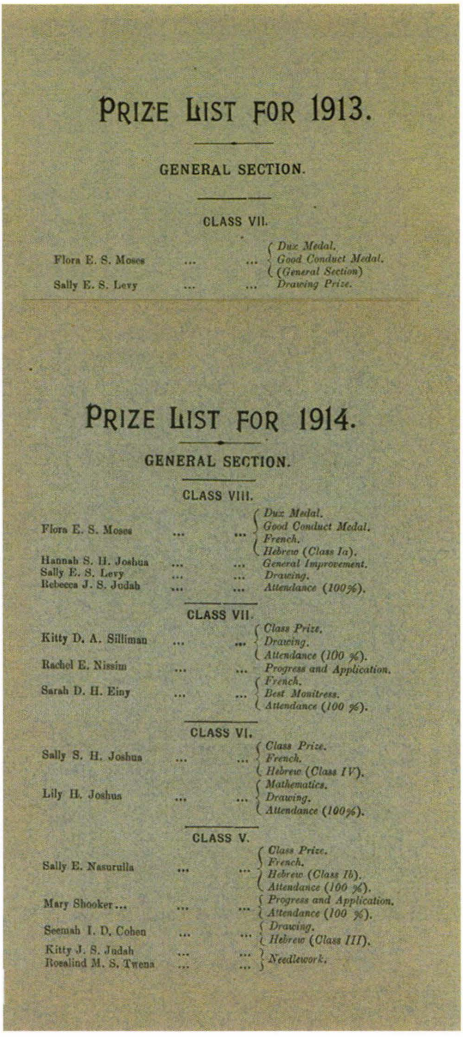
PRIZE LIST

President:

The Hon'ble Mr. P. C. Lyon, C.S.I., I.C.S.,
Member of the Bengal Executive Council.
Mrs. Lyon has kindly consented to give away
the prizes.

Tuesday, 22nd December 1914.

Catholic Orphan Press, Calcutta.



PRIZE LIST FOR 1913.

GENERAL SECTION.

CLASS VII.

Flora E. S. Moses	... ...	*Dux Medal.* *Good Conduct Medal.* *(General Section)*
Sally E. S. Levy	... ...	*Drawing Prize.*

PRIZE LIST FOR 1914.

GENERAL SECTION.

CLASS VIII.

Flora E. S. Moses	... ...	*Dux Medal.* *Good Conduct Medal.* *French.* *Hebrew (Class Ia).*
Hannah S. H. Joshua	... ...	*General Improvement.*
Sally E. S. Levy	... ...	*Drawing.*
Rebecca J. S. Judah	... ...	*Attendance (100%).*

CLASS VII.

Kitty D. A. Silliman	... ...	*Class Prize.* *Drawing.* *Attendance (100 %).*
Rachel E. Nissim	... ...	*Progress and Application.*
Sarah D. H. Einy	... ...	*French.* *Best Monitress.* *Attendance (100 %).*

CLASS VI.

Sally S. H. Joshua	... ...	*Class Prize.* *French.* *Hebrew (Class IV).*
Lily H. Joshua	... ...	*Mathematics.* *Drawing.* *Attendance (100%).*

CLASS V.

Sally E. Nasurulla	... ...	*Class Prize.* *French.* *Hebrew (Class Ib).* *Attendance (100 %).*
Mary Shooker ...	... ...	*Progress and Application.* *Attendance (100 %).*
Seemah I. D. Cohen	... ...	*Drawing.* *Hebrew (Class III).*
Kitty J. S. Judah	... ...	*Needlework.*
Rosalind M. S. Twena	... ...	

Figure 38. Flora Moses, Winner Of Dux & Good Conduct Medals, 1913 & 1914.

Flora Moses. Winner of the Dux and Good Conduct medals for the years 1913 and 1914.

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA
CHAPTER 4

THE MUSLEAH HOME

17 Pollock Street — 20 (?) years 1875 — 1895

12 Parsi Church Street — 37 years 1887 — 1925

(?) Lower Chitpur Road — 8 months 1925 — 1926

11 Bowbazar Street — Over 75 years 1926 —

Eliyahu/Yosef Musleah lived at 17 Pollock Street with his wife, Esther, daughter of Ezekiel Hakham Moses. From there he also conducted his business. He died there in September 1895.

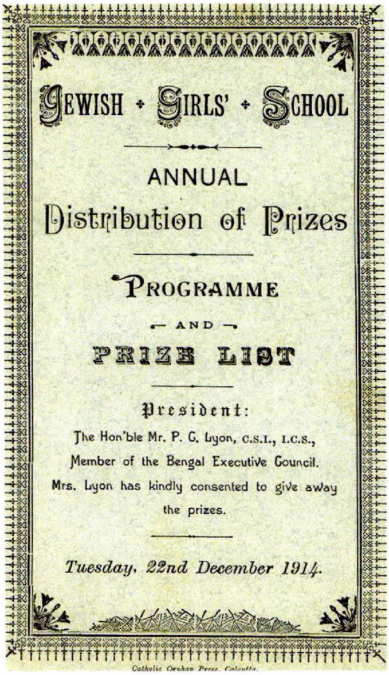
Their son, Meyer Ezra Musleah (19) married Masuda (12), daughter of Isaac Meyer, in 1887, and began living at 12 Parsi Church Street. The street was so–called in honor of a Parsi [=Zoroastrian] house of worship. It was a large six–bedroom house [or large rooms were partitioned] shared in this manner:

> 1. Grandpa and wife Masuda. 2. Esther, his widowed mother, died January 1914. 3. Leah, his blind sister, died November 1918. 4. Eliyahu Rahameem Moses (Chchotee), orphaned son of Grandpa's sister Hannah, died June 1925. 5 and 6. The Children — Eliyahu, died March 1896; Esther, married November 1908, (died March 1913); Isaac, Dinah, Hannah, Mozelle, Elias, Ramah, Seemah and Rachel. Mother Esther's room as well as the space that became available by daughter Esther's marriage, were used by the growing children. After Leah's death in 1918, Isaac and his bride Flora moved in in February 1920, by which time Diana and Mozelle were married [the previous year]. There was, of course, space for a Sukkah.

During their 37–year residence, Grandpa's job at E. D. Sassoon & Company fetched a small salary but was secure, ten children and two grandchildren were born, the children attending the Jewish School for Boys and Girls. The year 1895–96 brought much ill–luck. In September 1895, Grandpa lost his father. Three months later, his oldest sister, Dinah, wife of Abraham/Mordecai Cohen of Bhagalpur, died at only 40. And three months still later, he suffered the tragic loss of his first–born son, Eliyahu, just five years old, of burns sustained playing with fire–crackers during the Hindu Fire–Festival of Divali.

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JEWISH • GIRLS' • SCHOOL

ANNUAL

Distribution of Prizes

PROGRAMME

— AND —

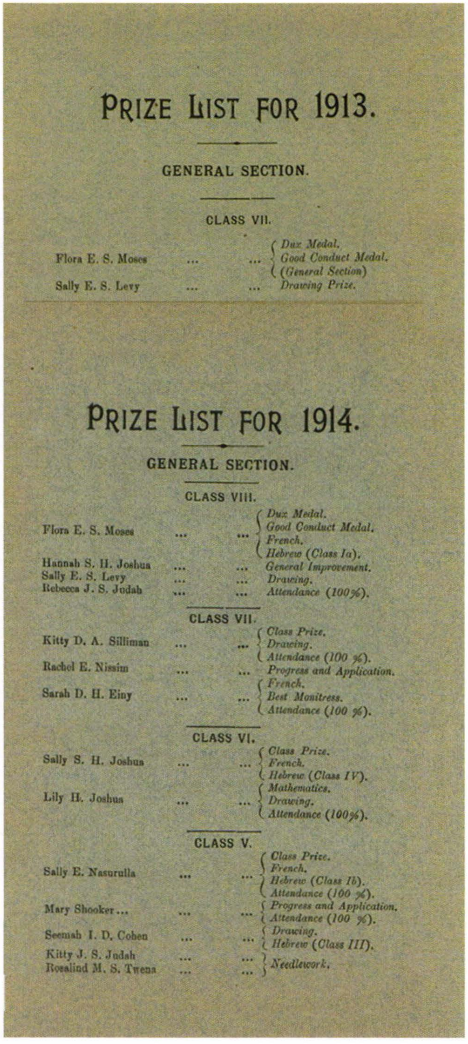
PRIZE LIST

President:

The Hon'ble Mr. P. C. Lyon, C.S.I., I.C.S.,
Member of the Bengal Executive Council.
Mrs. Lyon has kindly consented to give away
the prizes.

Tuesday, 22nd December 1914.

Catholic Orphan Press, Calcutta.



PRIZE LIST FOR 1913.

GENERAL SECTION.

CLASS VII.

Flora E. S. Moses	... ...	*Dux Medal.* *Good Conduct Medal.* *(General Section)*
Sally E. S. Levy	... ...	*Drawing Prize.*

PRIZE LIST FOR 1914.

GENERAL SECTION.

CLASS VIII.

Flora E. S. Moses	... ...	*Dux Medal.* *Good Conduct Medal.* *French.* *Hebrew (Class Ia).*
Hannah S. H. Joshua	... ...	*General Improvement.*
Sally E. S. Levy	... ...	*Drawing.*
Rebecca J. S. Judah	... ...	*Attendance (100%).*

CLASS VII.

Kitty D. A. Silliman	... ...	*Class Prize.* *Drawing.* *Attendance (100 %).*
Rachel E. Nissim	... ...	*Progress and Application.*
Sarah D. H. Einy	... ...	*French.* *Best Monitress.* *Attendance (100 %).*

CLASS VI.

Sally S. H. Joshua	... ...	*Class Prize.* *French.* *Hebrew (Class IV).*
Lily H. Joshua	... ...	*Mathematics.* *Drawing.* *Attendance (100%).*

CLASS V.

Sally E. Nasurulla	... ...	*Class Prize.* *French.* *Hebrew (Class Ib).* *Attendance (100 %).*
Mary Shooker ...	... ...	*Progress and Application.* *Attendance (100 %).*
Seemah I. D. Cohen	... ...	*Drawing.* *Hebrew (Class III).*
Kitty J. S. Judah Rosalind M. S. Twena	... ...	*Needlework.*

Figure 38. Flora Moses, Winner Of Dux & Good Conduct Medals, 1913 & 1914.

Flora Moses. Winner of the Dux and Good Conduct medals for the years 1913 and 1914.

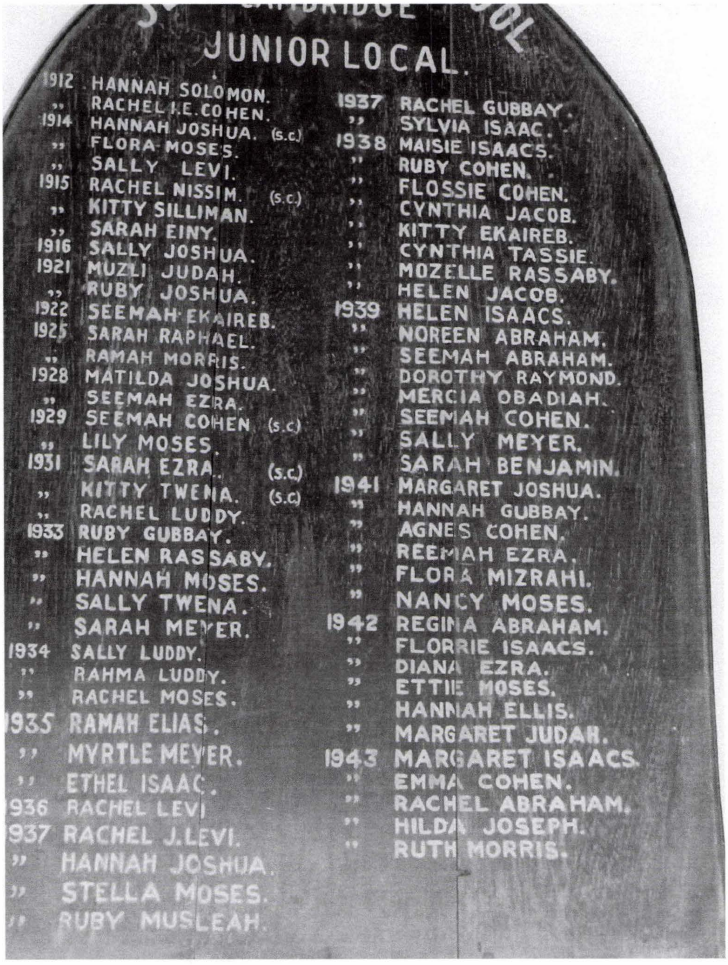


Figure 39. Junior School Certificate.

Names of students awarded the Junior School Certificate. Note Flora Moses 1914, and her daughter, Ruby Musleah 1937.



Figure 40. Graves of First Musleahs in Calcutta.
Visiting the graves of Hakham Eliyahu/Yehezkel Musleah and his wife Reemah, in the oldest section of the Calcutta cemetery.



Figure 41. Praying at My Parents Graves.
1997--Praying at the graves of my parents.



Figure 42. Dad with Mum's Orphans.
After Mum -- Dad with her three orphans in Madhupur, 1938.

CHAPTER 4

THE MUSLEAH HOME

17 Pollock Street — 20 (?) years 1875 — 1895

12 Parsi Church Street — 37 years 1887 — 1925

(?) Lower Chitpur Road — 8 months 1925 — 1926

11 Bowbazar Street — Over 75 years 1926 —

Eliyahu/Yosef Musleah lived at 17 Pollock Street with his wife, Esther, daughter of Ezekiel Hakham Moses. From there he also conducted his business. He died there in September 1895.

Their son, Meyer Ezra Musleah (19) married Masuda (12), daughter of Isaac Meyer, in 1887, and began living at 12 Parsi Church Street. The street was so–called in honor of a Parsi [=Zoroastrian] house of worship. It was a large six–bedroom house [or large rooms were partitioned] shared in this manner:

> 1. Grandpa and wife Masuda. 2. Esther, his widowed mother, died January 1914. 3. Leah, his blind sister, died November 1918. 4. Eliyahu Rahameem Moses (Chchotee), orphaned son of Grandpa's sister Hannah, died June 1925. 5 and 6. The Children — Eliyahu, died March 1896; Esther, married November 1908, (died March 1913); Isaac, Dinah, Hannah, Mozelle, Elias, Ramah, Seemah and Rachel. Mother Esther's room as well as the space that became available by daughter Esther's marriage, were used by the growing children. After Leah's death in 1918, Isaac and his bride Flora moved in in February 1920, by which time Diana and Mozelle were married [the previous year]. There was, of course, space for a Sukkah.

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"A market [Tiretta Bazar] is close by. From the small hours of the morning I can see carts laden with different articles arriving. Long before sunrise these carts are emptied, and people of all castes and creeds are seen hurrying down this pathway to purchase their day's needs. Shortly, they are seen exiting, followed by coolies [porters] carrying loads on their heads, containing different articles, such as, fish, fruits, vegetables, etc. The poorer people carry their own bazar [shopping], consisting of mustard oil for cooking, vegetables, some wood for fuel — flung across their shoulders, and small packages of rice, dal [lentils], or flour. This continues until 9 a.m., when the bustle in the street gradually increases. By 10 a.m., office time [rush hour], traffic becomes enormously heavy. To cope with this [volume of traffic], a parawalla [police officer] arrives, and positions himself right in the middle of the road standing on a board [wooden platform] bearing the words, "Keep to the Left." He raises his right and left arm alternately at his own sweet will, without heeding the actual need of the traffic situation. The portion of the road over which traffic is held up becomes choked with all sorts of vehicles — tramcars [trolleys], motorcars, lorries [trucks], buffalo– and cow–carts, hackney carriages [horse and buggy], rickshaws and cycles — a terrible commotion is created. The parawalla stands quite self–composed, unconcerned with the public inconvenience, for he knows he is the master of the situation and at the time, his commands have to be obeyed. He carries a small book in his pocket, in which he enters the numbers of defaulting vehicles. He is also provided with shoulder belts into which he sticks his umbrella, adding to his comfort.

"The Lal Bazar Police Station [headquarters], just opposite, cannot escape my notice. In the compound, all motorists applying for licences are daily assembled, and certain formalities undergone. The fun is when the "Passing Inspector" [the officer in charge of granting licenses] suddenly finds fault with the machine [automobile] or the owner, and both are sent away [we would say today, given a ticket].

"Around the corner, is a native [indigenous] sweet meat [confection] shop. The owner with a big fat belly is busy preparing all sorts of indigestible sweets, as drops of perspiration from his bare body pours into the pan! The odour sometimes drives me mad [crazy], leaving me wondering how it is that Food Inspectors do not intervene.

Lal Bazar corner is notorious for a record number of accidents. It is either horses slipping, or buffalo [–driven] carts smashing under the huge loads they are made to carry, some unfortunate person knocked down, killed or injured. Traffic is again at its height at about 5 p.m., gradually subsiding toward evening.

"Just below my window, a tea hawker [vendor, has a stall furnished] with all requisite articles — a giant tea kettle and small cups [made from dried leaves], is patronized by no less than 50 customers [who depend on him for their morning tea]. By 8 a.m. he leaves, and his place is taken by a couple — a coconut man [selling green coconuts called dahb primarily for their juice, a great thirst quencher], and a betel woman [selling pahn, a green leaf stuffed with betelnut and spices] — who remain there till late in the evening. This place is also a hotbed for beggars of all descriptions — the maimed, the cripple, the blind and the deformed — draw very largely on the sympathy of passersby [for alms].

By 9 p.m. there is no further disturbance unless I have to leave my bed to watch a native wedding procession." [It would have been an interesting description, but Dad concluded there.]

The Lower Chitpore house itself brought no luck! Within a few months, Isaac and Flora were bereaved of their oldest daughter, two–and–a–half–year–old Esther, nicknamed 'Bobu,' who succumbed to diphtheria, and Grandpa lost his job at E. D. Sassoon & Co., the Calcutta branch of the Bombay–based firm having closed its doors. It was enough for Isaac to go house–hunting again. He also had to borrow money for earnest and other initial outgoing. He tapped his father–in–law, Elias Saleh Moses, for a loan. We have an interesting hand–note in Dad's writing: "On demand I promise to pay E. S. Moses Esq the sum of Rs.800/– Rupees eight hundred only, together with interest @ 9% nine percent per annum, for valuable consideration received." Signed, "I.S. Musleah," on two revenue stamps of one anna each, depicting the portrait of then King George V. Dated, Calcutta, 4th January 1926. On back, is the record of one payment in his daughter Flora's writing: "Paid in part Rs.50/– Rupees fifty only, 3/1/28" [January 3rd 1928]. It was the only repayment recorded, fully two years after the I.O.U. was drawn. The 51/2"X41/4" note paper was preserved in an envelope inscribed by Dad's brother, Elias: "Koorun's Hand note. Handle with care[!]" [referring to E.S. Moses' family nickname, Arabic = ram's horn, probably a sobriquet for a Baghdadi seller of animal horns made into Shofars, etc. It cannot be certified that the loan was fully repaid by the time E.S. Moses died, June 1931.]

The family moved to 11 Bowbazar Street, a further quarter mile away, in time for Pesah, 1926. The last Musleah, Ramah, now 96 still lives there [November 2003].

FLOOR PLAN: 11 BOWBAZAR STREET, CALCUTTA

The family rented the entire floor above the street [British, 2nd floor; American, 1st floor]. The extended family in the 1930s lived on the floor above. On the East, David Hye/Eliyahu Rahameem Cohen [nicknamed Dick], his wife, the former Diana Musleah, daughter of Meyer Ezra Musleah and wife Masuda, their son Eliyahu Rahameem, or Elias, [later called Bob], and daughter, Simha, or Seemah, together with Thai Byu, their nanny, a Christian Karen [=a Burmese sect] who would read the Bible in Karenese every night.

For Christmas, 1948, I sent her a greetings card and inscribed Exodus 21:5, If the [strictly a Jewish] servant declares, 'I love my master … and my children, I do not wish to be freed …' She immediately looked up the reference in her own version of the Bible. She reacted so jubilantly. She went around telling everyone: "This is like me. Ezekiel is very clever!" Aunt Diana would say: "Thai Byu was shaking with excitement." Dad's comment: "You must have a wonderful diary or directory where no important date is omitted." [When I returned to Calcutta upon ordination, she asked me to explain why the Bible included a Book like The Song of Songs, a lovers' adventure with explicit sexual references. In acknowledging her perplexity, I expounded the rabbinic interpretation referring the lovers' relationship to that between God and the people Israel. She thence read the Book in a different light and with greater appreciation.] [She retired to her native Karen community after decades of faithful service, recognized virtually as part of the family. In rabbinic terminology, the righteous individuals of other peoples have a share in the future world.]

On the western portion of the floor lived Charles/Obadiah Cohen and wife, the former Seemah Musleah, daughter of Meyer Ezra Musleah and Masuda. They had no children.

Bedrooms on the 1st/2nd floor flanked a central hall divided by a movable screen, the north side being the living room, the south, the dining room.

The bedroom in the north–west were for Masuda and her unmarried daughters, Hannah, Ramah and Rachel, and Seemah before her marriage in 1931. [I was her naughty four–year–old page boy. When the family picture was being taken, I had to be given a cigarette tin to play with to allay my restlessness.] The north–east segment of the long room was a partitioned bedroom/office/dressing room of Elias Hyam, where I was born in August 1927. Separating the two segments was a lounge with three lounging chairs called easy chairs, for this part of the family. The bedrooms opened into a terrace or verandah overlooking Bowbazar Street, a noisy thoroughfare for trams [=trolleys], buses, automobiles honking interminably, two–seater rickshaws drawn by emaciated men, rain or shine, and carts pulled or pushed alternately by men and cows or bullocks. A sacred (?) stray cow and jaywalking humans added to the frustration of petulant drivers.

Adding to the din and clatter, processions of demonstrators or religionists noisily carrying their icons to immersion in the River Hooghly, a tributary of the Ganga on which Calcutta is situated, frequently tied up traffic. On the other hand, the verandah presented an ideal station to watch the annual Mohurram procession in observance of the Muslim leader, Hussein's murder by partisans in 680 C.E. The younger grandson and favorite of Mohamed, he walked into a trap set by antagonists and beheaded. The tenth day of the Islamic month of Mohurram was declared a day of mourning by the Shi'ite branch of Islam, the sect of Muslims in India. The processionists beat their chests with their hands or blade–tipped chains, sometimes collapsing in a swoon. But mourning was limited to the participants. Onlookers, especially children, anticipated happy vendors of multi–colored rubber balloons, festoons and toys, who provided side–shows and made handsome profits.

Most importantly, the verandah housed the Sukkah, a permanent structure of bamboos, which, for the Festival, were covered over with palm leaves, and prettily decorated and illuminated.

Uncle Elias's room alongside the north verandah had an almirah [=closet] full of toys he permitted the kids to play with. The Sukkah mats of palm–leaves having served their usefulness, were attractive bases for toys, and helped to compartmentalize the rooms for us kids playing 'house'. We would beg Uncle Elias for the toys and out came stuffed animals of all types, locomotives on rails, characters of clowns, and dolls — products of Germany for whose consulate he worked as commission agent. Once we were done playing, we had to follow the rules: put the toys back neatly in the almirah or there would be no more toys! We could play as much as we wanted in a tidy room. So the arrangement went on and on …

The area to the west was a large room separated by a wooden partition. The southern portion was the abode of my grandfather, Meyer Ezra Musleah, whose earthly possessions, including valued family heirlooms, were contained in a large almirah, and his books in a smaller one with glass panels. [Much of his library is in our possession.]

He possessed a tiny contraption — call it a desk of sorts — that held stationery and writing materials. He sat himself on the floor and wrote down what he had to, particularly the accounts he made as Gabbai of Maghen David Synagogue after 1926. Above his 'desk' was a small rack for the books he was currently reading. Then, of course, a bed and an arm–chair. He read sitting on the chair with feet propped up on the bed.

An interesting side–light on positioning of beds — always facing south/north or north/south, never east/west, because people were laid to rest in the latter position!

The room led into a dead–end, a godown or store room where Grandpa stored the Kasher wine for Shabbath and Festivals, the Sukkoth decorations and the edible goodies the family wanted out of reach of domestics and children. But the latter could not be beyond the naughty tricks of his grandchildren. With the goodies as target, I, ever playful, together with my more resourceful and imaginative cousin, Eric Morris, got the better of our grandfather, busy reading as usual, by using the prank that marbles we were playing with somehow got into the closed store room! Grandpa was unconcerned with the youngsters' ploy and too engrossed in his study to verify the story. Thanks, Grandpa, for those delicious sumoosucks, babas, kakas, luzinas … What a grandfather!

The north side of the partition was a dressing room used by Masuda and her daughters with five almirahs [=closets] and a dressing table.

Between the dressing room and the north bedroom was a staircase leading from the street to the upper floors. Under the stairwell on the ground floor, a godown stored coal to feed the kitchen fires.

Isaac and wife Flora occupied the east wing of the house, a large room divided by two almirahs, the couple's bedroom to the north and that of the children to the south, leading to a small washroom. No showers. To take a bath, order a domestic to heat up water, pour it into a metal tub, add cold water from a faucet to required temperature, and draw water with a ' lota' or large mug to throw over your body while seated on a wooden stool. The washroom was divided, one flank each for the two sides of the family.

The large central hall was divided equally between the dining room to the south and the living room to the north, separated by a movable partition. A large collapsible table was set with additional leaves when the extended family of Morrises and Cohens happily joined in the festivities of Rosh Hashana and Simhath Torah. In addition, the table, a little smaller than the standard table–tennis table, served the younger generation in the late 30s and early 40s for the game of table tennis on Sunday evenings.

The living room highlighted a grandmother clock on the east wall, chiming strands of Big Ben.

To the south of the central hall was a covered verandah used as a sort of den where family, especially the women folk, spent most of their time. Two work tables were employed to prepare vegetables for the day's meals, eat lunch, and on which Dad, having already devoted an hour to office work, placed his shaving equipment at 8 o'clock every weekday morning and shaved while engaging in small talk with the rest of the family, or with a hawker hailed off the street in response to the vendor's robust calls signalling he had fruits and/or vegetables to sell. The chatter of daily visitors and that of close neighborly friends, added to the hubbub. This was, incidentally, the distracted setting my father chose to teach me my Maftir portion and first Haftarah for the first day of Sukkoth, 1937. Apparently there wasn't much to 'teach' as, at age ten, I was already sufficiently proficient in chanting of Parasha and Haftarah. When the early morning hustle and bustle concluded, the south verandah became the site of leisurely folk relaxing on lounge chairs, including the post–lunch round of Turkish coffee with a piece of confection. On cool winter days, the warm sun's rays coming through large operable vents made it the most comfortable spot in the house.

Off the western end of this covered verandah was the 10'x 8' kitchen, presided over by a Muslim cook. Three generations of his family operated in that capacity — Rahim, his father, Karim [in Parsi Church Street], and his son, Ishmael. The cook's job was to prepare lunch and dinner for a family of eight adults and three children in the late 1930s. Making breakfast was the job of the assistant cook, or 'Boy' as he was called, consisting of scrambled eggs, egg–toast or omelet, tea and milk, toast and butter, together with the most delicious home–made jams, especially teepari [=gooseberry]. Lunch at 12 noon — Dad would come home for lunch an hour later for his soup and rice with boiled chicken, the office being a ten–minute walk away — Bhbhajee [=vegetables and potatoes, spiced]. At 4 p.m. tea and kaka [=dough rings]. Dinner at 7:30 p.m. — chicken roast or fried, in different delicious forms such as Aloo–Chahp, Kurkett, Shufta and Cutlet. Some cooks shopped daily for vegetables, chickens and spices, but ours didn't. For many years, a kindly woman did our purchases, and later, Aunt Rachel bought the daily requirements from Tiretta Bazar, an indoor market–place five minutes away. A Shohet for chicken sat himself down in mid–market, doing a profitable business. Calcutta Jews, unlike their Bombay co–religionists, somehow did not have a liking for red meat, though a Shohet was resident and two or three attempts to kill sheep and goats in the Jewish neighborhood were made but failed.

Besides assisting the cook, the 'Boy' washed and dried pots, pans and china, made beds, and dusted furniture. A second 'help,' a young chap called 'Chchokra,' could have been the assistant 'Boy.' He ran errands and did other odd jobs. Longest tenured of all 'Boys' was Mahboob, his name in Urdu, the language of the Koran, means 'loved,' whom Granny called Mahdoob to deflect from the other, more endearing term. Others called him 'Song,' expressive of his sing–song manner of speech. He would answer to that name; he had no option!

The bathrooms and the rest of the house were swept, cleaned and disinfected by a Hindu 'Dhangor,' or low caste. Because of the kind of work he did, he was not permitted to touch any food, utensils or clothes. If he accidentally did, the desecrated objects were discarded. All he could work with were brooms, swabs and pails. To cover his lowly status and duties, he was designated, 'Jamehdar,' a prestigious rank in the Indian army, but the Dhangor was really the janitor.

Milk was supplied in one of two ways. Most people living in the central Jewish neighborhood in the 1930s and 40s contracted with a Jewish woman who owned three or four cows. A cow, accompanied by a groom, arrived at individual homes and was milked while a family member watched to insure against adulteration. Or, more trustingly, the previously milked product was delivered in small barrels and poured out to the order of the homeowner.

Finally, clothes were laundered by the 'Dhhoby,' [Feminine=Dhobnee]. He or she appeared once a week, removed clothes from the 'Patara' [=dirty clothes basket], and counted each item individually under the scrutiny of a resident who recorded the name of each article and the number of pieces. The bundle was taken on the Dhhoby's back to his/her home, most often by the edge of a stream of water, washed, dried and ironed, and returned within a week or two when the accounting was checked and a new bundle filled and taken away.

Could Mr. Average Hyeem afford all these amenities? If the salary of a white–collar worker in the mid–1930s was 500 rupees, the monthly expense for help went something like this: Cook — Rs.30, Boy — Rs.25, Chchokra — Rs.10, Jamedar — Rs.25, Dhhoby — Rs.15. The balance for rent, food and clothes. The extent of domestics employed depended, of course, on one's income.

In the 30s, Dad as Sales Manager of National Tobacco brought home an adequate income. His brother Elias had lesser resource, until an opening replaced them in the shape of commissions from American oil imports. Some of those dollars, incidentally, came in handy to pay for my upkeep at the Seminary, as a loan to Dad.

Ramah taught kindergarten for more than fifty years at the Jewish Girls' School, earning enough for her wardrobe and other personal necessities. On the occasion of her silver jubilee in 1947, her principal, Ramah Luddy, arranged a staff party and praised her for her loyalty and devotion to duty. I sent her this message [December 1]: "For you and people like you there is, without question, חֵלֶק לָעוֹלָם הַבָּא a special portion in the world to come. In other words, you have prepared a generation or two to meet a new world full of questions for which you have tried to supply answers. There is no higher vocation than teaching Jewish children so wholeheartedly and diligently as you did for so many years. Mazal Tobe, and may you continue the good work with renewed strength." Dad to me in New York, November 14, 1947: "Aunt Ramah is not too sure of inheriting עוֹלָם הַבָּא , because she has been teaching secular subjects and not Torah. Do you think she will be obstructed at the entrance [to Gan Eden], or will she get free admission?" She officially retired after her fortieth year, but continued part–time for another ten. To the best of my knowledge, she did teach Hebrew and Bible stories at that stage. In any case, education is an all–embracing process, and teaching involves life in all its phases, religious and secular. In order to be fit to teach life, one must be able to live it. The principle of self–effort, of self–dependence, is a requisite of growth, and of happiness itself.. Children are impressed by their teachers' personal examples, and the influences they find in school go beyond mere academic exposure. So Aunty Ramah's career must be considered a sacred trust, dedicated in a very personal way to the lives of the children she taught. Gan Eden will receive her with open arms!

She excelled in her hobby — exquisite embroidery — making very pretty Kippot and Hallah covers for the family, thankfully still in use.

Hannah and Rachel never worked outside the home, but did many household chores. Hannah was left a small sum of money in 1925 from the estate of a friendly neighbor, Nahoum David, a scholar, and teacher at the Jewish Girls' School. He wrote unpublished treatises on Jewish Theodicy and compiled a 150–year Jewish calendar in manuscript, the final year of which was 2000. [Some of his writings and the calendar are in our library.]

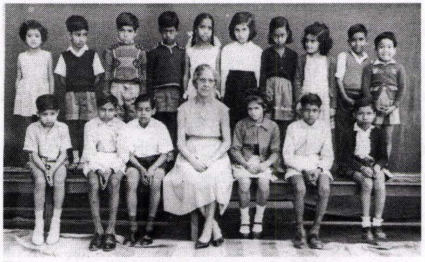


Figure 43. Aunt Ramah Musleah, Kindergarten Head.

Aunt Ramah, head of the kindergarten department at Jewish Girls' School, Calcutta.



Figure 44. 11 Bowbazar Street, Calcutta.

Bowbazar Street, Calcutta. Family Musleah rented the middle floor. The north verandah and Sukka structure overlooking Bowbazar Street.

The events of the past recalled from living here are beyond our power to alter or efface. Life lived is life lived. Now the task in hand is to spend our hours today that tomorrow may welcome its memories.



Figure 45. Aunt Ramah Preparing Table For Shabbath.

Aunt Ramah giving the dining table a scrub in preparation for Shabbath.



Figure 46. The South Verandah, Recreation–Cum–Work Room.

Morning — Vegetables prepared for the cook, vendors displayed their wares, and Dad shaved. Afternoon — siesta time.



Figure 47. The Sweeper Swabbing.

Sweeper doing his morning chores — swabbing. In the afternoon, he swept with a broom.



Figure 48. Aloo Makalla.

Delicious-looking aloo makalla made by Rahel, a Keen Student of Sephardi Traditions.



Figure 49. The Cook and Boy Serving.

These aloo-makallas made by the cook (right).

At your service, madames; Aunt Ramah and Margaret.

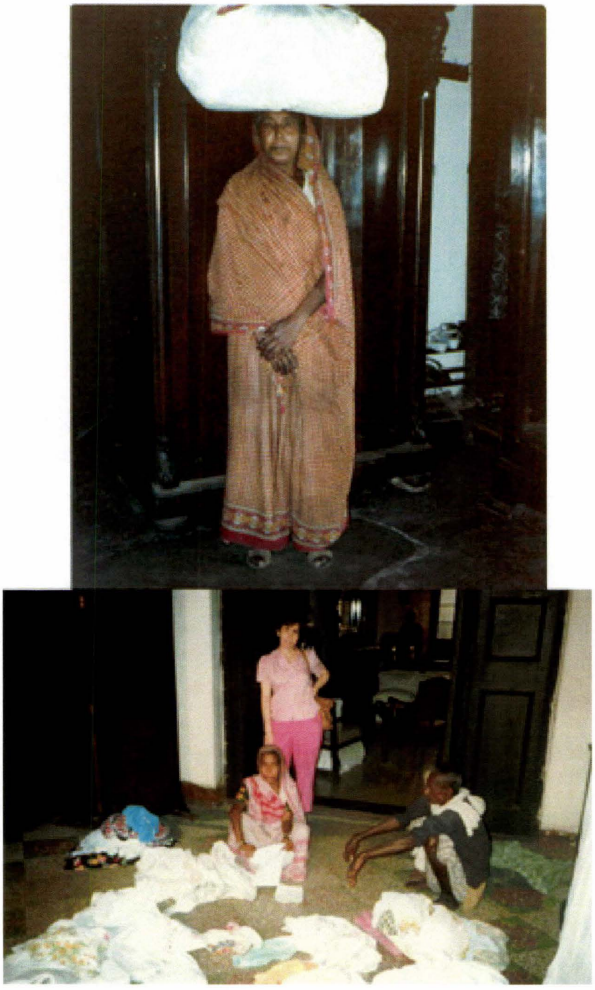


Figure 50. The Dhobnee — Washerwoman.

The Dhobnee (Washerwoman) sorting out clothes and linen to be laundered, and, after about a week, carrying a bundle of her laundry, washed and ironed.

Margaret is the interim supervisor.



Figure 51. Assisting Aunt Ramah to Pour Wine.

The Wine Cellar adjoining Grandpas' room. I am assisting Aunt Ramah to pour wine from the Bu-Yahm — large receptacle — to a bottle for current use.



Figure 52. The Wine Cellar—Found a Fanuse.

The Wine Cellar in our Calcutta home doubled as a store room. Look what I found there! The famed purple fanuse with the date indelibly marked on it — "March 10. 1857."



Figure 53. Hanging the Fanuse!

Look what we did to it! It hangs in our dining room alongside our Tirya with a matching top of the same material (probably of the same approximate date) imported by the same person, our great-grandfather, Eliyahu/Yosef Musleah. The Tirya top belonged to his wife, Esther (died 1914). A fitting happy scene for Shabbath and Yom Tov.

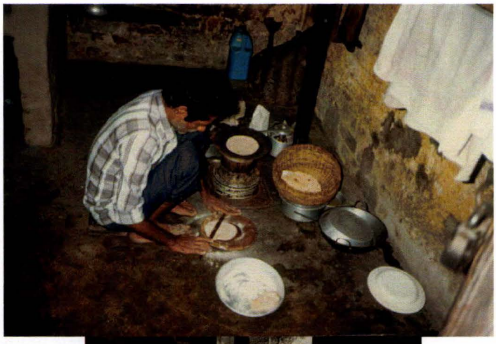


Figure 54. The Cook Rolling Dough.

The Cook rolling dough for the Indian bread, Chappatee, and his assistant, the Boy, pressing ginger and garlic in the old-style 'seal and loria.' Washed dishes lie over to the side in a basket . An earthen coal and wood stove is the background.



Figure 55. Home-Made Sumoosucks.

Cheese summoosucks made by amateurs — Margaret and Ezekiel — in Philadelphia. Is it really amateurish or professional?

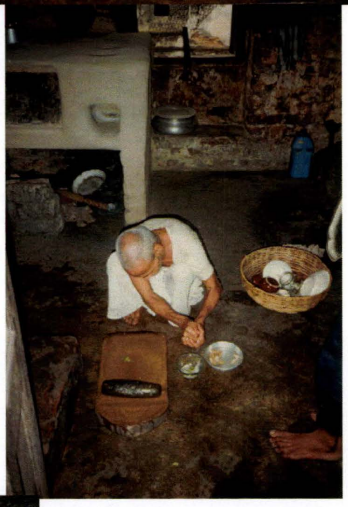


Figure 56. The Boy Pressing Ginger.

Pressing Ginger by Hand.

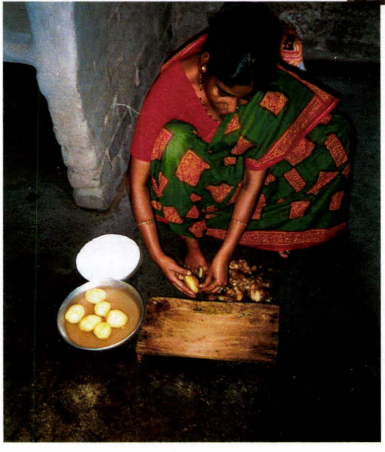


Figure 57. Peeling Potatoes With Her Toes

A domestic peeling potatoes with her toes!

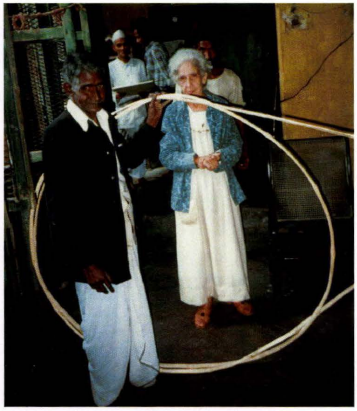


Figure 58. Magician Hired to Nab a Crook.

If a domestic was suspected of stealing, a magician was hired to nab him. A long bamboo line attached to a snake was used as manipulator. The line wraps around the suspect's neck.

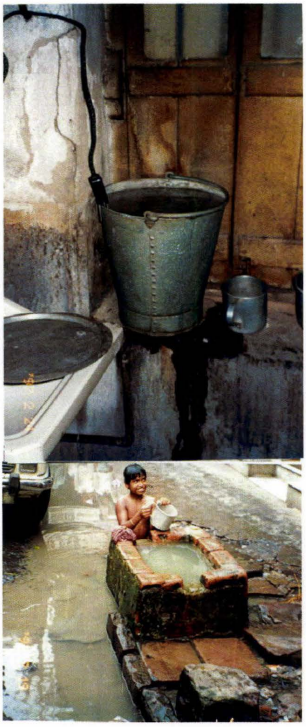


Figure 59. A Bath — Indoors and Out.

A bath anybody? Indoors — water is heated by an electric chord in a bucket, a more modern setting than heating water on a stove. Hot water is poured into a metallic tub and cold water from the faucet mixed to touch. The mug is used to draw water from the tub. Outdoors — A street urchin enjoys a bath with not-so-clean water.



Figure 60. Doodewalla - the Milkman.

The milkman measuring milk strained only by a piece of cloth. All milk was boiled — homogenized? — prior to being drunk.



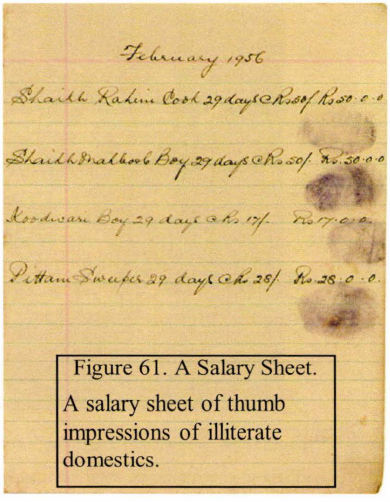


Figure 61. A Salary Sheet.
A salary sheet of thumb impressions of illiterate domestics.

Figure 62. Old-Style Transportation and Vending.
(Left) Old-style transportation — the rickshaw.
And vending — the balance for weights and measures.

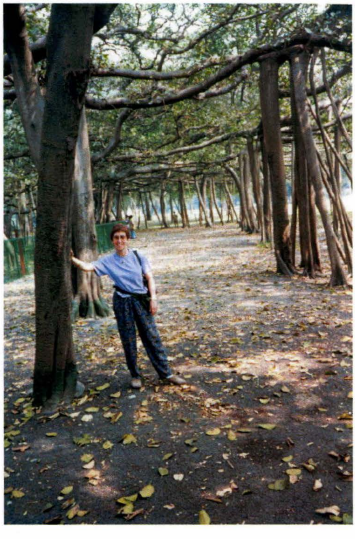


Figure 63. The Banyan Tree at the Botanical Gardens.
The famed Banyan Tree at the Botanical Gardens across the River Hooghly from Calcutta.
Age: 250 years
Canopy: 420 meters.
Highest branch: 25 meters
Margaret feels a tree bark.



Figure 64. Curb Service for Passers-By.
(Above) A hair-cut
(Below) Food



CHAPTER 5

MONTH AFTER MONTH

If the synagogue reproduced the home, the home was the analogue of the synagogue. All the ritual ceremonies of the synagogue had their counterpart in domestic preparations. Passover, Shavuoth, Sukkoth, Hanukka, Purim, were all home feasts. Together with the occasional fast days, Jewish history was thus taught in the home, indirectly tending to fill the child's heart with loyalty to the past and faith in the present. More remarkable was the series of private family fasts [Yartseits] and feasts, and preparation for auspicious days, birthdays of the living, and continued observance of family traditions.

ELUL

The advent of Elul signalled the start of Tikkuneem reading, a mystical commentary on the biblical Book of Genesis, each section or Tikkun dealing with a different interpretation of the word Beresheet [In the Beginning]. Could the reading have been chosen to associate Rosh Hashana with the traditional creation of the universe? Some chapters include the meeting of Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai and his companions with Moshe Rabbeinu along with other Biblical and Talmudic personalities with whom they discuss the mysteries of the Commandments, fit subjects for the approaching sacred days.

It should be noted that ritualistic and liturgical patterns of the Baghdad Jews and their religious dependencies in India, for example, took a dramatic turn toward mystical and Kabbalistic modes introduced in the second half of the nineteenth century by Hakham Rav Yosef Hyeem, Chief Rabbi of Iraqi Jewry for over fifty years, until his death in 1909.

Two rites mark the community's penitential period. Daily Selihoth services in synagogue begin at 4 a.m., an hour before dawn, bright enough to put on Tallit and Tephillin at Shahreet. Also, a series of Hattarah ritual, seeking release from vows and other pledges made during the year. Most popular Hattarah occasions, on the eves of Rosh Hashana and Kippur, follow well–attended Selihoth services. But the first Hattarah is done as early as forty days before Rosh Hashana, that is, the twenty–first day in the month of Av. Ten men sit as a Beth Din [=Religious Court] to recite the formula for remission of vows.

A special Hattarah, led by Family Musleah, takes place on any one of the days between Rosh Hashana and Kippur. Divided into four parts, they include 1. Absolution of vows, oaths, etc., 2. Prayers for continued devotion to God and Torah, 3. Affirmation of faith in the foremost principles of Judaism, and 4. Addressing the sexual weakness in men, its source and resolve to abstain.[1]

On the eves of Rosh Hashana and/or Kippur, the universal custom at cemeteries is to recite memorial prayers and Kaddish at graves of relatives and friends. Family Musleah, using a Hebrew text found in a volume entitled, שַׁעֲרֵי תְּשׁוּבָה, published in Leghorn in several editions, one in 1837, read a prayer at parents' graves as well as at that of an earlier deceased relative. The order on each grave visited is simply the memorial prayer, as a token amount of money earmarked for charity is placed on the tomb.[2] Perhaps because Kaddish is exclusive to Yartseits

1. Excerpts translated by Ezekiel N. Musleah and placed in the book of the above proceedings entitled, BETHEL, published in Leghorn, Italy, 1878, by Abraham Hamoi.
2. In 1953, as Rabbi in Calcutta, Ezekiel N. Musleah published a first ever English translation of the cemetery readings as well as the Rosh Hashana Tashlikh service and the Kippur hymn, Lekha Eli. For the formula

and congregational services, as well as in the interest of time, we omit it on these occasions. This annual observance becomes so much more meaningful when, following the prescribed text, the visit begins with the declaration: "I have come here to worship at his/her grave so that I may be remembered and inscribed before You, Lord, this year for good, forgiveness and pardon. May I deserve merit and the performance of good deeds as I walk in ways taught to me by him/her." And concludes with the very moving address to all those buried in the cemetery: "We greet you, dear parents … teachers and friends. May your souls be bound in the bond of eternal life with the Lord your God. Peace be upon you and upon your repose. Blessed were you in this world and it is well with you in the world of eternity."

TISHRI

Sephardim observe a Seder before the meal on the first night of Rosh Hashana found in different texts. The order, following Baghdad, was published in Calcutta in the early twentieth century, on a handsome, red–bordered sheet, at the top of which is the greeting תְּהֵל שָׁנָה וּבְרָכוֹתֶיהָ אכי"ר [=אָמֵן כֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן] זֶה סֵדֶר יְהִי רָצוֹן שֶׁל רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה שֶׁנּוֹהֲגִים פֹּה כַּלְכַּתָּה יע"א [=יַגֵּן עָלֶיהָ אֱלֹהִים] "Let the New Year and its blessings begin, Amen. This is the order for Rosh Hashana customary in Calcutta." Family Musleah adopted a slightly different order, the names of the edibles rendered in English by Eliyahu Hyeem ben Meir Ezra Musleah (EHM, 1904–1985).

1. תְּמָרִים [Arabic, תַּמְר] Dates, followed by the blessing בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָעֵץ
2. רִמּוֹנִים [Arabic, רְמָאן] Pomegranate.
3. תַּפּוּחַ בַּדְּבָשׁ [Arabic, תפאח] Apple Preserve.
4. רוּבְיָא [Arabic and Hindi, לוּבְיָא], Lubia, followed by the blessing בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה
5. קְרָא [Arabic, קרע] Pumpkin.
6. סִלְקָא [Arabic, סִלָק, Hindi, Polesahg], [in America, Spinach]
7. כַּרְתִּי [Arabic, כַּרָאת] [Hindi, Lusson Grass], [in America, Scallions]
8. Sheep's Head רֹאשׁ כֶּבֶשׂ with the blessing שֶׁהַכֹּל נִהְיָה בִּדְבָרוֹ [When sheep's head is not available, omit ...וְתִזָּכֵר לָנוּ אֵילוֹ שֶׁל יִצְחָק אָבִינוּ "remember for us Isaac our Father's ram."]

דָּגִים Fish is surprisingly included in the text on the sheet. Strictly, Iraqi Jews omit it because of the phonetic closeness to the Hebrew דְּאָגָה worry, trouble!

Mentioned at the bottom of the sheet: וּבְתוֹךְ הַסְּעוּדָה יִלְמוֹד ד' פְּרָקִים שֶׁל מַסֶּכֶת רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה כְּנֶגֶד

ד' אוֹתִיּוֹת הוי"ה ב"ה "In the middle of the meal [really, after the meal], one should read the four chapters of the Mishnaic tome, Rosh Hashana, corresponding to the four letters of the Tetragrammaton, the Name of God. And in בִּרְכַּת הַמָּזוֹן add: הָרַחֲמָן הוּא יְחַדֵּשׁ עָלֵינוּ אֶת הַשָּׁנָה הַזֹּאת לְטוֹבָה וְלִבְרָכָה May the Compassionate God renew for us this year for goodness and blessing.

As a border, the words of Deuteronomy 4:4 וְאַתֶּם הַדְּבֵקִים בַּה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם חַיִּים כֻּלְּכֶם הַיּוֹם אָמֵן כֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן you who hold fast to the Lord your God are all alive today. And Deuteronomy 1:11 ה' אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם יוֹסֵף עֲלֵיכֶם כָּכֶם אֶלֶף פְּעָמִים כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר לָכֶם May the Lord, the God of your Fathers, increase your numbers a thousandfold, and bless you as He promised you.

And from the prayerbook: וְיִכָּתְבֻכֶם בְּסֵפֶר חַיִּים טוֹבִים and may you be written in the Book of a Good Life.

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accompanying the placing of money on tombs, see Ezekiel N. Musleah, Read After Me, page 440

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA

Fun time arrives during a break in synagogue services on both days of Rosh Hashana between the end of the Haftarah and the commencement of Eth Sha–arei Ratsone in the form of Privileges' auctioning, that is, the sale of various synagogue honors to the highest bidder for the festive month of Tishri, including Rosh Hashana, Kippur and Sukkoth/Simhath Torah, conducted in Arabic. Many walk out of the synagogue to socialize in the yard. Those who remain indoors look for entertainment or intend to participate actively in the sometimes lively and intense competition in the name of the Sifrei Torah still on the Tebah. The proceeds afford the Synagogue a lucrative source of income. Booklets distributed freely, consisting of a record of the previous year's auction, make the comparative figures all the more interesting.

On the First Day, the Privileges for Rosh Hashana and Kippur are "auctioned;" on the Second Day, those for Sukkoth and Simhath Torah. Dad is interested in the littler items — Pittoom haKetoreth and Zemiroth [=Pesukei deZimra] — the earliest parts of the service when only a few congregants are present and bidders scarce if any. Zemiroth and Mahwi [=using the Pointer to mark the starting point of the day's Parasha] are intended for the children, eight and up, though adults chant the longer, more difficult, Zemiroth on Kippur. Also for the children is the honor of carrying the Sefer Haftarah, a lighter weight containing the Haftaroth for the year.

As a child I am bemused and entertained. The air of the marketplace is clearly in evidence; but bids are announced in the name of a Mitzva. The result is the same — the highest bidder wins out, often a man of affluence. When two persons of note go after the same honor, the price skyrockets, heightening the interest of spectators. After ten rupees, bids increase by three, then five, rupees, and the name of the buyer gets mentioned in a MiSheberakh. Purchasers paying twenty–one rupees and more are honored in a special prayer: הַנּוֹתֵן תְּשׁוּעָה לַמְּלָכִים וּמֶמְשָׁלָה לַנְּסִיכִים וּמַלְכוּתוֹ מַלְכוּת כֹּל עוֹלָמִים הַפּוֹצֶה אֶת דָּוִד עַבְדּוֹ מֵחֶרֶב רָעָה הַנּוֹתֵן בַּיָּם דֶּרֶךְ וּבְמַיִם עַזִּים נְתִיבָה הוּא יְבָרֵךְ וְיִשְׁמוֹר וְיִנְצוֹר וְיַעֲזוֹר אֶת הַשֵּׂם הַטּוֹב "He (God) Who gives victory to kings and dominion to princes, Who rescued His servant David from the deadly sword [Psalm 144:10], Who made a road through the sea and a path through mighty waters [Isaiah 43:16], may He bless, guard, protect and assist" …, a fitting prayer for the noble, generous purchaser. Most popular items: Opening the Ark doors, Maftir, Mashleem [last Aliyah after which the Oleh recites a Kaddish, popular among mourners and those who observe Yartseit], carrying the seven Sifrei Torah on Kol Nidrei night, and Oleem for Simhath Torah, particularly Hathan Torah and Hathan Beresheeth.

Rosh Hashana afternoon at home is spent in the presence of fifteen or twenty visitors who chant the whole Book of Psalms aloud, five chapters per person at a time, followed by refreshments and Minha. A delightful sidelight of these gatherings: A man chants Psalms 120–134, called the SHIR HAMA–ALOTH Psalms so beautifully, he is nicknamed, SHIR HAMA–ALOTH! The party then proceeds to Tashlikh at Dalhousie Square, a waterfront about a half a mile away, non–Jewish domestics carrying books if the first day of Rosh Hashana falls on Shabbath.

In the next few days, a consignment of white chickens and roosters arrives from National Tobacco's Chittagong [famed for handsome poultry] stockist at the instance of Dad, the Sales Manager. The birds are, of course, for eve of Kippur pre–Selihoth [3 a.m.] Hakkafoth, turning over the heads of each member of the family, as 'scapegoats' for possible destined mishaps for him or her, and instantly handed to a waiting Shoheth, Moses Hai, son of Hakham Shelomo Abid Twena. The birds are given as charity.

Three p.m. eve of Kippur Minha is preceded by symbolic lashes for iniquities deserving of such penalties. Then to the Mikveh at Bethel Synagogue compound, a once–a–year dip for the men in the family. Nothing extraordinary except for this — once–in–a lifetime happening: My father and brother [I am not yet Bar Mitzva and ineligible to dip, but accompany them after Minha], with a full complement of towels, have just ritually cleansed themselves, hail a rickshaw, normally a two–seater drawn by an emaciated human being. In a minute, overcome by our weight, he accidentally lets go his grip. The rickshaw reels back. We are thrown on to the street, our clothes and towels besmeared with grime but our disinfected spirits intact! After Kippur, Grandma Masuda directs that we return to the accident spot, where the mystical formula for shock be thankfully uttered. The underworld spirits, disturbed at our fall, have to be appeased!

Menfolk don't utter a word all of Kippur, apart from prayer and study. By hindsight, hand–motion communication occasionally seems comical! The poor fellow hauling a rickshaw that takes us home on Kippur night is ordered, as a condition of taking our ride, to blow out the kerosene light the law requires him to display to ply his vehicle after dark. He anxiously complies, but risks being pulled over by the police whose headquarters have to be passed en route to our home. No police action ever took place for the annual tampering with the law, emboldening generations to follow the practice of predecessors. In any event, a domestic waits at the house to pay the meager fare.

When I return to Calcutta upon ordination, I cease using a rickshaw not only on Kippur but at all times, despite the popular notion that riding in one helps a poor illiterate earn a living. Most people are prepared to overlook what it does to the dignity and self–esteem of human beings.

The first act of the head of the household upon returning home from synagogue on Motsa–ei Kippur, before even breaking fast, is to place a palm branch on the Sukkah, accompanied by a prayer, demonstrating the fervor for the Mitzva of Sukkah.

SUKKAH

The bamboo skeletal structure occupies a permanent place in the north verandah of 11, Bowbazar Street, Calcutta, no more than seven feet wide and about twelve feet long. Ever exposed to the elements — scorching sun and prolonged monsoon rain — some poles and strips deteriorate in varying degrees and have to be replaced from year to year.

The well–being of the Sukkah is squarely Uncle Elias's responsibility. It is he who determines if the bamboos need patchwork or overhaul, installs electrical cables, and supervises the taking out and putting away of appurtenances. On a rain–free Sunday before Rosh Hashana, he spends hours beefing up cables, and placing connections in appropriate corners. As a child, I ramble into the verandah, ask if I can help, and get odds and ends to do, like holding a tool or passing an instrument. To my query as to how he knows where the connecting cables are required, comes the reply: "it's the same every year!"

Two or three days before Kippur, a truck–load of palm–branches, assembled by volunteers of National Tobacco's cigarette factory in Agarpara's wooded area, nine miles from Calcutta, are delivered. Coming home from school and seeing the exciting spectacle of stacks of palms in the Sukkah, the children are ready to lend a hand. But much more preparatory exertion has to be expended. That evening, two synagogue caretakers [called bearers] join one of our domestics in a most interesting job — weaving of palm mats. An intrigued set of kids sit by the workers, all natives of Cuttack, a town in the neighboring province, now state, of Orissa. They wrench a

branch down the middle, then criss–cross the stems from each side, until there emerge a perfectly interlaced mat. We are quick to lie down on them, but soon forced off. The mats have a double use — to cover walls of the house abutting the Sukkah, as well as to act as a screen along the trellised iron fence visible from the street down below. Well, they are employed in yet another way. After Sukkoth, we children play "house" with the fast–turning–brown mats.

The Cuttack laborers perform another interesting job. They give the Sukkah a green body. Every bamboo pole and strip is covered with palm branches fastened with string. All is then ready to adorn and illuminate.

The next day, bright and early, especially if a Friday, the women–folk are off shopping for fruits and vegetables, and return to stringing. On a week–day evening, the children, anxious to be put to work, rush through homework and begin putting up adornments, fruits and vegetables. What a variety! Apples, pears, bananas, grapes, pineapples, carrots, string–beans — on personal reflection, we seem to enjoy the experience more than a feed of ice–cream or rasogullas! We joke and poke fun at each other, and grown–ups relish the sight of frolicking youngsters. One of our favorite adornments — chchun–chchun — shiny, brittle, multi–colored paper, crackles and sparkles in the wind. Sold in long strips, they are cut into 12–inch pieces, doubled and hung up by a stick and string.

Excitement doubles in anticipation of the next morning when the ten arches are the center of activity under Dad's direction. He appears with his walking stick to facilitate the hangings on the ten arches. The center–piece is the Fanuse, lamp in Persian, from where these antiques were imported by my great–grandfather, Eliyahu/Yosef Musleah as early as the mid–19th century. It bears an oil–wick in a glass or a bulb suspended from electrical chords. One of the earliest, a purple Fanuse, bears an imprint on its top rim: Registered March 10, 1857, the date of manufacture or import. It matches the purple Tirya–top used by his wife, Esther, (they were married in 1847). The Tirya–top now adorns our [Margaret and ENM] Tirya currently utilized by Margaret every Shabbath and Festivals.

The Sukkah is a replica of that used by the family for 37 years at their previous residence, 12 Parsi Church Street where two generations of Musleahs were born except me [ENM]. Clockwise from the West, the location of the special chair for the Ushfeezeen, patriarchal guests, Abraham to David, the following Fanuses become visible: West — blue; red; North — purple [now with us]; yellow [now with Mavis]; blue [now with us]. East — green [now with us], to the right of the entrance, whose arch does not have a Fanuse. South — white; yellow [taken by Ruby], would hold the oil–wick [never an electric bulb] lit in memory of the family head's father: Grandpa for father Eliyahu, and Dad for Grandpa; and finally, white, to the left of the chair, in honor of the Ushfeezeen.

On either side of the Fanuse is a pair of matching, colored balloons. On each side of these appear a pair of bright–red indigenous 'fruit,' — very attractive on the outside, but inside, yach! *resemble* cat's defecation, 'Billi ka goo!' It is never pried open, the contents being visible only upon falling to the ground after a rain–storm. Next on the arch appear a pair of custard apples, Sharifa, matching Chchun–chchuns, and finally, a pair of red apples. Dad meticulously insures that placements are symmetrical, and points with his stick to the exact location he thinks is appropriate. "Move this a little to the left," or "center this slightly," he calls, and, if further elucidation becomes necessary, the stick follows his directive. The kids go along with his judgment for minute measurement because we too wish to see a most beautiful Sukkah. If a Sunday, we are more relaxed and it takes longer, but on a weekday morning, it is all over by 8:30. The kids rush off to school and Dad to work.

When the lights are turned on at sundown, they attract the attention of pedestrians a half a mile away. The closer they come, the longer they stand and admire. When the men–folk return from synagogue, we catch the first glimpse of the Sukkah as we turn the corner of Lal Bazar and Radha Bazar Streets — the attraction in a blaze of illumination!

Before entering the Sukkah, we read a formula as though inviting the Ushfeezeen, our special guests, to participate in the lovely Sukkah ceremonies, and praying for celebrations in years to come. "May it be Your will, Lord our God, that You cause Your Presence to dwell among us, and spread over us the canopy of Your peace for the sake of the Mitzva of Sukkah we now fulfill in Your name, and for the merit of our esteemed guests, the Patriarchs who practised love and kindness inherent in the act of hospitality. Because we abandon the comfort of our usual abode, and choose this temporary setting under the open sky, may we, Family Musleah, enjoy abundant blessings You convey to us. To the hungry and thirsty, we pray, send food and water they depend on. Seal our fate for goodness in the coming year, and set our fortune to live long and well on this sacred earth reverently in Your service. Praised are You, Lord, forever, Amen."

Kiddush includes inviting the Ushfeezin to honor our proceedings — a way of indicating that our religious standards coincide with theirs.

Here is the style of the invitation:

עוּלוּ אֻשְׁפִּיזִין עִלָּאִין קַדִּישִׁין עוּלוּ אֲבָהָן עִלָּאִין קַדִּישִׁין לְמִיתַב בְּצִלָּא דִמְהֵימְנוּתָא עִלָּאָה בְּצִלָּא
דְקֻדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא לְיעוּל אַבְרָהָם רְחִימָא אַבָּא קַדִּישָׁא סוּכָּה גְּמַטְרִיָּא אַבְרָהָם תֵּיבוּ אֻשְׁפִּיזִין
עִלָּאִין קַדִּישִׁין תֵּיבוּ אֲבָהָן עִלָּאִין בְּצִלָּא דִמְהֵימְנוּתָא בְּצִלָּא דְקֻדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא זַכָּאָה חֻלְקָנָא
וְזַכָּאָה חֻלְקֵיהוֹן דְּיִשְׂרָאֵל דִּכְתִיב כִּי חֵלֶק ה' עַמּוֹ יַעֲקֹב חֶבֶל נַחֲלָתוֹ

"Welcome, guests from your sacred, heavenly abode! Welcome, our holy ancestors from on High, who dwell in the trusted shelter of the Most High, the Lord God, praised is His Name. Enter our Sukkah, Father Abraham, beloved of God. Feel at home. Love and hospitality are here among us. Bring along Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David. Be seated with us, guests from your sacred heavenly abode. Be seated with us, our holy ancestors from on High, who dwell in the trusted shelter of the Most High. Sharing you with us we are most fortunate, as are our brethren of the house of Israel. The Bible [Deut. 32:9] has truly foretold: 'The Lord's people shares His portion, the Patriarchs; and Jacob, that is, the Jewish people, enjoys God's own allotment, the Patriarchs.'" (Each of the other patriarchal guests is substituted on his day.)

The banquet caters to the extended family — Cohens and Morrises — duplicating Rosh Hashana's elaborate meal: Pillaw with almonds and raisins, aloo makalla, beet khatta, hari kabab, mahasha, doh piaza, chicken soup and, of course, fruits for dessert. A lengthy Pizmoneem session follows; for the kids, a major disappointment. The first two nights on the repertoire designate authors' whose names begin with Abraham and then Isaac — pizmoneem with less popular melodies. As a child, I remember asking Dad: When will we sing (the very tuneful) Soori Go–ali ya? Somewhat taken aback, he says something to the effect: "There are many Pizmoneem to be sung. On another night, we will sing the "tuney" ones!" True enough, their turn do come and we sing with enthusiasm and zest.

The Pizmoneem are pleasing, leaving a nostalgic memory to the happy setting the Sukkah occasions. The first Sukkoth I celebrate on returning home from the Seminary in 1952, one of the songs suddenly becomes excruciatingly appropriate. As we chant

יוֹצֵר אוֹר בָּהִיר praising God as the "Author of the bright, clear light, my lips declare Your glory," a full moon rises in the East, profoundly intensifying the aptness of the rest of the Pizmone: "He creates the heavens in right measure and stretches out the sky above. Celestial bodies on high, earth down below; where living beings delight in them. O God! All of these may come to an end, but Your spirit is eternal!"[3]

Three Pizmoneem the family sang should have been rendered extra special, but we did not, at the time, recognize their historic significance as compositions and melodies of our famed ancestors, Hakham Rav Saleh ben Yosef Musleah and his son, Nissim, or even our descent from them. They appear in my work, Kol Zimra, translated for the first time into English. Proudly, I insert them here:

צוּר יְשׁוּעָתִי. עֲנֵנִי יָהּ עֲנֵנִי קַבֵּץ עֲדָתִי. מִיַּד אוֹיְבֵי פְּדֵנִי שׁוֹד כִּי לְמִרְמָס שָׂמֵנִי. וּלְאַרְבַּע רוּחוֹת זָרֵנִי. חוֹשׁ קַבֵּץ אוֹתִי מִגְּלוּתִי וּתְנַחֲלֵנִי.
אֵיךְ נָגִיד עַמְּךָ. אֶת בְּרִיתוֹ הֵפַרְתָּ אֵיךְ עֲנִי וָמָךְ. אֶת כֹּל אוֹיְבָיו הִשְׂמַחְתָּ עִם מְשִׁיחֲךָ הִתְעַבַּרְתָּ. כִּסְאוֹ לָאָרֶץ מִגַּרְתָּ. אַתָּה נַאֲמָתָּ אָבִי אַתָּה הוּא יְקָרָאֵנִי.
לִי עָנָה דּוֹדִי. רַחֵם אֲרַחֲמֵנוּ לְדָוִד עַבְדִּי. בִּישׁוּעָתִי אֲרַאֲנוּ זְרוֹעִי תְּאַמְּצֵנוּ. בֵּן עָוְלָה לֹא יְעַנֶּנּוּ. אֶשְׁמוֹר לִי חַסְדִּי יֵשֵׁב נֶגְדִּי וְיִנַּחֲלֵנִי.
חֲמוֹל וְרַחֵם. עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל עַמְּךָ לְעִירָם הַנֶּחָם. וַיַּסֵּד הֵיכָלְךָ וְיִשּׁוֹנִי תְּהֵנָּה צִדְקָךְ. כֹּל הַיּוֹם תְּהִלָּתֶךָ. אָז לְבֶן יִשַׁי יוֹבִילוּ שַׁי וְהוּא יְרַעֲנֵנִי.

RETURN OF DAVIDIC RULERSHIP

Rock of our salvation! Answer us, O God, answer us! Bring together our community. Save us from our enemies. Look, they have trampled upon us, and scattered us in four directions.

Assemble us at once from dispersion and guide us. How has the Ruler of his people broken faith! What of the poor, the poor! You have made his opponents rejoice. You have become angry with your Messiah and have knocked down his rulership. But You have willed it. You are our Father and You will call our cure.

Our Beloved answers us: I shall surely have pity upon My servant David. I shall show him My saving power. My arm will uphold him and the wrongdoer shall not oppress him. I shall keep My kind pledges with him. He will live in My presence and sing My praises.

3. My "Kol Zimra, page 112

Have pity and compassion on Israel, on Jerusalem Your city, and re–establish Your Temple. Then shall our tongues declare Your righteous deeds; everyday, Your praises and tribute shall be made to the scion of the House of Jesse, who will guide us.

צוּר רָם עַל כֹּל רָמִים. הַצֵּל עַם תָּמִים ... מִים ... מִים. מֵיד אַנְשֵׁי דִּמִּים ... מִים ... מִים. הוֹמִים כַּיָּמִים ... מִים ... מִים.
בֶּן דָּוִד יָבוֹא יַשְׁמִיד יַכְרִית אֶת כֹּל גּוֹי גּוֹג. כֹּל עוֹשֶׂה זָדוֹן ... דוֹן ... דוֹן. יֵדַע יֵשׁ אָדוֹן ... דוֹן ... דוֹן. אֶתְעַלְּסָה בְּגִיל תָּמִיד כֹּל הַיָּמִים.

אֲחַלֶּה אֶת צוּרִי. יָרַפָּא לְצִירִי ... רִי..רִי. יִקְבּוֹץ אֶת פְּזוּרִי ... רִי ... רִי. מֵיד לְצוֹרְרִי ... רִי ... רִי. בֶּן דָּוִד יָבוֹא יַשְׁמִיד ...
לְךָ אֶמַר לִבִּי. עַד אָנָה אוֹיְבִי ... בִּי ... בִּי ... יִלְחוֹךְ אֶת סְבִיבִי ... בִּי ... בִּי. יֹאכַל כֹּל טוּבִי ... בִּי ... בִּי. בֶּן דָּוִד יָבוֹא
חוּשָׁה לְעֶזְרָתִי. צוּר יְשׁוּעָתִי ... תִּי ... תִּי. הַבֵּט לְצָרָתִי ... תִּי ... תִּי. וּמְהֵה צָרָתִי ... תִּי ... תִּי. בֶּן דָּוִד יָבוֹא ...

REMOVE THE UNGODLY NATION

Exalted Rock above all majesty! Save the guiltless people from the bloodthirsty, a people moaning as the seas.

(Refrain) May the descendant of David come and destroy, yea, cut off every nation that deals maliciously [against Your people], so that God shall be acknowledged as Master. Then shall we ever rejoice ecstatically all our days.

We entreat our Rock to relieve us of our pains and preserve our scattered people from the hand of the adversary. (Refrain)

Our inner beings pray to You: How long will the enemy lick clean everything about us, devour all our choice possessions? (Refrain)

Hurry to our assistance, Rock of our salvation! Look upon our difficulties and make an end of them. (Refrain)

[In this Pizmone that came to my attention after the publication of my Kol Zimra, Hakham Rav Saleh Musleah pleads with God as a kindly Gazelle to come to the aid of a forlorn dove (the people Israel) fallen into alien hands.]

צְבִי הַחֵן. חִישׁ בִּמְהֵרָה. פְּדֵה יוֹנָה גּוֹלָה צוּרָה. רְאֵה אַמָּה מִתְאַכְזָרָה.
צוֹדָה גּוֹזֵל. רוֹדָה גּוֹזֵל. וְהוּא לֹא גָזַל. לֹא גָזֵל. חַי.
אָדוֹן עוֹלָם. יִצֵּר אוֹרָה. שְׁבוֹר צָרָה הִיא צוֹרְרָה. בְּאַף וָזַעַם וְעֶבְרָה
צוֹדָה גּוֹזֵל. רוֹדָה גּוֹזֵל ...
לַמָּה יוֹנָה. זַכָּה בָּרָה. בְּחַגְוֵי סֶלַע סְתוּרָה. בְּיַד חַיָּה רָעָה מָרָה.
צוֹדָה גּוֹזֵל. רוֹדָה גּוֹזֵל ...
חוֹשָׁה עַד לֹא תָפוּג תּוֹרָה. הֲדוֹךְ אַמָּה נָכְרִית זָרָה. אֲשֶׁר עָלַי תּוֹרָךְ
גָּבְרָה. צוֹדָה גּוֹזֵל. רוֹדָה גּוֹזֵל.

ISRAEL, THE CHERISHED DOVE, SAFE IN GOD'S KEEPING

Lord, Graceful Gazelle, hurry! Soon redeem the dove, languishing in exile. Witness how Your maidservant is being cruelly mistreated.

(Refrain) The young Bird is distressed, the Fledgling is belabored; yet, the enemy could not steal her; she assuredly is not stolen, O Living God! [With God as guardian, Israel will continue to live with hopes of freedom, which cannot be forcefully taken away.]

Master of the universe! Creator of light! Put an end to our troubles caused by the oppressor in anger, fury and wrath. (Refrain)

Why is the Dove, pure and chaste, concealed in the cleft of a rock, forced to take shelter from cruel wild beasts? (Refrain)

Rush to save the Torah from growing faint. Crush the alien servant that overwhelms the Dove. (Refrain)

Hakham Rav Nissim Musleah's only Pizmone we still sing:

נוֹרָה אַתָּה קַבִּין אַתָּה יוֹנָתְךָ תַּמָּה תְּמִימָה. הָשֵׁב אוֹתָהּ אֵל נָוֶתָהּ
יְגֹרַשׁ הָאַמָּה בְּחֵמָה . נָאֱמָן.
סְכוֹ צִיּוֹן מִשְׁכָּן עֶלְיוֹן וְהַקִּיפוֹתֶיהָ מְפָרֶיהָ. הוֹמוֹת רָמוֹת גְּבִישׁ רָמוֹת. כֹּל
שְׁעָרֶיהָ עָרֶיהָ. נָאֱמָן.
יָהּ צוּר חֶבְלִי וְגוֹרָלִי בְּנֵה הֵיכָלִי זְבוּלִי. וְשָׁכוֹן עֶלְיוֹן בְּאַפְרִיוֹן אֵל שִׂמְחַת
גִּילִי גּוֹאֲלִי. נָאֱמָן.
מַהֵר אֶשְׁכּוֹן מִקְדָּשׁ מְכוֹן יָדֵי כּוֹנְנָה רַב חֶנֶד. זְכוֹ עֲתָה יִהְיֶה עֵתָה. חִישׁ
אֲחוּשֶׁנָּה בְּרִנָּה. נָאֱמָן.

PROTECT ZION

Awesome God! Gather in Your Dove [=Israel], pure and upright. Bring her back to her dwelling–place. In Your resentment against the alien conqueror, drive him out, Faithful God!

Protect Zion with the Divine canopy. Surround her — her frontiers, high walls, high turrets, all her gates and cities, Faithful God!

Almighty God, our portion, our lot! Build our Temple, our grand sanctuary. Abide above, in the heavens, O God, Source of our joy and our Redeemer, Faithful God!

May we soon dwell in the Holy Land. Prepare our hands, plot our movements. Favor us now — may this be the time for hastening redemption, happily, Faithful God!

Simhath Torah was the more popular time for first Maftirs. But Dad thought the Sukkoth Maftirs go for a lesser price. So came time in 1932 to bid for the first day of Sukkoth — he had to let go — it was too expensive! The second day's was more within his means — he got it for Meyer's Maftir. He was 113/4. The occasion was celebrated at home with great rejoicing. At ten, I was ready to be called to the Torah, and it was fitting for me to read the same portion as Meyer's, only Dad didn't want to take chances. He started bidding for the first day and got stuck with it for 28 rupees. It is a longer Haftarah, but I took it in my stride. I don't remember having had a party at home. Maybe it set me in the mood to oppose Bar/Bat Mitzva parties! But the reason I didn't have a party was that my folks were particular not to stress my tender age for fear of the Evil Eye. I, of course, had the Afsa and Dahash in my pocket, the prophylactic against the evil eye. Incidentally, my Bar Mitzva at 13 was celebrated at home in the presence of close relatives, when my grandfather, Meyer Ezra, helped me put on Tephillin.

Continuing the story of the Calcutta Sukkah: Covered by a decorative cloth, the high chair reserved for the Ushfeezin holds a bible with a few sprigs of myrtle leaf flag–marking a page to highlight the story of the Ushfeez of the day. Before retiring for the night, it is customary to uncover the chair and kiss the bible in deference to the patriarchal patron.

The next day after lunch, the family gets together to read select portions of bible, dwelling on the stories of the day's honoree. I recall with much adoration the zeal with which cousin Sammy Morris spent his lunch hour to participate in the readings.

Hoshana Rabba observances begin in Hathima [=Tikkun] setting when about a dozen friends and relatives light candles for their deceased loved–ones outside the Sukkah. Ours were memorialized by oil–wicks in a closed lamp hanging in the Sukkah. Before midnight, readings included the whole Book of Deuteronomy, each participant reading one Parasha, or, if they are slower readers, a portion of it. In Grandpa's lifetime, he read דְּבָרִים, Dad וְאֶתְחַנַּן and Uncle Elias עֵקֶב. Later, each moves up a step, and I am old enough to read עֵקֶב. Coffee is served throughout

the night to prop up the sleepy–heads. At about 11 p.m., refreshments are served and hashkaboth recited in memory of previous Musleah generations from a list written in Uncle Elias's immaculate Hebrew script on the inside cover page of Dad's reader, one of the many prizes he won at school. [In our possession.] Following about a half hour of reading vocalized texts of Zohar, then past midnight, commences the chanting aloud of the Book of Psalms, as on Rosh Hashana afternoon, except this time seven intervals devoted to a traditional Selihoth service named for the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David, separated the seven divisions of the Book of Psalms. Selihoth are distributed among men with patriarchal names. Cousin Abraham Shalom Cohen renders Abraham; Dad intones Isaac, Grandpa's cousin Jacob Meyer, nicknamed Taxi–driver for his vocation, Jacob; Moses is chanted by "Farju," E.F.E. Moses, a descendant of Grandpa's mother, Esther, from the renowned Hakham Moshi family; a distant relative, Ezra Musleah, is given Aaron, since he married a widow, Ramah Aaron; Uncle Elias takes Joseph for no reason but that it had additional lines to include Pinhas; and I corner David, [on hindsight, because I happen to be the youngest of my siblings?] and enjoy rendering חֲשֹׁם מָלְךְ to the tune of "Keep the Home Fires Burning," a tradition set by Hazzan E.M.D. Cohen at Simhath Torah Hakafoth. Incidentally, popular parts of the Simhath Torah and Shemini Atsereth Hakafoth are the Shema and Hashem Melekh, the latter being put to the melodies of Pizmoneem, prayers like Shemini Atsereth's Geshem, Rosh Hashana's Eth Sha–arey Ratsone, and Kippur's Lekha Eli, English songs like "He's a Jolly Good Fellow," and Indian songs. Each of the Selihoth is introduced by a Pizmone.[4]

The Hoshana Rabba night–long proceedings, having been held in the Sukkah overlooking the roadway and other residences such as those of police officers across the street, must have been a nuisance to non–Jewish neighbors. In all the five decades of Hoshana Rabba prayers at that venue, however, only once did citizens express exception. During one of the Selihoth in 1943, the officers demonstrated their annoyance in a violent way — they hurled an iron rod at the Sukkah from the terrace of their building, several storeys higher than our second floor house that missed the Sukkah by about ten feet. It landed right beside the table full of memorial candles, making a three–inch dent in the masonry floor of the verandah. The untoward incident did not stop the religious services then or similar ones in future years. We pleaded guilty to ourselves by not reporting the matter to the police! And yes, we did it again, and again, with no further ostensible protest. India happened to have been a great place to show off one's religious worship aloud in public.

The Hoshana Rabba early morning services are among the most beautiful in the Sephardi repertoire, only very uncomfortably held at 4:30 in the morning after the all–night vigil that left worshipers falling asleep. The service concludes with pounding the floor five times with five branches of willows in the grand tradition of the biblical Prophets. The mystics have an interesting interpretation. The willow symbolizes Divine power struck against an unrelenting, hard earth, forcing it to yield abundant harvests. On our return from synagogue, we attach a set of those willows to one of the Sukkah posts to indicate that the Sukkah may no longer be legitimately used that year.

4. "Kol Zimra," pages 130-136

Yet, Shemini Atsereth we sit in the Sukkah in keeping with the tradition that sets forth our reluctance to part with the Sukkah. "One more day," we seem to be saying, after all the love and effort invested in its building and maintenance. A distinctive Pizmone expressing our longing for God as we do for His festival is sung both in synagogue and at home.[5]

A significant custom called Hathimath Torah is reserved for the afternoon of Shemini Atsereth. The Hazzan, with a Sefer Torah pointer in hand, goes from congregant to congregant, directing him to read a Parasha of each of the Books of the Humash, a Book at a time, allowing fifteen minutes for each book. If someone thinks he cannot finish the Parasha in time, he shares it with a neighbor. In this way, every Parasha in the Torah is read before the start of Simhath Torah, the festival dedicated to the joy of studying Torah. Derived from the line of action on Hoshana Rabba, being the day on which one's fate is finally 'sealed,' the term "Hathima" [=sealing] has come to mean group participation in readings at hand, here the collective completion of the Humash.

While many congregations include Hakafoth in the ritual on Simhath Torah, evening and morning, the mystics extended the practice to Shemini Atsereth, both times. Grandpa, and after him, Dad, would conduct them in Maghen David, the Hazzan getting time off. After the Hakafoth on the evening of Shemini Atsereth, the Musleahs help the Shamash bring out the 75 or 80 Sifrei Torah from the Ark Room to the exhibition stands set up at the Kohaneem platform in the front of the synagogue in honor of Simhath Torah, and put them back at the conclusion of the Festival. If Simhath Torah falls on a Friday, the Torahs remain on exhibit through Shabbath Beresheet.

Many Calcutta Jews expressed allegiance to the Sifrei Torah of all three synagogues in close proximity of each other. Once a year, after evening services on the first evening of Simhath Torah, we Musleahs go about our annual pilgrimage by reverently kissing the Torahs in our own synagogue, Maghen David, then next door to Neveh Shalome, and finally to Bethel, a hundred yards away, to do the same. The practice is called "Zoor."

HESHVAN

Ashkenazim call this month, Mar–Heshvan, the bitter month, perhaps because of the absence of Jewish festive days, or because it happens to be the time period of oppression and other calamities in Europe. For me, it is a month of personal bitterness, commemorating the demise of Mum, of blessed memory, a tragedy whose traumatic complexity I still cannot comprehend, and which has followed me relentlessly through life. I still tell myself: "How I miss her! How much I could have learned from her! How much advice and comfort she could have given me! How short a life for so talented and brilliant a human being! And what our children have missed, not having had the love and devotion of a kindly and doting grandmother! The twenty–fourth of Heshvan, Oi!

She was born on Rosh Hodesh Av, 1898, the **first** day of a new Jewish month. To me, she was destined to have been a leader. She has won permanent place in my Book of Remembrance because she had performed one thing eminently well — a leadership role in motherhood and womanhood. In that eternal record, it is not the spectacular or rare deeds that carry the weight of balance, but the consistent mode of a person's daily living — the exceptional way she was devoted to truth, kindliness, diligence, and humility, the extraordinary record of exemplar.

5. Ibid., page 138

Here is the tombstone inscription I composed in 1953:

מַצֶּבֶת קִבּוּרַת אֵשֶׁת חַיִל עֲטֶרֶת בַּעְלָהּ וּכְבֵדָה בַּת מֶלֶךְ פְּנִימָה צְנוּעָה וְיָשָׁרָה וּנְעִימָה
בְּמַעֲשֶׂיהָ הַמְרוּחֶמֶת פַּרְחָה נוֹחָה עֶדֶן אֵשֶׁת ה"ר יִצְחָק שֶׁשׁוֹן מֵאִיר עֻזְרָא אֶלְיָהוּ מַצְלִיחַ חַשְׁמַ
יְשְׁנוֹתֶיהָ וְיַחֲדָהּ נוֹלְדָה רֹאשׁ חֹדֶשׁ אָב התרנ"ח וַיְהִי בְּהַקְשׁוֹתָהּ בְּלִדְתָּהּ הָלְכָה לְעוֹלָמָהּ בְּמִבְחַר
שְׁנוֹתֶיהָ עֶרֶב שַׁבָּת קֹדֶשׁ כ"ד חֶשְׁוָן התרצ"ח בַּת אַרְבָּעִים חָסְרָה אַחַת וְנֶעֱזָבָה לְאֶנְחָה אִישָׁהּ
וּבָנֶיהָ תְּחִי נִשְׁמָתָהּ צְרוּרָה בִּצְרוֹר הַחַיִּים

The tombstone of a virtuous woman, a crown for her husband [Proverbs 12:4] honored as a royal princess in her innermost being, [Psalm 45:14] modest, upright and pleasant in her deeds, Farha wife of Isaac Sassoon/Meir Ezra Musleah, born Rosh Hodesh Av 5658, when in childbirth she had hard labor, she died in her choicest years, Friday, 24th Heshvan 5698, one year short of age 40, leaving her husband and children to mourn her loss.

FLORA MUSLEAH Born 1st Ab 5658 – 20th July 1898 Died 24th Heshwan 5698 – 29th October 1937

KISLEV

Every adult male lit his own Hanukkiah — a cherished tradition. First, Grandpa lit his. I brought it from Calcutta and use from year to year with backings I had set to keep the fumes away from the wall on which they hang. I cannot tell if it belonged to his father, but few artifacts and books used by Grandpa didn't belong to his father.

Dad lit one he gave Mum in 1919 so that they could use it when they married two months later [February, 1920]. Uncle Elias was next. His could fit stem–glasses — they had a narrow slit in each of the receptacles. I am not aware of where the Hanukkiah and glasses may be. For various reasons, Meyer and I were never offered to light our own. Could it have been that, by the time Meyer had reached religious majority in 1933, three consecutive lighters were considered saturation point, or perhaps he was not interested enough to push for a chance. And even though, after Grandpa's death in 1941 wall space did become available, the family situation was no spur to Meyer's participation, and may have even been a cause for his apathy. In any case, the elders preferred to leave him out of the rotation, in which he might have taken the place of his grandfather for whom he was named. And I, quite at ease to watch my father light "our" Hanukkiah, was in no mood to ruffle feathers.

The walls surrounding the Hanukkiahs were decorated with multi–colored sheets of paper printed in Jerusalem in various editions with golden Hebrew letters, each bearing the name of a child in the family, and presented as a gift to him or her. [מִנְחָה שְׁלוּחָה לְכָבוֹד מַעֲלָה הב'=הַבָּחוּר] ... [הַבָּתוּלָה=] We have sheets bearing the names of uncle and aunts, some in Grandpa's writing, Others in that of Uncle Elias, as well as a few copies of mine which we had laminated.

The central motif of the sheets is appropriately a Menorah with the words of Psalm 67 on its seven branches, and its base portrays a silhouette of Jerusalem and a Magen David with צִיּוֹן in the center. To the right are representations of Temple appurtenances: The Decalogue, שֻׁלְחָן הַטָּהוֹר the Table of Shewbread and פַּךְ הַשֶּׁמֶן a jar of oil. To the left, a crown atop הַר צִיּוֹן Mt. Zion and other ritual objects: מִזְבֵּחַ an altar and כֶּבֶשׂ a sheep offering. Above the Menorah is the word חֲנֻכָּה in large bold letters, flanked on both sides by the Blessings for lighting: To the right of the Menorah הַנֵּרוֹת הַלָּלוּ and to the left, Psalm 30, מִזְמוֹר שִׁיר חֲנֻכַּת הַבַּיִת לְדָוִד . The bottom third has a likeness of the Temple — מָקוֹם מִקְדָּשׁ

The Holy Place, circumscribed by Isaiah 2:2 וְהָיָה בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים נָכוֹן יִהְיֶה הַר־בֵּית ה' בְּרֹאשׁ הֶהָרִים וְנִשָּׂא מִגְּבָעוֹת וְנָהֲרוּ אֵלָיו כֹּל הַגּוֹיִם "In the days to come, the Mount of the Lord's House shall stand firm above the mountains and tower above the hills; and all the nations shall gaze on it with joy."

Enclosing this image are oval–shaped imitations of seven sacred places in the Holy Land, clock–wise: כֹּתֶל מַעֲרָבִי the Western Wall, קִבְרֵי מַלְכֵי בֵּית דָּוִד tombs of the kings of the Davidic House, מִגְדַּל דָּוִד Tower of David, קֶבֶר רָחֵל אִמֵּנוּ Tomb of Mother Rachel, יַד אַבְשָׁלוֹם Absalom Memorial, עִיר הַקּוֹדֶשׁ צְפַת the Holy City of Safed, [עָלָיו הַשָּׁלוֹם=]ע"ה רַמְבַּ"ם קבר עַל בֵּית הַמִּדְרָשׁ the House of Study above the Tomb of Maimonides, of blessed memory. All the above are bound in a rectangle, at the four corners of which are figured: עִיר הַקּוֹדֶשׁ יָפוֹ the Holy City of Jaffa, עִיר הַקּוֹדֶשׁ חֵיפָה the Holy City of Haifa, יְרִיחוֹ עִיר הַתְּמָרִים Jericho, City of Palm Trees, and יוֹסֵף הַצַּדִּיק עִיר שְׁכֶם Tomb of the Righteous Joseph in the City of Shechem. On both sides of the rectangle is the greeting:

תִּזְכּוּ לְשָׁנִים רַבּוֹת נְעִימוֹת וְטוֹבוֹת may you merit many years, pleasant and good!

TEVETH

Dad, of blessed memory, was born on the last day of Hanukka, 3rd of Teveth. The date can play tricks. Only when Rosh Hodesh Teveth is a one–day observance does the third of the month coincide with Hanukka. In years with two days of Rosh Hodesh, the third of Teveth is an ordinary day, on which תַּחֲנוּן, supplicatory prayers are recited. At the latter incidence, Dad was wont to say: I was born when the Hanukkiah was brightest with a full complement of lights, but this year it's תַּחֲנוּן. Not fair!

In one of my letters to him from New York, I tried to soothe his seeming derogation: "Dad's birthday will miss Hanukka again this year, but it doesn't thereby lose any of its auspicious character. It would be in order for me to omit Tahanun on 3rd Tebeth, for what greater fortune is there than to have a father such as I have. The Midrash, in interpreting the verse in Ecclesiastes 7:28 says: אָדָם אֶחָד מֵאֶלֶף מְצָאתִי --זוּ אַבְרָהָם "I found only one human being in a thousand — this was Abraham." Since we are constantly interpreting texts, I prefer to read: זֶה אַבָּא מָארִי This is my revered father! So let's bless you and at the same time bless ourselves, that you may be the crown of our lives for many, many years to come."

November 14, 1947. Dad writing to me in New York: "I am very much aggrieved about my having to read תְּחִנָּה on my birthday. I really would like to put the question to the enlightened teachers whether in my case **the day** *[Hanukka]* or **the date** *[3rd Teveth]* counts. I personally think that they will be inclined to agree the day counts [!]" My answer, in good old Talmudic tradition, תֵּיקוּ, the question will be finally decided in Messianic courts!

Fast of Teveth — If it fell on Friday, it was moved up to Thursday to obviate the inconvenience of preparing for Shabbath handicapped by fasting.

SHEVATH

Family Musleah organizes a Hathima [=Tikkun] in celebration of Tu b'Shevath [or Tobe Shevath, to bring out the auspiciousness of the day] in the evening.[6] There are two publications of the reader,פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר printed in Leghorn, Italy, 1870, and Vienna, in 1894 in which the text of the Seder used by five generations of Musleahs appears. The Leghorn volume, bearing the

6. See description in "On the Banks of the Ganga," pages 223, 224.

signature of Eliyahu/Yosef Musleah in typical fashion, just מַצְלִיחַ, but adding בְּאֵל חַי בּוֹטֵחַ "who trusts in the Living God." In the text, EJM writes in Rashi script Arabic, verses from the biblical Song of Songs chanted before eating fruits as well as the names of fruits and nuts in appropriate places. In the other volume, his grandson, Uncle Elias, puts his rubber stamp "E.H. Musleah, 11 Bowbazar St, Calcutta," and renders the names of the edibles in English in two parts:

"List of **essential** fruits for Tobe Shebat" [some of which I am unaware of the equivalent].

1. Figs [Hindi, Anjeer]
2. Dates
3. Walnut [Hindi, Akrote]
4. Almond
5. Anab
6. Pistak [Hindi, Pistachio]
7. Abjosh
8. Chargozah
9. Apricot [Hindi, Mishmish]
10. Hazel Nut [Hindi, Bindak]
11. Raisins [Kishmish], for table and for making Kudoos [Kiddush]
12. Kaysoor
13. Alloo–Bokhara
14. Koobani
15. Dry Peaches
16. Grapes
17. Pomegranate
18. Olives
19. Apples
20. Itroge [Citron] When purchasing ask for Suntras, or Kolagka lemon.
21. Caca
22. Kachu

"Other fruits and vegetables" [non–essential]

1. Cling peaches
2. Prunes
3. Oranges
4. Moosambi [a kind of navel orange]
5. Narcooli Bale [a kind of olive]
6. Sweet Lemon
7. Cucumber
8. Gooseberry
9. Banana
10. Safaeda [looks like a kiwi]
11. Coconut
12. Papaya
13. China Potato [Hindi,China Aloo]
14. Guava
15. Kharbooza [a kind of cantaloupe]
16. Amra
17. Pineapple
18. Roseapple
19. Beet
20. Peas
21. Khas [lettuce]
22. Karfas [celery]
23. Cool [another kind of olive]

Most interesting in the sequence of the "four cups" are two types of wine, a white wine made from boiled grapes, called Kadoos, and the other, a home–made red wine, called Sharahb, Hindi for strong wine. I am inclined to interpret these as follows: The white symbolizes the outgoing winter, hostile to growth; the red represents the oncoming spring. The first cup — all white; second, 1/4 red, 3/4 white; third, 1/2x1/2; fourth, 1/4 white, 3/4 red, that is, we are still in the midst of winter. Here's my interpretation: The sequence speaks of the natural movement from winter to spring, from no growth, to budding growth, to fuller development, when a new year paves the way for consummation of Nature's powers. And like the seasons, human beings conform to the same pattern. Growth is gradual; don't despair in winter; await the spring. We live in a world of waiting; some wait for something or someone. We wait for loved ones to return. We wait for dreams to come true and ambitions to be realized. We wait for the time of sorrow to pass and for the time of joy to come again. We wait for the harvest to reward our summers and for spring to break our winters. It is well to live in a world that awaits the passing of events, but it is good also to live in a world that does those things that make waiting shorter.

Natural tendency may yield at most only three–quarters of one's normal potency. The final quarter, depicting full growth and abundant products, depends on intelligence, talent and initiative of each individual.

ADAR

Fast of Esther. In the evening before Arbeeth on the eve of Purim, Grandpa holds a large handkerchief to receive the traditional half–shekel [=a silver rupee] from family members as well as members of the congregation. On the coin of each one of the males in our family, Grandpa writes our names in ink. We use these every year. At home, he replaces them with paper bills and keeps the coins in safe custody. I still have mine! As Gabbai of Rabbi Meir's Yeshiva in Calcutta, he forwards the collection proceeds to the Holy Land to be divided between the Four Cities of Jerusalem, Tiberias, Hebron and Safed. He had a fixed percentage for each, which I never knew. Before placing the coin in the handkerchief, we utter the formula:

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ שֶׁיְּהֵא עוֹלֶה לִי
כְּאִלּוּ הֵבֵאתִי מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל לְתְרוּמַת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ

"May this payment be accounted to me as though I had contributed half a shekel to the coffers of the Temple in Jerusalem."

Men and boys go to synagogue to read and listen to the Megillah, return home to a table full of "goodies," from the bakeries of Nahoum & Sons in the New Market as well as those of Judah Levy, who ran a family business.

The delicious meal is only the second step that evening. The first is the Megillah recital by Uncle Elias for the benefit of the womenfolk and girls. On a night like that in 1939, my grandfather, Meyer Ezra Musleah is told that I, a boy of eleven and some, had learned to read Megillah. He expressed his delight by announcing in Hindusthani: "Larka parega!" [=the boy will read!] No name, no direct address. I was a little taken aback but thrilled, and I think I performed flawlessly. Grandpa smiled as I kissed his hand in reverence, at the conclusion. He would live two more years in increasing ill–health, the last one, on a surgical bed. I was not given another chance to read the Megillah at home, perhaps because Uncle Elias considered my skill in reading Torah, mastered in 1942, was sufficient repute for a boy of 15. But as a mark of distinction, I was given Chchota Dada's *[Senior Isaac Sassoon Musleah's]* Megillah, which I have used every year since.

The most elite company to have heard me read the Megillah was in 1948 at the Seminary Synagogue. Professor Louis Ginzburg, זצוק"ל, took a fancy to my "*Arabized*" pronunciation and chant of the Torah, and invited me to chant the Megillah in my native mode. Gerson Cohen זצוק"ל, told me later that Rav Ginzburg enjoyed it, but most others were bored!

Eliyahu/Yosef Musleah's Megillah was inherited by his son, Grandpa, and then by his grandson, Uncle Elias. It is now in my control. Dad's Megillah must be somewhere — I don't know where.

Uncle Elias would say: "I learned to make wine from my father and Halek *[=date–juice for Haroset]* from my mother." Sometime before Purim, he would undertake the annual manufacture of Halek for the entire family. Super quality dates, bought from Irani shopkeepers in the New Market a day before squeezing time, are submerged overnight in a Karai — cauldron — large enough to hold twenty–five pounds of dates. In the old days, the squeezing was done by hand, until the family acquired a hydraulic machine, which, of course, made the process much easier.

My grandmother, Masuda, supervises the entire course of action. Uncle Elias works the machine. He fills hessian bags with soaked dates and applies pressure. If the bags are properly positioned, a knack which experience teaches, simple, increasing pressure spells the rest of the labor. I volunteer to help, and if I exert too much, apprehensive of injury to me, my uncle would say: "Let the pressure work!" When done, the dates emerge as dry as paper.

The liquid is poured into a clean Karai and the servant, Mahboob, or Song, as he is called, sits at a coal fire in the north verandah and stirs, and stirs, for three or four hours, while my grandmother looks in from time to time and offers advice. I sneak in to learn as much as I can without accruing her rebuke for getting too close to the wood–fire. The cooking stage begins with the juicy contents brought to a boil and exudes a grayish froth, carefully removed. The tedious stirring continues until the discharge of a yellow froth whose color steadily darkens, becomes orangy, and the liquid slowly thickens. As long as it trickles like water from the raised ladle, the process continues. Only when the consistency is thick enough to seep drop by drop is it considered fully–cooked. To preserve the product and prevent fermentation, the orange foam has to be meticulously drained before being bottled.

We don't have to toil with wine–making anymore — I will describe Grandpa's procedure in the Iyar section — but Granny's style of making Halek is very much in demand by her American descendants.

NISAN

MATZA BAKING AT BETHEL SYNAGOGUE'S YARD

Two months before Pesah, an agreement is drawn up between the community's "Mussa Board" and a village broker to have wheat processed from its earliest stages and delivered to the synagogue. There is no known Jewish supervision of those stages. Work begins in a large tent in the synagogue courtyard shortly before Purim. Two strong men knead the dough, check the time it sits, no more than eighteen minutes limited by law, and apportion pieces to about ten women squatting on their haunches on the floor with their rolling pins and boards. The large, flattened loaves are then ready to be put into the earthen oven, clamped onto the sides for about two minutes by the head baker who wears a cushioned buffer on his arm and hand. If customers wait, the thin, luscious, unevenly circumferenced Matzas are weighed in bulky balances and sold. Placed in capacious wicker baskets covered over with a bed–sheet or an oversized table–cloth supplied by buyers, the Matza is taken home and hung from the ceiling to prevent contact with Hametz. Otherwise, it is stored in the synagogue vestibule, awaiting a higher volume of clientele. The number of buyers does increase with the approach of the Festival, particularly after Rosh Hodesh Nisan.

On the eve, the bakers make "Sedarim," the so–called Matza Shemura, used on Seder nights. If one needs a census of Jews, that is the day and place. Every Jew or his/her agent participates in the hustle and bustle of the pre–Pesah dealing.

COMMEMORATING THE FRUITION OF VEGETATION ON THE THIRD DAY OF CREATION

As Nisan comes closer, all eyes focus on a mulberry tree outside the window ten yards away from the Musleahs' seats in Maghen David Synagogue. We look for a bud on a tree that produced a fruit, and the tree never fails us. [I looked for the tree many years later on one of my trips back "home," but was told that it had withered, pining for Musleahs?] Jewish tradition adjudges Rosh Hodesh Nisan as the anniversary of the Creation, so the first Tuesday, the third day of the week, in Nisan is chosen for a impressive ceremony at the tree.

Most Jewish rituals allude in one way or another to a return to the Land of Israel, praying that Jews will once again be restored to their land and be settled within its borders. This one is no exception. First, the richness of the land wins praise, "a land of wheat and barley, of vines, figs and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey. When you eat your fill, give thanks to the Lord your God for the good land which He had given you." [Deut. 8:8 … 10] Then, predictions of fertile production from the land: "In that day, the radiance of the Lord will lend beauty and glory, and the splendor of the land will give dignity and majesty to the survivors of Israel." [Isaiah 4:2] "They shall build houses and dwell in them, they shall plant vineyards and enjoy their fruit [Isaiah 65:21]. "A time is coming, declares the Lord, when the ploughman shall overtake the reaper," *[harvests so plentiful will not be complete when it will be time to plough again,]* [Amos 9:13] "I will make the fruit of your trees and the crops of your fields abundant …" [Ezekiel 36:30]

The ceremony concludes with the benediction: בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁלֹּא חִסַּר בְּעוֹלָמוֹ כְּלוּם וּבָרָא בּוֹ בְּרִיּוֹת טוֹבוֹת וְאִילָנוֹת טוֹבוֹת לֵיהָנוֹת בָּהֶם בְּנֵי אָדָם

"Praised are You, Lord our God, Who has not deprived Your world of anything, having created beneficial creatures and edible fruit of trees for the pleasure of human beings."

Since the foregoing is a rabbinic ordination, an Ahl Yisrael Kaddish [Kaddish deRabbanan] is recited if a Minyan is present.

OBSESSION WITH HAMETZ

There's really no time to reminisce, to mull over **all** the treasured memories of childhood. Passover is different. As it approaches, I become nostalgic. I have but to shut my eyes and I am back again across the oceans and seas, in my parents' home. I can relive those uncomplicated days some decades ago.

Rabbinic law ordains that Hametz found in however tiny a particle invalidates the 'cleanness' of Pesah. I see the womenfolk in my family. Ever since Purim, they have been turning the house upside down in order to meet the exacting demands which Pesah makes on them — chests, closets, bookshelves, desk–tops, whatever, are examined and cleaned. They are at war. The enemy is Hametz, and like generals in the field, they take command. Planning. Attacking. Never resting until the adversary is routed. Most important, they enjoy the domestic upheaval, which is every woman's prelude to Pesah. For Pesah, when all is said and done, is strictly woman's business and child's play. How our legs ache as we children fetch the Pesah dishes, watch them sparkle after being washed and arranged neatly in a wire–mesh portable cupboard!

Grandpa's library gets its annual sunning in the north verandah. Stored in a four–shelved glass almirah, it might have been classified into three sections: year–round readings including prayerbooks; volumes published in Calcutta and Bombay; and a black metal box, about 15x12 inches containing valuable heirlooms. I was not quite fourteen when my grandfather died, but a

few years later I pried into some of the articles as they were laid out on soft bamboo matting [Indian, chchittai] by Uncle Elias. I asked him about an old manuscript of writing I couldn't begin to read, and funny–looking sketches [which I discovered many years later bore the signature of my grandfather's grandfather, Joseph/Hakham Eliyahu Musleah. I described above].[7] All he could tell me was: "These are very old books belonging to Grandpa's father, and our duty is to preserve them in the best way we can." I remember also trying on a ring, which just about fit my little finger. Uncle Elias didn't know whose ring it was, but I described it above.[8] I was not aware at the time that the name of the original owner of the ring partially matched mine. Now I am thrilled that the responsibility that Uncle Elias had of looking after the priceless library has fallen to me and my heirs; we firmly resolve to shoulder to the best of our ability.

Three days before the Festival, it is the kitchen's turn. The earthen range is smeared over with a muddy liquid, and shelves covered with newspaper, inviting the Pesah utensils. The kitchen is then locked. Interim cooking is done in the south verandah on movable, bucket–type earthen stoves called "Bahl–tee ka Chula, about a foot high, and everyday pots and pans and china are washed there under a faucet. On the day before the eve, the dining table gets rubbed down with soap. Nobody cares about the polish, lost many years previously, as buckets full of water pour over it. Fortunately, the dining room had glazed china flooring, easily swabbed up by the Sweeper. We children loved the puddles and had to be restrained from playing in the flood. The evening before Pesah arrives too soon. . On this day, we suspect that our 'sufferings' match those of our ancestors in Egypt. Our only prop is that the Exodus is around the corner. All that is left is mopping up pockets of Hametz.

The area of the campaign is by now so restricted that the combatants are treading on each other's toes while they go at the foe. The kitchen has been out of bounds — with its freshly–coated brick–oven ready to welcome its festive pots and pans. We are like so many refugees; our belongings temporarily situated until the last particle of Hametz is ejected.

At the time for Bedikath Hametz, the official search for Hametz, leaven is limited to the table in the south verandah. The ten pieces of Hametz are "hidden" on the table and along the railing in the verandah's edge. A child's question: "If the rooms are cleaned of all Hametz, why carry a plate of leaven throughout the house during the Search?" My father sharpens his wits to answer: "We must look until the last minute for Hametz unintentionally left in any part of the house. So when we take Hametz found elsewhere in the house into what we think is a 'clean' room, we would not be surprised if we found other Hametz there!" I don't remember ever being satisfied with his answer, but I don't have a better one!

The next morning, very busy with last minute doings trying to beat the clock, witnesses the hurried eating of breakfast and burning of Hametz. The year–round coverless table, full of Hametz minutes ago, was to get its turn of brushing with soap and water. I don't recall it ever having any polish, and the cement floor could take the deluge. Another moment for excited children.

The deadline for retaining Hametz is the same for other purposes — no shaving beards and no paring nails. In Temple times, the Pesah sacrifice would be offered by noontime, after which no

7. Page 22, footnote 2 (Chap 2.)
8. Page 4 (Chap 1.)

work was permitted, though contemporary practice requires attendance at places of work. For people who take the day off, it is time to pick up "Sedarim" [=Shemura Matza] from the courtyard of Bethel synagogue. At the crack of one–third of daylight, calm settles almost instantaneously. The whole house is accessible again. The Festival has settled in earlier than other sacred days do.

THE SEDER

For us, the growing generation, it is a time of exclusiveness. We Jewish children enjoy a holiday from our Anglican school, quite apart from the Easter recess, if the calendar is cooperative. At Pesah time, we seem to walk in a more sanctified atmosphere, as if we ourselves bear the label, Kasher l'Pesah!

Particularly on Seder nights, when my father seems to act out the announcement that we are of such stuff as royalty is made on. They are the most wonderful of all parties, one I look forward to from the end of one Pesah to the beginning of the next. The little princes and princesses are given home–made grape juice, until we grew up, and then share home–made wine with the adult members of the royal family. But the drink has an exotic taste because it is drunk out of century–old spouted cups that make it easy to sneak sips between the long intervals between readings.

I never possessed one of those gorgeous colored Haggadoth that children have today. Mine is old and well–thumbed and wine–stained. The print is poor, the illustrations primitive, and the English translation weird, though the Hebrew text has a classic Arabic rendering. But I would not change it for another. And I like to think that some grandchild of mine would some day read out of the same book. Indeed it is quite a thought that our children in future will read the Haggadah with the same relish as I did, when they will have grown out of their pretty little primers.

These are, of course, sentimental memories. Sentimentality is a cherished quality of maturity. It cannot be an emotion of childhood. The early years are a time to *collect* experiences. Whether or not we recall them with fondness depends on how much we enjoyed them as children. Meantime, let us not derail the momentum of providing our children with Jewish impressions packaged with pleasant preservatives. The product becomes progressively valuable with age.

Grandpa liked to listen to the traditional chanting of the Seder order, Kaddesh Urhas, especially when the children joined in. So he used to say the directive in Hindusthani: Fayr Bolo! = Repeat! And it was chanted a second time. This routine we have adopted in our American family.

At age eight, I was quite mischievous, so Uncle Elias taught me the "Rasha" paragraph in the Haggadah. Everyone enjoyed the joke, and so did I. That became **my** portion, irrespective of the rotation and my maturing flux. I read it with relish!

The four Questions were asked in Arabic and answered in Hebrew: מִמִּצְרַיִם — מִנַּיִן בָּ?

— לִירוּשָׁלַיִם. אַשׁ זְוָדָ?ְ — וְיֵן כָּתְרוּחַ?

The youngest in the family, who has the knapsack of Afikoman on his/her shoulder, is asked: "Where do you come from?' and answers: "From Egypt". "Where are you going?" — "To Jerusalem". "And what is your baggage?" — We never had an answer, but the poor youngster has to hit his/her head lightly to the table, and everyone begins chanting "Manishtannah". It seems to me that the response is not verbal but mute — he/she is meant to point to the Matza

slung over the arm as the baggage being carried to the family's destination in Jerusalem. The original response having been speechless, the exact action was forgotten.

As explained in our Tu b'Shevat section, two kinds of wine are used: Sharahb — a strong variety, the intoxicating regular wine, and a lighter kind called Kaddoos, like grape juice, prepared by boiling grapes and served to the children.

As mentioned earlier,[9] the wine cups were acquired by Eliyahu/Yosef Musleah during his imports of foreign goods from Europe. The three children's cups, two with spouts, made it temptingly easy to snitch kaddoos during long intervals between Kiddushim. Our children and grandchildren are now using these.

The Haggadah is chanted in Hebrew, repeated in Arabic, and, if requested, translated into English for the younger, non–Arabic speakers who were not yet adequately knowledgeable in Hebrew.

In conclusion, as the womenfolk wash and dry the Kiddush cups, the males hurriedly read aloud — we have no chant to — Had Gadya, and silently, Shir HaShirim, the biblical Book of Song of Songs. The very last item at the Seder table is the Pizmone, יָדֵךְ תַּנְחֵנִי a plea for the hastening of the messianic era.[10]

THE SEVENTH NIGHT OF PESAH

The family read from their Tikkun Reader, קְרִיאֵי מוֹעֵד.[11] They are excerpts from biblical and rabbinic sources dealing with the fallen dynasty of King David and hopes for its restoration under one of his descendants in a period of rebirth. As a family, only biblical selections are covered, but Dad, and his father before him, privately would add the Talmudic and Zoharistic passages. The Talmudic selection, Sanhedrin 97b to 99a includes a discussion of the pangs and the duration of the Messianic era, and the characteristics of the ideal person who will lead in that era. Question: Why was David chosen? Because, according to Tradition, he grew up in adversity, was the scorn of his brothers, and was a fugitive for a good part of his life. Notwithstanding these difficulties, he was spiritually equipped to sing SHIRA contained in the Psalms. So the Psalms selected deal with God's conduct relating to a king whose fortunes are temporarily low, but will be restored. Psalms include: 21, 22, 29, 42, 45, 72, 89:1–38, 126,132. Other biblical excerpts: Torah: Genesis 49:8–12, Leviticus 26:3–11. Prophets: Isaiah 2:1–5, 10:32–12:6, Jeremiah 30,31,33, Obadiah, Zechariah 8,14. Ketuvim: Daniel 7, deals with Daniel's vision of the Four Kingdoms, which will be destroyed before "the Kingdom of the people of the holy ones of the Most High [=Israel] shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them, referring, of course, to the restored Davidic kingdom. Zohar passages reflect the same notions of the renewed stock of David.

9. Page 16 (Chap2.)
10. Kol Zimra, page 96
11. Dad's copy printed in Leghorn, Italy, in 1902, awarded to him by the Jewish Girls' School, at the time a co-ed institution, in February 1909, as the First Hebrew Prize, Standard(=Grade) 6, (age 14).

The biblical Book of Song of Songs, consisting of eight chapters, is conveniently apportioned to be chanted one a day at home. Because work schedules of Family Musleah could not be coordinated on Hol ha–Moed days, we read two chapters each on the first and last two days. A Midrashic comment in Aramaic follows each of the biblical verses, sequenced by an Arabic translation. I have since translated the Midrashic passages into English with some notes [unpublished]. An enjoyable side activity for sister Ruby and me was when my father would test our knowledge of the biblical text: "What comes after ..." and we would promptly come up with the right response. We generated our expertise from the weekly Thursday afternoon session with the Hebrew tutor, Moosa, who invariably made us read Song of Songs in preparation for the traditional pre–Shabbath chant.

SANTIT KHADRA

Motsa–ei Pesah, the evening of the termination of Pesah. We return from synagogue to see green stalks and leaves strewn on the dining table, together with Indian sweets bought from the famous confectioner, Bhim Nag, a distance of about two miles from the house. From there, Jews purchase their first Hametz product after Pesah. Following Havdalah, each family member takes a sprig of green and lightly strokes other members with it, uttering a blessing: "Inshalla, may God will a healthy and successful year for you," and any other fitting wish. Again, the ceremony is consistent with the belief that Nisan commemorates the beginning of a new year.

IYAR

MAKING WINE AT HOME

We do not buy the so–called "sacred wine" made and labeled by the local Jewish community, because Kashrut and cleanness are questionable. So every other year we make our own. About twenty pounds of black currants are soaked in water in a very large jar called Boo–yahm in the storeroom off my grandfather's room, the only time the little chamber is locked to insure that the Muslim domestics do not touch the receptacle. As he pours water into the jar half full with currants, Grandpa, and after him, Uncle Elias says: בְּשֵׁם הַשֵּׁם נַעֲשֶׂה וְנַצְלִיחַ

"In the Name of God do we undertake this work, and we hope it will succeed," a slogan the family used to initiate other projects. The closeness of the last word in the phrase to the family name perhaps was the reason for the choice expression.

For twenty–one to thirty days [depending on how hot it is], the currants are daily churned by hand, and after a week or so, oh! that delectable aroma! When the currants begin to sizzle in ferment, it is a sign that the process is coming to an end — like the dates for Halek, it comes time to press them in the hydraulic machine. I help my uncle turn the handle, put the bucket in place under the machine's nozzle and pour the wine into jars for a two– to three–week storage to reduce the chances of fermenting once bottled in large bushels. The end product was the most delicious wine ever! The older the wine, the more precious the product!

LAG B'OMER

Lag b'Omer or Lag laOmer, as we call it, the thirty–third day of Omer. Less than twenty people assemble in Maghen David Synagogue to chant three songs in praise of Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai, a 2nd century teacher and leader of the rebellion against Rome, and reputed author of the Zohar.[12]. Very significantly, I remember my brother Meyer sending us in Calcutta, a picture of the tombs of Rabbi Shimon and his son, Elazar, in Meron, Galilee, where huge candles lit the

12. Kol Zimra, pages 82-90

whole area, and thousands of revelers danced and sang through the night. Mystics celebrate rather than mourn the passing of loved ones who contribute much to the understanding and improvement of Jewish life and/or life in general. Their actions are worthy of exemplification and celebration.

Indeed, Iyar happens to be a month of family deaths in almost every generation of Musleahs. The first Musleah to emigrate to Calcutta from Baghdad, Hakham Eliyahu, son of Hakham Yehezkel Musleah and his son Yosef, share a date — fourth of Iyar. Yosef's son, Isaac Sassoon, died on the same date as the latter's nephew, Meyer Ezra's wife, Masuda — twenty–fourth Iyar. And his nephew Meir Ezra, himself passed away on thirteenth Iyar. In the spirit of Lag la'Omer, we do honor to their memories, as well as those with yartseits in other months, by singing their praises for their merits and beneficence, and in some cases, their treasured eminence, we call to memory and cherish.

SIVAN

As the Festival of Shavuot, commemorating the giving of the Torah to the Jewish people, the study of Torah is a characteristic observance, in Calcutta, and perhaps only in the Musleah home, it is marked by an all–night vigil — Tikkun in Western countries, Hathima in Baghdad dependencies. As we pointed out previously, the word Hathima meaning sealing, is appropriate only for Hoshana Rabba, when the order of the day is the sealing of human fate for the new year, but it is applied also to any Torah vigil, day or night, with similar rituals. This night's order of study: For the most part, the first and last few verses of each weekly Parasha, and each of the early Prophets and Literary Prophets, The entire Book of Ruth appropriate to Shavuoth for the reference to barley and wheat harvests, the first and last chapters of Psalms, Job and Proverbs, Koheleth, each of the Five Megilloth, Daniel, Esther, Ezra and Nehemiah, and Chronicles. This segment of study concludes by 11:30 p.m., followed by refreshments.

Then rabbinics. Zohar, divided into several sections, each participant reading just one; Midrash Yithro for Shavuoth dealing with Moshe Rabbeinu's plea to live long enough to witness Israel's entering the Land of Israel; the first and last Mishna of each Masekhet until 3:30 a.m.

Early Shahreeth in synagogue beginning at 4 a.m. Back home for a feed of Kahee made by Grandma Masuda.

After lunch, the family gets together to read Shelomo ibn Gabirol's Azharoth, a poetic rendition of the 613 Mitzvoth, the Positive Commands on the First Day, and the Commands signifying negation, Do Not, on the Second Day. The Book of Ruth also is divided for readings on both days.

TAMMUZ

The fast of seventeenth of–the–month is observed by all adult males.

AV

Mum was born Rosh Hodesh Av. Significant, symbolic; a red–letter day amidst dreary days in the Jewish calendar. In biblical times, women would abstain from work on Rosh Hodesh, and it is still customary for some. The rabbis inferred the applicability of joy to Rosh Hodesh from the fact that the Bible equates the New Moon with the Festivals [Num. 10:10] and from the duty to recite on it: "This is the day that the Lord had made; we will rejoice and be glad on it" [Psalm 118: 24]. Yet the recitation of only half–Hallel is required by law because the day was not biblically sanctioned by the prohibition of labor [Bab. Tal. Ar. 10b].

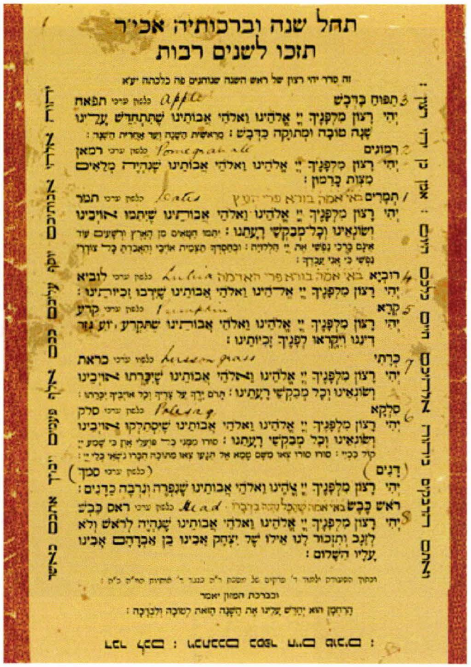
That she was our mother is indeed a reason to rejoice. But it could produce only a small part of the joy her motherhood brought her and us. Still, we consider her short stay with us felicitous, a brief period akin to a Festival on which we will ever sing: We rejoice on her birthday for what she was and could have been.

Before her and after her, the calendar spells distress and mourning. Jewish history testifies to it as well as a personal, tearful event: My father died a week later in Av, a day before Tisha b'Av, a day of national tragedies, when we offer our own elegy: In the month of Av, our sun was darkened. The crown has fallen from our head! Gone is the joy of our hearts!

Before taking the fast, the meal is eaten seated on mats on the floor: Kichree, mashed potato and a Bhhajee. In synagogue, we change our usual seats as mourners do for different ones on floor mats. As the number of years since the Destruction was mentioned by the Hazzan, the already dimmed lights were turned off for a minute. [The fact of the existence of the State of Israel and the unification of Jerusalem in 1967 needs to be taken official notice of after the mournful part of the evening service terminates, as I had done as Rabbi of Mikveh Israel Congregation in 1967.]

Whether for national revival or comfort after deceased parents, we echo the consolation of the Prophet Isaiah: "How welcome on the mountain are the footsteps of the herald announcing happiness, heralding good fortune, announcing victory ... [52:7]. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being exults in my God, for He has clothed me with garments of triumph, wrapped me in a robe of victory, like a bridegroom adorned with a turban, like a bride bedecked with her finery" [61:10].

HODESH TOV MEVORAKH!
TIZKOO LESHANEEM RABBOTH


תחל שנה וברכותיה אכי"ר
תזכו לשנים רבות

זה סדר יהי רצון של ראש השנה שנוהגים פה בכלכתה יע"א

תפוח כרכש Apple
יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שתתחדש עלינו
שנה טובה ומתוקה כדבש : מראשית השנה ועד אחרית השנה :

רמונים Pomegranate
יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שנהיה מלאים
מצות כרמון :

תמרים Dates
יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שיהבו אויבינו
ושונאינו וקל מקבלי רעתנו : יתמו חשאים כן תכלו ישועים עוד
אימם כרגי נפשי אתי ה' בלילה : ובחסדך העשיה אויבי האברה כל צורך
נפשי כי אני עבדך :

לוביא Black eyed beans
יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שיזכו לזוגיא
ויכרתינו :

קרא Pumpkin
יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שתקרע גזר
דיננו ותקראו לפניך זכיותינו :

כרתי Green peas
יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שתכרתו אויבינו
ושונאינו וכל מקבלי רעתנו : תרם ידך על ארבך וכל אויבך יכרתו :

סלקא Beetroot
יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שיסתלקו אויבינו
ושונאינו וכל מקבלי רעתנו : סורו סמרו כל פועלי און כי שמע ה'
קול בכיי : סורו סורו צאו משם טמא אל תגעו צאו מתוכה הבדו נשאי כלי ה' :

(דגים) (Fish)
יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שנפרה ונרבה כדגים :

ראש כבש Head
יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שנהיה לראש ולא
לזנב ותזכור לנו עילוי שך יצחק אבינו בן אברהם אבינו
עקידה השלום :

ותזכר הפטורה למחר ר' פרקים ל"ה ומסכת ל"ה כנגד ר' תפילות סה"ש ל"ה :
ובברכת המזון יאמר
הרחמן הוא יחדש עלינו את השנה הזאת לשלוה ולברכה :

Figure 65. Rosh Hashana Seder Sheet.

Rosh Hashana Seder Sheet Calcutta, early 20th century.



Figure 66. Uncle Elias Savoring Tea in the Sukka.

Uncle Elias savoring his cup of tea in the Sukka he worked hard to put up.



Figure 67. Bamboo Sukka Structure.

Bamboo Sukka structure; Rahel in saree.

Figure 68. Family Ready for Kiddush.

(Below) Family ready for kiddush (clockwise)

Cousin Seemah, Aunt Ramah, cousin Mavis, Dad, Granny, Uncle Elias.



Figure 69. Family Returned from Simhath Torah.

Family returned from Simhath Torah

(l to r) Aunt Hannah, Dad, Aunts Rachel & Ramah,Uncle Elias, Aunt Seemah.

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA
CHAPTER 6

THE STORY OF MY LIFE – THE HALUTZ

PIONEERING PATHS

Birth and Direction to the Eve of My Departure From India

Anecdotes may be the measure of a life. This one could characterize mine. What happens when a young person from a sheltered home with friends, relatives, traditions, family surroundings, and a well–ordered environment is suddenly uprooted, to find himself among strangers, with every pattern of life suddenly changed? And, when changes have become normal and he goes back to that place from which he has come, and takes up life where he left it, it is well to keep in mind that he doesn't change his identity and his character when he changes his environment.

In 1945, the Calcutta Jewish community was screening candidates to train in America for the rabbinate with a view to return to, and serve in, his native city. Behind this project was Rabbi David J. Seligson, of blessed memory, chaplain in the China/Burma/India sector of the United States Armed Forces stationed in Calcutta. At the time I was part of a tiny group that had organized the first–ever junior congregation holding services in a synagogue every Shabbath morning. The leaders were teenagers whose only qualification was a desire to instill love for religious services in youngsters whose knowledge and interest in Judaism were borderline.

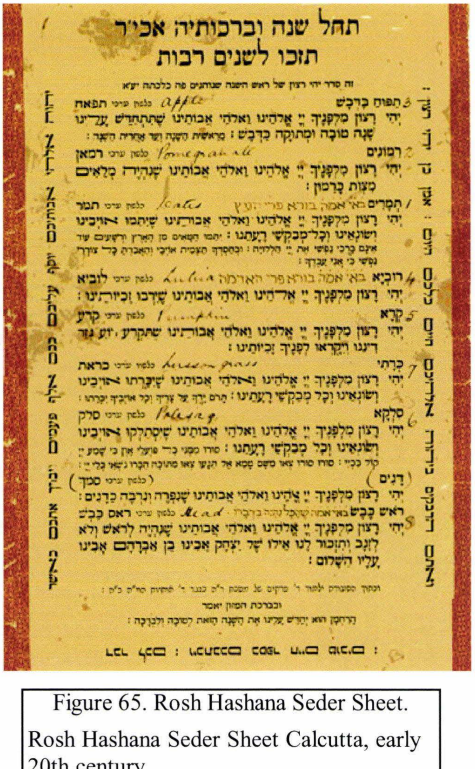
Unbeknown to me, Rabbi Seligson attended a service and sat himself behind the Bimah as I conducted the service and delivered a message on Shabbath Hazon on the centrality of the Land of Israel in Jewish life. I used as my text a song then popular in Palestine:

"The land will not be ours

עַד אֲשֶׁר יִתְאַחֲדוּ לְעָם
עַד אֲשֶׁר יְדַבְּרוּ שְׂפַת עָם
וְיָשׁוּבוּ לְאַרְצָם

"Until Jews will unite as a people; until they will speak the national language, and return to their land." After the service, the Chaplain emerged from hiding and greeted me warmly and stunned me with the remark: "Young man, you are going to be a rabbi in Calcutta!" My response too caught him off guard: "I am preparing to join my brother and sister in Palestine and would not be interested in the rabbinate." He invited me to his office and persevered for an hour to persuade me to change my mind. Finally, he made this prudent statement: "Many will go to Palestine as pioneers. But if there will ever be a Halutz in Calcutta **as a rabbi** it will be you."

I was convinced. He shook my hand and wished me Hazak ve–Ematz. On his return to the United States [he was assistant rabbi to the famed Jonah Wise at New York's Central Synagogue], and in consultation with Rabbi David de Sola Pool, of Congregation Shearith Israel in New York, the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City was recommended. Before long, a partial scholarship was arranged. Because of local politics, however, the Calcutta community picked someone else as its candidate. But I, persuaded by Rabbi Seligson's strong plea, decided on the rabbinate anyway, and applied directly to the Seminary. Dad ז"ל of course, generously afforded me all the support and encouragement that, despite the stipend, would run up a bill, which would be redeemed only by his estate!


תחל שנה וברכותיה אכי"ר
תזכו לשנים רבות

זה סדר יהי רצון של ראש השנה שנהגים פה בכלכתה יע"א

תפוח בדבש apple
יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁתְּחַדֵּשׁ עָלֵינוּ
שָׁנָה טוֹבָה וּמְתוּקָה כְּדְבַשׁ: מֵרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה וְעַד אַחֲרִית הַשָּׁנָה:

רמונים pomegranate
יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁנִּהְיֶה מְלֵאִים
מִצְוֹת כָּרִמּוֹן:

תמרים date
יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁיִּתַּמּוּ אוֹיְבֵינוּ
וְשׂוֹנְאֵינוּ וְכָל הַמְקַטְרְגִים הָעוֹמְדִים עָלֵינוּ לְרָעָה:

לוביא black eyed bean
יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁיִּרְבּוּ זְכֻיּוֹתֵינוּ:

קרע pumpkin
יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁתִּקָּרַע גְּזַר דִּינֵנוּ וְיִקָּרְאוּ לְפָנֶיךָ זְכֻיּוֹתֵינוּ:

כרתי leek
יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁיִּכָּרְתוּ אוֹיְבֵינוּ
וְשׂוֹנְאֵינוּ וְכָל הַמְקַטְרְגִים הָעוֹמְדִים עָלֵינוּ לְרָעָה:

סלקא beetroot
יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁיִּסְתַּלְּקוּ אוֹיְבֵינוּ
וְשׂוֹנְאֵינוּ וְכָל הַמְקַטְרְגִים הָעוֹמְדִים עָלֵינוּ לְרָעָה:

רגים ( )
יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁנִּזָּרֵעַ וְנִרְבֶּה כָּרְגִים:

ראש כבש head
יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁנִּהְיֶה לְרֹאשׁ וְלֹא
לְזָנָב וְתִזְכּוֹר לָנוּ אֵילוּ שֶׁל יִצְחָק אֲבִינוּ בֶּן אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ
עָלֵינוּ הַשָּׁלוֹם:

ותחל הפטורה לחזר ד' פרקים של כנגד ד' פרקים הראשונים כלם:
וברכת הפטרה יאמר
הרחמן הוא יחדש עלינו את השנה הזאת לטובה ולברכה:

Figure 65. Rosh Hashana Seder Sheet.

Rosh Hashana Seder Sheet Calcutta, early 20th century.



Figure 66. Uncle Elias Savoring Tea in the Sukka.

Uncle Elias savoring his cup of tea in the Sukka he worked hard to put up.

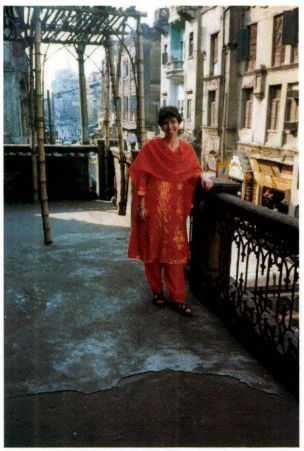


Figure 67. Bamboo Sukka Structure.

Bamboo Sukka structure; Rahel in saree.

Figure 68. Family Ready for Kiddush.

(Below) Family ready for kiddush (clockwise)

Cousin Seemah, Aunt Ramah, cousin Mavis, Dad, Granny, Uncle Elias.



Figure 69. Family Returned from Simhath Torah.

Family returned from Simhath Torah

(l to r) Aunt Hannah, Dad, Aunts Rachel & Ramah,Uncle Elias, Aunt Seemah.



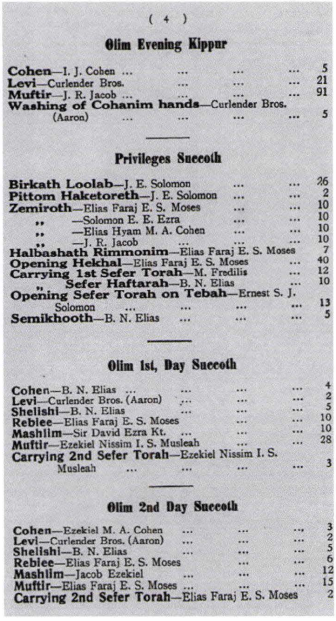
קהוב ה' לכל קראיו

תזכו לשנים רבות

לשנה טובה תכתבו ותחתמו בספר חיים טובים

Maghen David Synagogue.

TISHRI
5698—1937



(4)

Olim Evening Kippur

Cohen—I. J. Cohen	5
Levi—Curlender Bros.	21
Muftir—J. R. Jacob	91
Washing of Cohanim hands—Curlender Bros. (Aaron)	5

Privileges Succoth

Birkath Loolab—J. E. Solomon	26
Pittom Haketoreth—J. E. Solomon	2
Zemiroth—Elias Faraj E. S. Moses	10
,, —Solomon E. E. Ezra	10
,, —Elias Hyam M. A. Cohen	10
,, —J. R. Jacob	10
Halbashath Rimmonim—Elias Faraj E. S. Moses	7
Opening Hekhal—Elias Faraj E. S. Moses ...	40
Carrying 1st Sefer Torah—M. Fredilis ...	12
,, **Sefer Haftarah**—B. N. Elias ...	10
Opening Sefer Torah on Tebah—Ernest S. J. Solomon	13
Semikhooth—B. N. Elias	5

Olim 1st, Day Succoth

Cohen—B. N. Elias	4
Levi—Curlender Bros. (Aaron)	2
Shelishi—B. N. Elias	5
Reblee—Elias Faraj E. S. Moses	10
Mashlim—Sir David Ezra Kt.	10
Muftir—Ezekiel Nissim I. S. Musleah	28
Carrying 2nd Sefer Torah—Ezekiel Nissim I. S. Musleah	3

Olim 2nd Day Succoth

Cohen—Ezekiel M. A. Cohen	3
Levi—Curlender Bros. (Aaron)	2
Shelishi—B. N. Elias	5
Reblee—Elias Faraj E. S. Moses	6
Mashlim—Jacob Ezekiel	12
Muftir—Elias Faraj E. S. Moses	15
Carrying 2nd Sefer Torah—Elias Faraj E. S. Moses	2

Figure 70. Auction List of Privileges.

Maghen David Synagogue, auction lists for 5698=1937 to assist bidders with current sales the following year. My name as buyer of Muftir for Rs. 28 and the automatic carrying of the 2nd Sefer Torah for the option of bringing out the Sefer of my choice. It was the Sefer of my great-grandfather, Eliyahu/Yosef Musleah.



Figure 71. Sukkoth Hol-Hamoed Readings.

(Clockwise from left) Cousin Sammy Morris, Uncle Elias, Aunts Rachel (barely visible), Hannah and Ramah (back to camera). Note high chair covered with white silk cloth and the white Fanuse to the upper left, in honor of the Shiv'a Ushphizin. An electric fan to the right, whirrs on.

Straight ahead, on the arch to the left, are the three ornaments for each arch -- a balloon to match the color of the Fanuse, a green Sharifa (custard apple), and the 'red fruit.'



Figure 72. Admiring Fanuses Brought to Philadelphia.



Figure 73. Tisha B'av Torah Box and Cover.
The Tisha b'Av special black Sefer Torah Tik (box) and Mappa (silk cover).



Figure 74. Multi-Colored Sheet for Hanukka.

A multi-colored sheet for Hanukka presented to each member of the family with his/her name inscribed at the top, as decoration on the wall around the Hanukkiah.



Figure 75. Palm Branch Mats.

Palm branch mats, made for our Calcutta Sukka by expert natives of Cuttack, Orissa, were found also on the Konkan coast of Western India among the Bene Israel community. We show off our dear find.

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA
CHAPTER 6

THE STORY OF MY LIFE – THE HALUTZ

PIONEERING PATHS

Birth and Direction to the Eve of My Departure From India

Anecdotes may be the measure of a life. This one could characterize mine. What happens when a young person from a sheltered home with friends, relatives, traditions, family surroundings, and a well–ordered environment is suddenly uprooted, to find himself among strangers, with every pattern of life suddenly changed? And, when changes have become normal and he goes back to that place from which he has come, and takes up life where he left it, it is well to keep in mind that he doesn't change his identity and his character when he changes his environment.

In 1945, the Calcutta Jewish community was screening candidates to train in America for the rabbinate with a view to return to, and serve in, his native city. Behind this project was Rabbi David J. Seligson, of blessed memory, chaplain in the China/Burma/India sector of the United States Armed Forces stationed in Calcutta. At the time I was part of a tiny group that had organized the first–ever junior congregation holding services in a synagogue every Shabbath morning. The leaders were teenagers whose only qualification was a desire to instill love for religious services in youngsters whose knowledge and interest in Judaism were borderline.

Unbeknown to me, Rabbi Seligson attended a service and sat himself behind the Bimah as I conducted the service and delivered a message on Shabbath Hazon on the centrality of the Land of Israel in Jewish life. I used as my text a song then popular in Palestine:

"The land will not be ours

עַד אֲשֶׁר יִתְאַחֲדוּ לְעָם
עַד אֲשֶׁר יְדַבְּרוּ שְׂפַת עָם
וְיָשׁוּבוּ לְאַרְצָם

"Until Jews will unite as a people; until they will speak the national language, and return to their land." After the service, the Chaplain emerged from hiding and greeted me warmly and stunned me with the remark: "Young man, you are going to be a rabbi in Calcutta!" My response too caught him off guard: "I am preparing to join my brother and sister in Palestine and would not be interested in the rabbinate." He invited me to his office and persevered for an hour to persuade me to change my mind. Finally, he made this prudent statement: "Many will go to Palestine as pioneers. But if there will ever be a Halutz in Calcutta **as a rabbi** it will be you."

I was convinced. He shook my hand and wished me Hazak ve–Ematz. On his return to the United States [he was assistant rabbi to the famed Jonah Wise at New York's Central Synagogue], and in consultation with Rabbi David de Sola Pool, of Congregation Shearith Israel in New York, the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City was recommended. Before long, a partial scholarship was arranged. Because of local politics, however, the Calcutta community picked someone else as its candidate. But I, persuaded by Rabbi Seligson's strong plea, decided on the rabbinate anyway, and applied directly to the Seminary. Dad ז"ל of course, generously afforded me all the support and encouragement that, despite the stipend, would run up a bill, which would be redeemed only by his estate!

Incidentally, the community's choice was admitted to Chicago's Theological College where he did not complete even the first year of studies. The "Halutz," on the other hand, not obliged to return, indeed became the first and only Western–oriented rabbi in Calcutta.

A word about the politics referred to above. A prominent man in the community, David Jacob Cohen, was running, in the 1930's, for election to be head of the Jewish Burial Board against another famed family member, Ezra Gubbai. Grandpa voted for the latter who lost. D.J., as he came to be called, gradually became head of other institutions, while his brother, Immanuel Jacob Cohen, assumed the helm of Maghen David Synagogue. I.J. harassed Grandpa no end when he officiated as Gabbai of that synagogue, even insisting that he adhere strictly to vacation time of two weeks, beyond which his sons had to attend daily synagogue services for the other two weeks of their father's vacation time in Madhupur. Ultimately, D.J. became President of the Jewish Association of Calcutta, which organized the campaign for rabbi, and impeded, nay negated, the chances of Grandpa's grandson of becoming the community's candidate for rabbi.

My Birth

A tale of a different type is told about my birth. My mother's milk having been banned presumably on suspicion it was unblessed because of two difficult deliveries prior to me of babies who did not survive, I received my first nutrients from an Indian wet–nurse called Josephine or Ay–ree, as she was nicknamed, as well as from a kindly family friend, Sarah. I was jaundiced all over and held for forty days and nights in arms and laps not my mother's, for fear of losing the encounter with Lilith, a female demon who preys on male children. But once the fortieth day had passed, I was considered beyond her relentless reach and on the road to recovery. When I had recuperated nicely, my Uncle Elias, in whose room I was born, is said to have remarked: "Not for nothing is this child saved. He will one day become a great man!" I suppose his prediction could possibly refer to one with an unusual mission, a Halutz, if you will.

I was named Yehezkel in token of the enormous strength I would need for me to survive the first forty days of life, and Nissim for the miraculous recovery. [My father was not aware of the family's connection with Hakham Rav Saleh Musleah's two sons named Nissim and Yehezkel, but the coincidence affords me great pride and gratification.] Still, for four years the struggle for life continued — my sex was camouflaged — I was dressed as a girl and wore a simple earring on my left ear lobe, and my hair was allowed to grow long. My Berith Meela, postponed by seventy days, was performed by Sassoon Jacob Cohen on Tuesday יוֹם שֶׁנִּכְפַּל בּוֹ כִּי טוֹב, 29th Tishri 5688 — 25th October 1927 at 11 Bowbazar Street, Calcutta, India, my family residence where I was born Saturday [שַׁבָּת וַאֶתְחַנָּן] 15th Av 5687 — 13th August, 1927, at 4 a.m.

Dad ז"ל would tell a captivating story in connection with my Akd–il–Yas, the night prior to the Berith Meela, devoted to exaltation of the Prophet Elijah, believed to be the guardian of boy babies at their circumcision. With extensive preparations under way and expense of no consequence, he remarked: "How satisfying it would be for us now to have a khassi [=a fattened rooster] cooking!" It wasn't quite ten minutes when a hawker with a khassi for sale at a venture entered from the back door, an entrance very sparingly used. The availability of that unexpected but fervently hoped for bird, not a common commodity, led the family to the conclusion that it was the doing of Elijah, hovering over the house, ready to take requests in preparation for the Meela! Unusual would you say? Or, normal for a Halutz in prospect?

Then again, my birthday is an uncommon and singular day in the Jewish calendar. Tobe Av, as the day is known in Sephardi tradition, is a good day, an auspicious day, for, according to Rabban Simon ben Gamliel, 1st century C.E. scholar and teacher, Jews do not have a more joyous day than the fifteenth of Av [and the Day of Atonement]. For, on these days, young women would go out in white dresses, all borrowed, so as not to embarrass those who did not possess white dresses of their own.[1]

The period beginning with late summer — Tobe Av — and concluding with the New Year, had in common festivities connected with the vintage in ancient Israel, which, for many peoples, was associated with excesses of drunkenness and sex offenses, according my teacher, Prof. Louis Finkelstein ז"ל.[2] Jewish sages converted them into days of spiritual rejuvenation and renewal "after the manner of angels." Pagan agricultural vintage joys were exchanged for the most solemn observances of the year. But some pagan influences remained, even to the extent, in Temple times, of setting aside a large portion of each vineyard called מָחוֹל or dancing space for the purpose of spirited celebration out–of–doors. Even the merriment arranged by the High Priest for his friends on the day after Kippur for "emerging from the Sanctuary in peace" was, according to Finkelstein, a "vague memory of the ancient agricultural festivities. He also concludes that what is today considered a Mitzva to banquet on the eve of Kippur could have somehow been tied to the older pastoral enjoyment of this time of the year.

Having been born on Tobe Av, as the name suggests, was opportune and providential, for this day's baby, it seems to me, could not have been destined to the Lilith perdition. So for whatever it is worth, the stars favored the survival of a Halutz!

Moreover, they could have foretold the uncommon trend of my life. The Talmuds Bavli and Yerushalmi[3] list six other possible reasons for marking Tobe Av as a red–letter day, all of which point to the enhancement and advancement of Jewish life and life in general.

1. As a result of the complaint of the daughters of Zelophad against the choice of future husbands, the Israelite tribes were allowed to intra–marry.[4]
2. The ban imposed on the Benjamites was lifted when they were allowed to return to the community.[5]
3. The sentence of death was lifted against the generation of the wilderness of Sinai for their rebellion in the matter of the reconnaissance report on Canaan.[6]
4. Guards placed by Jeroboam to prevent pilgrims to worship at the Jerusalem Temple were removed by Hoshea ben Elah, the last king of Israel. This insured life with religious freedom.[7]
5. The Romans permitted the dead of Bethar's Jewish rebels to be buried. Miraculously, the bodies were found to be intact. Human dignity, even in death, is valued as one of the basic elements of life.
6. Chopping of trees for wood consumed on the altar was seasonably stopped because the sun's rays were temporarily not hot enough to dry damp wood, which could then be attacked by worms. The welfare of trees got a slight reprieve in the service of man.

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1. Mishna Ta-anith end
2. "The Pharisees," pages 54-58
3. TB Ta-anith 30b, 31a; Bava Bathra 121a,b; TY Ta-anith 4:11 and 69c
4. Numbers 36:8 & the following verses
5. Judges 21:18 & the following verses
6. Numbers 14:32
7. I Kings 12:29, II Kings 18:4

It was also a day of the Wood Offering, when people brought kindling wood "in order to provide fuel for the Altar of the Lord our God."[8] The contribution of wood to facilitate divine worship, one of the mainstays of Judaism, enhances the value of צְדָקָה. The Wood Offering ceremony may symbolize, in addition, another brand of illumination — knowledge and thought that fire human betterment.

I find intriguing the treatment of Tobe Av by Eliezer Levi[9] elaborating on the story of the Zelophad daughters as well as the nexus of Tobe Av with Kippur for the auspicious celebration of freedom as a *religious* way of life.

The oldest reference to Tobe Av, according to Levi, is the freedom of choice of a husband given to the Zelophad daughters. Here is the chronology of their complaint:

The women pointed out that the laws of inheritance were unfair to women whose father had no male issue . The law was amended to read: If a man dies without leaving a son, his property shall be transferred to his daughter. When, before Moses died, time came for rules to be laid down for dividing the Land of Israel, the women came back with another complaint: What if they marry someone from another tribe, their share of the land would be forever lost from their own tribe, that of Manasseh, and added to that of their husbands'. Even according to the Jubilee laws, when inheritances revert to original owners, they would stand to lose if they married any but those of the tribe of Manasseh. Came yet another revised instruction: They may marry anyone they wish, provided they marry into a clan of their father's tribe, that of Manasseh. So their inheritances were held intact, but their choice of husbands was limited.

Levi then quotes Nahmanides, 13th century Spanish rabbi, and scholar, one of the leading authors of Talmudic and Biblical literature in the Middle Ages. After the division of the land, the urgency of living by the marital restriction limiting the Josephite choice to its own tribe was no longer pertinent, and the tribes began intermarrying. But when the first Jubilee approached, according to Maimonides, 12th century rabbinic authority, sixty–four years after they arrived in the land — fourteen in conquering the land and fifty years of the count thereafter — the relevance of the question of the Zelophad inheritance was renewed. A major decision was thrown into the lap of the Beth Din. The elders decided that the Law of Limitation was no longer in vogue and applied only to the generation that entered the land — זֶה הַדָּבָר = "This is the Law," says the Torah, interpreted to mean, this law refers to that generation alone that entered the land and no other. And according to Tradition, the epochal decision was made on Tobe Av when the Tribes were allowed to intermarry one another for all time, and the day was declared a festival.

Now the practical effect of the Beth Din's decision, Levi continues, was not felt before Kippur when the Jubilee officially began.[10] That's when the blowing of the Shofar legally ushers in the Jubilee year in which, the Torah requires, "each of you shall return to his holding …" The Talmud,[11] confirms this law: "Only when the Shofar is blown are slaves freed to join their individual households and fields restored to their original owners."

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8. Nehemiah 10:35
9. Pages 56-59 יְסוֹדוֹת הַתְּפִלָּה
10. Leviticus 25:9-10
11. B Rosh Hashana 8b

Levi wants us to note that the Jubilee did not begin with Rosh Hashana, which at the outset did not have the religious overtones and emphases it does today, but with Kippur, regarding which the Torah declares: וְקִדַּשְׁתֶּם אֶת שְׁנַת הַחֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה וּקְרָאתֶם דְּרוֹר בָּאָרֶץ לְכָל יוֹשְׁבֶיהָ "*You shall hallow* the fiftieth year. You shall proclaim release throughout the land for all its inhabitants."[12] So the Elders did not wish to declare the day of their historic decision — Tobe Av — a festival unto itself, which would have become at best a national *secular* holiday, but preferred to do it in conjunction with a biblically sacred day — Kippur — on which the enactment came to be executed.

Thus the joy of this auspicious occasion was thrice blessed. One, Kippur, normally worthy of rejoicing for forgiveness which we Jews receive for sincere atonement, and at the conclusion of the day the High Priest would invite relatives and friends to celebrate with him his unique service in the Temple of old. That is why, according to the Midrash[13] בְּמוֹצָאֵי יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים יָצְתָה בַּת קוֹל וְאָמְרָה לְךָ אֱכוֹל בְּשִׂמְחָה לַחְמֶךָ וְשְׁתֵה בְלֵב טוֹב יֵינֶךָ שֶׁכְּבָר נִשְׁמְעָה תְּפִלָּתֶם "At the conclusion of Kippur, a voice from Heaven declares: Go, joyfully eat your food and drink your wine with a full heart, for your prayers have been heard." With this statement appropriately, Kippur services to this day draw to a close.

Two, on Kippur of the Jubilee year, Jews freed their slaves as a sign of public demonstration that they were servants of God and not of human beings.

Three, especially Kippur of the Jubilee year following Tobe Av, the occasion of social rejoicing for individual freedom of choice, rejoicing reached ecstasy, making Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel declare: "Jews didn't have as happy feast days as Tobe Av and Kippur, placing the two in chronological order, when the jubilation began and when it had cause to be repeated. On those lovely days, prompted by thoughts of family ties, pride in progenitors and joy of posterity, the women of Israel would frolic in the fields, stressing equality of every participant, irrespective of economic status, those who could be proud of their ancestry as well as those who couldn't. They downplayed beauty and graceful demeanor and praised piety. This is why perhaps we read the section of permitted and prohibited marriages during the Kippur afternoon services.

In sum, Tobe Av and Kippur together spell spiritual renewal, personal freedom and national Jewish unity as ideals in God's service. I have tried to treat these as ideals in my own lifetime. I have tried to act ever without coercion, a clear conscience and for the love of family and my people Israel. I have tried to be worthy of having been born on Tobe Av, in accordance with the foregoing analysis.

SCHOOL AND ENTERTAINMENT

At three–and–a–half, in January 1931, I began attending kindergarten about a mile from home, at Calcutta Girls' High School, a British Protestant institution, providing private, secular education through high school, but co–ed until grade three [age 10]. My brother Meyer and sister Ruby, seven and four years respectively senior to me, were already in attendance. There were no public schools in the American sense. Every school was "private," and students had to pay monthly fees. Why were we not sent to a Jewish school?

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12. Leviticus 25:10
13. Koheleth Rabbah 9:7

In Calcutta, the Jewish community ran two schools. The Girls' School charged a monthly fee which many parents could not afford. The Jeshurun Free School admitted the children of these families. The Boys' School, being an entirely free school, would not admit those who could afford to pay. Up to a stage, Calcutta Girls' was the closest school that would admit all three of us for a fee. When Meyer reached 4th grade in January 1932, the closest school closed on Shabbath was St. James, a co–ed companion high school to Calcutta Girls' but five miles away. St. Joseph's, a Jesuit school, composed of a cosmopolitan student body, was considerably closer, but classes were held on Saturday in place of Thursday. Ruby, of course, began attending the Jewish Girls' School, within walking distance, in January 1934. I was to spend all three of my kindergarten years at Calcutta Girls'. We have a picture of the whole school in 1931 with all three of us in it.

What stands out clearly in my mind is the kindergarten head, Pauline Hecky, who would occasionally order me into her office so she could pamper my ear–lobes! I would be mad at her for depriving me of my play–time, but I good–naturedly didn't show it. She did give me a leading part, I remember, in the kindergarten act we put on for the closing concert coinciding with the Distribution of Prizes, the annual Commencement activity, perhaps her way of saying thanks. That was December 1933.

Now it was time to move on to St. James'. The means of transportation was the rickshaw, a two–seater carriage drawn by a scraggy, emaciated man for a meager ten–pice, twenty–minute ride, or the tramcar [=trolley] with a mid–trip change costing six pice.[14] Somehow I recall that terminal as the spot where I saw a flash of the news report of the death of King George V in January 1936. Competition among rickshaw pullers was so fierce that we would reject any one demanding 12 pice!

At St. James', Anglicans were required to attend church services for fifteen minutes each day before the start of classes. A substitute non–denominational service led by a Hindu member of the staff and attended, among others, by Jewish students, was held in the school hall. Around Easter, at the start of Lent, the church–goers would have an hour–long service, and we non–Christians would enjoy an hour of additional leisure it afforded us.

St. James' was a primary/middle/high school with a good academic record, owed primarily to its talented principal, Ian M. Valentine, an Australia–born Englishman, whose birthday, April 16th, was declared an annual school holiday, because, he said in jest, he didn't want us around him on his happy day! Also a strict disciplinarian, he held an after–school session of "caning" when he often told his victims: "This is what you did. Now see how you feel as I play "Rule Britannia" on your tail!" He taught English to the Junior Cambridge class [age 14], and the following year, British History, in the Senior Cambridge class. I still recall the new words he introduced us to, and insisted that we make sentences with the new words that brought out their meaning. For instance, how "intermittently" differed from "spasmodically," and how World War II was causing "wanton" destruction which would stop "no sooner than" the war ended. Freshest in my memory is the short, descriptive essay he assigned after instructing us on how to express growing excitement and expectancy in short sentences. I wrote about the award of a trophy — The Indian Football [=Soccer] Association Shield — some kind of a Stanley Cup event, presented to the winner of the match between two finalists. Another boy's essay and mine were read out in class as exemplary. I was flattered.

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14. See tram ticket specimen page 141 (Fig 80.)

I think I was a good student, placing second in the Cambridge School Certificate class [=High School]. I liked English Literature and Composition, Latin, Scripture [both Christian and Jewish sections], Arithmetic and Algebra. I couldn't stand Geometry, perhaps because of the poor teacher, until my brother Meyer tried to explain how simple it was. I was 14 at the time, and he, at 21 was taking a law degree. He sat me down, and on the inside cover of my Geometry text book, wrote this problem:

Given: Ezekiel has brains

Required to prove: Geometry is easy

Construction: Put on your thinking cap

Proof: [I don't remember the details, but it was very clever.]

Q.E.D. [Quad Erat Demonstrandam =that which was required to be proved], in student parlance: Quite Easily Done.

Meyer was ever a brilliant teacher and expositor of complex ideas simply put. This demonstration made me apply myself to Geometric problems, at first with some help from him. I came to understand and like them.

A subject that I always got a failing grade in was Art. I couldn't copy draw for anything, and nobody cared to help. I suppose nobody thought it was important enough. Several of our children and grandchildren excel in art, most certainly attributed to Margaret's genes.

I had good friends. With a Jewish one, David Einy, ע"ה, who lived in my neighborhood, I would study together. The other friendships were limited to school hours — I didn't go to their homes and they didn't visit mine. One was a Muslim, last name Hashmi, son of a tailor. One day I stepped into his father's shop on the way home, and somehow the name stuck in my head. Being Tisha b'Av week, I gradually put the name and address to the tune of a קִינָה, an elegy for the day of national mourning:

S. H. Hashmi

Tailors & Outfitters

40 Dharamtalla Street

Calcutta

My family, particularly Uncle Elias, was bemused.

Only once was the name 'dirty Jew' thrown up at me. A Christian boy, aged 12, asked me for cash in the "Tuck Shop," the school's candy store. When I refused, he was upset with me, pushed me outside the shop, and called me miser, etc. We went at each other and he got the better of me. Badly beaten up, my face scratched and hair disheveled, I hobbled crying into class. The Hindu teacher asked me what had happened. He took us both out of the room, reprimanded my classmate, made him apologize, and warned him that that nomen is out of bounds not only in school, but is alien to the country. That day, the boy was sent to "Detention," a punishment that delayed going–home time by an hour. He never spoke with me again, but I was happy the episode ended with my vindication.

I never could run a decent race. At Meyer's suggestion one year, I entered the "Heats" competition for the 100–yard dash. I placed — last.

Till age 13, I read little. Meyer then encouraged me to read Scott's novels. I read them all and began to read whatever I could lay my hands on. I frequently borrowed from school and college libraries. Once I was so engrossed in what I was reading that that rickshaw man who would wait to take me home from school went on another errand. I looked in vain for another, and not having any money on me, could not take public transportation. I was the only child in the school compound. Overcome by my solitariness, I sat and wept. When I failed to appear at the usual time, the folks at home got anxious, and before long, I went into raptures when I set eyes on Uncle Elias at my side. I cried some more in relief before we took a tram home.

My mates in the Junior Cambridge class [=age 14], were far more aggressive than I was, ever thinking of something outrageous to do. Once, during lunch hour, they followed a girl walking home from a neighborhood school just to frighten her. Another time, they let the air out of all the bicycles in the schoolyard. In both these wiles, I refused to join. One day, I accompanied them to a bar to taste a smoke. We bought a cigarette each and lit up. Everyone but me had a look of satisfaction on his face. I inhaled once, got sick, and threw up. The kids poked fun at me, but that experience was enough for me never to put a cigarette to my mouth again, even as an adult.

Another time, the knavery got me into trouble. An adventurous cycle excursion was planned during school hours. I loved cycling, but never had an opportunity to go on long trips. Occasionally, I was allowed to rent a cycle on a Sunday or in Madhupur for short periods, affording little satisfaction.

As luck would have it, it was Shiva Asar b'Tammuz — The Fast of Tammuz — and I was fasting! The temperature in the afternoon soared through the nineties. The fast seemed so much more oppressive as I looked enviously at my friends drinking dab [coconut] water and eating candy. We cycled to Diamond Harbour, about thirty miles from the city. We got back to school in time to be picked up to go home. Here comes the rub. On my way back to school, unbeknown to me, a distant relative of ours, Ezra Musleah, spotted me with my fellow cyclists, and reported to my father!

Now the confrontation:

— Where were you on ——?

— In school.

— Are you sure you were in school?

— Yes. Where else could I have been?

— Suppose I tell you you were on Theatre Road [where our relative lived] at half past two in the afternoon?

I couldn't deny it any longer. I knew the cat was out of the bag. I had to acknowledge where I had been on the Fast day. My father gave me a lecture about how badly I had behaved on four counts: 1. I had skipped school. 2. I could have been run over in traffic I was unfamiliar with. 3. I could have fainted from exhaustion because of the fast and the heat and gotten sun–stroke. 4. I had denied having been on the trip. But there was to be no punishment! Relief! My father would even buy me a cycle provided I promised never, never, never, to repeat the chicanery. And there the matter rested.

My bicycle — an English Raleigh — was a remarkable machine, rugged and easy–going, a masterpiece. How well–built! The pedals, the wheels, the brakes, the tough–leathered seat! Everything about it was solid and worked flawlessly. I always felt supremely confident riding it on the streets of Calcutta — automobiles with no traffic lanes, pedestrians, cows and buffaloes vying for the right of way. I felt nothing could deter the cycle from its appointed goal — in all kinds of weather and at all times, in rain and bursting sunshine — to college three miles away or to my Aunt Mozelle in Kidderpur, ten miles away. I felt a certain responsibility to it, so I oiled and cleaned it regularly — a fitting tribute to a faithful machine.

I led a fairly closeted childhood, alternating between homework, visits of cousins, and the petty goings–on at home. I would look forward to Sunday when the Morris cousins, especially Eric, two years older, provided much–needed companionship. We developed a close relationship based on that between a "pilot" and a "gunner" in warplanes. The pilot maneuvered movement in an "attack," and the gunner zeroed in on the target. For instance, we tried successfully to gain access to the store–room at the extreme end of Grandpa's room. Grandpa was busy reading as usual. All Eric [the "pilot," the more audacious of us two] had to say was: "Nana [mother's father]! "Our marbles ..." He did not so much as lift his head from his book ... when the "gunner," that is, I, darted into the store–room followed closely by Eric, and enjoyed a feed of goodies.

One week–end in the 1930's, when all adults went to the movies to watch "Top Hat," we cousins put up a show of our own at home. Some recited poetry, some sang, others danced, and I — I ran around the "stage" in circles till my head swung. I fell and cut open my chin. The scar still reminds me of that "Oscar!"

We played board games, carroms, draughts, snakes and ladders, monopoly, simple card games like trumps and "beggar–my–neighbor," and, of course, the ever popular Towli [=backgammon], played with dice and counters in which each player tries to move his/her counters along the board and at the same time block or capture the opponents counters.

My favorite pastime was to imitate the sound of moving trains on their tracks. I fancied something that would closely resemble the clang of railroads. To clean spider webs high in ceilings, a stack of jute or hessian was attached to a bamboo branch. These rods had rings along their slim bodies. I would place these bamboo rods on the cross bars of the south verandah's fence, sit myself down on a high stool, and wield the rod back and forth on the fence to get the sound of railroad cars in motion. With the help of a railroad timetable and a timepiece, the rod would keep going until it was time for the train to come to a halt at a given station. I would conveniently follow the schedule of local trains so that the interval between stations would be but a few minutes. Shabbath was one of the days I chose to work my railroad. In the verandah at the time, my father would be playing towli with a family friend, Meir Barookh Meyer, called Master Meyer, a teacher of Bible reading at a Jewish school. When his patience listening to the jarring resonance came exhausted, he turned to my father in sheer desperation and pleaded in Arabic he thought I wouldn't understand: "Khatar Allah, hada il wallad ash kai–sawwee?" [For God's sake, what on earth is this boy doing?!] Being a bit embarrassed to explain my unusual activity, my father said simply: "He's playing!"

A word about *my university years*. I was fifteen years old when I completed the Cambridge School Certificate in one year. Most other schools required an additional year. The first two years of university, one prepared for the Intermediate Arts [or Science examination] in four subjects of one's choice. Mine were: Logic, English Literature, History and Civics. The next two, I took Philosophy as my major, since Logic was one of my Intermediate subjects; English Literature and Economics as minors.

Final examinations were held in April. Majors did six three–hour tests on three consecutive days, morning and afternoon. The first of these fell on the last day of Passover. I negotiated with the University through the Rev. Dr. John Kellas, a Scottish Presbyterian minister, professor of Economics and principal of my college, the Scottish Church College, one of the affiliates of the University. Like his predecessor, the Rev. Dr. Alan Cameron, who invigilated my brother Meyer in similar circumstances, he empathized with me and undertook to see that I was segregated all day from 10 a.m. when the exam began, until the conclusion of the Festival, about 6 p.m. I then wrote my answers for six hours, and arrived home thoroughly worn and exhausted. It demonstrated the sensitivity and deference paid by authorities to religious diversity, another in the series of liberal attitudes minorities enjoyed in India. Incidentally, Rev. Cameron, in May 1944, his last year as principal, called me into his office and talked with me about my future. I told him about my tentative plans to make Aliyah; he was thrilled. He emphasized that a student of my caliber would do well anywhere, and the Holy Land could use my services. He then gave me his personal gift of "Still Lighter Essays," selected and edited by A. J. Merson, in token of his recognition of my high placement in the half–way point [Intermediate Arts] toward the Bachelor of Arts degree.

If officialdom had to cooperate to ensure my segregation on the final day of my examinations, my family too had to practise constraints. What did I eat that memorable day? Song, the domestic, brought me a Pesah meal with special, very strict instructions: The table had to be overlaid with two layers of newspaper, and then one more of a doubled tablecloth. Only then were the generations–old plates in a napkin to be exposed and the food emptied onto them. Those plates and utensils looked strange being anywhere but home and were to be returned with assurances that instructions were meticulously followed. When I was done eating, they were not to be washed but re–wrapped in the napkin. I was to drink water from a Kosher–for–Pesah bottle and the bottle discarded. When I got home at 1 a.m. everyone was awaiting my arrival. After a brief formal inquiry into how I had fared at the exams, the inquisition queried me about whether the china could still be considered Kosher–for–Pesah! I assured them that I had followed all instructions punctiliously. Only then did they go to bed — relieved! To the folks at home I could not have done better, but academically, I earned a Bachelor of Arts degree and placed 28th in the University in my subject, Philosophy with honors.

SHABBATH — FROM WEEK TO WEEK

Friday morning in preparation for Shabbath the family runs a hectic schedule. Besides the everyday morning roll, greater concentration on food takes much of the time of the women folk, busy with chopping ingredients for two days' provision. Vendors of fruits and vegetables are summoned off the street. The prior night's left–over food, if still undelivered, is despatched to a needy home. Most impressive is the string of the poverty–stricken calling for their weekly loaves of bread delivered the previous day by the Jewish confectioner, Nahoum's, together with fresh cheese and other appetizing dainties. Then there is additional shopping from the neighboring Tiretta Bazaar and the New Market further away. In late afternoon, Aunt Rachel makes Tomato

Chutney, and Aunt Hannah busies herself with the more tedious Hulba. Granny lights her Tirya an hour before sunset, while, after my mother's death, my dad walks in the door from work a minute before lighting time. When he is ready for Kiddush an hour later, an uncle, Abraham/Mordecai Cohen, originally from the town of Bhagalpur and living with us the year before he died, wittily remarks: "Sahib! [Sir!] We are required to say Kiddush on Yom ha–sishee [the sixth day] close to sunset, not Yom ha–Shebi–ee [the Seventh Day] much after the sun has set!" After a sumptuous meal of Aloo makalla, Pillaw and roast chicken etc, and Birkath ha–Mazone, Hashkabah is recited for a relative whose anniversary fell on the coming week, before partaking of fruits. We then lulled ourselves to sleep by singing six or seven Pizmoneem.[15]

Morning services begin at 5:45. Male members except Grandpa, who doesn't eat or drink anything before reciting his prayers, drink a cup of tea with a cheese samoosuck or a caca [dough rings] before going off to synagogue. The house of worship plays a central role in our religious lives. At eight years, all our male children chant Zemiroth [=Pesukei de Zimra] in Baghdad's distinctive melody. It gives us a feel for the service and its conduct. Another practise fit this pattern beautifully. As the Sefer Torah is brought out of the Ark Room and raised in the presence of the congregation assembled in front of the Hekhal, our boys use the Mahwi [pointer] to mark the starting point of the day's reading, which I could find at a very early age without any help from the person who opened the Sefer Torah. I was flattered to signal and identify the portion for the people's guidance. Both practises somehow supply me with a sense of steering synagogue proceedings.

As far back as I can recall, I felt comfortable in synagogue. With the help of the Hebrew tutor who came to the house four days a week, Monday through Thursday, and the Hebrew readings at family observances, we read Hebrew fluently, and regular synagogue attendance made us familiar with melodies and chants from a very early age. The dedication and lovely singing voices of the Hazzanim of Maghen David were inspirational, and our generations were blessed with the ability to pick up melodies easily and sing them well. The first Hebrew primer we used, entitled לֶחֶם לְפִי הַטַּף *"Food" Graded for the Little Ones*, published in Leghorn, Italy, is in our library.

We had no refrigerator for some time, and when we did get one, eating stale food was unacceptable except, of course, on Shabbath after early morning services. Aunt Ramah and I pass up the Hammeen–Hashua [Stuffed Chicken], Kababdas, and Hareesee [on Shabbath Shirah] and prefer dairies at a table in the south verandah.

After Birkath haMazone, about 10 a.m., my dad retires to his room for the rest of the morning/early afternoon to read and take in his Shabbath snooze, while Grandpa, Uncle Elias, Aunts Hannah and Ramah and I assemble in Grandpa's room for the weekly session in Nevee–im/Ketuveem for about an hour to 11/2 hours. Except for self–evident passages, no one knew or asked about the content of the readings. Meyer and Ruby go off reading on their own whatever interested them. My grandmother plays Towli with Master Meyer, an old friend who studied at a Baghdad Heder or Yeshiva and had an excellent memory, because years later, when my Uncle secured a copy of Rashi's commentary with vowels and Silberman's English translation, Master Meyer unfailingly answered every question on Rashi's comments! He once told us that in Baghdad he was initiated in Talmud with Berakhoth, then on to Hagigah. He was

15. Kol Zimra, pages 22 to 36

studying Mo–ed Katan when his father migrated to Calcutta. The boy was barely fifteen, but never missed an opportunity to demonstrate his reverence for his Baghdadi teachers. At the mere mention of an instructor's name, he made sure his head was covered and bowed his head in homage. The Hakhamim say: מוֹרָא רַבְּךָ כְּמוֹרָא שָׁמָיִם "Let the reverence for your teacher be like your fear of Heaven."

Let me dwell a little on Master Meyer's further application of his knowledge. A man named Shimoon E. Moses, a cripple from infancy, spent his time studying Torah from books he indented from Baghdad and Palestine. In the course of his studies one day in 1947, he was troubled by an apparent contradiction. So he set out in quest of the wisest Torah mind he could think of — Master Meyer — to try and reconcile two verses concerning Moses our Teacher. וְדִבֶּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה פָּנִים אֶל פָּנִים "The Lord would speak with Moses face to face as a person would speak with his fellow" [Exodus 33:11], and וּפָנַי לֹא יֵרָאוּ כִּי לֹא יִרְאַנִי הָאָדָם וָחָי "a human being cannot see My face, for no human can see My face and live" [Exodus 33:20,23]. Master quoted two other verses that seemingly solved the contrariness:

לֹא כֵן עַבְדִּי מֹשֶׁה... פֶּה אֶל פֶּה אֲדַבֶּר בּוֹ "Not so with My servant Moses … With him I speak mouth to mouth" [Num. 12:7,8]. וְלֹא קָם נָבִיא עוֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר יְדָעוֹ ה' פָּנִים אֶל פָּנִים

"Never again did there arise in Israel a prophet like Moses with whom the Lord spoke face to face" [Deut. 34:10]. Master explained that Moses had special privileges not extended to any other human being, and he knew precisely when to address God for concessions when פָּנִים שֶׁל זַעַם vexation and resentment needed to give place to mercy and forgiveness. Master praised Shimoon for his wide knowledge of Torah.

Incidentally, it was with Shimoon, whom I endearingly called Uncle Simon, I learned some Musar about six months before leaving for the United States. I helped him publish a small book, MOSES, with funds I had collected on his behalf. In acknowledgment he wrote a letter of thanks to Dad:

> "8 Royd Street, Calcutta. לְכָבוֹד הַיָּקָר וְהַנָּעִים יִצְחָק מֵאִיר [May the Lord preserve him in life] מַצְלִיחַ הי"ו[וְהַשֵּׁם יִשְׁמְרֵהוּ וְיִחַיֵּהוּ] Dear Mr. Musleah, You will be glad to know that due to the mercy of G–d and your dear son Ezekiel, my book — Moses — has reached many hearts, which augurs well for the future of Judaism. The distinguished name of your family will live with this book forever because your son wrote its Foreword and also gave money for its publication. Now who was the kind donor? I think it was you. If so, then let me tell you, although the financial sacrifice was heavy, it was never merely an expenditure but an eternal INVESTMENT in the spirit of Seenai, the choice harvest of which will be reaped by all for centuries." [In fact, it was I [EN] who collected the one thousand rupees required by the printers.]

Shimoon continues in Hebrew:

> הֲלֹא תֵדַע אָדֹנִי הַשַּׂר שֶׁעָלֶיךָ כַּאֲשֶׁר בַּתּוֹרָה וַיִּזְרַע יִצְחָק בָּאָרֶץ הַהִיא וַיִּמְצָא בַּשָּׁנָה הַהִיא מֵאָה שְׁעָרִים וַיְבָרְכוּ הַשֵּׁם עִם כֹּל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ לַעֲד אָמֵן וּבִזְכוּת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר לִמַּדְנוּ אֲנִי הַצָּעִיר עִם בִּנְךָ הֶחָשׁוּב יְחֶזְקֵל קוֹדֶם שֶׁהָלַךְ לַאֲמֵרִיקָה תְּנוּ עָלֶיךָ וְעַל מִשְׁפַּחְתְּךָ לְדוֹר דּוֹרִים אָמֵן

> "You should know, sir, the blessing [?] upon you mentioned in the Torah: *Isaac* sowed in that land and reaped a hundredfold the same year, and the Lord blessed him [Gen. 26:12]. And for the merit of the Torah which your dear son and I studied before he left for America, may [the blessing] be fulfilled for you and for your family for generations to come, Amen."

Dad replied, "February 11, 1951. שִׁמְעוֹן עֻזְּרָא מֹשֶׁה [סִינְיוֹר=]סִינְיוֹר לְחַיִּקָר Many thanks for two copies of your book "Moses." I have read it over and over and I have nothing but admiration for the scholarly manner in which you have accomplished a work for the benefit of generations to come. Though physically impaired, your spiritual strength befits a man of your humility and piety. עָלֶיךָ נֵאָמַר הֲנִמְצָא כָזֶה אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים בּוֹ 'Could we find another like him, a man in whom is the spirit of God?' [Gen. 41:37].

While I admit I donated a small fraction toward the cost, Ezekiel had raised the funds single–handed. To him goes the satisfaction of having your work seeing the light of day. אַשְׁרֶיךָ בָּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה וְטוֹב לְךָ בָּעוֹלָם הַבָּא Happy are you in this world, and it shall be well with you in the world to come!"

It should be noted that due to my strong recommendation made through Dad, then on the board of the Elias Meyer School and Talmud Torah, that Shimoon began teaching Bible and rabbinic in that school on a wheel–chair, a paying position that made him independent and kept him in Calcutta, though at one stage, his family tried hard to have him enter a rabbinic establishment in Israel.

I was already in America when Master Meyer died in Calcutta on the 6th Tebeth 1947. On 28th December, Dad wrote: "I must tell you the very sad news of the passing of our beloved friend, Meyer Namurdi, better known as Master Meyer or Meir Barookh, after a brief illness. The previous Shabbath he played Towli but, not as usual. He professed to be very ill, and that he had come only to wish the family before their Madhupur visit later that week. But for that mission, he would have stayed home. His indisposition started with an incessant cough he neglected, developing into pneumonia. He died within twenty–four hours, on choking over hot milk. His Towli slogans still ring in my ears — Bay–eyn [=Eyes for the #2]; Choki [=Chair for the #4]; Heerik [=Hebrew vowel, one dot, for #1]; koobboos [=Hebrew vowel, three dots, #3]; 'Never', when he hoped his opponent would not get the number, he called out, Ah–ma [=Blind, when he wished his opponent's dice to miss its target]; Gan Eden [=the best number, Double sixes]; Hada giben? [=Is this a good ingredient? when it's a number that does him no good], ooth–fa–nu! [Let this number be cursed]. May his soul rest in peace!" On his first Yartseit, I penned the following poem in his memory:

> MASTER, I OFFER …
> [On the first anniversary of our friend and teacher]
> Has he gone, that figure straight and princely?
> Is it one with dust, so keen a head and lofty?
> Servant of the Most High!
> Begat offspring his Creator to praise,
> A plume resplendent unto his people to raise.
> Hark! I hear his voice!
> In tone no less than rumbling thunder,

In meaning no harsher than soothing wonder.
His fiery eyes reflecting sparks of light
Turned away the haughty from his sight.
In God's chariot his soul conveyed to Infinity,
Now forms part of spiritual Divinity.
His mantle lies shrivelled, ready to tear,
Are there strong shoulders worthy to bear?
Unfurl his banner, emblazon his motto,
Take heart! Let his sterling slogans echo!

To continue Shabbath happenings, My Dad would relieve his mother as Master Meyer's Towli partner, as she lay down for a while. I needed no rest. I ran my "railroad," or studied Parasha, both to understand the text as well as to learn reading from a Tikkoon. The latter interest came to me by chance. The family would visit the home of Aunt Seemah and Uncle Charlie [Cohen], a few houses away, every Shabbath night after Kiddush and Pizmoneem. Once, Uncle Elias took along his pocket Maftir Tikkoon and, I could see, was struggling with the next day's Maftir. I asked him what he was plodding over. He showed me a long Maftir for Parashath Vayyishlah, dealing with the kings of the House of Edom [Gen. 36:31–43]. I looked at it, read it over once, then again, then a third time, and then volunteered to read from the Tikkoon side. He marveled at my feat and expressed his wonderment to my father for whom I repeated the reading flawlessly. Commendation was evident all over his face. The next day in synagogue, my Uncle himself made a fine impression. Incidentally, it was not his first rendition of that Maftir!

I was then 12 years old, and it occurred to me that I might try my hand preparing other portions of Parasha. I wasted no time. I began with a third of Parashath Vayyeshev, and continued assiduously from week to week. The following year's annual cycle brought me to the end of the second third, and by the time I was fifteen, I had completed the entire rotation. The year, 1942, is inscribed on the then freshly–bound, black–covered Tikkoon given to me by a friend of my grandfather's, Shimon Cohen, former Gabbai of Bethel synagogue and an expert Parasha reader. My own synagogue's rule limiting the Parasha to be read by the Hazzan alone, I betook myself to prayer halls where I could exhibit my new–found expertise. I remember being challenged by my Uncle Elias to read the double Parasha, Vayyakhel–Pekudei without a mistake. The sixteen–year–old performed as dared!

What was originally a pleasant hobby, many years later began part of my professional requirement. The synagogue where I was barred from reciting parasha as a teenager, hired me as Hazzan when the incumbent made Aliyah in 1959. In my first pulpit, Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia, the Rabbi's position made reading Parasha a sine qua non. And when I retired from the active pulpit, I continued realizing income as professional Torah reader.

Getting back to Sabbath afternoon, the well–rested family would come together again at 2:30 pm and keep the company of visiting friends. The men folk attended Minha in synagogue at 4 pm, a twelve–minute walk; return home for Seudah Shelisheet, and then went back for Arbeeth. Havdalah at home was repeated for the women in the family and chanted Pizmoneem for Motza–ei Shabbath.[16]

16. Kol Zimra, pages 38-62

ZIONISM

In 1936, I remember a discussion with Mum, Meyer and Ruby on whether we should join a new Jewish youth movement introduced from South Africa by a cousin of my father's, Sally Meyer (later, Lewis). Mum, to whom Dad gave full authority to decide, agreed to have us participate on condition that we review with her our interest in its activities from time to time. We began attending meetings on Shabbath at Sally's home, a mile or so away, where we would go by rickshaw. Later, meetings were held in the yard of Maghen David Synagogue. Sally was appointed Bakoah [=Superintendent] of the area Habonim, Meyer, Rosh Gedud [=group leader] of the Boys' division, and Ruby and Rachel Levi (later, Musleah), Rashei Gedud of the Girls' division. A Gedud consisted of about twenty boys/girls, and the sub–division, called a Kevutza, of about six. I was a Rosh Kevutza.

It should be noted that Indian Habonim, with headquarters in Bombay, had no connection with American Labor Zionism, but run as a religious movement like its South African counterpart. The movement was based on ceremonial brick–building symbolic of building the Land of Israel, scouting being a preliminary to settling the Land. In addition, Hebrew, and Jewish and Zionist history were taught. I recall three levels of study and testing called מַדְרֵגוֹת [=Steps]. Outings, including trips to Madhupur, provided lively entertainment and camaraderie. The movement's badge in the shape of the Hebrew letter Beth enclosing a palm tree, I still have, made me proud of the work being done toward the fulfillment of Zionist aims of building, suggesting the phrase from Psalms: צַדִּיק כַּתָּמָר יִפְרָח "the righteous bloom like a date–palm." Looking back at Mum's proviso to evaluate periodically our interest in Habonim, our combined judgment progressively gave the movement the high marks that made it worthy of defining our future, preparatory to the establishment of the State of Israel and the emigration of Jews from India. It is hard to tell how Mum would have reacted, had she been alive, to one of the local products of Zionism — the emptying of her nest. It would be easier to predict her response, however, against the background of mass emigration of Jews to Israel and other parts of the world, as well as how her children conducted themselves in their new spheres of influence.

Adult Jews in Calcutta were invited to join a lay–persons' group of the Zionist Association, organizing monthly meetings and annual conventions. Meyer, Ruby and Rae were active committee members, while pursuing their goals of Halutziuth [=Zionist pioneering].

It's worthwhile to sidetrack to bring out my brother Meyer's invaluable, high–spirited, service to the Jewish community of Calcutta, especially in the planning and organization of a central; organism for the unification of the community which came to be called The Jewish Association of Calcutta. Together with the support of the much–respected and well–loved J. R. Jacob and his gallant, resolute, son, Bernard (Bunny), Meyer envisaged it as an instrument to an improved community, a combined voice of Calcutta Jewry crying aloud for a way out of chaos. To those who just sat idle and unconcerned with Jewish needs and interests, he thought, it was a voice of conscience pricking them to do things that had to be done. But judging from results, there seemed to be many who proved to be impassive or even derelict of this call to duty.

Meyer wrote memoranda for greater efficiency of each major institution. Most far–reaching was his insight in Jewish welfare. He called for a survey to answer these primary questions. 1. Was it possible to make poorer classes of Jews more self–respecting than they had been? 2. Was money distributed among the poor done with wisdom and economy? 3. Was it possible, by preventive measures, to avoid the necessity of coming to the aid of more serious situations later? And he

recommended: 1. Do not overlap charitable work. 2. Lend without interest for domestic purposes. 3. Able men and women must be made to work for a living. 4. Provide scholarships to enable boys and girls to proceed either to university or for technical education after they leave school. Again, it was easier said than done.

A note Meyer sent to Ronald J. R. Jacob, ever keen on improving the lot of the hapless, surveyed the severe schedule of students of the Elias Meyer Free School and Talmud Torah, required to attend religious services at Neveh Shalome Synagogue morning and evening before and after school hours. Mental fatigue at the end of the day made them unfit to do homework and for recreation. Ronnie, as he was endearingly called, with Meyer's input, recommended that the boys attend in shifts, thus reducing their burden. The school authorities approved the advice.

I recall Ronnie addressing a meeting of the Jewish community held on April 8, 1945, at which the Jewish Association was inaugurated. He made scholarly references to 1. Leibnitz, the seventeenth–eighteenth century German philosopher, who taught that our world has the greatest possible perfection? Similarly, the Jewish Association, in the circumstances, was the most perfect forum to govern the Jewish community. 2. Leo Tolstoy, nineteenth century Russian moral philosopher, who defined the Jew as the pioneer of liberty and of civilization, the emblem of civil and religious toleration, and the emblem of eternity. Ronnie turned to the audience and asked: If this is true, then I would request each of you to ask yourselves: Do we Jews of Calcutta come under these categories?

Ronnie's remarks struck a chord with me because at the time I was a Philosophy Major at Calcutta University.

Meyer's scheme for rabbinical leadership conceived of a fund of sixty thousand rupees for an initial three–year contract. I was not in the local rabbinical picture at the time. He took his project with him to Aliyah, where he began hard physical work at Kfar Blum. But his thoughts were still with Calcutta. Barely three months after settling in the kibbutz, he wrote a letter to the Chief Rabbi of the Holy Land inquiring about the possibility of a rabbi for Calcutta. Here is a translation of the Rabbi's reply:

Ben Sion Meir Hay Ouziel
Rishon Lesion, Chief Rabbi of the Holy Land
Jerusalem, 20th Teveth 5706 [=24th december 1945]

Meyer Musleah, Kfar Blum, P.O. Rosh Pinah

> Dear sir, In reply to yours of 11th December 1945, I have the honor to reply.
>
> First, I am happy to know that the Calcutta Jewish community desires to appoint a rabbi to be spiritual head and leader of youth to inculcate love of Torah and its observances. I had looked forward to this development in previous correspondence.
>
> I am happy to note that this serious stage has been reached. I must point out, however, that it is not possible to find a rabbi appropriate for the position, knowledgeable in English over and above his other accomplishments which should include university and rabbinic degrees, erudition in Jewish law and rabbinic homily as well as fluency in Arabic.

> If you agree with these ideas, please let me know the terms set forth by the community to enable me to look around and talk to fitting and talented individuals.
>
> Ben Sion Meir Hay Ouziel

To those at the helm of things in Calcutta, the project was a whit too abstract. Of course, nothing came of Meyer's initiative. They had to have someone in their presence they could scrutinize, look up and down, and analyse in person. Their dupe was still a few years away.

To continue our story of the Halutz group's preparation for Aliyah, the seven members were assisted in their pioneering venture by Jewish members of the British and American Armed Forces stationed in Calcutta during World War II, and gave of their knowledge and expertise to augment and strengthen Zionist leadership. Unfortunately in my view, a few were members of Hashomer Hatzair, exhibiting and disseminating philosophies of Karl Marx and Lenin. The Halutzim, therefore, made Aliyah in 1945 and settled in an essentially non–religious kibbutz. A younger group of active young people, including me, assumed the mantle of leadership, formed what we called Shomrim [=the Guards], and held fort for about two years. In addition, I continued to be part of a group of able teenagers, who, with some adult help including that of Ramah Luddy, organized the Young People's Congregation that held Shabbath services for even younger girls and boys. As recounted previously,[17] I had every intention to make Aliyah myself but for the intervention of Rabbi David J. Seligson. In August 1947, I left for the United States to study at the Jewish Theological Seminary, while most of the others in the Shomrim group, about six in all, settled in Israel. All had abandoned the ship of Calcutta by 1950.

Even before my avocation changed directions, I determined to exploit every avenue to further my studies in Judaism and Hebrew. Interestingly, an opportunity presented itself in 1942 when a member of the United States Armed Forces, Moshe Haiby, [later Havivi] of Yemenite descent and a born teacher of Torah, agreed to instruct me in Bible. I look back upon those sessions in Joshua and Judges with great endearment and gratitude for one who went out of his way to perform a Mitzva of Limmud Torah [Torah learning] in the unfertile fields of India.

Also during the War, I tried another venue of Torah study. Spirited by Moshe Haiby's example and under very trying circumstances, I got in touch with British Religious Zionists in London, England, and entered a correspondence course in Bible and Modern Hebrew. For three years, I would answer their questions and they would send them back to me corrected. I still have some of these texts and papers. These two sources of instruction served me in good stead as I prepared for entrance examinations to the Rabbinical School of the Seminary.

Despite the non–traditional influences of some of my overseas and local Zionist friends, as well as the trend of my university studies in Philosophy, I remain true to my religious faith, bound by destiny to an ancestral way of life, teaching Torah and its traditions in pioneering conditions. In fulfillment of Rabbi Seligson's prediction, I am proud to have served as a Halutz in the rabbinate!

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17. Above, page 115.

MADHUPUR VACATION SPOT

One born and bred in the hustle–bustle of an over–crowded city, where humans vie with horse and buggies, rickshaws and vehicular traffic, the idyllic scenes of rustic life 182 miles away can be refreshing and invigorating. The quiet and peaceful village of Madhupur, a hilly station on the Eastern Railway system in the neighboring province of Bihar, attracted scores of Jewish families to spend at least part of their three–week winter vacation enjoying its salubrious climate, a good ten degrees fahrenheit cooler and drier than humid Calcutta. Reasonable rents off retired railway employees, fresh drinking water drawn from wells, fresh milk from cows brought to your door, were some of the facilities in this attractive location. One admirer bought three properties there and nicknamed the resort, Modhu–pur, abode of honey. The colony was so popular that, in the early 1920's, a Sefer Torah was taken there to enable the vacationing Hazzan of Maghen David Synagogue, Rev. E.M.D. Cohen to conduct full Shabbath services. About the time, Family Musleah began its annual pilgrimage and came upon Maude Jansen, the widow of a former railway employee who owned two contiguous houses close to the railway station. She lived on the first floor of a building she appropriately called "Home," and rented out "Maude Villa" next door. She became so attached to us Musleahs that she let that ground floor of 'Home" remain vacant nine months in the year in order to accommodate us for as long as we wished, which, for Grandma Masuda and two unmarried daughters, Hannah and Rachel, meant three–and–a–half months, from mid–November to the end of February. Other family members spent different times there: school kids and teacher Ramah, all of their vacation time; Grandpa as Gabbai of Maghen David Synagogue, his two–week official holiday, and if he prolonged his stay, his sons Isaac and Elias would fill in attending synagogue; Elias, whatever broken periods he could spare, perhaps a total of five weeks; and Isaac, a few days at the end of December. In one of my mother's letters to Dad in February 1935, she mentions having returned from a trip to Madhupur. I don't remember her being there with us. Occasionally, the Morris children joined the family group.

Maude Jansen, a pious Christian, chose her quarters very conveniently opposite the hamlet's only church she attended every Sunday morning and on Christian holidays. Christmas morning, we got accustomed to listen to her piano playing and singing of Christmas carols. She would politely apologize for "disturbing" us, but we assured her that we "enjoyed" her renditions, as we presented her with a Christmas gift. After her post–dinner walk, she would spend a few minutes with us before retiring upstairs for the night. She happily agreed to plant myrtle trees in her yard to provide us with Havdalah spices.

The distance between Calcutta's Howrah station and Madhupur was traveled by express trains borne by British steam locomotives. Dad and Uncle Elias would make it a point to take a look at the engine as it rolled into the terminal to connect with the carriages. The heaviest and fastest steam engines, the XBs, would do 70 to 80 miles an hour, considered very fast at the time, until they were withdrawn following an major accident. Apparently the tracts on Indian soil, too soft for the weight and speed of the giant British locomotives, were gradually strengthened, but never again did XBs see service in India. The lighter and less speedy XC and XD engines replaced them. The trip by express train took about five hours, for me an exhilarating journey toward the highlight of my year, leaving Howrah at 11 a.m. and arriving Madhupur at about 4 p.m., when a number of vacationers would be standing at the station or on the overpass, called the "Bridge," to greet newcomers or just to become aware of their arrival. Depending on his schedule, Uncle Elias would sometimes take the Punjab Mail, a faster train arriving Madhupur by 11:30 p.m. I,

age 11, recall pleading with him to take me with him ahead of the children's contingent scheduled for a few days later. I packed a few clothes in a small metal carton reserved for my school lunch, and was on my way. When Aunty Hannah greeted me, she kept reminding me in years to come, I assured her I would be "good," but the next day I was myself again!

I came to know the sequence of most of the stations, especially the express trains at which they stopped for water — Burdwan, 60 miles away, Asansol, 132, in addition to the stations we sped past as we approached Madhupur — Mihijam, Jamtara, Karmatar — Madhupur! My interest in railway tracks, locomotives and signals brought me to the goomtee, a signal and track control center about five minutes from "Home," on the east side of the railway station, where I spent hours. Called the East Cabin, it controlled incoming and outgoing trains by changing track lines and operating signals. An extremely responsible job for the controller named Dabbay, a very kindly man who never lost his patience with me, nor did he once complain that I was unwelcome there. In fact, he painstakingly explained to me, then in my early teens, what he had to do next, how his lever determined on which track the train would enter or leave the station, and how the corresponding signal told the driver to proceed if the track was clear, or stop if it wasn't. Most exciting was when he asked me to "help" him move a massive lever with him.

Taking walks at least once a day, twice by the more energetic, assumed the most popular activity. The shortest was a stroll in the Dak Bungalow, a large, grassy park belonging to the municipality, whose entrance could not have been more than a few yards from Home, and in the midst of which stood a stately, spotlessly white, building that doubled as a guest house and a civil court for "small cause cases" heard once a week. Longer trips extended to accepted endpoints like Rose Bank [belonging to Obadiah Cohen, Uncle Charlie's father], about three–quarters of a mile away, or Sett Villa, a quarter mile further; or, more enterprisingly, to the "1916 House," the "Last House" in Madhupur, a distance of three miles.

One Friday late afternoon, as the walkers reached a short distance from Rose Bank, Uncle Elias suddenly realized that he had not cut the sprigs of Yahs, myrtle leaf, from the plant, which meant there would be no leaves for Havdalah. I volunteered for an errand no one would ever forget — Ezekiel saved our Havdalah berakhah that day! I ran all the way and ran back, prompting Uncle Elias to say: "I can understand why you ran one way to be in time to cut the Yahs, but why exert yourself to run back?" I had no answer, but I suppose my award came in the form of more pampering and laxity for my errant ways.

Granny did her bit. A pony with its attendant was hired all day to be at my call to take me riding. I was proud of my monopoly. Boys my age came to my door pleading for a ride but were flatly refused.

Every Monday and Friday, villagers from smaller districts brought produce and wares to be sold in the larger market–place. The location of sale called "Haht," a kind of mall, attracted buyers from a wide area for bargains of fresh vegetables and fruit in baskets carried on the head of the "mali," literally a gardener, but employed by us for assorted functions like porter and sundry jobs like cleaning and lighting the Hasag lamp, a gas lantern fueled by kerosene that kept the living room/dining room bright, far brighter than smaller kerosene burners servicing other rooms. The "mali" was also the Shabbat Goi. Incidentally, Rahim, the cook, and "Song," the home help, were ever part of the domestic party.

Commodities for which Madhupur was distinctive included tomatoes, papayas, mint [=pudina], and cooking oil, much of these good enough to be transported back to Calcutta. As a child, of course, I was not interested in the **purchase** of produce, though I relished the edibles. My gaze was fixed at the end of the mall to stalls selling "mud toys," earthen cooking and dining units painted red or black, together with sets of iron cutlery. Bought on Monday they were broken by Friday, and I was ready for replacements. Playing "house" with these articles kept the children occupied.

A Mulla [=Shohet] who did not miss the opportunity to combine his avocation with his annual vacation, lived a few houses away to do the needful whenever required. So hawkers of chickens and pigeons were ever on the lookout for Jewish homes to sell their birds, and my grandparents were adept at examining the birds' behind for fat content. Fat would commonly be used in place of oil. Looking at Grandpa with his flowing white beard, one of these vendors asked Granny: "Isn't it true? The gentleman has completed age 100!" Afraid of the evil eye, Granny replied: "Not quite 60 yet!" Actually, he was 65 or so.

The compound of "Home" played an important role in passing leisure time. Besides helping keep an eye on vendors, it served as outdoors for sun–bathing, towli [backgammon] playing, reading, and just plain kibitzing.

My siblings, Meyer and Ruby, and on occasion, cousins Sammy and Eric, [Mavis was too little], were ever scouting extraordinary ways to be active. In company of Master Meyer's son, Nat and daughter Sarah, we once set out to the ravines, a stream of water ten miles from the center of town, that flowed in winter and used by visitors to frolic and by native herdsmen to bathe bullocks, but dried up in summer. We hired two 'tongas', horse and buggies parked on the south side of the railroad station, picked up singaras, rasogullas, paeras, [all goodies], from the famed confectioners, Burdwan shop, and readied ourselves for an exciting day. On arrival at the waterway, we released the tongas, deciding we would walk back home along the railway tracks. We "paddled" in the cool, two–foot deep water, picnicked on the sandy "banks," caught sight of passing trains over a "bridge" in the distance, and coursed there at the end of our ravine adventure, yet unfinished with a daredevil encounter. We entered the tracks, surrounded on both sides by tall hills, luxuriated in lunging from one wooden step of track to the next until suddenly, we heard the menacing clang, grind and toot of a locomotive blasting ever so close to us. We scurried off the tracks and clung for dear life on to the hillside as the train whistled and whizzed past barely six feet away! We continued understandably relieved, soothed and softened, trudging more cautiously from one wooden step to the next, predisposed to say "Gomel" at the first opportunity.

That year had to be historic. The entrance to one of three Master Meyer's properties, 'Cannas,' bloomed with wreaths and garlands. The imagination of the youngsters stirred. Why not conduct a mock wedding in that picturesque setting? The groom, cousin Eric, and the bride, Sarah Meyer, were "married" with traditional chanting of the complete blessings. Each celebrant chanted one of the blessings. Looking back, as if in protest, Eric was never really married, and Sarah took a great while to finally settle down!

The wild ones circled town in rented bicycles, not an easy feat on sandy, unpaved roads. Sticking in muddy "puddles" shoved riders off their two–wheelers. Those difficult conditions didn't deter Ruby from learning to ride one to enable her to join the crowd of revelers the following year. And we played a game native children enjoy — Goolie–Danda, a three–inch puck [Goolie] shaved at the extremities, must be struck by a Danda [wooden rod], and on the hop, hit for the distance.

Giridih is a very hilly sub–station about an hour's ride by mini–rail from Madhupur. The vintage scenic route made a day's outing very pleasurable, especially picnicking along a towering waterfall. I recall accompanying Uncle Charlie, full of fun and good humor, on that refreshing tour.

Finally, letter writing between vacationers in Madhupur and those who had to be at their place of work — business or school — kept one another in touch. From a couple of post–cards, preserved by Grandpa and written by Uncle Elias, we gauge some of the things that interested and bothered the folks in the thirties of the twentieth century. First, dated Friday, 9th December, 1932 from Madhupur to Calcutta. Addressed to: M. E. Musleah. 11 Bowbazar Street, Calcutta. Postmarked MDP 9th December 1932. Calcutta, 10 Dec 1932.

"My dear people, I must say today is a very busy day for all of us. I must thank father for his several letters. I am purposely writing a p.c. today to wish our dear darling father a very, very happy birthday. [He was 64.] Inshalla he shall live to see many more and may the Almighty spare him and bless him with good health, long life, and prosperity. He should read the same prayer tomorrow which Eliyahu Hyeem Hilali made him say a couple of years ago. [Presumably at a prior birthday. Hilali sat alongside Grandpa in Maghen David Synagogue, Calcutta, before suffering a stroke in 1935 (?) The prayer hall, Sha–aray Ratsone, in the vicinity of his home, came into being primarily to accommodate his physical disability.]

"Nowadays the trains run to time. No more XB engines this end. The thirds [third class compartments, the lowest class after 1st, 2nd, and Inter(mediate) are really very comfortable, and if it remains like this, I will be able to enjoy week–end trips [to MDP].

Last night at about 1 a.m., the cat came into our dining room and broke a saucer with the cheese in it. It ate up all the cheese (!)

"Thank God Mummy is O.K. and I do hope she will improve this time. She is only troubled with her eyes. [She underwent unsuccessfully cataract surgery years later because, it was believed, after surgery she cried a lot, anxious for her son Elias' hernia operation, in those days a procedure that put patients at great risk.]

"Obadiah's malis [=gardeners] are rather strict, and I was worrying for myrtle. [Obadiah Aaron Cohen, Uncle Charlie's father, who owned Rose Bank, which grew myrtle plants for Yahs, the Havdalah Berakhah for B'sameem. The Musleahs at the time had not begun planting myrtle trees in "Home."]

"If we don't get a place [in Madhupur after December 1932], we will come away. [Apparently, "Home" was not readily available as in later years.]

"If father comes [to Madhupur] on Sunday, please send my mail.

"Did Isaac wind the chiming clock [the grandmother clock that chimed like Big Ben every quarter hour] and the other one? [carryover from the Parsi Church house, that struck on the half hour. It had been Uncle Elias' job to wind the clocks.]

Shabbath Shalome

"How did Meyer read the Maftir? [Shabbath Vayyetsei, December 10, 1932, his birthday Shabbath, two months after his first Maftir on the second day of Sukkoth.]"

P.C. #2 Addressed to, M.E. Musleah, "Home," Madhupur, S.P. [=Santhal Pradesh, an area inhabited by natives called Santhals] E.I.Rly [=East India Railway]

"December 13, 1940 My dear parents and sisters and Ezekiel, Yesterday I received a telegram from Isaac [on a business visit to Western India] reading as follows:– 'Wishing Meyer Happy Birthday. Post [=mail] letters today before 3 [p.m.] Poona, Friday Surat, Sunday Baroda, all care respective post masters.' Therefore if you wish write now to Isaac, address his letters on Sunday and Monday, Care of Post Master, Baroda.

"Today the weather is much more damp than other days and I am sure we will have a shower. [There were no weather forecasts.]

"Song [=the Boy] [then temporarily not working with the family] came again when I was out, so he told Sim [Seemah, wife of Charles O. Cohen] that if we do not want him, he can get a job, as he does not want to be idle. He will be in Husrath [=something one wants and cannot get] for a job like here on a fancy salary, and then not only would he boss, but we would be afraid to check him [=to criticize him]. Sim said that Burra Mem [= the senior lady of the house, that is, Granny] will come [from Madhupur], he can see her. He knows he can only get on [=have it his way] with mother.

"There is no more camphor water here [=medicine for stomach pain]. Surely you can add ordinary water to the camphor.

"Ishmail [=the cook Rahim's son, substituted for his father in Calcutta when his father was in Madhupur] is very lazy, and leaves all the washing for Seemah's chokra [assistant Boy]. His mind is too concentrated on the mill job [=an industrial job on higher pay]. It seems he received a post card yesterday, as there is some dispute about the land [=in his native village]. The judge fixed a date and he [=Ishmail] comes to me [to say] that he wants to go to his country [=his native village]. Ramah scolded him and said he cannot go anywhere until mother returns. Tell Rahim about his son. [Report the son to his father]

"Shabbath Shalome. I like Madhupur on Lahath nights [=Motsa–ei Shabbath] as no disturbances from visitors [=no visitors to intrude on one's privacy as in #11 Bowbazar St, Calcutta.] Elias"

Less than a year after that letter, Grandpa died. The family grew disenchanted with trips to Madhupur. In the 40's, they spent perhaps two winters there. Another Musleah generation had passed away, having preserved family traditions and handed them over to the next. For a few years, Margaret and I took our children to Madhupur every winter.

WORLD WAR II

In my Grandpa's lifetime, nothing in the community sparked changes or even modifications in the political and religious set–up. World War II was on, but hardly affected daily life India was largely spared the cataclysms experienced during the War by European and Far Eastern communities. Japanese occupation put an end to organized

Jewish life in Singapore and the Burmese cities of Mandalay and Rangoon, whose Jews were forced to move to Calcutta and Bombay. Calcutta did sustain spasms from Japanese air raids in December 1941, when huge craters in the dock area made for nervousness in varying degrees, including evacuations to Central India, six hundred miles away. Family Musleah stuck to its faith. We brought out a book, רְזִיאֵל הַמַּלְאָךְ — the Angel Raziel, exhibiting exertions of a Divine messenger in protecting the fortunes of humankind — placed it on the dining table, and crept under it during air raids. The Divine envoy's name is derived from the rabbinic phrase attributing to God כֹּל רָז לֹא אָנֵס לֵיהּ No secret is hidden from Him, and so flesh–and–blood destinies are safe in His hands. The faith and trust represented in displaying the Book paid off when a comparatively small bomb fell directly on a next door house whose residents were out that night, knocking out many of our windows.

British and American armed forces stationed in Calcutta could be seen in every quarter of the city. Special times of worship held in synagogue for Jewish servicemen required adjustments in local schedules. The Jewish Girls' School in the Jewish neighborhood was converted into a hostel for military personnel during the High Holydays. Once–a–week open–houses organized by Sir David and Lady Ezra and Mrs. Gala Gubbay were well attended by local Jewish residents. As we previously mentioned, the Zionist Organization was a beneficiary of some of these visitors.

Dark clouds ominously threatening the dissipation of the Jewish community were soon to become widely evident. Some soldiers married Calcutta girls whose families emigrated to the United States and Britain. As Western culture and refinements percolated into a largely faithful community, intermarriage increased. The first group of seven Halutzim, including my brother, Meyer, and sister, Ruby, and their new spouses, Rae and Elias, made Aliyah as the War came to an end. But then came real upheaval. India got its independence from Britain two years later, leading to economic fright in the Western–oriented Jewish community which set out for London, England. The establishment of the State of Israel caused even more radical eruption the following year, sending Israeli emissaries to recruit scores of young people on behalf of Youth Aliyah.

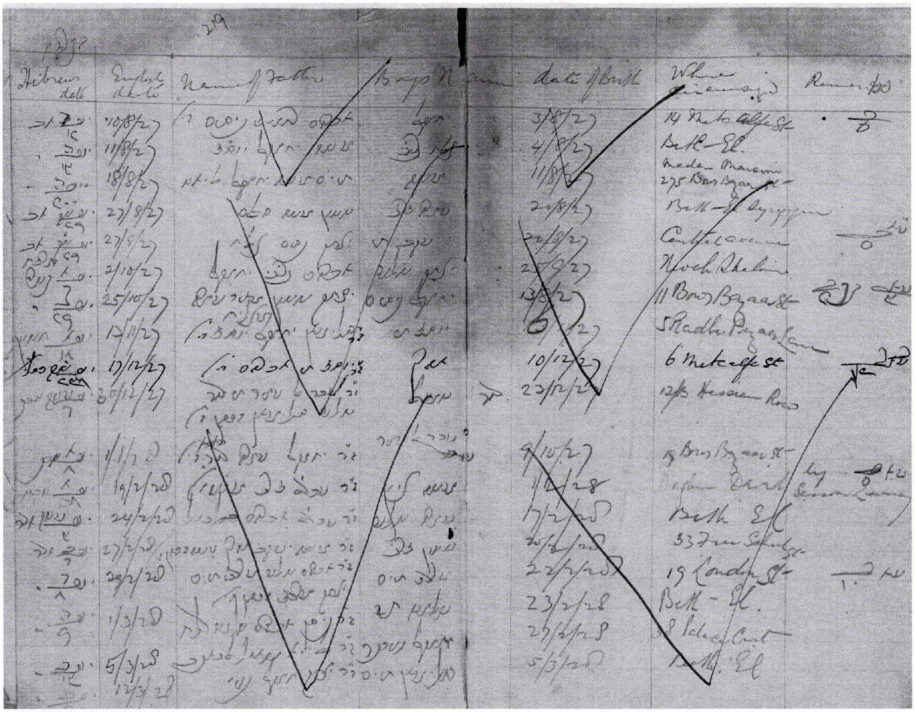


Figure 76. Rough Register of Mohel, Sassoon/Jacob Cohen.

Rough register of Sassoon/Jacob Cohen, Mohel. Berith Meela performed on Tuesday, 29th Tishri, 5688=25th October 1927. Place: 11 Bowbazar St. Name - Yehezkel Nissim/Yitshak Sasone/Meir Ezra Musleah. Date of birth: 13th August 1927 [=15th Ab 5687.] (Seventh from the top)



Figure 77. Where I Was Born.

Behind the partition, the room and bed where I was born.

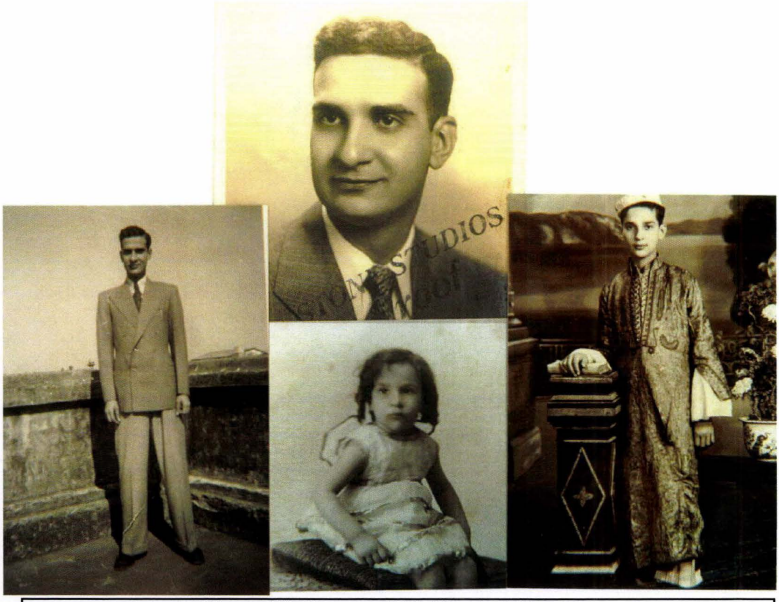


Figure 78. Stages of My Physical Growth.

(Bottom-l to r):

1944 on the 11 Bowbazar terrace.

1930 "camouflaged" as a girl.

1939 fancy-dressed in dagla worn originally by Dad and Uncle Elias on their Bar Mitsva

(Top): 1947 Ready for the Seminary



Figure 79. Reenacting a Childhood Pasttime.

The bamboo jhol bahs (cobweb cleaner), substituted for the sound of moving trains, a time piece and a railroad schedule.

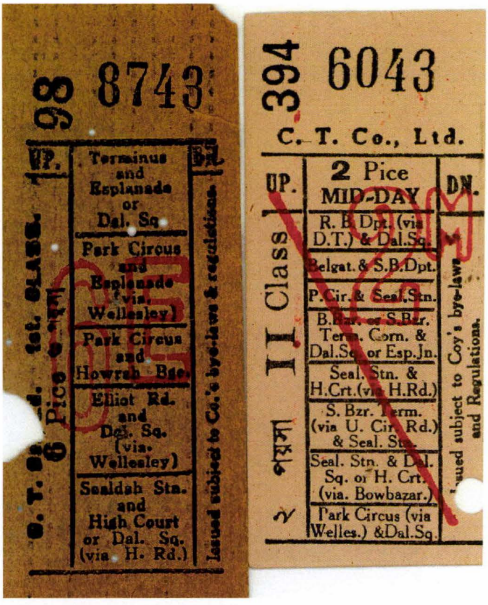


Figure 80. Calcutta Tram Tickets.

Calcutta tram (trolly) tickets, 1930's.

1st class -- 6 pice

2nd class -- 2 pice



Figure 81. Herzl Day with Rabbi David J. Seligson.

Herzl Day observed by Habonim at the Jewish Girls' School, 8 Pollock Street, Calcutta. Chaplain of U. S. Forces in the China-Burma-India sector, Rabbi David J. Seligson, addressing.

Seated (l to r) Ruby Musleah (Mordecai), Rachel Levi (Musleah), Meyer E. Musleah (behind the flag-pole).



Figure 82. Brick-Building Ceremony.

Habonim brick-building ceremony at Maghen David Synagogue's courtyard. (l to r) Mervyn Meyer, David Cohen, Josh Joshua, Ezekiel N. Musleah (Rosh K'vutza), Benji Judah, Moses Judah, Jenkins Meyer, Sass Ezekiel.



Figure 83. Officers.

(Right) Officers - Jenkins Meyer, Mervyn Meyer, Dick Zaccai, ENM, Shaul Moses, Aaron Ellis.



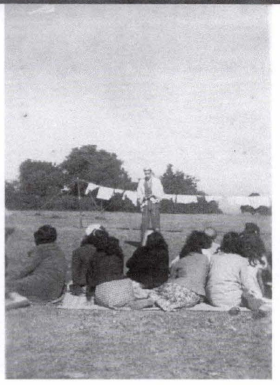


Figure 84. Madhupur — Vacation.

(Left, top, standing) Habonim Madhupur vacation (l to r) ENM, Regina Abraham, Yak Judah, Shaul Moses, (?), Elisha Sassoon, Sauly Saul, Mordi Moses, Mervyn Meyer, Aaron Ellis. (Seated, 4th from left,) Simha Noah, (kneeling) Felicia Jacob, (right) Esther Moses.

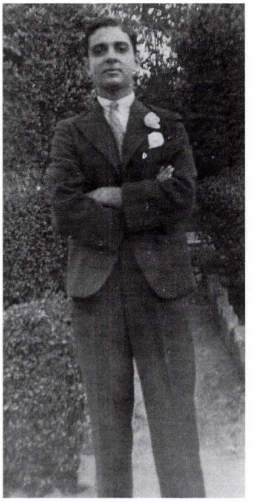


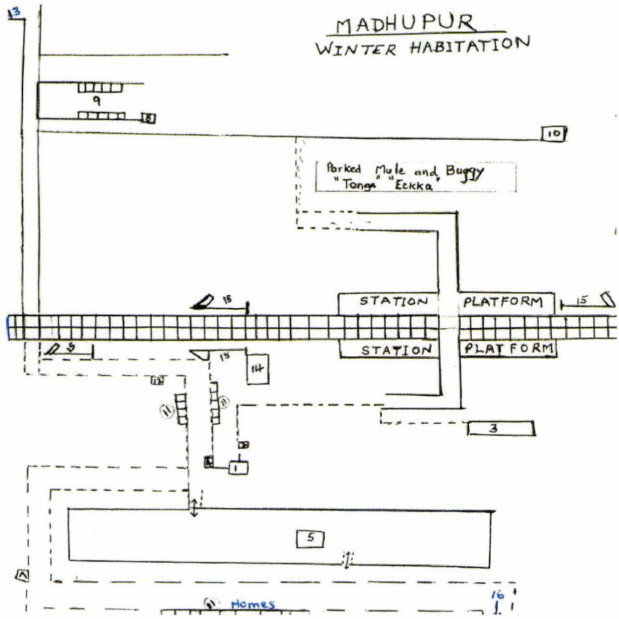
Figure 85. ENM Conducting Shabbath Services.

Figure 86. Habonim Zionist Leader.

Meyer E. Musleah - Zionist leader, Halutz

Figure 87. Winter Habitation Road Map.

1. "Home"- two-story red and white brick house
2. Maude Villa
3. Railway workers' recreation club.
4. Church
5. Dak Bungalow
6. Lilly Ville
7. Beatrice Jacob
8. Burdwan shop - Indian goodies
9. Mall - shops, clothing, hardware.
10. Bilatee Bungalow grandees' residence
11. Jews' homes
12. "Mud" toy shops
13. Haht--open-air village market
14. Goomtee- signal & track control center
15. Signals
16. Road leading to "Rose Bank"
17. "Sett Villa" "Last House 1916"
18. Hills



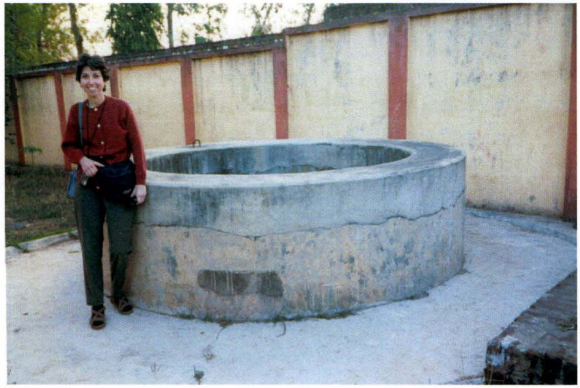


Figure 88. Rahel at Lilly Ville Well.

רָחֵל עֲמְדָה עַל הָעַיִן

Rahel at the "Lilly Ville" well.

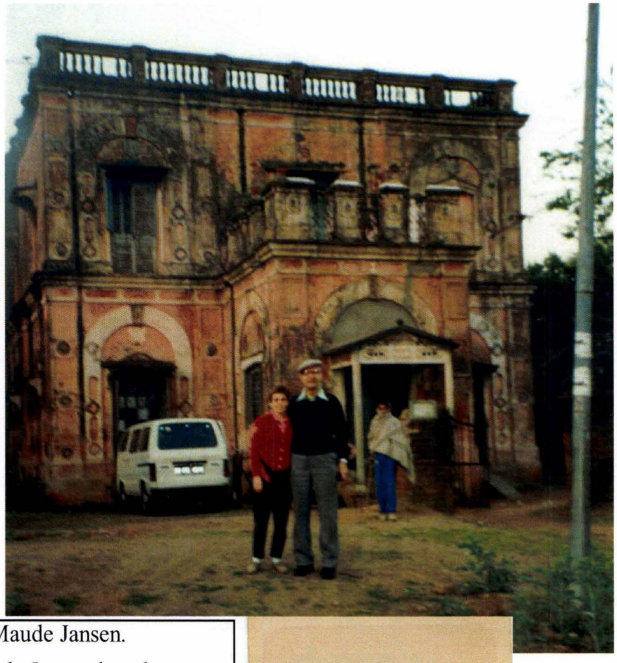


Figure 89. Madhupur "Home".

Picture taken, coincidentally, on the wedding anniversary of my parents, February 22, 1997.



Figure 90. Maude Jansen.

Madhupur church Maude Jansen loved so much.
Picture taken in the 1930's at the compound of Maude Villa with Aunt Rachel. Dak Bangalow in the background.



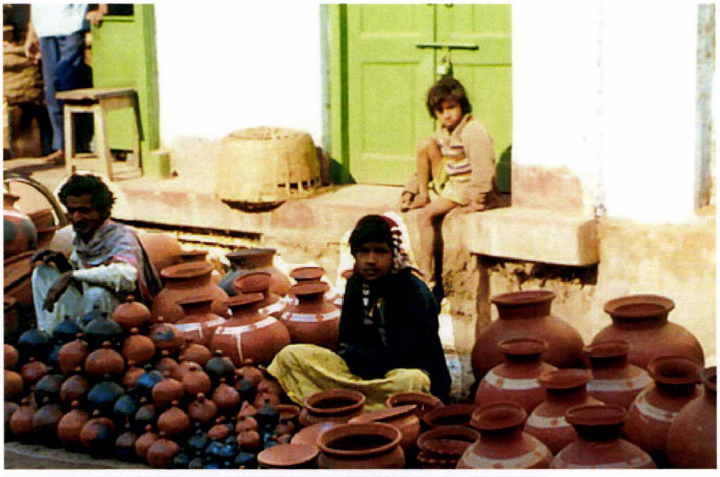


Figure 91."Mud" Toys Shop.

A stall in the MDP *haht* — market place — exhibiting earthen cooking and dining units painted red or black, together with sets of iron cutlery — a kiddies' delight.



Figure 92. Tonga — Pony and Buggy.

Tonga — pony and buggy — favorite transportation of MDP vacationers. Margaret and Rahel enjoying a ride.

Some events, like those of Madhupur vintage, make me wish that time was still, that it did not move on. Then we would look at our parents, and our parents at us, and wish that those days, so beautiful, so happy, so fixed in our minds, would be here to stay. Those were the days that thrilled beyond our capacity to reminisce over them. But things change rapidly both in our surroundings and in us. And all we can do is continue to cope.

Rahel tells the Madhupur story in her own inimitable way.

HOME

By Rahel Musleah

In the pearly morning light, the village of Madhupur is still sleeping. The sky, a gray wash before the sun comes up, holds a hint of the cold that forces us to wear sweaters despite the warmth the day will bring.

After 33 years, my parents and I have come back to visit this Indian hill station, once a popular vacation spot for the Jews of Calcutta because of its pure water and clear air. We left India in 1964, in search of a better life in the United States. Many of the Jews of Calcutta, who had thrived in India since the early 1800s, had left in the 1950s and 1960s, on the heels of Israel independence in 1948 and India's just the year before.

During the years we had been away, Madhupur remained enshrined in our memories as an idyllic place that embodied all that was simple and carefree. We have returned to reclaim those memories.

My father remembers that he spent almost every vacation here since the age of 12. His family would stroll every morning past pretty cottages and estates with cheerful names: Emerald Cottage; Maude Villa; Elias Lodge. He used to play in the park in front of the Dak Bungalow, the pure–white building that used to house the British government court and fulfilled the same purpose for the Indian government. My mother remembers running helter skelter, bucket in hand, to the cattle train that used to stop in the village, and return with fresh milk. I have my own memories: of tonga [horse–and–buggy] rides to the nearby ravines–the nearest we came to the beach; of buying clay toys at the open–air market, even of a pet goat I had adopted from among the stray animals in the village.

We have traveled six slow, bumpy hours by train from Calcutta to rediscover Madhupur. The trainmaster at the station says he has never seen American visitors, and in fact, we are the only non–Indians in sight.

Now, before the day busies itself with the clamor of village life, we walk the still–empty dirt streets in the dusky light. A woman passes by, barefoot, one arm lifted with a ballerina's grace to grasp the basket balanced on her head. Soon, a cart follows, pulled by two black, long–horned bullocks and laden with burlap bags piled up like the hump of a giant hunchback. They are at home in their village, while we are in search of home.

That is more than a symbolic statement. "Home" is actually the name of the house my father stayed in since his boyhood. In his shirt pocket, he has tucked away a tiny picture of his aunt in front of Home's well–kept splendor. He pulls it out to show it to me: it was a grand, red–brick building with spotless white trim. On each of four columns above the arched doorway, I can vaguely pick out four letters: H O M E.

We pass the Moon Hotel. My father doesn't recall its original name. Opposite it, he says, was Anchorage, a house said to be haunted, where no Jew would live. My mother and I stop to admire apple and papaya trees heavy with fruit.

"There it is," my father exclaims. As we round the corner, a mottled pink building with blackened arches comes into view. The boxy shape of the building is the same as in the small photograph, the same as it is in my father's memory. But its facade is no longer pristine. Dust and grime have settled on the house like an ugly mask, almost obscuring those four letters: H O M E. My father doesn't see the ugliness. His expression is rapt. His heart transforms what his eyes see.

Several members of the Muslim family who now live in the house peek curiously out of the doorway. A little boy clings to his mother. My father walks over to them and shows them the photograph, almost as proof that he hasn't made up a story called HOME, that his childhood had indeed existed. They chat in Hindustani, the local dialect, and one of the men shakes his head in disbelief, impressed that my father remembers so much, but not quite fathoming that we have come so far seeking a building. He doesn't grasp that Home means something much deeper than its name.

I reflect on the meaning of HOME, in capital letters, during the rest of our day in Madhupur. Metaphors for identity, they spark questions about where I belong.





Figure 93. Rahel's Daughters, Shira and Shoshana.

At Shira's Bat Mitzva, carrying the Sefer Torah of her great-great-great grand uncle, Isaac Sassoon Musleah

and

Shoshana - another generation enamored by the ever-attractive aloo-makalla.

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA
CHAPTER 7
ON THE WAY OUT

Change is a constant recurrence of life, sometimes quiet, sometimes painful, but we have always lived with change, and always we shall. We must find our courage and our confidence and our faith in all change that moves toward promised events destined by our Lord God. And so, on August 2, 1947, at age twenty, it was my turn to bravely seek change. I began by embarking the American cargo vessel, "Oachita Victory," to transport me on a five–week voyage to the United States. It was Shabbath. I wouldn't ride in a rickshaw. I wouldn't take public transportation. My faithful companion for five years, my bicycle, came to the rescue as the least offensive to the law. It would take me on the fateful trip to the harbor, would be wheeled home by the domestic, Song, like the traditional riderless horse on the passing of its presidential owner, and subsequently sold. I just hoped that the buyer would be decent enough to look after it. I was about to lose a good friend.

My father, uncle and aunts took rickshaws. I had already said a tearful farewell to my grandmother. With moistened eyes, now I bade good–bye to my aunts and uncle. Most difficult it was, of course, to part with my father, the last of his children to separate from him. I wished at that moment I didn't have to take the crucial step. It was שַׁבָּת וָאֶתְחַנַּן Earlier on, I had read the Ten Commandments at Bethel Synagogue — "Remember the Sabbath day," and "Honor your father …" — and here I was desecrating Shabbath for all the formalities of embarking, and was deserting my father. He had seen me through times of both great joy as well as disappointment, as new born, orphan and adolescent. I was most relieved when I told him, paraphrasing Deuteronomy 2:7, לֹא חִסַּרְתִּי דָּבָר "I have lacked nothing!" Brimming with tears, we hugged and kissed each other. And the prologue of the pace–setter was beginning to unfold.

Among Dad's papers, I found a precious note he scribbled, expressing his thoughts on my rabbinic mission. "In the same way as our father Abraham dedicated his son, Isaac, for the love of the Lord to the knife and to the flames at His holy command, so do I, humble Isaac, dedicate my son, Ezekiel Nissim, my beloved son of pure birth, to Torah which is Light and a Product of the Consuming Fire. אוֹר זָרוּעַ לַצַּדִּיק וּלְיִשְׁרֵי לֵב שִׂמְחָה 'Light is sown for the righteous, radiance for the upright.' [Explanation: Proverbs 6:23, כִּי נֵר מִצְוָה וְתוֹרָה אוֹר "For the Commandment is a Lamp, the Teaching is a Light." Deuteronomy 4:24 כִּי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵשׁ אוֹכְלָה הוּא "For the Lord your God is a Consuming Fire." Dad had these two biblical verses in mind and wished to indicate that Torah is enlightenment, whose Source is the Lord God. Its light is reserved for those who seek the path of Torah. He also made reference to my 'pure birth,' a fact he told me about on my return as rabbi — my parents made sure to observe the laws of Niddah when I was conceived.]

Dan Rather, the famed T.V. personality, once said: "If all difficulties were known at the outset of a long journey, most of us would not start out at all." I had not an inkling of what was in store on the tortuous pilgrimage, but the adventurer in me never had second thoughts.

The first few hours on board passed very slowly, drowsily. I lay down and wept myself to sleep; woke up and bethought the consequences of where I was and where I was headed. Already it seemed a long way from home and a very much longer way to go. Couldn't there be a shorter route, a less complex course, to attain my goal? Two weeks previously, we read Parashath Beshallah, and the whole idea of a shortened mode came to naught. וַיְהִי בְּשַׁלַּח פַּרְעֹה אֶת הָעָם וְלֹא נָחָם אֱלֹהִים דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים כִּי קָרוֹב הוּא "When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them

by way of the land of the Philistines, although it was nearer, for God said, 'The people may have a change of heart and return to Egypt.'"

Knowing simple geography it will seem strange that the triumphant Israelites spent so many long, trying years in the wilderness when at that time they could have reached their destination, the Promised Land, in eleven days![1] But the Torah teaches that they had first to experience some of life's travails, to learn to take the initiative, to study the goals that were set before them. Anything that is קָרוֹב , near at hand, easily attained, is not held with the same esteem as that which is gotten with much effort. The Israelites had to be patient. **There are no short cuts to far horizons.**

I began to feel better. Pioneering spirits must experience travails and wait patiently for them to pass. Only then can they expect to wax triumphant.

The extent of my Torah knowledge at that stage basically did not surpass the biblical text. At the Seminary, however, I added a rabbinic text to the lesson that made a deep initial impression:

שָׁלֹשׁ מַתָּנוֹת נָתַן הקב"ה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא נְתָנָם אֶלָּא עַל יְדֵי יִסּוּרִין. וְאֵלּוּ הֵן — תּוֹרָה. אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְעוֹלָם הַבָּא.

"The Holy One, praised be He, gave Israel three precious gifts, but only after constant effort and patient endeavors on the part of the Jewish people: Torah, the Land of Israel and the World To Come."

Torah, symbolizing the eternal ideals of a people and an individual, makes some minimum demands on life. Worthwhile goals are not fulfilled overnight. Those who suppose this, fail to differentiate between material and intangible things. We may turn out automobile and airplane motors with ever increasing speed, but we cannot build character faster than a person lives, faster than she gains experience. We can pour concrete across a racing river, but we cannot pour honesty, courage, devotion and self–reliance in any other way but the old way, perhaps the hardest way. These and other elements of human character don't come by the speed–up system. There are no short–cuts to far horizons, and those who think they are, are really on a detour.

The Land of Israel is one of those special gifts to the Jewish people acquired only by sweat and blood. The Psalmist's words "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning" [137:5] had been uppermost in the minds and hearts of Jews in ghettos, prison–cells, or on the way to gas–chambers. We kept uttering the slogan: 'I believe in the coming of the Messiah in the new era of עוֹלָם הַבָּא , belated though it be,' a world of peace and amity among nations and human beings, and even though there be struggle and counter–struggle, I strengthen my belief that a reborn world will come. Like the pioneering Israelites and modern Israelis, we are able to appreciate our achievements through the patient and vitalizing process of trial and error, re–trial and success.

My years at the Seminary and since have demonstrated that, having lived through tough and trying years of preparing for others to follow, success had to be on the way.

Ten residents of Calcutta set sail on the "Oachita Victory" that Saturday morning, of whom a good proportion, three, were Jews: Arthur Ezra, nick–named Bunny, a former editor of Calcutta's Jewish monthly, Shema, and Shalome Arakie, the rabbinical candidate of the Jewish

1. Deuteronomy 1:2

Association Of Calcutta, a 15–year–old, very immature, lad. I found Bunny to be a brilliant, level–headed intellectual, with whom I tangled on different subjects. I discussed Indian Philosophy with a Philosophy major from Calcutta University, who borrowed Part I of my expensive textbook on the subject by Radhakrishnan (who later became India's president), but the book was never returned to me.

The crew came to know that India was to gain its independence from Britain in two weeks, August 15, 1947, and was secretly, we ascertained later, preparing a party for the passengers. On the day, they threw a banquet, played the Indian National Anthem, and sang and danced with us. As mementos, each of us was sent pictures of that memorable day.

I spent part of the time on board writing a letter to be posted (mailed) on arrival in Port Said on Friday, 16th August 1947. "Oachita Victory

Red Sea approaching Suez

נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ עַמִּי Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people!

Dearest folks at home, Today makes two weeks since my departure, half the voyage nearly over. Though in parts it had been boring and monotonous, I am quite happy. We reached the Bay of Bengal on the 4th morning and experienced excellent weather till we rounded the coast of Ceylon last Saturday when the wind became a bit strong and the waves hissed up over the deck. The pitching and tossing of the ship gave me a slight headache, but that was all. So far I exult that I am free from sea–sickness and from storms. This morning we entered the Red Sea, which is very calm, and compared with the Indian Ocean, we feel as if we were travelling on land. We expect to arrive Suez on the nineteenth morning, and would have made it earlier, but for rough weather in the Indian Ocean, retarding our speed. We touch at Port Said for a few hours, then to Gibraltar in six days, and finally across the Atlantic in 8 to 10 days.

"Last Saturday we were almost caught in a storm. The report came out of the captain's office at 3 p.m. that we should prepare ourselves for very rough weather. I recited a little prayer, asked God to allay the impending storm, and as a material symbol of His Strong Hand and Outstretched Arm, I cast a bit of Sedarim [Shemura Matza] into the sea. Thankfully, the storm did not arise and the wind calmed down! The forecast is for good weather through the Mediterranean, but the Atlantic is reputably most unpredictable.

We have many facilities on board, comfortable beds and ward–robe almirahs called closets. From what I hear from the crew, America seems a very pleasant place. I pass my time reading and writing, playing deck games and cards. The Third Engineer is Jewish, but his wife is more observant than he is. I thought of inviting him and our local Jewish boys for Kudduse [Kiddush] on Friday evening before dinner, but my feelers were not well received. I understand that there is a lot of anti–Semitism in America, and the ship is not free from it. Nevertheless, I cover my head in the dining room and nobody has objected.

"I can imagine Aunty Hannah waiting to hear about what I eat, and she will be delighted to know that there is plenty to eat. I regret having brought so many provisions. At each meal, seven courses are served, three or four of which are vegetable. I am enclosing a

menu for your attention and adoption at home! The cheese I brought has remained quite fresh, supplemented by biscuits, butter and jam. I've made friends with the Head Cook and Assistant Steward, who grant me free access to the cold storage, full of fruits, vegetables — and pork! The cook sympathizes with my Kashruth story and supplies me with fruit–cocktails and milk–shakes made with evaporated milk — and I brought eight tins (cans) with me! In fact, I am eating more than I ate at home, as all the items I like most are readily available. Saturday is rather restricted for my public needs, so I delve into my own resources of Malfoof and Sumusucks in the morning, salmon and sardines in the afternoon, and biscuits, jam and butter in the evening. Delicious bread is plentiful; I sometimes eat a half a big loaf at a time. I am sure everyone is satisfied that I am alive and kickin'! [To get ahead of myself, when I arrived in the United States, looking at an almost empty box of canned provisions, the customs officer remarked: "Where did you think you were going, to a desert?"]

"Head of the clothes department, Aunty Rachel, please note! There is no laundry on board. Each of us has to do our own washing. I took soap supplied by the steward and got down to work with banyans [undershirts], shirts and socks. If you only knew what a good job I did, you would have relieved Bashir [the domestic)] of that chore! I had to pay a dollar, that is, three and a half rupees, to have three pants washed. I had someone take a picture of me in that pathetic stance in the laundry room for you to see and feel sorry for me.

"Dad, your cigarettes are coming in handy, at the same time doing some advertising for National Tobacco. I gave a tin each to the Assistant steward and the cook. I heard one of the passengers telling the crowd that he had smoked many kinds of cigarettes for twenty–five years, but never anything better than Carlton Special! I immediately pulled out a tin and gave it to him. He was very surprised and delighted. He offered me a cigarette but I refused it, saying that my father was the Sales Manager of that company and didn't smoke, but recognised the quality of tobacco by sniffing it. The passenger was amazed."

En passant, for about a decade from my mid–teens, I had a penchant for writing poetry, some of which has appeared above. That which was closest to my inmost thoughts and emotions I phrased in rhymed verse. On board ship, fanciful and passionate, I penned these lines:

Shining sapphire of eternal bliss!
Cherished, charmed, with your pampered kiss.
Look from your empyrian abode
Upon mortal man's amorous load.
His heart throbs with patient love, and leaves:
"Will you him forsake and to another cleave?"
She, intense, tender, ardent, speaks: "See,
What Fate destines that alone shall be.
To each is given our future to decide.
Shed your fears,
My dear,
And in my heart reside."

My next letter home was written at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 3080 Broadway, New York 27, N.Y. "5th September 1947.

"Dear people, whether a dream or a fact, I am in the United States. I have so many things to say that it's best to go in chronological order.

"At Port Said, we got off for a few hours. A small steamboat ferried us across to land. Most of the people here are Egyptians who speak Arabic, but not the dialect spoken in Calcutta. A few words seemed familiar. An entire section of town is barricaded off with Arabs, and we were advised not to enter there because we were Jews. The French girls are very beautiful. We arrived Port Said on the Egyptian Christmas day when everyone was adorned in her best. The air was one of gaiety and restaurants did a flourishing business. The widest roads are not broader than about twenty feet. Commodities are normally priced, but some things are quite cheap. I bought a Swiss watch for three dollars, about ten rupees, from a hawker whose type is the most plentiful sight in Port Said. They steal different articles and resell them at ridiculously low rates. The watch keeps very good time. I saw the statue of Ferdinand de Lesseps, who planned both the Suez and Panama canals. [I mailed home post cards of a bird's eye view of the Suez Canal and of de Lesseps' statue from Port Said.]

"Before Port Said, on the Mediterranean side of the Suez Canal, we passed a spot in the Canal believed to be where the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. [Modern scholars call it "The Sea of Reeds."] Called the Bitter Lake where water is not more than fifty fathoms deep and the breadth of the lake does not exceed five miles, it is quite reasonable that the crossing took place there because at low tide the waters are not very deep. I woke up early to see the sacred place at 5 a.m. and a cold shiver ran through my spine as I imagined Moses and his hordes crossing the Sea. We passed Kantara, the Egyptian railway station, connecting Egypt to Palestine. For the moment, I allowed my imagination to run deep and followed the railroad to Jerusalem, so close and yet so far, and with tears rolling down my cheeks pronounced with the Psalmist: 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem …'

"Gibraltar came on the horizon on the 25th morning. The British have a stronghold everywhere. The Rock is very well fortified and resolutely fights against time and age. There is a tradition that the monkeys, of which the Rock is full, are the mainstay of British foothold in Gibraltar, and the day the monkeys die out, it will be time for the British to quit. In 1943, when the Germans were winning one battle after another in Europe, the monkeys began diminishing fast. Considered an ill–omen, the British transhipped a fresh stock of them from Africa so as to prevent them dying out completely. Now the monkeys are multiplying fruitfully as is the strength of the British in Gibraltar.

"The same day, we set out to the Atlantic, where fortunately we experienced very good weather throughout and arrived the U.S. in a record eight days. I was met at the pier by one of Uncle Elias' business associates who arranged a van to transport the luggage to the railroad station from where I was on my way to New York at 5:30 p.m. My luggage and I met at the Seminary twenty–four hours later.

"Trains are something worth speaking about. Run on the criterion of efficiency, they leave Wilmington for New York every hour on the half–hour, maintain a speed of 65 miles per hour, and arrive in New York, a distance of about 200 miles in 21/2 hours. I enjoyed the trip, but because all windows were shut, I could not stick my head out like we would in India, and my face was not full of soot and grime after the journey! Most engines are run by electricity. India's Silver Arrow has a long way to go to compare to any of them.

"I arrived at New York's Pennsylvania station, [the other is the Grand Central)], at 8 p.m. Everyone was busy doing something or other — no one can afford to miss a second on idle matters. I followed suit, hurried to a cabstand, jumped into a taxi, rushed to the Seminary, and reached in fifteen minutes. I exhilarated at the galaxy of lights in a city bristling with life and drove past as if in a dream like a hero in a great adventurous and eventful story. The cab stopped at the Seminary, an imposing red–bricked tower in front of me, and as I walked up the few steps to the front gate of the Seminary, my face deepened in color as I read the emblem of the Seminary: וְהַסְּנֶה אֵינֶנּוּ אֻכָּל "the bush was not consumed".[2]

"From the ship I had sent a cable to the Seminary that I was arriving on the 3rd. [I had learned later that the administration was not expecting me till October when classes started, but my cable set things straight.] A Seminary deputation, headed by the House Chairman, was waiting to receive me. I was heartily welcomed with a mini–party until 9 p.m. when I was shown my room in the dormitory. In an atmosphere of solitude and quiet I settled for the night to rest my tired mind and body. Thoughts of home and the volume of work in front of me kept coming to mind, and in the midst of these thoughts I fell asleep.

"I awoke literally in a new world. Accustomed to old world activities, I had to find my way in the new. So I ventured one floor downstairs to the lounge and aimlessly stared out the window, and guess what caught my attention? A railway track which I came to know was a subway system turned elevated — running above the ground for a short space. Was this, I thought to myself, Destiny's way to make me feel at home? Things continued to look bright. It was a Friday at about noontime. From the elevator stepped out a middle–aged man – I came to know was Rabbi Simon Greenberg – whose kindly eyes, as it were, casting about for Mitzvoth, met a stranger wandering in the foyer, wondering how he was going to spend Shabbath in an unwonted place. He strode up to me and said: 'I assume you are the student from India. You will spend Shabbath with us in Philadelphia.' And that's where I got my first religious experience in America, הַכְנָסַת אוֹרְחִים providing hospitality. Indeed, it was his family that I adopted as my role model. In place of singing the אֵשֶׁת חַיִל, Mrs. Betty Greenberg led the very impressive procession of her family singing שָׁלוֹם עֲלֵיכֶם followed by her husband and sons Moshe and Daniel. During the meal, Moshe excelled in the recitation of the kings of Israel and Judah, making me utter a silent hope that my future family would resemble this one!

2. Exodus 3:2

"Dr. Greenberg, now the provost of the Rabbinical School, was senior rabbi of Har Zion synagogue in Philadelphia for twenty–two years, and joined the Seminary's administration only last year. The atmosphere in their home invites נְשָׁמָה יְתֵרָה, the double Shabbath spirit. Eight candles, two on the dining table and six on the side light their house. No electric lights over Shabbath. I asked to be explained why candles were allowed to burn on the dining table, a practice quite alien to me. The Rabbi pointed out that the Torah prohibits the touching of fire, in this case the burning candle, as well as the candlestick, but does not prevent placing it on the table. The table, however, can be touched. When the candle burns out, the stand must still not be touched. We talked about my background, education and work in the Calcutta community, and the Rabbi concluded that I was fit material to enter rabbinical school. That Shabbath, I ate meat after five weeks, and didn't I relish it!

"The next morning, I was called up to the Sefer and read "Gomel." A boy of fifteen read the Parasha. To my query whether he knew to read more Parashas came the response: 'He learned to read Prarashat Ki Tabo for his Bar Mitzva, and this was his first anniversary!' The melodies were so different that I stopped following the congregation and resorted to my own. The Ashkenazi pronunciation and tunes aggravate me.

"The same night I attended Selihoth at midnight. The custom here is to have Selihoth only once before Rosh Hashana. The Hazzan shook the synagogue with a lovely voice to the accompaniment of a very good choir. In all, a very impressive ceremony!

"Last Wednesday, I visited with Sipporah [nee Reuben] Tartakoff, about 130 miles from New York. I enjoyed the 3–1/2 hour drive by bus; concrete roads run for miles on the highway over hills and valleys. The lovely green grass growing all the way along the countryside I passed without a spot of barrenness, contrasted with that in India. Their resort home reminded me of Madhupur, equally exclusive, equally healthful. I slept over two nights — they were very hospitable. They asked me to come over whenever I felt like it.

"Yesterday, I attended Dr. de Sola Pool's synagogue, Shearith Israel in New York, founded in 1654. He is an elderly man, with Shekhinah on his face. He sat on the pulpit wearing a rabbinic gown and top–hat, making his presence felt even more strongly. When he passes, sections of the congregation stand in reverence. The only difference in pronunciation is the Ayin, rendered nga–yin, and the melodies are different except that of the Parasha. He recognized me as from India, and called me to the Sefer [gave me an Aliyah]. I intend spending Rosh Hashana here, about an hour's walk from the Seminary. My evening meals for Rosh Hashana are taken care of — 1st night with Dr. Louis Ginzburg, the great Talmud professor at the Seminary, and the 2nd, with Rabbi Louis Gerstein, Dr. Pool's associate rabbi.

"The question of Aunty Ramah fasting on Kippur — Dr Greenberg thinks that she should not attempt to fast, because, in her case, though there is no immediate life–threatening danger, the affliction she gives her soul surpasses that which is demanded by the Torah."

That same day, I addressed a self–explanatory letter to my grandmother.

"My darling Granny,

This special letter is particularly intended to express my sincere and devoted thanks to you and your children for all the kindness shown me during these past years. To think of repaying you would be as futile as trying to reach the moon, but I trust that the expression of my gratitude would serve as a mere indication of how much I am indebted to you. I had always felt that you had my good permanently in your warm heart. Indeed, it is through the mercy of God and your diligence that I am alive today. Pleasant thoughts of your devotion to me overwhelm me, and the scene of your relating to me the difficulties that were encountered in bringing me up constantly lurks in my mind.

"You may be surprised why I did not address such a letter to my father. You will understand when I tell you that all such attempts had been foiled by the fact that it was beyond my power to do so. I just could not find words to express my feelings to him. Any measure of his favours to me would be seriously limiting his goodness. I can only hope and pray that the Almighty will spare him for us in health and prosperity all the days of his long life.

"I had unfortunately lost my mother at the early age of ten. To bridge the gap that was caused by her death, you and your children worked very hard. To each one of you individually I send immeasurable and heartfelt thanks. Still there were times when I had not acted as I should have had. These acts of misconduct, though conscious, were not meant to abuse your goodness, but psychologically a rebellion against my fate to which I found it extremely difficult to adapt myself. I beg your pardon for any such incident that may have occurred.

"I have dedicated my life to the study of the Torah and the service of God. In doing so, I feel proud that I am following in the traditions of the Musleah family and its חֲכָמִים, of blessed memory. It is mainly because of my family heritage and the inspiration that I gained therefrom that I am enabled to embark on a vocation such as I have chosen. Truly, the footsteps of our ancestors have been exemplary and worthy of pursuit.

May I have your goodwill and blessings for success in life and your fervent prayers to God to guide me through the paths of righteousness and holiness all the days of my life. May He in His gracious mercy keep you and preserve you from all harm, and may your old age increase with health, happiness and pleasantness.

Your very loving and affectionate grandson,

Ezekiel Nissim"

Dad in reply:

"Your letter to Granny which arrived on the first day of Rosh Hashanah moved all of us very appreciably, and tears of joy trickled down our eyes at your gratefulness so appropriately expressed. Granny was overwhelmed at your being such a Nimak Halal [Hindi, grateful person]. She was determined to write the letter in reply herself without anyone's help, but could hardly read what she had written [She suffered from inoperable cataract.] If a fraction of her hourly blessings reach you, you are assured

success for life. You are constantly in our minds and conversation, whether at the table, or in the synagogue or on the road. All the time it's 'Ezekiel' and 'Ezekiel.' The little letter–box attached to our door is being opened half a dozen times a day by each one of us in anticipation of 'a letter from Ezekiel.' Post (mail) men on BowBazaar duty are 'way laid' to produce #11 letters. 'Nai Hai' [='there isn't'] turns enthusiasm into disappointment. I realise that your correspondence must be shared by Calcutta, Delhi and Palestine and others who await a line from dear Ezekiel, but I would ask that you give Calcutta the preference. You are just a single individual who has carried our hearts away with him; you must be thinking of a legion — father, Granny, aunts, uncles, cousins, and a brother and sister just half way between, and whom you could not meet, though the railway lines that led to them were within your gaze. Meyer wrote me a very nice letter consoling me for being left all alone, with my children scattered and separated from me. But we recite a fitting daily prayer: מְקַבֵּץ נִדְחֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל [praising God Who gathers our dispersed]. This prayer we hope will apply to our family when at some future date we shall all be sitting around a common table and narrating our experiences of the great hardships each one underwent in his or her own way when living in isolation."



Figure 94. Arriving at the Seminary.

Arriving at the Seminary. Overawed by the slogan: "The Bush was not consumed."

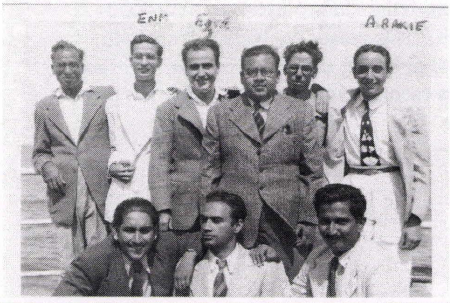


Figure 95. "Oachita Victory" to America.

Of the 9 passengers on the cargo ship "Oachita Victory," 3 were Jews: ENM, Bunny Ezra, and Shalome Arakie. Passengers being presented with cake in honor of Indian Independence August 15, 1947.

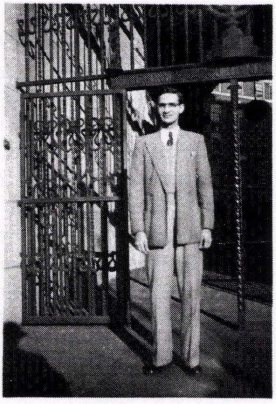




Figure 96. New York's Record Snowfall, 1947.

No, not cotton flakes for mattresses, but co-o-ld snow -- a record fall (my first), 1947.



JUNE 9, 1948

TRUMAN RECEIVES HOLY SCROLL

President Truman receiving the Holy Scroll from Dr Weizmann when the President of the new State of Israel paid a formal visit to the White House. The Scroll is encased in blue velvet and bears a Star of David.

Figure 97. President Harry S. Truman Receiving Sefer Torah.

President Harry S. Truman receiving a Sefer Torah from Dr. Chaim Weizmann, the President of the new state of Israel, who paid a formal visit to the White House. The Sefer Torah belonged to Seminary president, Dr Louis Finkelstein. I read in it at the Seminary, 1947-48.

CHAPTER 8

THE WAY HOME — BY LETTER

YEAR ONE

The story is told of a youngster who had gone with an older companion to the prominence of a high hill that overlooked the valley of his home. The long effort upward had tired the boy, and he thought longingly of the comfort and security of home, which now seemed so far away. He turned to his companion and said: "How do we get home?" Came the answer: "Just down this trail, and along that road, and up that street, and there we are home." Somewhat assured but still with the reality of distance facing him, the boy replied: "You can talk your way home fast, but it takes a long time to get there." In our dreams and in conversation, we can bridge over many obstacles, ignoring great distances; we can 'see' where home is, but the eye travels faster than the feet, and the wish is far ahead of the performance that would take us there. The only thing we can do is to move as surely and as safely as we can. That we go quickly is not as important as performing safely and surely, even spectacularly, from day to day and from month to month, knowing that all is well at home.

The long way from home offered me a challenge to rise above circumstances in which I found myself, and the way out was to move surely and safely and report home each significant movement toward realizing my highest possibilities — by letter. And so began a correspondence that bridged over many obstacles, ignored great distances, and 'saw' with my mind's eye where home and family were. That letters went quickly was, at least for me, not as important as telling of my performing safely and surely, even spectacularly, from day to day, and from month to month, knowing that all was well at home.

From home I embraced a spate of epistles that kept faith with me and my siblings, telling of no sacrifice too great to be made on our behalf. Dad taught us one of the greatest lessons of life when we learned that fathers [and mothers] live not only for themselves but also for those who follow. These letters clearly demonstrate that Dad's greatest satisfaction came not only directly to him but also through his children.

Two weeks after his last letter, Sunday, 28th September 1947, with Sukkoth facing him, Dad wrote a pathetic letter, expressing a depression he never disclosed before or since:

> "Today makes 57 days since we have parted. To me it appears like 57 years, and that the "Oachita Victory," with you in her bosom, still carries you further and further away from me, making the gap between us wider and wider. This is counterbalanced by the happy feeling that you are moving in circles given only the very privileged. But at this moment, I feel down, as if I have lost control of my limited literary power, pausing every half a minute to complete a sentence. A thousand thoughts leap to mind. The happiest ones portray the family as a united whole, my children, looking cheerful, seated beside me at table, clad in their very best. Today each of us ponders the past with a lump in his/her throat. The separateness causing a sort of revolution within us at times overpowers our limited patience and tolerance, which, of course must be kept under control. My mind travels to sorry events that happened exactly three years ago when open discord made itself felt. *[The first Halutz group, with his son and daughter in it, began leaving their homes and moving into a Bayit, a common residence.]* While the Sukka was being decorated, evacuation proceeded apace, marking the beginning of great

trials from which I am lucky to have survived. *[One of the associated circumstances included a message Rabbi David Seligson delivered on that Simhath Torah, quoting Malachi 3:24, pleading for harmony among parents and children. Dad was so embarrassed, he told me, sitting by his side, that it was like being buried alive!]* Your separation is compensated by the thought of voluntary parting for the sake of Torah, which, therefore, does not upset the equilibrium to a great extent. It will still be very hard to spend Sukkoth without any of my children, so I have asked the Cohens and Morrises [sisters Diana and Mozelle and their children] to spend the entire Festival with us. I like the table to be as full as possible so that my mind will not be detracted by empty chairs and all that they convey. To you the family sends best wishes for a very happy "Hagh" (Festival).

Here there is a breakdown ..." [Dad became emotional.]

Here are some of the endearing openings to Dad's letters:

"My darling Ezekiel, My darling Kaleyja (heart) Eze, My darling Bacha (child) Eze, My dear darling Eze Boy."

I once pointed out that he could well be compared with Jewish historical figures who sacrificed much for their children. In reply he thought I had taken the comparison too far as he had not offered the ultimate. I replied:

"Sacrifice need not imply finality, as in the case of Isaac or Hannah's sons. You too dedicated as you did, you too parted with your dear ones, though we hope temporarily. Is it not enough of a sacrifice to do without your children when you need them most? People who strive high must dedicate, must give up some of the things with which they would be very well off. You have striven to no mean a position, for not too many give their children Torah education, or boast of them living in the Land of our Fathers."

A man of deep faith, he once apprised me of the fact that "Uncle Elias just lost a steady source of income, but made up from another source. יְשׁוּתַבַּח שְׁמוֹ מַקְדִּים רְפוּאָה לְמַכָּה 'The healing balm is prepared and kept in readiness before the injurious onslaught, God be praised.' Indeed, the "healing balm" was delivered only a few months later when Dad apprised me of it in June 1948:

"I hope this pleasing news will make you very happy, and encourage you to prosecute your studies with confidence and zeal. Our prayers to God are that our bread will come directly from His יָדְךָ הַפְּתוּחָה וְהָרְחָבָה שֶׁלֹּא נֵבוֹשׁ בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה וְלֹא נִכָּלֵם בָּעוֹלָם הַבָּא liberal and generous hands, so that we be not embarrassed in the means of our livelihood now and in the future. We want to echo the prayer of the יוֹנָה, dove, sent out by Noah, by now well–known to you: יְהִי רָצוֹן שֶׁיִּהְיוּ מְזוֹנוֹתַי מְרוֹרִין כַּזַּיִת בְּיָדוֹ שֶׁל הקב"ה(=הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא) וְלֹא מְתוּקִין כַּדְּבָשׁ בִּידֵי בָּשָׂר וָדָם 'may my sustenance be as bitter as the olive from the hands of God, rather than as sweet as honey from human hands.'

"The day you arrived in Port Said was the Muslim festival of Ramadan, celebrated after the 30–day fast. I wonder who rendered it the Arab Christmas. And your description of French girls is as if you were in wonderland. I think for a while you should go about with sun glasses until you get used to 'atmospheric conditions' in the new world!

> "The latest news from Palestine is that the British have decided to leave the mandate. I fear that the same inter–racial conditions in India *[Hindu–Muslim]*, will prevail in Palestine. This is exactly what the British and the Mufti of Jerusalem want — anti–Semitic sentiments leading to the massacre of Jews.

Now on to religio–political axes grinding on my account, that were to characterize relationships with those factions for years to come. Orthodox elements in England were disappointed that the Seminary was chosen for me rather than a yeshiva. On the day of my departure from India, Rabbi Solomon David Sassoon, then living in Letchworth, England, despatched this note to me:

> "I am taking the liberty of writing to you as one who read an article by you on the subject of our holy Sabbath in the Shema which appears in Calcutta, with much admiration for the warmth of feeling which that article displayed. I recently heard that you were going to the Seminary, New York. I was not sure whether you could appreciate the exact spirit prevailing at the Seminary when you were in Calcutta and felt that on finding out you would prefer to be in the more traditional atmosphere of Yeshiba College, New York, where a good grounding could be obtained in our traditional studies without any addition of modern theories which are daily becoming obsolete as new archeological discoveries are made.
>
> With this possibility in mind, I have written to Ms. Bendheim who is intimately connected with Yeshiba College and asked her to get in contact with you, as I feel there is a better opportunity at the latter institution of strengthening and extending holy traditions basing its teaching as it does on unadulterated sources of our learning.
>
> Hoping you will not take my intentions amiss but will kindly judge me charitably; I remain with kindest regards and every good wish for your progress and success
>
> Yours sincerely,
>
> S. D. Sassoon
>
> P.S. I feel sure you will choose the traditional centre as it is our tradition you have at heart, not the spirit which underestimates the eternal value of same."

In a response dated September 21, 1947, I wrote:

> "Dear Rabbi Sassoon, Not without being deeply touched did I react to the intimate tone of your letter. For one who does not know me personally, you have indeed shown a deep sense of friendship and brotherly feeling in your advice, which I appreciate and respect profoundly.
>
> "Notwithstanding the possibility of my having implemented your recommendations to enter the Yeshiba before I came to this country, arrangements with the Seminary have now reached too advanced a stage to enable me to make a change. I must bring to your notice that I was not directly responsible for the choice of institution. Preliminary negotiations had been conducted by Dr. David de Sola Pool and Rabbi David J. Seligson, who met me in India in his capacity as chaplain of the American Armed Forces. Nevertheless, I am happy in the atmosphere of the Seminary.

My first impressions of the Seminary point to the overwhelming scope for free thought, irrespective of biased affiliations to any particular religious movement. Simultaneously, one enjoys the leadership and guide of a sincerely orthodox faculty, which is a constant source of inspiration. I do not doubt that the same breadth of perspective would be available at the Yeshiba, tinged perhaps with the flavour of a more intense training in our observances. Fortunately, such a training had been afforded me by my home environment which I have the honour to say is blessed with the unusual richness of Jewish ritual and tradition. I may assure you that no attempt is here made to influence the ideas of individual students in the acceptance of one pattern of thought in preference to others.

"I thank you for the personal indulgence with which you put yourself out to aid me get the fullest benefit of my rabbinical training and trust you have understood the stand I have taken in the light of prevailing circumstances.

Yours sincerely,

Ezekiel N. Musleah"

I did get a letter from Ms. Bendheim letting me know that she was going on a visit to Europe and Palestine and that her son would get in touch with me. When he did, I gave him the gist of my message to Rabbi Sassoon. It is fair to add a subsequent communication from Rabbi Sassoon dated 19th May, 1948, clarifying one of my comments:

"... I would not say that the main difference at a Yeshiba is that its method is 'tinged with the flavour of a more intense training in our observances.' While a more intense application to our observances may well ensue *from* the curriculum, there is the difference in the curriculum itself, which is not negligible even from the point of view of scholarship. A course of a few years at a Yeshiba is devoted entirely to the Talmud and while it may superficially be thought a restriction of perspective, which at first it may very well be, nevertheless it produces that patient and deep and appreciative approach to our traditional writings which becomes a real shield against the numberless pitfalls which beset the less trained scholar when he begins to venture upon the seas of 'wider perspective.'

"You will therefore be on your guard, determined that an attractive 'wider perspective' in your studies will not withhold you from attaining a really profound knowledge of the Talmud. I am convinced that such knowledge is an absolutely indispensable foundation for any deep and true understanding of Jewish history and literature — either early or late."

Dad too let me hear that the opinions I formulated at so early a stage did not appeal to him. "I note what you say, 'Orthodox rabbis don't give freedom of thought,' 'Fanatical craze of rigid observances.' While I appreciate your breadth of thought in this changing world, I would emphasise that it was that rigidity that kept the Jewish banner aloft. Please continue to write your views to me and let us have free and frank exchanges, for it is only by this means that we may see the other side and thus improve ourselves."

Dad continues:

> "I want to correct an impression you may have about Hathima *[Tikkoon]* on Rosh Hashanah. It is not only to ensure a Minyan for Tashlikh, because Tashlikh can be done without Kaddish. The purpose of Hathima is to obviate idle and frivolous talk on the Day of Judgment מִי לֹא יִירָא דִּין הַנּוֹרָא ['Who does not fear such awesome judgment?'] Since we know no more pious way to spend the day, we read Psalms and Adra *[a part of Zohar]*. If a rabbi could teach us the inner significance of Yome Haddin, it would be a better alternative to the way we spend three or four hours."

Dad's letter October 26, 1947:

> "In one of my photos taken outside the Sukka, I am told I am looking very natural, so place this on your desk and be proud of it. Whenever you look at it, let your imagination travel far and think you see my lips moving and your ears hearing my prayers: 'God bless you, my son, and keep you from all harm.'"

The main concern of the folks at home centered on my meals because I had a reputation for fussing over my food. So Dad, prompted by the family, made me promise not to skimp on my diet. "Eat whatever satisfies you of the best and most costly," he wrote. He advised what seemed most amusing to me. "You say the cafeteria meals are satisfactory to a degree, but if they could be improved upon by some clever manipulation, by all means attempt it. Try to persuade them [the cafeteria staff] to add not just salt and pepper but real spices like hilachi (cardamom), lowng [cloves], tees ka patta [bay leaves], chatpattay ingredients, dalchini [cinnamon], dhania zeera [coriander, cumin]!" I chuckled as I imagined myself making these suggestions to the kitchen staff!

On the subject of my preparation for the active Calcutta rabbinate, the Seminary did give me additional courses in the Laws of Mourning and very detailed erudition and skill in the Laws of Gittin (Divorce) under the guidance of the meticulous Seminary Fellow, Prof. Abraham Schreiber z"l. This training enabled me to rectify many defects and flaws in the method of granting divorces in Calcutta. In fact at one stage, the Sephardi Chief Rabbinate in London demanded that I show a copy of the divorce procedure I used, which I did, but to which there was no comment from London, meaning that Hakham Gaon judged it to be satisfactory! Added to my credentials, the famed Halakhist, Rabbi Isaac Klein used me as rabbi at the husband's end of a Get in Calcutta, for delivery to the wife in the United States. The Get went through with Rabbi Klein's commendation! And as will be pointed out after my active rabbinate in the States, the courses in Gittin made me eligible to practise as Mesadder Gittin (processor of religious divorces) and Sofer (Scribe) for over two decades.

An interesting, almost comical, side story in connection with a parallel Jewish legal procedure — the Halitsa ceremony — I had performed in Calcutta. Sara Curlender lost her husband, Aaron, a month or two before I was ordained. They were childless. According to Jewish law, the brother–in–law must marry her to insure his brother's lineage, or divorce her in accordance with the Law of Halitsa.[1] Throughout history, priorities differed as to which option should be followed. Sara Curlender insisted on the Halitsa being performed. She asked me to draw up an intelligible procedure in accordance with the Law. Because of the controversy surrounding my

1. Deuteronomy 25:5-10

rabbinic credentials, she secretly sent the document I drew up via a trustworthy courier to be examined and judged by the Sephardi Chief Rabbi in London. Upon perusal, Rabbi Dr. Hakham Solomon Gaon made this statement: "This is such a worthy document drawn up by a legal master of old and used by generations of Calcutta residents. Now young Musleah is there and will spoil it!" On hearing the report of her messenger, Sara Curlender laughed in her sleeve and agreed to follow my alt–neu procedure!

Back to correspondence. Dad insisted on my continuing to the minutest detail all the practices I followed in his home. So when he discovered that I had left behind a book containing a prayer for Kapparoth on Kippur eve, he quickly air–mailed it –

> "... because you must not miss if possible a single Miswa or break away from any custom as Kapparoth that have a very great סוד [a hidden meaning] which you will gradually appreciate more as you hear from your teachers. A person following his religion evokes respect from others, no matter what that other person believes in. When you do a Miswa, you will be praised as one who does Kiddush Hashem [declaring God's name holy] in openly upholding the Kingdom of God and the Jewish Religion. I note that you did not do Kapparah on Kippur eve, so we turned a rooster on your behalf after Kippur."

October 23, 1949. From Calcutta:

> "I wish I could convince you that Kapparoth has a wider significance than mere symbolism. If you consider the practice crude and torturesome, then what do you say to the Korbanoth in the Temple of God? Thousands of birds and animals were slaughtered at the altar, and each performance constituted a positive command. I wish you went deeper into the matter, so that the impression you gained in your younger days, divorced of religious essentials, would be changed, and the matter viewed from a higher and more spiritual angle. Our Sages have not ordained anything contrary to common sense, or inhuman. If anything strikes us as crude and unwholesome, we must make it a point to investigate. The Torah mentions עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבָשָׂר לֶאֱכֹל birds and flesh to eat as licences for eating birds, animals and fish. How can we eat these without killing them? We are questioning God's discretion ח"ו [God forbid], when we call the slaughter of animals and birds inhuman and crude."

I responded with a longer explanation of the difference between Kapparoth and Korbanoth [animal and bird sacrifices].

> "To compare Kapparoth with Korbanoth is wrong. First, Korbanoth are ordained by Biblical law; Kapparoth are not. Second, taking for granted that the Temple sacrifices are valid even today, they are not only forms of atonement, but also covered thanksgiving, and other aspects of Divine worship. It was a medium of worship. Today, however, sacrifices of animals as was wrought in the Temple has become outdated, and few think of reinstituting the sacrificial system of ancient Israel. To verify my arguments, look up Hertz' commentary on Leviticus, page 562, last paragraph. Even the rabbis who look forward to the restoration of the Temple made a deliberate stand that when the standard of human morality will be sufficiently high, sacrifices will no longer be necessary. In my opinion, to go one step ahead toward establishing the kingdom of God on earth, we would do well to abandon sacrificial offerings. The form of prayer as used today is a

higher moral level than sacrifices. Such a stage has been achieved in the words of the Prophet Hoshea: וְנְשַׁלְּמָה פָרִים שְׂפָתֵינוּ Instead of bulls we will pay (the offering of) our lips (14:3). Killing birds and animals for food is sanctioned, on second thought, in the Torah. Perhaps something may in future be invented that would provide the human body with whatever protein or other energizing elements contained in meat. The distinction between 'pure' and 'impure' in the Bible contains a very necessary principle in Judaism — כִּי עַם קָדוֹשׁ אַתָּה לַה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ "Because you are a holy people to the Lord your God"— Kashruth keeps us apart as a holy people. Kashruth, which sanctions the killing of certain animals for food, has nothing to do with either sacrifices, a biblically–sanctioned worship form no longer in vogue, or with Kapparoth, discredited by modern scruples."

Dr. Max Arzt, one of my teachers took a fancy to my last name, meaning the successful one, to the extent, in jest, of exchanging his for mine! I too joked that I would if he gave me his doctorate! Dad promptly wrote back:

"I was rather amused at Dr. Arzt envying your name. You should have told him how Musleahs of past generations influenced the future of their co–workers: How B.N. Elias prospered after he employed a Musleah [Dad himself], and expanded from a two–room office to one of the foremost and premier business houses in Calcutta. And the opposite — how after Grandpa was retired from E.D. Sassoon, it gradually diminished until it had to close its Calcutta offices."

In the same vein, our name came up during a class session at the Seminary. Dr. Robert Gordis, Professor of Bible, was teaching a course in Philosophies of Religion, when he happened to have mentioned that life expectancy in India was a mere 29! My fellow students immediately associating India with me, were bemused at the insinuation that I had but a few years to live. But Gordis, not having me in mind, scolded the students for their inexplicable conduct, until they pointed to me. The quick–witted professor rapidly remarked: "Don't worry about Musleah. He has God and his name on his side!"

On another occasion [October 26, 1947], Dad wrote:

"I can tell, you have made a good impression that you are of uncommon birth even before you could utter a word. The Bible says, הַכָּרַת פָּנִים עָנְתָה בָם (Isaiah 3:9), 'one's face is like a mirror and can be judged by one's appearance'. We Musleahs have that princely appearance. We always had it, even when we were poor. This is God's mercy on our family." [I have just one problem with this interpretation — the Isaiah context is seen in a **bad** light and is rendered: "Their partiality in judgment accuses them," as the Prophet rails against the sinners of Judah and Jerusalem. But it served Dad's purpose to extend his family's title to the credit he claimed.]

Dad was a sound believer in the pious significance of names and their perpetuation. He raised a controversy with my brother and sister on the names they gave to their oldest children, Jacob Michael and Farha Yael. He insisted that Jacob named for his grandmother's brother and Farha, for her grandmother, were superficial, and the parents had no intention of calling the children by their first given names. I supported the parents' right to juggle their children's names anyway they wished. Let's hear what Dad had to say November 23, 1949 [happened to coincide with Meyer's birthday]:

> "Regarding the battle of the names. I cannot agree with you that no harm is done by your brother and sister continuing in their zid [Arabic, stubbornness]. The names in question were intended clearly and specifically to represent those of your mother and Elias' [Mordecai] uncle. If those names were not identified with the dead, I would have cared two hoots. But here there is an element of danger I do not wish to openly express to Meyer and Ruby. I declared in veiled form that they were running a risk, to no avail. What can be Meyer's objection in calling his daughter by his mother's name? Surely your mother's name was not Yael! Is Farha such a displeasing word? Would Meyer like to be called Ezra [his middle name]? Could you ever dream of being called Nissim [my middle name]? The middle name is טָפֵל [of secondary importance] and the first name is עִקָּר [main]. Meyer was not compelled to name his daughter after his mother if he did not wish to call her so. I do hope no harm will befall either child. May God protect the two innocent kids and save them from all harm. As a compromise, I shall in future use both names whenever I have occasion to refer to them יַעֲקֹב מִיכָאֵל וּפַרְחָה יָעֵל חַיּוּ יִחְיוּ אָמֵן כֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן May Yaacob Michael and Farha Yael, may they live long and live well, Amen. And let this be God's will, Amen."

I sent a message of congratulations through Dad to Bunny Jacob [Bernard V. Jacob, one of Dad's bosses] on his marriage. In his letter, November 23, 1949, Dad responded:

> "Bunny by no means conducts himself as a boss. He is a real colleague and works with me very cordially and respectfully. If he wishes to speak to me, he never sends for me; he comes to my room. He is absolutely and basically the very essence of refinement. One would hardly expect that a graduate of Balliol College would extend so much courtesy, cooperation and equality to an individual like me. I shall certainly congratulate him on your behalf."

One of the first things I did in New York was to get in touch with my patron, Rabbi David J. Seligson. We met at his synagogue, 55th Street and Lexington Avenue, from where we entered a zoo! I said to myself: Lunch in a zoo? True enough, kosher foods were being served. We chatted for about an hour when I vented my spleen on how Calcutta's Jewish Association led by D.J. Cohen reneged on paying my passage from Calcutta to New York. I assured him that were I given the dignity due to a spiritual head, I would serve my native community. While he was pleased with my comment, he said with certitude that Sephardi rabbis were in such demand in this country that I would have no difficulty obtaining a very good job here upon ordination. I thanked him profusely for the spadework he had done on my behalf, for which he adduced two reasons: He wanted Calcutta to have a rabbi, and he was delighted that I was given the opportunity at the Seminary.

That first Kippur away from home I spent at Shearith Israel in New York where I was invited to take the fast at Dr. David de Sola Pool's home: Canned fish, a glass of orange juice, corn on the cob, and a cup of milk, in place of Rahim–cooked pillaw [Calcutta cook], aloo–makalla, khatta and harri–kabab. The break fast was a better meal, but I would have preferred Nahoum–made nam–namath *[goodies]*.

Dad would occasionally ask a Halakhic question on which he expected an authoritative answer. To understand this first one, one must know the set–up at the Calcutta cemetery. From the inception in the early nineteenth century, Kohens, the founders of the community, were buried separately from the rest of the people. The question: What if the wife of a Kohen happened to be the daughter of an Israel? Should she be buried alongside her husband or with the rest of the population? The earliest practise was to bury her with the others. Gradually, a more humanitarian view took hold, and she occupied a place with the Kohens. Dad asked if there was a halakhic basis for the current practise.

I posed the question to Dr. David de Sola Pool who was quite amazed at the early local custom. No parallel existed in the Western world, where no discrimination was practised in Jewish burials. The early division in Calcutta owed its existence to the almost singular migration there from the Middle East of Kohens who wished to maintain their exclusiveness even in death. But better judgment later prevailed, and rightly so, opined Dr. Pool, in the burials of the wife of Sassoon J. Cohen and Dinah Ellis, both daughters of Israel, and now with the impending death of I.J. Cohen's wife. In Biblical days, if the daughter of an Israelite married a Kohen, she became eligible to partake of the sacrificial meal set aside for her Kohen husband. So those who were one in life should not be separated in death. However, when I.J. Cohen was given the option, he chose to have his wife buried with the Israels, one grave away from her uncle, E.J. Moses.

I missed visiting my mother's grave on her yartseits and all the Kaddishim in daily services according to the Baghdad custom. I did read Parashat Va–era or Hayyei Sarah and their respective Haftaroth both before and after I picked up the Ashkenazi chants. In the 1947 observance, I wrote home: "On Mum's anniversary, I conducted prayers from the Ashkenazi Siddur both in Shahrith and Minha. After Kabbalath Shabbath, Dr Louis Finkelstein, President of the Seminary, who became aware of Mum's Yartseit, told me to break my fast immediately and not wait for the meal to be served. [He was saying Kaddish for his father who died the previous December.]" Dad made amends for his children's absence by being called Maftir on Shabbath Va–Aera, chanting the Haftara, and visiting her grave. He lit an oil wick and read portions from Beth Menuha, a manual for mourners and those observing yartseits.

Dad's question, November 12, 1947: "How is an electric shaver considered Kasher? How does it override a fundamental injunction of the Torah: וְלֹא תַשְׁחִית אֶת פְּאַת זְקָנֶךָ 'Do not destroy the side–growth of your beard (Leviticus 19:27).'" My answer (December 1, 1947) "The Halakha prohibits removal of the beard with a razor מוֹרָה. Anything but sharp steel may be applied to the beard, and so an electric shaver may be considered a kasher instrument for beard removal."

Dad would not miss an opportunity to perk up my sagging spirits should I have mentioned how hard I had to study. October 13, 1947:

> "The task before you may seem heavy and bewildering, but when you apply yourself to it, the work will appear simple, since you have approached your studies for no other motive but enlightenment — תּוֹרָה אוֹר — and the Light of Torah will be your guide.

> Also you are inspired by love of Torah, and love always conquers. דְּרָכֶיהָ דַרְכֵי נֹעַם וְכָל נְתִיבוֹתֶיהָ שָׁלוֹם 'Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace.' Your preliminary studies are on a par with those in Baghdad 60 years ago, according to our friend, Master Meir Barookh Meyer, who had to study Humash and Rashi simultaneously with Nebiyim Rishonim at age twelve! But you already know the latter because I remember you would sit down with a set of books on Shabbath afternoon and scan the verses thoroughly with the aid of an English translation and the dictionary."

Dad complained that my letters reached their destination on Shabbath, making him tense and uneasy all day until after Havdalah. [October 10, 1947]:

> "When your letters reach on Shabbath, I feel like launching out against anyone who opposes having the servants [domestics] open them. I just cannot control myself. So the last time, your letter was shown to me after Habdalah. They [the family] did the right thing because, in order to rise to loftier heights of this sacred day, it is forbidden to worry or fret or be anxious. For generations, our practice has been to spend the day in prayer, singing Zemiroth, and reading from the Bible. I know that Grandpa would never have a letter opened on Shabbath or Festivals. So that's what we will do in future. Your letters will be concealed from me till after Habdalah."

My next letter fulfilled the family's pious determination not to desecrate Shabbath. November 12, 1947:

> "The postman [mailman] delivered your letter of 31st October fifteen minutes before the conclusion of Shabbath, just before Arbith time. For fully fifteen minutes, we passed the time by weighing the letter in our hands, guessing its contents, admiring the handwriting on the cover, speculating whether or not snaps [photos] were included, etc. Arbith was read exactly to schedule and Habdalah was done in great haste. I then slipped into my room to have a quiet read, or so I thought. One after another the inquisitive aunts kept intruding with questions: 'Have you finished the first page? Is he alright? How long you take to read! For an hour no one drank the Mosa–ei Shabbath tea or chanted Pizmonim, [two urgent priorities those nights] until each individual read your letter to his and her satisfaction. This then is a description of the right royal welcome your letters receive."

In response to my offering Dad consolation for parting with his children, he offered advice on my conduct as rabbi:

> "Your duty will be not only to teach but to lead by example. A good and pious son is not only the pride of his father but also the joy of his mother, and in years to come it will be said of you אַשְׁרֵי יוֹלַדְתֶּךָ 'happy is the one who bore you.' If between us we can leave behind a treasure, an invaluable jewel, one who has learned Torah, אַשְׁרֵי אָדָם מָצָא חָכְמָה...כִּי טוֹב סַחְרָהּ מִסְּחַר-כֶּסֶף...יְקָרָה הִיא מִפְּנִינִים 'happy is the man who finds wisdom … her value in trade is better than silver … she is more precious than rubies,'2 then we shall be thankful that we have served a useful purpose in this world and our memories will be alive through you even though our remains will have

2. Proverbs 3:13-15

crumbled to dust. ... כִּי אַתָּה תַּנְחִיל אֶת הָעָם הַזֶּה 'for you shall apportion [the Torah] to this people.'[3] May the Lord יְזַכֶּה אוֹתְךָ [have you merit] fulfillment of your studies in the sphere your forefathers devoted their lives, and may you do it as completely and as perfectly as God, through His mercy, will permit you."

In similar vein, Dad expressed greatest joy when he received my first set of photos.

"If ever I derived pleasure in sending you to New York it is to look at you at a מָקוֹם תּוֹרָה, for it is the Torah that is giving you the strength and stamina עֵץ חַיִּים הִיא לַמַּחֲזִיקִים בָּהּ 'She is a tree to those who grasp her.'[4] You will remember the story of Daniel and his colleagues when they were being served with vegetables and herbs and their caretaker was afraid that it would cost him his life when the king discovered that they looked emaciated on account of their not partaking of the princely, fleshy meals. When they were presented to the king, they seemed to him as the best–looking of all his subjects. Why? Because they had thrived on the Torah which itself is life.[5] I bless you from the bottom of my heart. Every vein in my body calls out for your success. I am thrilled to think that a תַּלְמִיד חָכָם is in the making, born of my seed. To this I must add אַשְׁרֵי יוֹלַדְתֶּךָ happy is she who gave birth to you, I cannot ignore my partner who was instrumental in bringing you into this world for the benefit of humanity. Another few days will make it half a year since our parting. The other nine halves will be soon covered. May God spare me to receive you in my arms once again — a full–fledged rabbi."

Dad's knowledge not only of Bible but also of rabbinics came evident in response to my informing him of my introduction to the Talmud with the third chapter of Bava Kamma. November 12, 1947:

"I remember being told in my young days that the three Babas are the most difficult series of the Mishna and Gemara. They come under the heading of Seder Nezikim or Torts. The three Babas are: Kamma, Metzia and Bathra — First Gate, Middle Gate, and Last Gate. I think what you are now studying deals with injuries perpetrated on persons intentionally or otherwise, and their compensations. I always thought I could read [and understand] any Mishna and Gemara without help if only I could be accommodated with an Aramaic–English dictionary. If you come across such a book, I would be only too pleased to include it in my library. [I promptly sent Dad a copy of Jastrow's Dictionary. He would use it with delight.]

From New York. December 1, 1947:

"The news we are all exultant about is the creation of a Jewish State in our day. This has been the cry and prayer of Jews from after the destruction of the Temple more than 1800 years ago. This thought overwhelms me and makes this writing a most historic one. That I am here in New York City where the United Nations has called for the birth of a Jewish commonwealth treads on enchanting ground. For the past week very little work is being done here. On Friday last, I accompanied several students and

3. Joshua 1:6
4. Proverbs 3:18
5. Daniel 1:6ff

teachers to Flushing Meadows to witness the historic decision being made. The sights were moving. Hundreds of Jews, old and young, prayed and recited Tehhillim. Jews from all over the world were united in purpose. At that moment, people expected the Messiah. The meeting gave over after sunset, so Shabbath had set in. The vote did not come until the next day. But we revelers could not be controlled. We danced and sang our way back to our residences, for Seminarians a distance of five miles. Saturday brought crowds back to the U.N. meeting, and when the decision was announced in favour of partition and the consequent creation of the state, hilarity and exhilaration broke loose. Members of the Jewish Agency present hugged and danced with ordinary people. Many shed tears of joy, running wild looking for others to frolic with. A mass meeting in Madison Square Gardens, a huge hall, was addressed by Haim Weizmann and Moshe Shertok, tipped as the new State's president and its ambassador to the United States.

"The Seminary faculty convened a special meeting of two hundred boys and girls to celebrate. Minha was followed by reciting Psalm 126, Jeremiah chapter 31, Isaiah chapter 63. One of the professors gave an address in Hebrew, nothing new, but in those circumstances spelling the rebirth of the language of the new state, brought down tears not only to his eyes but those of the entire audience

"In the midst of unmitigated rejoicing, let us not forget that statements and decisions don't, practically speaking, create a state. With much more blood–shed and tears will government be established; with many more sacrifices will Jewish life be consolidated in the land of Israel. May we too fulfil our dreams by visiting, if not dwelling in, the land of our Fathers!"

December 1, 1947:

"Last Shabbath I was invited to the home of Dr. Louis Finkelstein, President of the Seminary, a distinct honor. He is a divorcee and his two children live with him. Out of courtesy he offered me to recite Kaddoos [Kiddush] but I politely declined and told him: בַּעַל הַבַּיִת מְקַדֵּשׁ וְהָאוֹרֵחַ מְבָרֵךְ The master of the house makes קִדּוּשׁ and the guest makes בִּרְכַּת הַמָּזוֹן . He was impressed. After a delicious meal of chicken and vegetables during which he posed many questions about India, he asked me with a twinkle in his eye, to lead in the בִּרְכַּת הַמָּזוֹן to which he listened attentively, particularly to the בִּרְכַּת הָאוֹרֵחַ [the guest's blessing of the host].

The previous week I was invited by the registrar, Rabbi Bernard Mandelbaum, ordained three years ago and married to a graduate of the Teachers' Institute. They have a little son named Isaac Ezekiel!! How did they know the right order? As the child was sleeping, everything had to be done in a hush. I sang יְדִיד רַעְיוֹנַי enjoyed by both. Many have been pressing me to record Parasha and other Eastern melodies. That project must wait for a more opportune moment."

November 14, 1947. Dad's comment:

"It is a novel idea to record your voice reading Parasha and chanting Pizmonim. Did you use the ordinary tune for יְדִיד or Tara Tara Bomba Ya? [!]

"Yesterday I went to Neveh Shalome [synagogue] and read Rebiee of Parashath Mikkes. I was then asked to read Wayiggash. I did not commit myself, but have practiced more than half [the next day, Sunday]. If I can get ready by Friday, I will let them know that I am ready."

December 12, 1947. From New York.

"J.R. Jacob, Lily and Bunny invited me for lunch at a Kasher restaurant whose proprietor recognised Lily from Vienna where he had a restaurant by the same name and a long beard, but now he is clean–shaven. Everyone seems to be disappointed with Sir David Ezra's will. Bunny has been negotiating, it seems unsuccessfully, with rabbinical authorities in America and Britain for Calcutta, and had spoken with Rabbi Levy [originally of Rangoon, Burma and then of Los Angeles]. Bunny was not sure if a fund could be started for disbursements to the rabbi. Lily asked me about my plans upon ordination. I told her it was a long way off but I would put out a hand of help to the Calcutta community, and it was up to them to accept or reject it. Bunny realised the futility of discussing the matter at the time and gave his mother a choker.

"We are not permitted to bore holes in the wall so I had to hang my Hanukkah [Hanukkiah] by a string. Every one marvelled at its uniqueness. I missed the coloured paper with the Berakhoth. To compensate, I bought silver paper and set it up. At a social evening, we sang and danced and had lots of fun.

"For me, the joy of Hanukka was augmented by a record snow–fall. Everything outside was covered, as it were, by a white blanket. At first, as I looked out of the window, I didn't recognise what was happening, thinking someone had released cotton flakes from an upper floor! A fellow student came into my dormitory room and asked my impression. 'I recall the scenes in movies, Christmas cards, and Santa Claus, and the top of Mount Everest from Darjeeling [in Himalayan India]. But this is real!' Before the snow ended, 23 inches accumulated on the ground, something many New Yorkers had not seen. It was time to frolic — throw snowballs at each other with maximum zest, take historic pictures of me dug in beside a half–buried car, holding boulders of the solidified white–stuff. Once again, adults played the game from which children get so much fun."

January 8, 1948:

"I'm sending pictures. Don't scream when you see me 'wading' in the snow. I had a wonderful feeling. I doubt I will ever experience such a heavy snow–fall."

March 3,1948. From New York:

"Today, the beginning of March, is one of the coldest days of winter. It's surprising how my reactions to snow have changed. At first I was overwhelmed at the wonderful sight, looking forward to the next fall. Now having gone through the winter, the white stuff has become a nuisance. I wait patiently for springtime when trees will be green again and people from warmer climes will feel comfortable again.

> "I have established myself to read Parasha at the Seminary synagogue. וַיִּגַּשׁ was not my week, but middle of the week I was summoned because, during the winter vacation, many go away and readers are nowhere to be found. Two or three students are the usual readers, as well as a teacher [Prof. Abraham Halkin]."

Dad mentioned that he had read וַיִּגַּשׁ in Neveh Shalome Synagogue, and when he came to know that I too read it at the Seminary, he wrote(December 28, 1947):

> "What a coincidence that father and son should have read the same Parasha in different parts of the globe!"

November 11, 1947. From Calcutta:

> "Granny kissed your snap [photograph] and held it in her hands for sometime. She asked for it again and blessed you with tears rolling down her cheeks."

January 8, 1948. From New York:

> "How I spend Shabbath: The whole environment is replete with the spirit of Shabbath. Friday evening, the students who don't go home for the weekend pray Arbith at which I feel so much spiritually higher than in Calcutta's Maghen David with a handful of people paid to attend services. At 6 p.m. the short version of Kuddoos [Kiddush] is chanted — only Shalome Aleikheim and the Berakhoth over wine. To compensate, I go up to my room and make Kaddoos in the homey, traditional manner and all that it means to me. I return to join the rest in the dining hall at 6 p.m. for the meal — about 30 to 40 people, mostly Seminary students, but some from nearby universities. An honoured guest, usually a Seminary professor, graces the evening's proceedings. Those who wish to partake of Shabbath meals must make prior reservations. The hall beams with the candle at the head–table, and happy and gleeful folks, singing sacred Shabbath hymns and national revival songs that breathe the spirit of freedom and rest. Birkath Hamazone, recited aloud by a leader, crowns the meal with refrains from the rest of the participants. At 10 p.m. the Oneg Shabbath continues to enliven and exhilarate in dance and good cheer. The cafeteria is left open with cake and tea for all. Brave and somewhat prosy is the person who can resist such celebration in the solitude of his study! At 11 p.m. I go over Parasha, whether or not I am scheduled to read it the next morning. Once a month I volunteered to read in the Seminary synagogue."

[Dad reacted exuberantly to my description of the Seminary's Shabbath procedures. He wrote:]

> "Believe me, what you wrote about the dining hall on Shabbath, the cheerful atmosphere breathed by all participants invoked in me a desire to be with you just for one Shabbath. מִי יִתֵּן וְהָיָה If only this could be done!"

Back to my description: "Shabbath morning is time to sleep till 9, as services commence at 9:30. When I plan to attend Dr. Pool's Synagogue, a distance of 31/2 miles, I must wake up an hour earlier, compensating me liturgically. At times I accompany others to different synagogues, but all are back by 1 p.m. for another session of good food, singing and fun. Close on 2 p.m. a heaviness draws the eye–lids together for the Shabbath nap. Silent and comfortable, the Seminary sinks into soft repose until echoes of 'all out for Minha' are heard

in every room. [About a year later at a Minha service, I read the Parasha in the Ashkenazi Te–ameem for the first time. Dr Finkelstein was amazed. "Who taught this to you?" he queried. "Nobody," I answered, "I listened to boys reading and picked it up."] The highlight of Seudah Shelisheeth., the third meal of Shabbath, was the presence of Professor Abraham Heschel to instill tone, temperament and inspiration into the singing and comradeship."

[Dr. Finkelstein's interest in me brings to mind a question he asked upon watching me put on the tephillah of the arm in a sitting position while that of the head standing. "Do you know why?" he asked. "Yes." I explained that the Ari, Rabbi Yitshak Luria of Safed, wished to point out the significance of Deuteronomy 28:10: וְרָאוּ כָל עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ כִּי שֵׁם ה' נִקְרָא עָלֶיךָ וְיָרְאוּ מִמֶּךָּ 'All the peoples of the earth shall see that the Lord's name is proclaimed over you, and they shall stand in fear of you.' The Tephilla of the head assumes greater importance because it bears the more outstanding evidence of God's name 'proclaimed' over us — it can be seen — and so deserves greater deference."]

February 3,1948. From New York.

> "I was shocked to hear of Gandhi's assassination. Before it became evident that the killer was an extremist Hindu, I thought that the country would be bathed in blood were the killer a Muslim. I cannot comprehend what evil hands could perpetrate such a dastardly act on so frail and saintly a leader. The words of the psalms ring in my ears: עַד מָתַי רְשָׁעִים יַעֲלֹזוּ 'How long shall the wicked exult?'6 Bernard Shaw, on being asked to comment on the murder of one of his best friends, said: 'One realises how dangerous it is to be good!'"

February 12, 1948. From Calcutta:

> "Today was Mahatma Gandhi's Ash Immersion day, a public holiday, to scatter his ashes into several sacred rivers amidst prayers and ceremonies. 'Rabbi' Girji Raymond was invited to represent the Calcutta Jewish community at the immersion ceremonies, but, together with the Parsi (Zoroastrian) representative, did not offer a prayer. No official reason was given. Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Muslims, and Buddhists took part. The Rev. John Kellas, [the Principal of the Scottish Church College and my former Economics professor,] represented the Christian community."

The political situation in Palestine gradually deteriorated and my brother Meyer and sister Ruby were in imminent danger. February 2, 1948. From Calcutta:

> "We were deeply disturbed and anxious at Ruby's description of how she faced death boldly and unknowingly once and deliberately a second time. On her way to school [she was a teacher], her bus, carrying Haganah men, passed a dangerous Arab quarter. As she had taken shelter under a bench on the floor of the bus, it was hit just above the wheel. The Haganah returned the fire and soon a battle raged but she was unhurt. On her way home by the same route, this time in an open truck, bullets were flying all

6. Psalms 94;3

around with Ruby saying שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל until they rolled on past that pernicious section. Ruby has since stopped teaching in that school … Meyer's long silence perturbs me no end, though he is living among Arabs whom he considers good friends and trusted neighbours.

"In the midst of this turmoil, Shimoon E. Moses has agreed to apply to a Yeshiba in Palestine. His request was well received by Chief Rabbi Ouziel as regards entry into a Yeshiba. The stumbling block was a guarantor for his maintenance. His sister Mary and others guaranteed fifty rupees or four pounds a month against the minimum requirement of fifteen pounds. The question of permission for entry to Palestine was to be posed to the Foreign Office which, looking at his physical condition, would compassionately consider his case."

My reaction, February 3, 1948:

"I am glad Uncle Simon [as I affectionately called him] has decided to move to Eretz Yisrael, and at his partial success. I wouldn't advise him to go, however, in so explosive a situation. I wouldn't want to deter him from his sacred mission, but express my reservations at its opportuneness."

Dad thought Zohar would be taught as part of the normal course at the Seminary, since he had been reading it mechanically since age nine:

"I do not know why in Western countries they do not attach so much attention to Zohar as to Mishna and Gemara. Zohar is a study in mysticism like the secrets of the עֶשֶׂר סְפִירוֹת *[The Ten Spheres],* which can best be understood by the Kabbalists. Anyhow, a course in Zohar could take about three months and could be taken up in Jerusalem or Baghdad after completion of your Seminary studies [!] — I realise what a load you have assumed studying two Gemaras *[two different Massechot or subject segments]* at one time, יַשֵּׁר כֹּחֲךָ!

March 5, 1948. From New York:

"Last week I was summoned by Dr. Simon Greenberg with a curious proposal — he wanted my measurements! A tailor friend of his in Philadelphia wished to make and present a suit for anyone of Dr Greenberg's choice. He immediately thought of me not, he said, because my clothes attracted adverse attention, but because it would be a saving for me. The suit would be delivered within a week and no one would know it was a gift." *[Dr Greenberg was my mentor as a teacher, family man, a deeply committed Jew, and an exceptional human being.]*

March 28, 1948. From Calcutta:

"I was unduly delayed since my last letter … you are as fresh in our minds as when you embarked on the 'Oachita Victory', and there is hardly a spare moment when thoughts of you do not flash into our minds. During Festivals, such thoughts are uppermost when we keep discussing your merits and demerits [!] On Purim night we talked about your Diamond Harbour expedition with unworthy company despite the heat and the fast, and your naughtiness in Madhupur. And how the young Musleah Brigade would drop veritable 'bombs' each time Haman's name was mentioned. And how you would collect

varieties of sweets [goodies] in your plate on Purim night of which you could barely consume a few. Aunty Hannah re–enacted your way this year, filled 'your' plate with delicacies, and would not allow any pilfering. This is 'Ezekiel's share,' she said. All we were waiting for was for you to take your seat next to Dad and start nibbling at cakes, summoosucks, and badam–zaleibee and what not. I missed your accompaniment to my Megilla reading, which was the worst, since I had no time to revise [review] even once. We expect your next letter to tell us about how you spent Purim in a strange country, where cards and towli are conspicuous by their absence. Here it was dull despite the presence of the Cohens and K's [the Morrises] in the usual afternoon banquet. The table was made to look as full as possible, but the gaps were clearly visible. There was no gambling, and even a challenge from Sam for a towli championship was rejected. Since Master's death I have not touched the towli."

"There were disturbances this year during 'holi' *[a Hindu spring festival celebrated with water–colored syringes sprayed liberally on Hindus].* The merry–makers spared neither Muslim. Jew, Parsi, or Christian, who happened to come in their way, leading to several arrests and an apology from Bengal's premier, Dr B.C. Roy. Tram [trolley] passengers were prime targets, and young women were stopped, insulted and sprayed, even molested."

April 9,1948. From New York:

"For the first time I was given the honor of reading the Megillah in public in the presence of a large crowd in the Seminary synagogue. I received congratulations from professors and lay people galore. While I read, the thought that Dad was struggling with the right signs without preparation troubled me. I pictured myself beside him but it wasn't enough. Since there was no celebration in the Seminary, I went over to Yeshiva where they had spontaneous dancing and singing."

"Ereb Rosh Hodesh Nisan I read the portions from שְׁכִיוֹת הַחֲמְדָּה the volume that we Musleahs have made it a tradition to observe the anniversary of the construction of the Tabernacle, and the daily readings until Pesah." *[Interpretation: Today we should read the same passages to celebrate the construction of our synagogues and the organization of religious life within our communities.]*

"For Pesah, I am invited to the home of Edward Hay who lives in Long Island. He is the husband of Farha Baqqal's brother–in–law's daughter, Lily, originally from Rangoon. Aharon Baqqal's wife, Lily's mother, lives a few houses away, so I will be at home with Arabic and Hindusthani expressions. I can also give the old woman a treat with my parrot–fashion Haggada–Arabic Granny taught me." [Dad recognized this lady, and in his letter of April 18, 1948, wrote:] "Lily comes from a family as strictly orthodox as ourselves. When I visited Rangoon in 1926, Lily invited us for tea. I also knew her sister Annie. When we would pass Pollock Street on our way to synagogue, and these girls would be standing on their small verandah opposite the Armenian Alm House, shy things that they were, they would disappear at the sight of me, then a bachelor, and Uncle Elias, still schooling. Lily's mother's name was Haboob, Moshi Hai Reporter's [so–called because he was ever full of the latest news!] half–sister. Haboob's mother was a tenant in [my great–uncle and namesake] Ishaq

> Sassoon Musleah's house in Chitpore Road. Haboob and her husband would bring their perpetual domestic quarrels to Eliyahu Hyeem Hilali in synagogue [who would be seated alongside Grandpa]. I am sure you will feel quite at home at their home on Peach except for the old crockery [china] and diversity of wine glasses וְכֵלִים מְכֻלִּים שׁוֹנִים beakers of varied design (Esther 1:7) in our home."

I did not feel at home. April 27, 1948:

> "Family participation was absent. Mr. Hay is an עַם הָאָרֶץ totally unaware of what's going on, thoroughly engrossed in Christian studies which have estranged him from Judaism. Lily is the same simple woman she was in Rangoon. They have adopted, since age 9 months, a Jewish child now 16, spoiled by his father, rude to his mother, and knows no Hebrew. This family has no Jewish future. Where there is no Jewishness in the home, Judaism is sure to fail.

I can aptly describe this family in the context of the Four Sons. Lily's Mother was the Hakham(a). As I read the Arabic, I could discern understanding from the gleam on her face and the nod of her head, perhaps bringing to mind her husband's rendition. I have no hesitation to append the designation of Rasha on the family head who constantly urged me on to skip portions, much to the annoyance of the wife. She had to be the Tam(a), asking simple questions, expecting simple answers. The son, of course, didn't know how to ask, sitting mum throughout and perhaps asking himself why he had to undergo penitence every year. For me, redemption was my being able to articulate the Haggadah in a sort of family setting." In response to my report that there was no Zeroah at my hosts' Seder, Dad suggested they could have used the wing of a rooster.

Where did the practise of riding on Yom Tov, permitted in Calcutta, originate? I suspect it was erroneously deduced from the license to use fire for cooking to apply to other circumstances where combustion takes place. Unrestricted striking of a match, not from a flame lit before Yom Tov, became acceptable. All sorts of contradictions came into play. Coal fires could be initiated for domestic use, striking a light for a smoke was legitimate, and if riding in a rickshaw was permitted, though a horse and buggy was not, how much more so should a car ride be allowable! Electricity itself received a license. Whether or not Baghdad was approached for a ruling is moot. Could the Beth Din there have not understood the scientific implications of the automobile? Or did local authorities take the law into their own hands? Dad tells me, May 2, 1948, that the first auto he saw on the streets of Calcutta was about 1904, and the first time he witnessed Jews ride in a motorbus, not car, was when Ralph Arakie read his first Maftir in 1905 or 1906. [The infringement of Halakha struck the eye of a Western traveller in India as he took offense to Bombay Jews using public buses with the use of a coupon provided for Jews only. In a diatribe against the practise, he wrote a small volume entitled, אִמְרֵי שַׁבָּת [Shabbat Matters] pointing out the reasons for ceasing the custom.]

Dad wrote in April 1948, "I bought 1st day's [Pesah] Maftir for 33 rupees and Uncle Elias the second day's for 12 rupees. We are trying to combine the two grandfathers' Sepharim into one. [Eliyahu/Yosef and Yitshak Sason Musleah.] The pages are identical in both and the readable, kasher portions interlace." [The Sopher pronounced the proposal unfeasible.] [Dad

wrote May 2, 1948 that the Sopher later agreed to use ISM's Sepher by itself but not the other.] and the Sepharim ultimately lay Pesulim, unused, until I salvaged them and brought them to America where both are being currently used by our family. ENM]

I wrote enthusiastically about the Seder practice: "This year Aunty Ray must wear the Dhoby's bundle [the Afikoman]. See that she bangs her head hard!" [in traditional response to the question: What provisions do you have for the way? in place of pointing to the Afikoman! (See explanation under 'Nisan'[7]) Dad subsequently wrote that Aunt Ray refused to put on the Afikoman bundle. She considered it a childish act.] "I had done it long enough. I won't mind, however, resuming my role should I take my seat again as youngest in the family." [I did, again, from 1953 to 1955.]

It has been our Haggadah practise to chant biblical verses before each segment of the Seder. On April 8, 1948, Dad reminded me:

> "Wherever you are for Shitta–kha (=Seder), don't forget to chant the פְּסוּקִים (verses) in our tune. Just hum this: אֱלֹהִים יְחָנֵּנוּ וִיבָרְכֵנוּ יָאֵר פָּנָיו אִתָּנוּ סֶלָה
>
> I am sure we shall be remembered by you at least a dozen times at the Seder table, and you will visualise our "crockery" [china], those valuable remnants which have come down to us from generation to generation."

April 1948. From New York:

> "Pesah shopping is a treat. Supermarkets convert part of their stores to Kasher le–Pesah provisions, groceries sell Kasher le–Pesah meat, and Jewish restaurants serve KP food. Macy's in New York ten floors high, converts the fifth floor that sells books all year, into a Pesah store after making it 'Uzzil' [Kasher le–Pesah]. Aunty Ramah will be interested to know they even sell KP tea!" [For many years, the family did without local tea because it was thought to be not suitable for Pesah.]

April 18, 1948. From Calcutta:

> "The womenfolk at home are very busy as usual preparing for Pesah because they were instrumental in the deliverance of Israel from the Egyptian bondage לֹא נִגְאֲלוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם אֶלָּא בִּשְׂכַר נָשִׁים צִדְקָנִיּוֹת 'The Israelites were redeemed from Egypt only by virtue of the righteous women.' The aunts especially are annoyed with you for not having sent the Macy's catalogue for Pesah requisites in advance for them to order several items. Aunty Ramah thought of Kasher tea and cakes, and Granny would have ordered several jars of fat, and done away with the trouble of rearing chicken and ducks a month in advance for their fat." [Canned locally available oil was not considered Kasher le–Pesah. Before India was partitioned, fatty birds would be imported from Chittagong, which became Pakistan.] "Uncle Elias, the inveterate bargainer, says he would not be satisfied shopping at one Macy's but would like to compare other Macy's to ensure he was getting the best prices. He is tempted to do his Pesah bazar [shopping] at a group of Macy's and return to Calcutta with his darling nephew he misses so much!"

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7. Page 63, pages 105-106 (Chap 5.)

From New York. May 1948:

> "The Seminary cafeteria is the ideal place to meet people, and in the past few weeks I have met a number of big shots: Abba Hillel Silver's wife and Judge Edgar Nathan's wife. As a means of propaganda, these people are introduced to me and brought to my room in the dormitory not because it still has my shoes under my desk, but because I have many exhibits like my Hanukkah [Menorah] and Megillah, the likes of which they had not seen. I am taken out of a show–case, as it were, to up the Seminary in their eyes. Judge Nathan invited me to dinner, and from there we attended a talk where I met Rabbi David J. Seligson and his wife, who is a cousin of Dr de Sola Pool. I told her that by this time, she knows more about India than I do! Seligson remarked that he had heard Dad was doing a great Miswa for the Calcutta community, and to extend his congratulations to you."

April 4, 1948. From Calcutta:

> "Meyer writes that he went to Ramat Gan [Ruby's place] with his family to celebrate Purim together, and Ruby writes that they had a 'rollicking' time with cakes and chocolates, shopping and gambling. It was, of course, a dangerous errand, [because of the situation in Israel] but thank God, without untoward incident. Meyer's main object, I think, was to provide Ruby with vegetables and other edibles for which they were starved for a month during which they lived on mainly tinned [canned] provisions. Lately, they had to exist on bacully [beans] and this gave both Ruby and Elias stomach disorders. So Meyer acted as a good samaritan and carried provisions for them.
>
> "Meantime, there has been recruiting for ages 26 to 35, and both Meyer and Elias are eligible. Whether as Home Guards or anything else, they have now got to face real danger ה' שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל [God guard them]. I have shown Meyer a possible way out as I did when Becker Gray [his employers] compelled all assistants to join up during the 1914–18 war. I got exemption from a military court for my Gudda–Budda [corn condition in the soles of both feet inherited from his mother's family]. I feigned too much walking or standing caused intense sensation and pain not only in the region of the heel but also around the toes. I was honourably discharged! Meyer has a stronger case as he was on record as having received treatment on his arrival in Palestine, but doctors failed to give any relief. [It was actually not a painful condition, just a nuisance to be scrubbed and smoothed regularly with pumice stone!] If he is exempted from active service, he will then be classified class II or III for clerical duties at the base or headquarters. May the Lord do best for them, and the זְכוּת [merit] of our forefathers will shield them from all harm. [Dad was elated and relieved that Meyer received a blue ticket, exempt from active duty. Red signified active service away from home, and green, service near home.]

Dad was terribly upset at the dangers his children in Palestine confront.

May 2, 1948:

> "As you study our sacred Torah, pray to God to spare your brother and sister and their families for my sake. Elias' mother wrote to me that she is observing fasts like Kippur, going to the cemetery and invoking the help of her dead, a family of Kohanim, to

spare her son, Ruby and their son. This is what we parents must endure for the rash acts committed by our children in a moment of frenzy and thoughtlessness, [that is, the children's decision to make Aliyah.]

"Thanks for sending Ruby her pressure cooker and stockings. Bill me together with ten dollars for your Purim money.

"My greatest delight is your reference to your study of Gemara. So far you have done chapters from Baba Kamma, Metzia, Kiddushin and Ta–anith. I hope God will keep me alive to hear with my own ears your rendering of the Gemara. Could I wish for anything better? Yes, a wife who will be your loving life–companion."

Dad could write to his children only on Sunday or public holidays. He regretted every minute taken away from that precious communication for whatever reason. April 18, 1948. From Calcutta:

"This letter would have been started two hours ago but for … my precious two hours were wasted, and I am only afraid this letter will not be as long as I would have liked it to be … besides no holidays intervene till the 16th of June, and all my correspondence must be devoted to Sundays alone. If I miss mails or my letters are not long enough, please don't worry … I was worried not having heard from you seven days past the fortnight you pledged to write, and this drove me almost boisterous yesterday when I opened and closed the letter–box at least a dozen times to no avail. To assure me that everything was all right with you, Aunty Dinah sent me her unopened birthday card to look at the post–mark. I was relieved …

"It gave me great pleasure to read of the reaction to your Megilla reading. Could you dream of such an honour when you first prepared it in 1941? Nothing is lost especially when it comes to observing of one's religion. My heart leapt with joy bringing to mind King Solomon's proverb: בֵּן חָכָם יְשַׂמַּח אָב 'A wise son brings joy to his father.'[8] No reaction to Megilla reading could be more enthusiastic than when Grandpa would read it at home. The familiar grand setting of your father's home on such occasions can never be forgotten.

"One thing just struck me. You will not recite Shittakha [Seder] comfortably in your night suit [pyjamas, as you would do at home], but fully dressed, as the Torah says: מָתְנֵכֶם חֲגוּרִים נַעֲלֵיכֶם בְּרַגְלֵיכֶם וּמַקֵּלְכֶם בְּיֶדְכֶם 'This is how you shall eat (the Pesah meal): your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand.'[9] (Exodus 12:11).' [Dad would have been happier had he realized that the Israelites were clad closer to pyjamas than Western dress.]

"With so much publicity coming your way, I hope you wear Afsa/Dahash Granny gave you. May God protect you from עַיִן הָרַע the evil eye. You will be surprised; mine burst in my pocket about a month ago [!] [a pair of shells were believed to break if one is 'struck' by the evil eye!]

8. Proverbs 10:1
9. Exodus 12:11

"The film 'Ram Rajaya' is now being shown in one of the Indian theatres. It means 'God's Kingdom on Earth.' Do you think you would be able to follow the trend of the story? As a clergy man, you might have been interested.

"I am not worried about Ruby's son Michael not speaking a syllable at one year and eight months. Meyer, too, was tongue–tied for a year and a half, and then we snatched Hamosee [Motsie] from the mouth of Abraham Poopa [husband of Grandpa's oldest sister, Dinah, a Kohen, and gave it to Meyer to eat], and behold he started to speak the very next day. Emma Aaron, [a family friend,] snatched Hamosee from Uncle Charlie [my aunt Seemah's husband, also a Kohen,] for her sister, Seemah Shalome's son. He too spoke within twenty–four hours. There must be some magical power in this. I decided to snatch some Hamosee from Uncle Charlie in Pesah, powder the Mussa [Matza] with salt and send it to Ruby. Someone suggested Maghen David Hazzan [a Kohen], but Uncle Charlie is better since he had been tried out and passed the test [!]

"And now, my dear son, let me convey to you once again all my blessings for a very happy חַג הַפֶּסַח and בְּרָכַת מוֹעֵד . יְהִי רָצוֹן יְגִיעֲךָ לְמוֹעֲדִים וְלִרְגָעִים אֲחֵרִים בְּלֵב טוֹב וּבְרִיאוּת הַצְלָחָה וְהַרְוָחָה יָמִים אֲרוּכִים דְּשֵׁנִים וְרַעֲנַנִּים וְכֵן יה'ר וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן 'May the Lord be with you in your solitude and brighten every dark spot that you tread with His spiritual light. May He grant you חָכְמָה וּבִינָה וָדַעַת [wisdom, understanding and knowledge], and may your mission be one of complete success וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר הוּא עוֹשֶׂה ה' מַצְלִיחַ בְּיָדוֹ as the Lord lent (Joseph) success to everything he undertook.[10]

"Granny has done the usual supervision for Passover, but the details she attends to with so much ease cannot be handled by anyone else. She is blessing you every minute and prays for your success. I think without a word of exaggeration that she loves you more that any of her children, and your parting has dealt her a severe blow."

Other Passover greetings. April 1948; In Granny's handwriting:

"My darling my life my eye
I wish you happy feast
God bless you give you
long life and every succes
ful your darling In Rashi script תִּזְכּוּ לְשָׁנִים רַבּוֹת G r a n n y
[Tizkoo layshamim rabboth] [You are missed] לְךָ לְאַד
Masuda מסעודה"

Sammy Morris:

"My dear Eze, I'm writing these few lines during my lunch hour at your Dad's nudging. You are always in our minds and I do hope your mission in life will be an entire success. I trust you are well and studying hard. Wishing you a happy Passover. Love, Sam"

10. Genesis 39:3

Aunty Hannah:

> "My darling Ezie, Don't be surprised to receive these few lines from me. Let me wish you a very happy Passover. God bless you with long life health and happiness, and may you be successful in all your dealings. With love and kisses, Aunty Hannah"

Uncle Elias:

> "My beloved Eze boy, I am sure you will appreciate these few lines from me. As you know, I am in the midst of Passover work, and became quite jealous seeing all of the others scribbling good wishes to you. Now it's my turn. May the Almighty protect you right through, and may you succeed in your work. These few years will soon fly, and once again, God willing, we shall again be together in the best of health and happiness. Tizkoo Leyshanim Rubboth. With love and kisses, From Uncle Elias"

Aunty Rachel:

> "My darling Ezekiel, We shall all miss you very much indeed. I do hope you are well. Enjoy yourself in Passover. Love, Aunty Rachel"

[Aunty Ramah was in school when these notes were being written]

Dad's position as Sales Manager of National Tobacco was, he felt, being undermined. He was not being consulted in major policy matters, and the staff was becoming increasingly undisciplined. Transfers of key personnel were being made without reference to him. He wrote: "Injury to me will be negligible, but the company will suffer to a great extent. My new job, in addition to Sales, is to look after title deeds of properties and sign cheques and documents all day. Many have tried to harm me, only to meet with failure. I have always had trust in my Maker. ה' יִלָּחֶם לָכֶם וְאַתֶּם תַּחֲרִישׁוּן 'The Lord will battle for you; you hold your peace.[11]

"I have no peace of mind. The disturbing Palestine situation, the parting with my children, the unstable economic situation, and now the disappointment in the office — even the Oseh Haised [welfare] work is becoming too heavy to carry on single–handed."

June 6, 1948, Dad is frightened. "There are several air–raids on Tel Aviv, four within six hours yesterday. This is exactly what Ruby stated she dreads most. יְרַחֵם הַשֵּׁם God have mercy!

"Last week, special prayers were held in Maghen David Synagogue for Divine protection of Jews in Palestine."

Dad's letters increasingly reflected his preoccupation with community matters, particularly Oseh Haised. Though he realized that rabbinic tradition looked upon burials as חֶסֶד שֶׁל אֱמֶת [true kindness beyond measure], including care and cleanness of the Calcutta Jewish cemetery and numbering and cataloging of tombs, he insisted on bringing compassion for the living into

11. Exodus 14:14

the purview of communal resolve. He raised funds for a medical facility, The Oseh Haised Clinic, to attend to the needs of the Jewish poor five times a week. Never before in the annals of Calcutta Jewry was such an historic venture undertaken with so great success. He complained of enervation and strain.

June 10, 1948:

> "All this devotion means more and more work for me, and though I cannot boast of the strength I had just a year ago, I am struggling through, depending on the mercy of the Almighty and the שִׁפְעַ [=Arabic, redemption] through the influence of the dead." In the same breath, he added: "Just a week ago, I reserved my [burial] place beside your mother, and the rest of the family, beside Grandpa. We wish to be close together in death as we have been in life."

May 27, 1948. From New York:

> "A photograph in the New York Times bore a famous picture of two presidents, the American, Harry S. Truman, and the Israeli, Chaim Weizmann, on the occasion of Weizmann presenting Truman with a Sefer Torah in appreciation of Truman's warm friendship with Israel, having been the first international figure to recognize the State of Israel. On his arrival in America, Weizmann contacted Dr. Louis Finkelstein to recommend an appropriate gift for Truman. Finkelstein promptly offered his own Sefer Torah, a small scroll encased in blue velvet bearing a Magen David. The Torah has a connection with me. In my first year at the Seminary, I read almost weekly in it, especially at the time that Finkelstein was saying Kaddish for his father." [The picture appeared also in two Calcutta papers, the Hindusthan Standard and the Statesman.]

June 27, 1948. From New York:

> "At this time, most of the students have left for home and whatever they have planned to do for the summer. On Friday nights, I struggle my way to a the nearest restaurant for a Shabbath meal where I think of the aloo–makalla, chicken and mahasha meal back home, and the melodies of after–meal chanting rings in my ears as thoughts and feelings stray many thousands of miles over ocean and sea, mountain and desert. The summer promises to be a difficult period, but with the help of the Almighty, I will overcome." [A friend of mine, Simon Glustrom, had just accepted a position as rabbi at a summer camp, and invited me there. So]

July 11,1948. From New York:

> "I am now in a summer camp run by the Hebrew Educational Society in the position of Counsellor. I had intended staying in New York all summer, but changed plans for three reasons: 1. I was lonely and miserably dull at the Seminary, as all students had gone home. 2. My meals were irregular. The nearest Kasher restaurant was at least a mile away and meals cost a fortune. 3. It became very hot in the city. So when I was offered a camp job by one of our Seminary graduates, I thought I would gain experience in an educational sphere and earn a modest amount of money. I hope to buy a set of Talmud with this money together with that which I get from a High Holy Day position later this year. No offence to you, Dad! It looks like a fine adventure and I'm glad I took the job. I have a chance to read Parasha on Shabbath and on Monday

and Thursday. On Friday night, I was told to read Torah, and was ready in about an hour. I reflected on the challenge of Parasha reading I undertook as a youngster and the use it was now affording me. I always admired Hazanim for being able to read week after week, and to tell the truth, was a bit envious. I did try to learn Aharei Mothe, but gave it up after three Aliyoth. [Age 111/2. I began again six months later and successfully completed the cycle three years later.] The beginning was admittedly difficult. Which beginning is not? כֹּל הַתְּחָלוֹת קָשׁוֹת 'all beginnings are difficult,' say our Rabbis. Now it doesn't take more than 2 or 3 readings to get ready.

"The knowledge of the Humash is coming in handy in the study of the Talmud when quotations are referred to by commentators. While other students stumble over the exact pronunciation of the words and their terms of reference, the Professor asked me: 'Well Musleah, you can read the Torah. Do you know where this passage appears?'

"Yes, Musleah rattles off not only the whole sentence but the one before and the one after it! בֵּן חָכָם יְשַׂמַּח אָב 'A wise son brings joy to his father.' (Proverbs 10:1) I did the same thing in my exam paper. The teacher comes up to me and asks: 'Do you know the entire Torah by heart?' With a gleam, I answer almost in the affirmative!"

The Registrar gave me the official verdict of the Faculty: I have been accepted into the Rabbinical School, but that I may have to spend additional time to study to officiate at Divorces. [This I did with the help of Prof. Abraham Schrieber.]

In the few weeks before I left for camp, I had time to mull over Dad's situation and came up with this suggestion.

June 27, 1948. From New York:

"Here I wish to ask Dad seriously of settling in Palestine when the crisis ends and he retires. Not that I fear any Indian uprising against Jews, for we have cordial relationships with the indigenous peoples, but for family unity, it could be a healthy move. Indian Jewry, though depleted, will continue and I could be its first rabbi, בְּעֶזְרַת הַשֵּׁם. But I would have a psychological satisfaction to think of the entire family, Dad, aunts, uncle, and Granny all together in the Land of our Fathers. Mind you, I am saying this in all seriousness and would expect all to give it serious thought. I (with wife and kids) would ultimately settle in Palestine after having done a good job in Calcutta. Come on Dad, let's see your foresight in action on the home front!"

Though Dad did not react directly to this proposal, I nudged him further in a subsequent letter in which I referred to his "laborious youth and frightful middle age." He made this comment:

"All that is now left for you to do is to wish me זִקְנָה טוֹבָה וְאַחֲרִית שָׁלוֹם 'a good old age and a peaceful late years.' If mine was a struggle from start to finish, I shall be indebted to the Almighty if in my advanced age I shall find peace and happiness. It

would give me endless pleasure to be with my children once again as a united family of which it can be said: כִּי שָׁם צִוָּה ה' אֶת הַבְּרָכָה חַיִּים עַד הָעוֹלָם חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת נִפְגָּשׁוּ צֶדֶק וְשָׁלוֹם נָשָׁקוּ 'There the Lord ordained blessing, everlasting life.'[12] 'Faithfulness and truth meet, justice and well–being kiss.'"

YEAR TWO

October 31, 1948. From Calcutta. Dad wrote a very private and personal letter with intimate advice on my love life being conducted at a distance:

> "Look for an American because I am personally of the view that you will spend your days anywhere in the world but India where there is no Kabod (respect), no Torah, no religiosity, and no Jewishness. After five or ten years the community will further diminish, and the services in synagogue will dwindle to the extent that only on the high festivals nominal prayers will be recited by a few who will rattle off popular melodies, engage in conversation, and look up at the [ladies'] balcony. And if you do return to India as rabbi, several girls will be available and you will have the pick of the bunch. May God bless you, my child, and direct you and light your way in the right path. You are the light of my eyes. When my vision will diminish with age, I expect added lustre from you for whose sake I am living. May I live to see your children and have the pleasure of placing them on my lap."

Letter greeting for my 21st birthday.

יְבָרֶכְךָ ה' וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ

I. S. Musleah,
11 Bow Bazar Street
Calcutta, 20th Aug. 1948

ט"ו באב התש"ח

Dearest Ezekiel Nissim,

On this happy day of your 21st birthday, when our hearts are with you and our lips are uttering blessings galore for your long life, health and success, we present you with a sum of $50 (fifty dollars) for a suit of your choice for the coming festivals. With all our love.

Dad

Uncle Elias Aunty Hannah Aunt Rams Aunt Ray, GRANNY MASUDA [in Rashi script] P.S. It has been further decided that if the amount has to be exceeded, there is no objection so long as you are satisfied and you look a thorough guy(!)

September 14, 1948. From New York:

> At the home of a friend whom I met at camp, I heard the יְהִי רָצוֹן over Kiddush recited. The host claimed he had known his family practising that Minhag from his childhood. Besides, I had never seen before how every male member recites the Kiddush and

12. Psalms 133:3, 85:11

ha–Motsie individually. Dad was not surprised. September 26, 1948, he wrote: "Whereas we make Kawana [=concentrate] on the Berakha of the Baal Habayit [Head of the Household] and our יְדֵי חוֹבָה [obligation] is fulfilled, these individuals make no Kawana. I was told that when a person makes Kawana, he must not respond בָּרוּךְ הוּא וּבָרוּךְ שְׁמוֹ when the blessing is pronounced, as that constitutes הֶפְסֵק [a break, an interruption in the flow of the blessing]. That is why it is a Baghdad custom for the Hazan to announce:

רַבּוֹתַי כַּוְּנָה עַל הַבְדָּלָה Gentlemen! Please make Kawana over Havdalah, [so that they don't have to repeat it individually]. I learned something from Dad. But, his explanation did not cover why, in other times of Kiddusheem, we respond with Barukh and yet don't repeat the Berakha.

September 27, 1948. From New York:

> "Today was a big day at the Seminary. General Dwight Eisenhower, who is now President of neighboring Columbia University, was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters in a most impressive ceremony. He said it was important for an institution like the Seminary to be supported because through its auspices will a new world be built on a spiritual basis. After the academic ceremonies, the General was introduced to guests and students. Isn't it thrilling to know that as I shook his hands? Dr. Finkelstein told him that I was the only student from India. 'It was very nice meeting you,' he remarked, 'I'm glad you're here.'"

I wrote home that I had earned $500 in my first High–Holy position and hoped the money would help toward lightening Dad's burden of financing my rabbinical studies. Came Dad's reply, October 14, 1948, addressed me as "My darling Rev. Eze."

> "If you have the idea that I will allow you to to contribute a farthing toward your education out of your own earnings, you are mistaken, as long as I have the strength to bear the burden myself. Bank this money and add to it to the best of your ability. I have provided for your full course of studies, but unforeseen events can bring about upheavals like my own capacity to earn may be reduced by retirement. You know, my darling son, God has made me independent of flesh and blood even when Uncle Reuben [Granny's brother] offered to pay for Uncle Elias' illness and I refused it, though we needed the money. [Uncle Elias, then a teenager, was dangerously ill with enteric fever. Granny's mother, Kemayra, was said to have gone on the street with one of her grandson's garments in the belief that begging passers–by to buy it from her 'for Eliyahu Hyeem's sake' might bring about his complete recovery.] You know that a father's duty for teaching of Torah to his son is imperative, and I cannot shirk this duty as long as I have the means."

November 8, 1948. From New York:

> "The eyes of the world are now focused on the American presidential elections. Very few predicted a Truman victory — not one public declaration to that effect except by Truman himself. By dogged determination he took the issues to the people. Dewey, on the other hand, only skimmed the issues, as he was over–confident. From the Jewish point of view, Truman's victory is indeed significant as now we can depend on the

U.S. to extend recognition as well as financial aid to Israel, much more than a Dewey administration would have done. I heard Truman speak and saw him face to face during the election campaign. He looked confident. At least I've seen one President of the United States!"

December 6, 1948. From New York:

"I spent Mum's Yartseit quietly in study. What I wouldn't have done to visit her grave! I was comforted only by her photograph, reminding me of the years she was with us. How different our lives would have been had she been alive! I thought about how cruel life can be, how exasperating, without the tender love and care of a mother. On the other hand, when I think of the pride and dignity she would have enjoyed at the opportunities afforded her children, I feel comforted. I imagine her watching over her beloved husband and children patiently and fearlessly awaiting the moment when they would be united once again. Yet her Spirit fills the air with sacredness and warmth that bind parent and children together. At every point I hear her soothing voice: שְׁמַע בְּנִי מוּסַר אָבִיךָ וְאַל תִּטֹּשׁ תּוֹרַת אִמֶּךָ 'My son, heed the discipline of your father, and do not forsake the instruction of your mother.'[13] I read אֶשֶׁת חַיִל , מִשְׁנָיוֹת, and זוֹהַר at night, and during the day, dedicated my study of Talmud to her memory. I read both פָּרָשַׁת חַיֵּי שָׂרָה and וַיֵּרָא. and the touching verse struck me: וַיְבִיאֶהָ יִצְחָק הָאֹהֱלָה שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת רִבְקָה וַתְּהִי לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה וַיֶּאֱהָבֶהָ וַיִּנָּחֶם יִצְחָק אַחֲרֵי אִמּוֹ 'Isaac then brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he took Rebecca as his wife, and thus found comfort after his mother's death.'[14] Who will be the woman worthy to enter my mother's tent, emulate her ways, and be a source of solace and happiness to me as my mother was to her husband? Our Rabbis say that when Isaac brought Rebecca to his house, she began doing instinctively the very dutiful acts his mother would do, a wonderful replacement for maternal love.

"It's a wonderful thing — a mother;
Other folks can love you
But only your mother understands.
She works for you, understands you,
And forgives you anything you do.
And then the only bad thing
she ever does to you —
Is to die and leave you.

"My craving for old books and manuscripts is intensifying. This interest is coupled with Hakham Shelomo's books. I would ask Dad to take a special interest in this material, see that it is kept in good condition, aired and sunned, far from white ants and rodents. A catalogue must slowly but surely be made. This is a priceless collection in Calcutta. The Seminary librarian asked if Hakham Shelomo's family would be willing to sell the material for a very high price. I said I would inquire."

13. Proverbs 1:8
14. Genesis 24:67

December 29, 1948. From New York:

> "The Seminary library is currently displaying a number of books in sixteen different languages — one of which is Arabic — but in Hebrew transliteration. And guess whose book was included? Hakham Shelomo Abid Twena! (Misspelled Tavina) who translated into Arabic the story of the German leader, Guss Oppenheimer, and printed it in his Calcutta press in 1897. I pointed out the mistake in spelling to the Seminary librarian and Professor of History, Alexander Marx, a man of about seventy, who promised to correct the error. He was very interested in the fact that the Twena library was in Calcutta, and asked that special care be taken of it. I assured him that I had asked my father to look into it."

January 5, 1948. Dad writes:

> "The wisest course is to make an offer to Hakham Shelomo's family for their complete library, excluding prayerbooks, of course. The condition of the material is heart–rending. No airing and no sunning. The only surviving son is over seventy, feeble and forgetful. Should he agree to some reasonable offer, I fear his sisters may veto it. If I could at least make a list of the books, I would send it to you, but it is not practicable. [In fact, a very reasonable offer *was* made and rejected out of hand: 'Baba ka hai' [It belongs to our father!], they were quoted as saying." While these suggestions were being bandied around, bundle after bundle of already moth–eaten precious writings were being transported and immersed by the Hakham's son into the Calcutta Geniza, a well of water, and lost forever.]

My birthday greeting to Dad, dated 27th December, 1948, his 54th:

> "My darling Dad, Everything must be huddled in a corner to make room for your birthday. I am so overwhelmed by an inner joy that I feel it almost impossible to write what I feel. Your presence would make up for all the unnecessary words I express now, and had the opportunity of giving you a tight kiss. Since my emotions deserve expression and have been suppressed by, and restricted to, mere words, I am going to let myself go and let you have a bit of my heart אַשְׁרֵי יוֹלַדְתֶּךָ [happy the mother who bore you] for having borne a son of your loyal calibre, a father so loving and self–sacrificing, a brother so attached and mindful of his own. There is nothing so dear to on this earth as you, the light of my eyes, the joy of my existence. A blessing you were to me when we were together; may we continue to be so when we are apart. For as I ponder the rabbinic warning אוֹי לַבָּנִים שֶׁגָּלוּ מֵעַל שֻׁלְחַן אֲבִיהֶם 'woe the children who are exiled from their father's table', I shudder to think of the consequences. But with your goodwill and blessings, I will succeed in this supreme responsibility placed upon me. I pray that I be granted an affectionate heart, a ready obedience, and a respectful bearing so that I may, in some measure recompense you for your anxious care and self–denying love. May I remember your wise and earnest counsels and pious teachings! Your kindness and solicitude are unbounded, as angels before me by the Almighty, a constant guide and consolation. May all sorrow and affliction be far from you, and may you be blessed with

an old age of health and prosperity, gladness and peace. Most of all, may your table be increased and multiplied with the happy reunion of your children and grandchildren in the Land of our forefathers. May it be said of you: וַיִּזְרַע יִצְחָק בָּאָרֶץ הַהִוא וַיִּמְצָא בַּשָּׁנָה הַהִוא מֵאָה שְׁעָרִים וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ ה' 'Isaac sowed in that land and reaped a hundredfold the same year. And that Lord blessed him.'[15]

"This letter, together with two others from Meyer and Ruby, is timed to reach you next Monday at sunset. I can but imagine the birthday scene: Uppermost is Granny with baskets of sandesh *[Indian confection]* presenting you with a crisp note [bill] (which you never spend), her eyes gleaming with the joy of אֵם הַבָּנִים שְׂמֵחָה *[a happy mother]* as she kisses you in silent blessing. If you take a studio picture in your new Hanukka suit and send a copy to me, I'll have framed pictures of you, Mum, Meyer and Ruby to keep me company at all times. Your loving son, Ezekiel"

From Calcutta. January 5, 1949:

"My dear darling Eze, What immeasurable pleasure and satisfaction your highly welcome letter gave me is indescribable. I laughed and wept tears of joy at the knowledge of having such a loyal and loving son. Whatever I have done for my family was with a keen sense of duty and I am glad that I have accomplished something, which will turn out to be permanent. Your letter arrived exactly to schedule — half an hour after sunset on 3rd Tebeth. It is certainly a million times more precious and valuable than any printed card. Now I reciprocate with a full heart the second part of Isaac's blessing to his son. If you remember, after I had partaken of the sweets and wine you offered me before your departure for America, the earlier portion of that blessing, ['May the Lord give you of the dew of heaven and the fat of the earth …'[16] and now let me conclude with the second part: וְאֵל שַׁדַּי יְבָרֵךְ אוֹתְךָ וְיַפְרְךָ וְיַרְבֶּךָ וְהָיִיתָ לִקְהַל עַמִּים וְיִתֵּן לְךָ אֶת בִּרְכַת אַבְרָהָם לְךָ וּלְזַרְעֲךָ אִתָּךְ 'May El–Shaddai bless you, make you fertile and numerous, so that you become a community of peoples. May He grant you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your offspring.'[17] For my part, I consider that if only a fraction of your sweet blessings reach me, my mission in this world will have been fulfilled.

"I had a new suit made for Hanukka and wore it on Shabbath Hanukka in exceptional circumstances. Maghen David's Hazan had overstayed his stay in Madhupur, and frantic efforts to get a temporary replacement failed. S. Rassaby, who had filled in with plenty of time that previous week, וַיֵּשֶׁב , couldn't do מְקֻיָּן on no notice. Elias Kelly of Neveh Shalome was out of town. As I entered synagogue on Shabbath morning, A crowd gathered round me, pleading with me to read Parasha. Abraham Hazan of Bethel, agreed to come over only after he completed it in his synagogue. This meant טוֹרַח צִבּוּר [troubling the congregation with unnecessary wait] for about an hour. I couldn't permit that. So I struck a bargain. I agreed to read up to Rebiee and then await Abraham's arrival. So in God's name I took out the Torah and asked Furjoo [the usual Somekh] to retire in favour of Uncle Elias [a much more dependable prompter]. My heart was in my mouth but God

15. Genesis 26:12
16. Genesis 27:28
17. Genesis 28:3-4

helped me through and I was told I read excellently without a hitch or mistake, reading with great excitement and Masala [spice]. In fact, when Abraham Hazan [who had a feeble voice for a cavernous synagogue like Maghen David] began reading Hamishi, congregants complained: 'Musleah should have continued.' Little did they know that I could not do any parasha on a moment's notice and make a success of it.

"Returning to my birthday celebration, in addition to routine sandesh, blessings and kisses, Granny presented me with three beautiful ties from Phelps … [a fancy store].

"I have applied to the Reserve Bank for the usual permit to your brother and sister in Palestine. In case they finally reject my application, I would then request you to remit from the funds at your disposal that amounts to forty dollars to each every month.

"I have been trying to find words to express my admiration for you at your success you have attained thus far. So I have composed a small prayer in which I beseech the Almighty to look Himself on your behalf for a life partner for you who will make you happy throughout your life. ה' אֱלֹהִים. הָאֵל הַמְּזוּג זְוּגִים. אִם יֵשְׁךָ נָא מַצְלִיחַ דַּרְכּוֹ שֶׁל בְּנִי הַקָּטָן. תֵּן לוֹ אִשָּׁה כִּשְׁרָה בַּת זוּגוֹ וּשְׁמַח לִבָּבוֹ. וְזַכֵּהוּ בַּתּוֹרָה וּבַחֻפָּה וּבְמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים אָמֵן. ['O Lord God, Maker of marital matches, grant my younger son good fortune to find a fitting life partner who will make him happy. May he continue to merit Torah and good deeds, and in due course, the wedding canopy.']

"The other day I was reading a book Meyer sent me from Palestine in which I found the following concerning the reading of Parasha [one of the 54 weekly segments of the Five Books of Moses or a personal comment based on a rabbinic teaching] in the presence of a grandparent. ר' יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הָיָה רָגִיל לִשְׁמֹעַ פָּרָשָׁה מִבֶּן בְּנוֹ בְּכָל עֶרֶב שַׁבָּת. פַּעַם אַחַת שָׁכַח וְנִכְנַס לְרְחוֹץ בְּאוֹתָם מֶרְחֲצָאוֹת שֶׁל טְבֶרְיָא וְהָיָה סָמוּךְ עַל בְּתֵפוֹ שֶׁל ר' חִיָּה בַּר אַבָּא. נִזְכַּר שֶׁלֹּא שָׁמַע פָּרָשָׁה מִבֶּן בְּנוֹ. חָזַר וְיָצָא. אָמַר לוֹ ר' חִיָּה בַּר אַבָּא. וְלֹא כֵן לִמַּדְתָּנוּ רַבֵּנוּ: אִם הִתְחִילוּ אֵין מַפְסִיקִין? אָמַר לוֹ. חִיָּה בְּנִי! חֲזַר וְיָצָא. אָמַר לוֹ ר' חִיָּה בַּר אַבָּא. וְלֹא כֵן לִמַּדְתָּנוּ רַבֵּנוּ: אִם הִתְחִילוּ אֵין מַפְסִיקִין? אָמַר לוֹ. חִיָּה בְּנִי! חֲזַר וְיָצָא. אָמַר לוֹ ר' חִיָּה בַּר אַבָּא. וְלֹא כֵן לִמַּדְתָּנוּ רַבֵּנוּ: אִם הִתְחִילוּ אֵין מַפְסִיקִין? אָמַר לוֹ. חִיָּה בְּנִי! שָׁכַח הִיא בְּעֵינֶיךָ שֶׁכָּל שׁוֹמֵעַ פָּרָשָׁה מִבֶּן בְּנוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא שָׁמַעְתָּה מֵהַר סִינַי? שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר. וְהוֹדַעְתָּם לִבָּנֶיךָ וְלִבְנֵי בָנֶיךָ . . . יוֹם אֲשֶׁר עָמַדְתָּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּחוֹרֵב . . . [Rabbi Yehoshua was accustomed to listen to a Parasha of his grandson every Friday. On one occasion he forgot this practice and entered a bathhouse to have his Shabbath bath, the same one in Tiberias that Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba was using. Suddenly, Rabbi Yehoshua realized that he had not heard his grandson's Parasha. He began leaving when his student Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba queried him: Did you not teach us, Rabbi, that once a bath has commenced, it should not be interrupted? He replied: Hiyya, my son! It is also a tradition of greater moment that one who listens to his grandson recite Parasha [a section of the Torah], is as though he has heard it on Mount Sinai! — and what be a more auspicious experience than at Sinai?]"

Shabbath Hanukka last will always remind me of my trip to Canada with a good fellow Seminary student, Sam Scolnic. Dad was reading the Sefer in Calcutta's Maghen David and his son was on pins to read in a small synagogue in Quebec with a Jewish population of about eighty families. January 13, 1949. From New York:

"It is fascinating that in every nook and corner of the world, Jews assemble in synagogues and community centers to observe an ancient tradition faced with bizarre, old communal conduct. Services were to start at 9:30 a.m., but fifteen minutes later, when the Hazan [they have no Rabbi] did not arrive, one of the congregants began the service. Five

minutes later the officiant walks in, obviously annoyed that the congregation did not wait for him, goes straight to the front of the synagogue, puts on his tallit, and instead of sitting in his usual seat, takes one in the last row. Several people came to him literally begging him to be reconciled, to no avail. He kept shaking his head negatively and waving his hands threateningly. Left alone when persuasion led nowhere, and seeing he ceased to attract any more attention, he quit his seat at the back and removed his gown. By then it was time for the Torah–reading. While with his despicable behavior he shamed himself, he stopped short of dishonoring the Torah. He was the only one who could read [besides myself], and I was hoping that he wouldn't and I would be given the opportunity by default. That would really have been a parallel father–son happening in opposite sides of the globe! As it was, the Hazzan read so fast and made so many errors, that I wished he had carried his intransigence a little further. During the Musaph he refused to lead, he told my friend and me in Hebrew: צַר לִי נַפְשִׁי בָּאֱמֶת [I am fed up!]

"For lunch, we were invited to the home of the president where we were treated to a most delicious meal worthy of Shabbath Hanukka. I had a copy of יִתְרוֹעֲעוּ [the Hanukka Pizmon] with me, and explained that the beautiful Hebrew script was that of my uncle in Calcutta, who had sent it to me to continue the family tradition. The previous evening, as my friend and I sang Shabbath songs, I took out the copy of יִתְרוֹעֲעוּ and chanted it. I was overcome emotionally, and burst into tears thinking of the second miracle in our day — the defeat of the massive Arab armies at the hands of the little Jewish defence corps — yes, it was worth יִתְרוֹעֲעוּ אַף יָשִׁירוּ shouting in praise of God and singing in joyful thanksgiving!"

January 30, 1949. From Calcutta:

"Today is a day of universal rejoicing for Jews in every part of the globe. The recognition of 31 nations has been given to the State of Israel among which is one of the most stubborn opponents of Israel. I feel like giving vent to great inner joy as the victorious army of Israel marches forward from strength to strength and demands the respect of every nation, big and small, all aghast at the amazing speed with which this small state has become a power in the Middle East within a few months of its birth. Who does not see the Hand of God in all these miracles? Who can say the days of miracles have passed? Is not our God אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה , waging this battle on behalf of His beloved ones? We have seen this repeated in our time

וַיַּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַיָּד הַגְּדוֹלָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה' בְּמִצְרַיִם -- וַיַּאֲמִינוּ בַּה' "And when Israel saw the wondrous power which the Lord had wielded against the Egyptians … they had faith in the Lord."[18] May God help and guide the wise leaders on whom has devolved the grave responsibilities of laying the foundations of a future secure State of Israel.

"Every other person you meet in Calcutta is bound for Israel. Every one seems to be planning a future there. It is now all too obvious what the future has in store for us חוּץ לָאָרֶץ [outside Israel]. The determination of the Indian government to refuse recognition when the whole of Europe, United Kingdom, the [British] Dominions and USA have declared that this state has come to stay is not a very happy augury for בְּנֵי עַמֵּינוּ [the

18. Exodus 14:31

Jewish people in India]. Still so long as we are fated to be here, we have no alternative but to remain a subject nation [sic!] and call out to Him to hurry our deliverance. You will be astounded at this sudden change in my tone, but events are moving so rapidly that he who cannot see a blurring of his future [here] is blind. I certainly think that the younger generation has no future here unless they would be satisfied with a much lower standard of living and become assimilated. This is not an exaggerated picture of what's going to come, and many who believed in their future prospects here are now awakening to the dangers involved.

"Eric and I played an extended game of towli [backgammon] and what do you think was the result? 8 to nil in my favour. If his ship is still in port next Saturday, he will call again to try his luck." [Cousin Eric Morris was an engineer on board ship navigating across the seas.]

February 17, 1949. From Calcutta. "My dear children, The best news I can give you today is my victory over my sworn enemy — or enemies, shall I say? The arch conspirator, that infamous Sriramulu, whom I raised from a lowly position to become my lieutenant, and who desired to usurp my position ultimately — has fallen victim to his own schemes. A few days ago, he resigned on the plea of having received a better post in Albert David & Co [a pharmaceutical firm]. Be it as it may, a great institution [BNE] has been freed from a plague. He came to me with tears rolling down his cheeks and asked for my forgiveness and blessings. I granted him both. The hard time I spent in the office over the past year was the worst in all my 30 years in BNE's organisation. I might have contracted any kind of incurable disease through incessant worry and thoughts. My reputation suffered, as I became practically a nonentity. Indiscipline among staff spread far and wide. Mad schemes were introduced and failed. Lacs of rupees [lac=100,000] were wasted on so–called 'scientific' theories invented by hardly tried and inexperienced men. Our advice, views and opinions, were thrown to the winds. Anything Monk Rasputin put to the Czar was regarded as the order of the day. Today, crest–fallen, they have all come back to me, not acknowledging, in so many words, the wrong and injustice they had perpetrated, but their action speaks it. I am overwhelmed. This sort of victory is hardly believable. On the morrow was Shabbath Sheera, and as the victory of Israel over the Egyptians was being recounted on the Sepher Torah, I was inwardly thrilled [over my personal victory]. For was I not the Israel and Sriramulu and his host the Egyptians? In my last letter I quoted two verses from the Sheera as applied to the new victory in our time of Israel over the Egyptians. Who knew that within a week, that miracle was going to be repeated for me personally? So my dear children, join with me in praising the Almighty for the great achievement through the Lord's mercy."

October 12, 1949. From Calcutta:

"A great Nes *[miracle]* has happened. The enemy of the Jews, the great Sriramulu, the Haman who planned and partially succeeded to annihilate Jews, met with the fate he intended for the עַם סְגוּלָה *[the people of God's treasured possession]*. He died suddenly from a heart attack on the first day of Sukkoth on the eve of his departure for the U.S.A. to obtain a sales manager's diploma. It is not for anyone to rejoice over one's enemy's

death, but this case is like Amalek, Haman and Pharaoh. With the defeat of each, Israel burst into song and festivity. Though S. resigned, he would closet himself with the directors [of B.N. Elias & Co] and propose plans against Jewish employees. So he has been given the measure of Heaven."

November 4, 1949. From New York:

"I know it is wrong to rejoice over one's enemy's downfall, but when the antagonist is an anti–Semite, relief is in order. What is miraculous as Haman's predicament is that S. suffered his fate as he was about to fulfil his evil project. How true the words of the Psalmist: לֹא כֵן הָרְשָׁעִים כִּי אִם כַּמֹּוץ אֲשֶׁר תִּדְּפֶנּוּ רוּחַ "Not so the wicked; rather they are like chaff that wind blows away."[19]

Dad writes, February 27, 1949, that a Beth Din was established in Calcutta with Hakham Daweed Girjee as "Av Beth Din," and David Jacob Cohen, Hazzan of Maghen David, and Sam Rassaby, as members. The question people raised surrounded the competency of the 'Hakham'. He came to Calcutta from Baghdad around 1924 at age seventeen with an amount of knowledge nobody was prepared to vouch for. The Beth Din was soon confronted with a serious question of Halakha. Cohen resigned over an issue publicly stated as monetary — Hakham Daweed contracted to receive emoluments of fifty rupees per month while Cohen was offered nothing. But the real issue was halakhic. A Christian woman, pregnant from a Jew, agreed to abide by Jewish law upon conversion to Judaism except the Sabbath because she had to work on Shabbath to earn a living. The Av Beth Din asked to lead in the matter said plainly: Ma arif [Arabic= I don't know!]. It was then decided to refer the matter to the Baghdad Beth Din. Within two days, however, Hakham Daweed got together two members of the community and performed the conversion. David Cohen's place was taken by the Mohel, Sassoon Cohen, whose knowledge of פֶּרוּשׁ מִלָּה *[the meaning of Hebrew words]* was questionable."

[Hakham Daweed's diploma finally came to light a few years later in a complicated case of a Get *[Jewish divorce]* he conducted in Calcutta in which the justices in a Jerusalem Beth Din came down hard against the 'Hakham'.]

March 24,1949. From New York:

"I have asked authorities about [the above question of conversion]. The stipulation of the girl in question could not be accepted by any Jewish court of law. Strictly, she couldn't have been converted, but that woman should have been taken to a corner and asked not to make that condition openly, but to accept every aspect of Judaism unconditionally. In favour of conversion is a passage in Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 21b, 22a, מוּטָב שֶׁיֹּאכְלוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשָׂר תְּמוּתוֹת שׁחוּטוֹת וְאַל יֹאכְלוּ בָּשָׂר תְּמוּתוֹת נְבֵילוֹת 'it is better for a Jew to eat the flesh of animals about to die yet *ritually slaughtered*, than the flesh of dying animals which have perished'. Interpreted, it is better for the mother to be converted before the birth of the child rather than complicate the matter of the conversion of the baby as well as that of the mother after the baby's birth."

19. Psalms 1:4

March 6, 1949. From New York:

"On the question of Jewish law, I would like to draw your attention that squeezing certain fruits for juice is **not** permitted on Shabbath. The law originates in Chapter 2 of Mishna Shabbath, continues in the Gemara on that section, concluding: Shulhan Arukh, Hilkhoth Shabbath, section 320, para.1. Olives and grapes are forbidden to be squeezed, but if juice came out by itself, it is permitted to be drunk, though the fruit was intended for eating. Mulberry and pomegranate may not be squeezed. If the juice exuded by itself, it may be drunk only if these fruits were meant for eating; but if they were intended for juice, the juice is not allowed. But other fruits may be squeezed.

"Maimonides in Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoth Shabbath chapter 21, says the following: Combing is forbidden because of threshing (אֵב מְלָאכָה), and squeezing of olives and grapes is forbidden because of combing. Therefore squeezing of mulberry and pomegranate is forbidden lest people squeeze them like olives and grapes. But other fruits like quinces, apples of any species may be squeezed on Shabbath because they are not capable to be squeezed like olives and grapes. I give these details for our own use because I am aware that we do squeeze pomegranate, which is not permitted. The exception is לִרְפוּאָה – for health purposes, it is permitted.

"I have just removed the tissue paper from the Megillah, supplied and tailored by Uncle Elias to put between the rolls of parchment before the first of two practice readings. Once again I will miss Purim at home and thanks for the gift — a little flattering — which I will use to build my library. I look forward to the day when Dad and all will use some of the books in it for satisfaction from pearls of wisdom.

"Last Shabbath, I had lunch with Dr. Simon Greenberg and family. He now lives in New York as acting President of the Seminary in the temporary absence on leave of Dr. Louis Finkelstein. A more God–fearing man I have not met, plain–speaking, wearing his heart on his sleeve. He was a very successful rabbi in Philadelphia for 21 years for these reasons, in my opinion: His own perseverance and whole–hearted devotion to the rabbinate, his deep faith in the Jewish people giving him confidence to advance unperturbed, and last but not least, his wife being a major help in his success. His home is Hebraic, his family life loving, his relationships kind and encouraging. One subject we talked about was the effectiveness of trying to persuade someone who has no faith or belief in God. Dr. Greenberg had long come to the conclusion that it was futile talking to an atheist about God. In his own words, faith is a gift of grace. Only those blessed with the grace and kindness of God can have faith."

February 6, 1949. From New York:

"I'm glad you didn't give me up as lost and had confidence in my ultimate survival. I had to do well in the last exams as it's in the Musleah blood to be successful. So far, כְּשִׁמּוֹ כֵּן הוּא 'as is his name, so is he'.

One person I have not mentioned in my letters — my own dear respected master Moosa. Please convey my respects to him and hand him ten rupees for Purim. As a token I intend, בְּלִי נֶדֶר, to give him this gift every year as long as he needs it. For is it not true that he laid the basis of my Hebrew reading? And in keeping with the Talmudic injunction, one must respect someone from whom one learns a single sign אוֹת.

"The Israeli elections appear to me as if in a dream. Yes, our people are free, free from the iron bonds of the oppressor, liberated from the persecutions of the ages, facing a future as glorious as our past. It has been an inherent characteristic of the Jew — dogged determination and personal initiative to survive and build Eretz Israel. It wasn't the nations of the world that gave us our homeland. The Jews themselves, realizing the great value of a land called theirs, decided that Israel must come into existence. The world acknowledged facts, not fairy–tales. They recognized existing and effective government, not care–takers of the holy soil. If you have read the new constitution, you will recognize the presence of several of the old laws of the Talmud. One very important point is the complete absence of capital punishment. Though punishment by death is found in the Five Books of Moses, the rabbis of the Sanhedrin made it very difficult to put anyone to death, with minute enactments of court judgments whereby witnesses must be examined and re–examined. Most exciting it is for me to think that I have a brother and sister in the new–born Israel, whose children will be first–generation Israeli citizens born in the Land. It also creates in me a burning desire to visit Israel soon, to partake there the incessant joys of our people in a new and healthy civilization. Blessed is our generation that we have witnessed the flowering of Israeli nationalism and statehood! May we be worthy of living in better times of peace and brotherhood!"

Dad reported, March 21, 1949, that I. J. Cohen, Honorary Secretary [secretary with no emolument] of Calcutta's Maghen David Synagogue died, and that N. B. Elias, the Treasurer, offered Dad the Secretary's position. Dad agreed on condition he would be given a full–time personal assistant, because one communal organization, Oseh Haised, fully occupied his free time and it would be against his conscience to accept a job for its prestige to which he could not do justice. The deal fell through as the authorities would not concur with his terms.

March 24, 1949. From New York:

"I spent a dull Purim away from home, enlivened only by thoughts of the 'Nauwta Hashta' *[a card game played at home on Purim alone]* and Towli *[backgammon]*, despite the knowledge that the active Purim gamblers were out of town — Sam and Eric in England, Meyer and Ruby in Israel, and Hazkellu [I] in the land of gold and silver. Strange but true! But I did walk into Purim services with my age–old Megillah proudly under my arm.

"The month of Nisan now casts a longing, lingering look behind as Pesah is straight ahead and triggers a bold look ahead leading me to the thought that even after I have a home of my own, assuming it is in Calcutta, Pesah night will be reserved for Dad and family to partake of home–made wine from the same curious–looking cups as when I was a kid — rabbi or not. Its a real ordeal to be a stranger on a night when it is a special delight to enjoy a sense of belonging, to have a feeling of family cohesiveness, to experience that added inspiration derived from the Musleah enactment of each segment

of the Seder. [The Arabic word for Seder is Shitta–kha, personal participation]. This year again I will be a guest, having been invited by my room–mate, Mordecai Halpern, to his parents' home in St. Louis, about 800 miles away. His father is a rabbi in one of the bigger congregations in the Mid–West, and his mother is reputedly a wonderful cook!

"Since last writing, I met a fellow whom I was long looking forward to talk to — the famous Moshe Haiby [he subsequently changed his name to Havivi. Two of his sons were ordained by the Seminary, one of whom has a pulpit, the other has since become a medical doctor.] He came to the Seminary [from Philadelphia where he was a teacher] to consult with the director of Jewish Education. I banged into him as he was leaving the Seminary and I was coming in. He pretended he was in a great hurry to get away, but invited me to his home in Philadelphia for the following Shabbath, including Hulba! [fenugreek, a favorite Middle–Eastern appetizer] As luck would have it, I received a speaking assignment from the Seminary at Staten Island and had to cancel with the Haibys. [The invitation was never renewed, and I didn't have the opportunity to eat Hulba there!] [I write this after Pesah 2001 as I heard of Moshe's death in Israel. Barukh Dayyan ha–Emeth.]

"The Shabbath being Tetsavvey I spoke on the Jews of India, far away from the main centers of Jewry, having been guided by the Ner Tamid [Eternal Torch] of Torah that has kept Jewish life alive virtually without rabbinic leadership. And in St. Louis on the last day of Pesah, taking as my text the Prophet Ezekiel's Valley of Dry Bones, I said that I had posed the same question of my native community of Calcutta: 'Shall these bones live?' Shall a community with little or no spiritual vitality be able to live creatively once again? I responded affirmatively that with motivation generated by an inspired leader, there was hope to resuscitate it sufficiently for renewal in the Land of Israel." [Was my prediction realized?]

March 27, 1949. From Calcutta:

"We have been seriously considering calling you to India to spend your summer holidays, it being understood that your passage to and fro will be by air. Two questions: How would the vacation affect your commitment for additional studies at the Seminary? And would the Government of India hinder a return passage and thereby cause a delay? Unless we are certain about your getting back in time, I would not risk a journey out. Please let us know your reaction to this proposal. Then there are problems that might arise regarding the journey itself. If your plane lands in England or any other European airport, would your passport adequately cover you? On no account should you land in any Arab country en route. You must try airlines that don't touch at Arab ports even for re–fuelling.

"Aunt Ray insists that you send her some Kasher LePesah face powder regardless of cost of freight or duty. Aunt Rams tackles the question from a religious angle. She thinks it is a great Miswa to beautify oneself on a major festival, so from the point of view of לְכָבוֹד מוֹעֵד [honor of the Festival] she feels you should give them this satisfaction."

April 4, 1949. From New York. "My revered and beloved father, your expression of your intention to call me back to India this summer has indeed taken me by surprise. I am glad you put it in the form of a suggestion, giving me full scope to use my initiative on the subject. Needless to say, I have given it maximum thought, and here is my analysis: Against the proposition: 1. Although the fact of your suggestion implies that the financial aspect of the round trip has been settled in your mind, I know, Dad, that the decision was not an easy one, as I can imagine what a strain it is on you to make me so comfortable here. I cannot convince myself that to tax you so would be justifiable on my part. But in the light of your decision, this argument does not seem conclusive. 2. The most important consideration, however, is that I am now two years away from home and have four years to go. Were I to come home to India this year, I would still have four more years to go when I return from my holiday with you. But if you so will, I can avail myself of the holiday next summer (1950) when the time will exactly intersect my stay in America. I feel strongly about this, as I don't rule out the possibility of your visiting Israel next year. In Israel, the family can re–unite and after a short stay, you and I will return to India where I will spend the rest of my holiday. 3. This is a smaller point but can have larger repercussions. Fast–moving events in Calcutta indicate that the entire community has become very unstable, and I don't want to face questions at this juncture about my future. A year would give me time to give the problem more serious thought.

For the proposition is the one all–important factor — a welcome, long–awaited, happy home–coming I need. Attacks of nostalgia, which have become frequent of late, have made me yearn for a few days at home. The feelings expressed so often in my letters are conclusive enough to show how much I miss the fuss made over me, the love of my own flesh and blood, the tender care of my guardians.

"In balance the cons outweigh the pro, though by a very little. In considering my reply, you will note a significant change in me, nearer maturity than boyhood, a grappling with real facts rather than giving in to the excitement of the thrilling opportunity to return to India. Praying that I should be worthy of your blessings. Your son, Ezekiel."

April 8, 1949. From Calcutta:

"Darling Eze, At last we decided to send you a parcel of Halek and trust you will get it in time to partake of it on the Seder nights or on the subsequent days. Granny's image will prominently be before you as you cast eyes on the Halek pot. Until we are once again fated to sit around a common family table, plenty of love, Dad."

[In Granny's handwriting:] "My dearest Ezekiel, TIZKOO LAYSHANIM RABBOTH [in Rashi script]. Laklak [Arabic=You are missed]. God bless you give you long life and helth [sic!] You will enjoy my hand [–made] halek amen. your d[ear] grany"

[In Aunty Hannah's writing:] "My darling Ezie boy, I am sure you will be surprised to receive a few lines from me. Let me wish you a very happy Passover. God bless you with long life, health and every prosperity, Amen. I wish you were close to me for a tight kiss. With love and best wishes, Aunty Hannah"

[In Aunty Ramah's writing:] "Eze darling, Best wishes for a very happy Passover. We hope to hear you had thoroughly enjoyed yourself [in St. Louis]. Love and kisses to you, A. Rams."

[In Uncle Elias's writing:] "My dear Ezekiel, Let me wish you with all my heart an enjoyable Hagh Happesah, and the Almighty protect you throughout, Amen. Tiskoo Leyshanim Rubboth. Uncle Elias."

[In aunty Rachel's writing:] "Darling Ezekiel, You may bet that all of us will miss you once again on Passover night and throughout the feast. I pray that God will give you long life, health and happiness, and [fulfil] your heart's desires, Amen, and hope that we will all meet very soon. I wish you were here to partake of the nuts, as it will surely go abegging [=unclaimed] without the children. Uncle Elias did not spare himself [hold back] to buy in quantities the very first day after his illness. I hope to receive the powder in time. Love, from Aunty Rachel."

June 26, 1949. From Calcutta. "My darling Eze, It was not till 9:30 p.m. on Lahad night [Motza–ei Shabbath], when Aunt Sim opened the letter–box in fun before going home that she discovered that a letter from you was deposited therein. After Habdalah, both Granny and I opened the letter–box but were disappointed in turn. It must have been after 8 p.m. that the postman [=mailman] quietly slipped the letter in the post–box. We were even not aware that such late deliveries were being made of foreign air–mails." [Even so smart a man like Dad could occasionally be bluffed. No late deliveries were ever offered by the Indian postal service. Rather, I think, it was a trick played by the family to prevent a letter from me delivered earlier on Shabbath from being for my Dad the source of anxiety and restlessness throughout Shabbath if he knew it had been delivered.]

I had apologized for missing my letter by two weeks. Dad replied:

"Please be assured that we never misjudged your prolonged silence. We knew you were engrossed with your preparations for exams. We did not for a moment guess that you were retiring at 2 a.m. We had never ceased from praying for your success. Your love and reverence for me are undoubted, and if you have unconsciously committed any act short of expectation, you are forgiven — nay, twice forgiven. Ever since your mother died, I have been to all my children guide and friend. Time will tell whether that great attachment was sincere.

There is nothing that I had not sacrificed on the altar of love for my children. There have been many disappointments from your brother and sister, all since forgiven, and I always hoped that you would make up for the deficiencies of the others, and as a consequence reap the blessings of Almighty Father. I have even at this hour no doubt that you will act as a model son and do your duty toward me as I had done in small measure toward my own dear parents. We frail human beings are all apt to make mistakes, and so long as we do not persist in those mistakes, and learn to repent, we are forgiven וּמוֹדֶה וְעוֹזֵב יְרוּחָם . *[in the Kippur Shahreet, 'One who acknowledges errors and pledges to refrain in future is forgiven']*

"I have stated before and I repeat that the less you think in terms of returning to India [upon ordination] the better for you. Emigration is proceeding apace, and despite sickening conditions prevailing in Israel, local Jews are prepared to do or to die. For them, no sacrifice is too great just to get a foothold in the Homeland. Despite the sufferings of those who have made Aliyah already, the prospective emigrants are undaunted. In India, conditions are not too rosy. The main industries such as jute have been crippled by the partition of India and Pakistan. Jute mills are losing 21/2 crores [=ten million rupees] per month against profits heretofore of twice and thrice as much. Stocks have practically no value. Unemployment is rife and miseries of respectable middle–class homes are untold. For a Jew it is hundredfold more difficult because *they are no longer British and not quite Indian*. Jewish offices have closed and Jewish influence has waned. Where and how is one to exist? Therefore the safest haven is Israel, despite all the difficulties, present and future. For you to eke out a respectable living with a wife (who you would not wish to work or desecrate the Sabbath) would cost in the neighbourhood of Rs.1200 to 1500 per month. Where is this money going to come from? Therefore please proceed on the assumption that the U.S.A. will be primarily your home, or with a little luck, אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל, Israel, but in terms of dollars or pounds sterling, you will be better off in the U.S.A. where a comfortable and decent living for a person of your dignity and standing can be guaranteed. In three to five years, Calcutta and Bombay's Jewish population will halve. Such is my impression of the not too distant future, so your planning must be based on this most recent information. Though you would be justified to return to your flock and work for their uplift, I can see no such opportunity offering itself. After my mother, I would perhaps myself want to emigrate and live on whatever God provides me till the end of my days. Conditions are too fluid and none can predict the turn of events. You should therefore play the safer game and not reckon on an Indian pulpit."

June 27, 1949. From Calcutta:

"The anticipated good results of your exams where you expect honours in every subject is most encouraging. May the Lord grant you דֵּעָה חָכְמָה בִּינָה וְהַשְׂכֵּל [knowledge, wisdom, understanding and discretion] to grapple with the tremendous task, which you have so gladly and cheerfully undertaken, and acquiesced to solitary living in strange surroundings. May the Great God grant you the strength and the health to continue the labour of love and may you continue your course with the same zeal and enthusiasm as when you set foot in the Seminary until you achieve your goal. Your very apt reference to זְכוּת אָבוֹת *[merit of our Fathers]* has thrilled me. Knowing I am devoid of all זְכוּת , I attribute your success to a very great extent to that of those who have gone before me. May their spirit always guide you and lead you to safe paths, and may you shed added lustre to the great name and fame of מַצְלִיחַ Musleah, of which we are all proud. Each of us in his own time and in his own way has striven to keep the family tradition alive — a tradition ringing with piety, purity and love. On you, my son, I pin my utmost confidence and faith, and I am sure you will carry the family banner aloft and hand it over untarnished to the generations that will follow."

Dad and I had been arguing intimately about 1.My return to India and 2. Possible marriage plans before ordination. On both he had very strong views:

"If you still dream about an Indian pulpit, let me disabuse you of this illusion. The Jewish communities in India are dying. Jews in this country have no future. In five years, their position will become intolerable. The edifice outside India will be built on surer foundations. Every schoolboy and girl must think of a life in any place but India. Your own future plans seem to be based partially if not entirely on a home in India, and so, likewise, the choice of a wife. Any Indian community worth its name cannot offer you a position commensurate with your qualifications. I fully realise what an important role a wife plays in the life of her husband. No great man has achieved his goal without the help of his wife as co–worker. History is full of instances where inspired co–partners made the ideal attainable. For success in the life of a rabbi to be assured, his wife must be a fitting בַּת זוּג, [partner] nothing less. I am a plain–spoken simple man. My heart and mouth are one, and in any action I take, I do not mince matters. If I have reason to take a particular course, I have the courage of my convictions to admit it. If you can't agree with me today, you will do so tomorrow. I will not deflect you from the course you wish to pursue. I assure you that you will have ample opportunity to meet people in all walks of life, and as time for your ordination draws closer, more interest will be taken in you. You perhaps know the story of Kalba Sabooa. What was the prospective father–in–law's views of his would–be son–in–law before the latter's study of the Torah and after he had emerged a full–fledged rabbi with a following of hundreds of disciples." [Dad was referring to the Talmudic story (Ketuboth 62b–63a, Nedarim 50a) of Rachel, daughter of Kalba Sabooa, who married Akiba, then the former's shepherd, against her father's wishes, who disinherited them. When Akiba returned home as a great scholar and a considerable following, his father–in–law was reconciled to him and bequeathed them half of his wealth. Another surprising fact of Dad's Judaic knowledge.] "People are following you, watching you progress from day–to–day. They may have worthy daughters who may just suit you and become your life companion. All I say is: Don't hurry. Things will work out to your satisfaction. See how smoothly plans fell into place for your rabbinical studies. What does this and other events in your life indicate? There is a Super Force behind you — זְכוּת אָבוֹת [our Ancestors' blessings] as well as your mother's שַׁפַּע [Arabic=abundant workings]. You shall be notable and your achievements prominent."



Figure 100. Boaz Cohen's Teaching Tenure — Celebration Speakers.

Boaz Cohen, Seminary Professor in Talmud, celebrated an anniversary of his teaching tenure on the faculty. Present were some of the famed members of the faculty: (top left) Louis Ginzburg (bottom left) Mordecai M. Kaplan (seated), Louis Finkelstein (speaking), Boaz Cohen (seated, right). (top right) Saul Lieberman (speaking), Alexander Marx(seated), H.L. Ginsberg (seated right). (Bottom) ENM at the function. Also pictured, (bottom left) fellow students, Mordecai Simon, and Moshe Greenberg (back to camera). (bottom right) Gil Epstein, (?), Myron Fenster.

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA

Dad and I had been arguing intimately about 1.My return to India and 2. Possible marriage plans before ordination. On both he had very strong views:

> "If you still dream about an Indian pulpit, let me disabuse you of this illusion. The Jewish communities in India are dying. Jews in this country have no future. In five years, their position will become intolerable. The edifice outside India will be built on surer foundations. Every schoolboy and girl must think of a life in any place but India. Your own future plans seem to be based partially if not entirely on a home in India, and so, likewise, the choice of a wife. Any Indian community worth its name cannot offer you a position commensurate with your qualifications. I fully realise what an important role a wife plays in the life of her husband. No great man has achieved his goal without the help of his wife as co–worker. History is full of instances where inspired co–partners made the ideal attainable. For success in the life of a rabbi to be assured, his wife must be a fitting בַּת זוּג, [partner] nothing less. I am a plain–spoken simple man. My heart and mouth are one, and in any action I take, I do not mince matters. If I have reason to take a particular course, I have the courage of my convictions to admit it. If you can't agree with me today, you will do so tomorrow. I will not deflect you from the course you wish to pursue. I assure you that you will have ample opportunity to meet people in all walks of life, and as time for your ordination draws closer, more interest will be taken in you. You perhaps know the story of Kalba Sabooa. What was the prospective father–in–law's views of his would–be son–in–law before the latter's study of the Torah and after he had emerged a full–fledged rabbi with a following of hundreds of disciples." [Dad was referring to the Talmudic story (Ketuboth 62b–63a, Nedarim 50a) of Rachel, daughter of Kalba Sabooa, who married Akiba, then the former's shepherd, against her father's wishes, who disinherited them. When Akiba returned home as a great scholar and a considerable following, his father–in–law was reconciled to him and bequeathed them half of his wealth. Another surprising fact of Dad's Judaic knowledge.] "People are following you, watching you progress from day–to–day. They may have worthy daughters who may just suit you and become your life companion. All I say is: Don't hurry. Things will work out to your satisfaction. See how smoothly plans fell into place for your rabbinical studies. What does this and other events in your life indicate? There is a Super Force behind you — זְכוּת אֲבוֹת [our Ancestors' blessings] as well as your mother's שִׁפְעָ [Arabic=abundant workings]. You shall be notable and your achievements prominent."

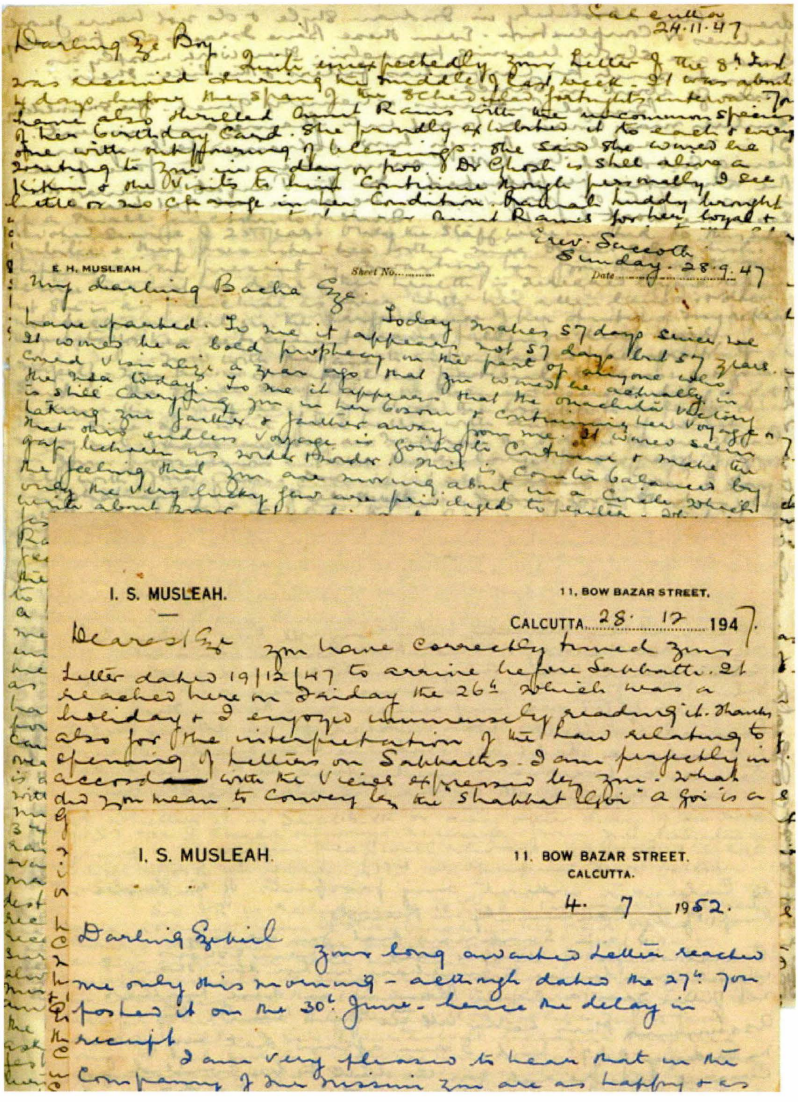


Figure 98. Specimen of Dad's Endearing Salutations.

Specimen of Dad's endearing salutations: Darling Eze Boy, My Darling Bacha [child] Eze, Dearest Eze, Darling Ezekiel.

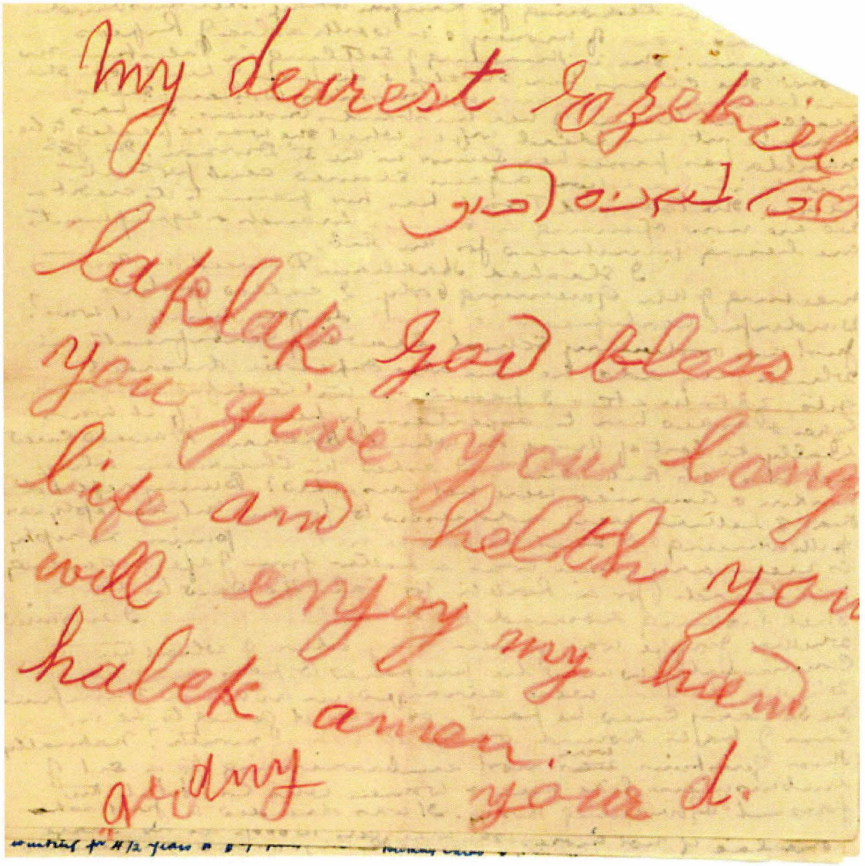


Figure 99. Granny's Passover Greetings #1.

My grandmother Masuda spoke and wrote little English, and was handicapped by poor eyesight. Here is her Passover greetings: My dearest Ezekiel, Tizkoo le-Shaneem Rubboth [in Rashi script: May you merit many years! Oriental Sephardi Yom Tov greeting.] Lukh Kakh! [You will be missed.] God bless you give you long life and helth [sic!]. You will enjoy my hand Halek [date juice used for Haroseth made with her supervision, and mailed to me in New York] amen. Your d.[arling] Grany.



Figure 100. Boaz Cohen's Teaching Tenure — Celebration Speakers.

Boaz Cohen, Seminary Professor in Talmud, celebrated an anniversary of his teaching tenure on the faculty. Present were some of the famed members of the faculty: (top left) Louis Ginzburg (bottom left) Mordecai M. Kaplan (seated), Louis Finkelstein (speaking), Boaz Cohen (seated, right). (top right) Saul Lieberman (speaking), Alexander Marx(seated), H.L. Ginsberg (seated right). (Bottom) ENM at the function. Also pictured, (bottom left) fellow students, Mordecai Simon, and Moshe Greenberg (back to camera). (bottom right) Gil Epstein, (?), Myron Fenster.

CHAPTER 9

THE WAY HOME — BY LETTER

YEAR THREE

September 1, 1949. From New York:

> "I spent the summer at the same camp as last year having a great time enjoying the lakeside, trying to swim [after two summers I still have not mastered the art of swimming; the instructor told me I'm too scared of water to let myself go], hiking and looking after the kids.
>
> "This year I am told I will be in a Semikha course studying the laws of Mourning and Divorce, over and above the normal courses.
>
> "I shall soon begin my investigation on formalities regarding my trip to India. I believe the round–trip is around 1800 dollars, and I feel I must bear part of the cost myself, however small in proportion.

September 9, 1949. From Calcutta:

> "I am not unhappy that you have failed to master the art of swimming. Though parents are bound to teach their children to swim as much as is their duty to teach them Torah, yet I am extremely nervous when I hear of my children going into the water.
>
> "I am most pleased at your high marks [grades] in every subject. I pray for your strength and intellectual capacity to cope with the hard work still in store for you. Be as the seed of Joseph — let no evil eye attack you, בֵּן פּוֹרַת יוֹסֵף Joseph is a fruitful bough [who escapes the evil eye]. God has favoured me with a set of intelligent children. I can say with pride that all my children have gladdened my heart, in the spirit of Proverbs [10:1]:
>
> בֵּן חָכָם יְשַׂמַּח אָב a wise son gladdens his father, or shall I say, בָּנִים חֲכָמִים יְשַׂמְּחוּ אָב wise children gladden their father.

A New Year card for Dad, September 1949, in anticipation of a summer meeting in Calcutta of Meyer and family and me. Quoting Isaiah 60:4, שְׂאִי סָבִיב עֵינַיִךְ וּרְאִי כֻּלָּם נִקְבְּצוּ בָּאוּ לָךְ בָּנַיִךְ מֵרָחוֹק וּבְנוֹתַיִךְ יֵבָאוּ עַל צַד תֵּאָמַנָה... Raise your eyes and look about, they have all gathered and come to you, your sons shall be brought from afar, and your daughters ... אָבִי. מְאוֹר עֵינַי וְשִׂמְחַת לִבִּי. אֲנִי מְבָרֶכְךָ לְשָׁנָה שֶׁל שָׁלוֹם וְשַׁלְוָה וְהַצְלָחָה וְהַרְוָחָה בְּכֹל מַעֲשֶׂה יָדֶיךָ שָׁנָה טוֹבָה וּמְבוֹרֶכֶת ה' יְרֵבֶּה אֶת כּוֹחוֹתֶיךָ וִימַלֵּא אֶת כָּל מִשְׁאֲלוֹת לִבֶּךָ אָמֵן. בְּנְךָ הַקָּטָן. יְחֶזְקֵאל נִסִּים. נְיוּ יארק רֹאש הַשָּׁנָה תש"י

> "Dad, the light of my eyes and the joy of my heart, I bless you for a year of peace and well–being, prosperity and comfort in whatever you do, a good and blessed year. May the Lord increase your strength and fulfil all your heart's desires. Amen. Your younger son, Ezekiel Nissim. New York, Rosh Hashana, 5710.'"

September 25,1949. From New York:

> "I conducted Rosh Hashana services at a Sephardi synagogue in Brooklyn, N.Y. Most interesting was my stay at the home of a widower, a fine older man of about sixty. He kept repeating how his home had changed since his wife's death — the walls were bare, no white curtains for Rosh Hashana, the house neglected. He still works hard for his

living. To my query as to why he didn't ask any of his seven children to help, he discoursed on his independence. As long as he had his feet to stand on and his hands to work with, he would not seek anyone's assistance, not even his children's. A most gentle and large–hearted man, he would not rent one of his three rooms, which he reserved for strangers and guests. He frequently came into my room to see if I was comfortable, once at night to put my covers back over me! Here is a צַדִּיק גָּמוּר , going to synagogue twice a day, giving charity privately though he himself is not too well–off. His favourite saying was: He who respects his fellow is as though he shows respect to God."

October 6, 1949. From Calcutta:

"Your widower host impresses me much. Although he had done for you what I had done for my own children — seeing that they were covered as they slept — I don't know if I would have done the same for someone else's child. So I proudly acknowledge that in his goodness he surpasses me, for which he has my greatest admiration and respect.

"You will be surprised to know that we almost did without Kapparoth this year. The price quoted was twice last year's, so we decided to do without the fowls [chickens] and pay the poor the equivalent amount in cash. The seller later reduced his price to our satisfaction and relief, because none of us felt we were doing the right thing by abandoning a time–honoured custom.

"There was a [Berith] Meela in synagogue on Kippur — one of the Ferris boys' family. Sassoon Cohen [the Mohel] did not do the Mesisa [sucking the blood, which would have served as breaking of his fast]. The cup of wine was given to boys below the age of 12, and did they enjoy it! It was pleasurable to see congregants from all three [neighbouring] synagogues witnessing the happy event. Tradition has it that our Patriarch Abraham also was circumcised on Kippur, so it is a privilege to witness a circumcision on this solemn day.

"An interesting point of Jewish law: A woman gave birth for the first time to twin sons. The first to be born died. The other survived. Is the living child considered a Bekhor — firstborn — and entitled to Pidyone?" [No, the living child is not the Bekhor. The dead child "opened the womb" of his mother and so he was the Bekhor.]

October 14, 1949. From New York:

"You ask about Kapparoth. I haven't changed my mind in this respect. I still think it is inhuman, bordering on צַעַר בַּעֲלֵי חַיִּים cruelty to animals. I see no good reasons for transferring sins — or projected punishment — on to the necks of innocent chickens. Symbolism is good at times, but not at the expense of practices that are crude and torturous. It would have been better had you paid the equivalent of the cost of the chickens to the poor. You may have saved the profit of the chicken seller."

November 9, 1949. From Calcutta:

"You staggered me with you arguments about sacrifices," [I argued: "The petition for the restoration of animal sacrifice as worship in synagogue has no value to a modern Jew. All that is important for us today is to recall that at one stage, sacrifices were an integral part of the Temple service."] "I do not think I can reply adequately when I lack deeper

knowledge of ritual laws. If ever I come across anything to sustain my arguments in favour of sacrifices, I shall revert to the subject. Until then, תִּיקוּ [the Talmudic term that ends a discussion with no rabbinic conclusion on the subject]!

"Regarding the issue of Kapparoth, the Babylonians were always considered to be above the Palestineans in their knowledge of the Law, and far from accepting the principle or being guided by Western customs, one should investigate the whole idea of Kapparoth. You must have a mass of sources at your disposal from where you may gleam the other side of the issue and arrive at correct conclusions. You are permeated with a humanitarian feeling, making killing of all animals and birds a thing of the past. But give the matter as much thought as possible and discuss it with others, and if I hear any useful and interesting information, I will send it to you.

"Eric brought us some lovely plates [china] from Antwerp. He says it costs 53 rupees though he admits the sales girl made a mistake in billing. [I think I know my cousin better!] He also brought me a beautiful brown velour hat from Liverpool. He is a real darling. We are perturbed at his emaciated state because he cannot stomach the food served on board ship."

[Eric was an engineer on a commercial ship for a few years.] In October 1951, Dad, who would enjoy challenging him to games of Towli, reported two accidents on board ship:

"On the day after Rosh Hashana, Tsom Gedalia, when the ship was anchored in Hamburg, Germany, he had examined some pipes in the bottommost part of an empty hatch and was going up back on to the deck by narrow iron steps, — in fact, he had put one leg on the deck — when he was struck by crates suspended from the ship's crane and fell almost unconscious 25 feet to a closed middle hatch. He hurt his spine, head and wrist, and his body badly bruised all over. The captain and members of the crew came to his aid; a doctor took x–rays and fortunately, nothing abnormal was traced. An angel must have been with him, because had he fallen 50 feet to the next level, the story would have been different. An prior accident happened five years ago when he fell into the Irrawady River with his attache case when his ship was berthed off Rangoon, Burma. A group of manges [dock workers] saved him by exercising extraordinary pluck. His mother shed tears of joy and thanksgiving for three days for her son's providential escape."

November 9, 1949. From Calcutta (Continued):

"Your mother's anniversary falls on Wednesday next. This reminder must be too late, but I know [the rabbinic saying,] אֵין מַזְהִירִין לְנִזְהָר ['We don't forewarn one who is already heedful]. I also rely on Meyer without my reminder because I am sure there will be no omission with regard to this sacred date. This completes the twelfth year of our parting. I will read Maftir on Shabbath, and with the availability of the Oseh Haised bus, the cemetery visit will be considerably facilitated."

December 14, 1949. From New York:

> "I am so wrapped in the Torah atmosphere and the opportunities to study here, that I find myself thinking how difficult it will be for me to tear myself from the extravagant facilities for study at my disposal once I graduate. Everyday I feel a greater urge to study harder and harder, and what a pleasure! Time passes so fast and I look at my watch, another hour has passed as if in a few minutes. On many an occasion, I become so engrossed in a subject when it is long time past to go to bed that I cannot leave the investigation in mid–air. What better life can be spent than in the study of Torah! The vastness and depth of יַם הַתַּלְמוּד [sea of the Talmud] is so enticing and engrossing that I will ever regret the lack in India of this type of intensive education which would have made me so much more advanced before entering the Seminary. Now that I know the resources of such study, I shall surely make them available to my children. Of course, no single individual can be held responsible for this barrenness in our educational standards, but the community as a whole is the defaulter. I hope to rectify this for our people."

November 9, 1949. From Calcutta:

> "Besides your determination to succeed and very hard work, you have your father's blessings all the time and on all occasions, whether you are asleep or awake. With your ordination, my mission in this world will be complete. All I hope for is that I shall be alive to witness that great day, the fulfilment of my dream. That occasion will take me to the borderline of sixty, and I do not know, if alive, in what condition I'll be in. Let us hope for the best and rely on our Maker to make our course as easy and as pleasant as possible. ה' הוּא הַטּוֹב בְּעֵינָיו יַעֲשֶׂה ['He is the Lord; He will do what He deems right.'[1] וְיהִי חֲזַק וֶאֱמָץ. בְּנִי. יָשֵׂם בְּעֶזְרֶךָ 'Be strong and of good courage, my son, and may God be your help.

December 1949. From New York to Meyer and Ruby in Israel

> "We have much to rejoice for during the next few days. First of all, it's Hanukka, which has new meaning for us now that we have attained a new freedom in our day having re–dedicated the Holy Land, which had been contaminated and defiled by foreign rule for centuries. Next it's Dad's birthday and we have cause to rejoice with him on his nearing the 60th–year mark with all its joys and sorrows mixed in. Why, in a very few years we can call him זָקֵן and in a few more יָשִׁישׁ . We'll celebrate all these milestones in real pomp and ceremony when at least I shall consider it an honour and a privilege to be present. Today I came across a fresh interpretation of זָקֵן. The Talmud asks: 'Who is a זָקֵן?' מִי שֶׁקָּנָה חָכְמָה 'One may be considered זָקֵן even before one attains the chronological age of 60 if one possesses knowledge from books or from experience. Assuredly, Dad fits into this category already, and it is a source of great personal exaltation that he is our father."

January 6, 1950. From New York:

> "It is a rich experience to be in New York during winter vacation. Everyone is in the gayest mood possible. I ran around town visiting the opera [a play mostly in a foreign language, German, French, or Italian, where words are sung for the most part], a ballet

1. I Samuel 3:18

[interpretive dancing], and most exciting, I was in Times' Square, [a picture of which I had sent you sometime ago with the blowing advertisement of Camel's cigarettes] on New Year's night. This was one of the most unique experiences of my life. On a single street were assembled about three–quarters of a million people, merry–makers, drunks, curiosity fans, old and young, awaiting the turn of the year indicated by an electric ball on the New York Times' building forming the figures 1950.

"An hour or two before midnight, crowds begin to form, breaking police lines. All traffic is redirected. The hooting of horns, and jingling of bells as zero–hour approaches, enhance the scene of festivity. All moving space is occupied by the gaiety of humans who forget their daily drab of work and toil. At one minute before midnight, expectancy reaches frenzy pitch as the Times flashes the sign 'A Happy New Year' and the electric ball becomes 1950, while everyone greets everyone who can be reached with good fellowship.

"On one of the weekends of the vacations, I visited Williamsburg, the home of the orthodox Jewish groups of Hasidim. It can truly be called יְרוּשָׁלַיִם הַקְּטַנָּה [Little Jerusalem] The entire neighbourhood is Jewish. On Shabbath not a shop is open. After synagogue services, Jews dressed in their best attire return home for Kiddush the same way we do. People who don't have homes step into the nearest restaurant with the sign 'Strictly Kosher' in Hebrew. After the meal, everyone chants Birkath Hamazone — a very moving ceremony with fifty or sixty people chanting together. I stayed at one of the many dormitories of a Yeshiba, but they are not quite as comfortable as the Seminary's. Though they limit study to Gemara, I admire their love and whole–hearted devotion to the tradition. They foster what is called פֵּאוֹת [side–locks', and wear long daglas like Grandpa would put on, and old–time hats their ancestors would don in Europe. Their swaying in prayer ranged from mild movement of the head and body we are not unaccustomed to, to a vigorous body–head–hands movement. Visitors at the meals paid for them after Shabbath, — they were trusted enough, otherwise they would not be part of that kind of observance. After the afternoon meal, we visited the head of the sect, an old rabbi from Europe, who happens to be revered by members who do everything but worship him. For Seudah Shelisheeth, this kind of extreme reverence is clearly seen as they watch the rabbi eat. As the rabbi finishes a course or even a spoonful, he hands it over to his following, who polish off the remnants. To them, it is considered a Mitswa to eat out of the rabbi's plate. Singing follows with much zeal typical of the נְשָׁמָה יְתֵרָה."

I received two gifts for Passover, 1. Halek [date juice for Haroset] supervised by Granny and 2. a cap [Kippa] embroidered by Aunty Ramah. I blessed Granny to be the joy and light of our home for many years to come, and told Aunty Ramah that we have so many unique items of her tireless labours and fine handiwork that there would be enough for our children and grandchildren. I was going to say שֶׁהֶחֱיָנוּ over it on the first night of Pesah.

I tentatively plan to visit Israel this summer for two reasons: 1. It had been my life's hope and prayer to set foot on the holy soil of Eretz Yisrael 2. I have a growing sense of need to see my brother and sister and their families.

January 24, 1950. From New York:

> "Last weekend I took part in a symposium entitled 'Jews the World Over' where Jews from Yemen, Pakistan [Esther Gershone], and Ethiopia were represented, and I from India. Jews in Ethiopia with a population of 50,000 still sacrifice animals three times a year — Rosh Hashana, Kippur and Pesah — on a mountain top of Gonda, their capital. They were not aware of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, nor of the existence of the Talmud, not even of the Jews in other parts of the world but Yemen. They use the Hebrew spoken at the time of Isaiah, 750 years before the Common Era — the old script unintelligible to most of us today.
>
> "Since I was in that vicinity and slept over at a place nearby, I took the opportunity of visiting Rabbi Seligson's synagogue, and walked down there in the morning. He is the assistant to Jonah Wise, whose father started Reform Judaism in America. It is the largest Reform congregation in America. A really abbreviated service, typical of Reform. — three lines each Komah [aliyah], no Haftarah, and no Musaph, but a beautiful organ. Seligson told me how glad he was to see me for the first time in his synagogue and inquired about Dad. He said he had received a letter from J.R. Jacob from Europe. He took me over to his wife who promised to invite me to their home."

February 7, 1950. From New York:

> "Last night I dreamed about a fish market in Tiretta Bazar, and was surprised that it was so clean and orderly. I probably confused it with an American fish market, or perhaps a revolution had been staged in the exotic center of Bowbazar Jewry, having introduced health laws in that shabby market. Whichever is correct, you can see how my mind and heart work these days."

However keen Dad's intelligence, I never credited him with being a Yosef — a sharp interpreter of dreams. In his reply, February 19, 1950, he wrote:

> "Your dream of the Calcutta fish market has some significance, I am inclined to feel דָּג fish, is the equivalent of דְּאָגָה trouble, and I am afraid you are worrying and grieving about something. I only hope I am wrong. But if I have interpreted correctly, let your father know what is worrying you, and maybe we can discuss it together."

March 13, 1950. From New York:

> "Dad, you are a profound expounder of dreams. I must confess that my mind has been in turmoil for a few weeks now as a result of the severing of a close relationship which hurt me badly ..."

February 7, 1950. From New York:

> "Once a year students are sent to the congregation of a Seminary graduate to renew contact between the Seminary and the rabbi as well as give students an opportunity to experience a Shabbath in a community. I delivered a sermon. After the service I was overwhelmed by the numerous handshakes and congratulations. A Mr. Loth introduced himself as having been in Calcutta for two years, who knows Seligson and many Calcutta Jews, particularly the Bob Abrahams. You will hardly believe what happened next. A woman approached me with a kind of marriage proposal for her daughter standing next to

her. She asked me three questions. 'Are you returning to India?' — 'Yes'. 'What sort of girl do you think you would like to marry?' — 'I haven't met her yet.' 'Would you care to come over to my house?' — 'Sorry, I'm too tired.' Poor girl! Poor mother!"

February 19, 1950. From Calcutta:

"The problem with servants [domestics] is grave and acute. At present, we have an additional cook as a standby lest Rahim [second generation] flees to his 'country' [native village] at any time. The standby draws five rupees a month more than Rahim does and does less than half his work. In the category of 'boys' [helpers], we have started a nursery. First, we employ a lad of 12 and pay him 25 rupees a month with tea and bread twice a day. Next is a boy of 11, employed by Aunt Diana. The third is scarcely 10 years old and working for Aunt Mozelle. And the 'baby,' 8 years old, is employed by Aunt Sim. The headquarters of these urchins is, of course, No. 11, where the foursome often meet and act out their childish pranks. Our youngster is the commander–in–chief whose orders are loyally discharged. These lads have had good recommendations from former employers! To give you an idea of salaries, cooks demand 50 to 60 rupees, some with food, some without. Sweepers [who sweep floors and clean toilets] earn 70 to 90 rupees and cannot be ordered about!"

April 7, 1950. From New York:

"The first Seder was spent at the home of Dr. Menny Rapp, the Seminary physician, the most pleasurable few hours I spent in this country. It was more than a Seder — it was my ideal. First, the family solidarity and feeling of oneness in the heart and mouth of each member gave me a composed feeling. The table reminded me of ours on Pesah night — arm–chairs and cushions, and the head of the table empty to signify the inability of the present family to fill the place of the 'old man' of the house, the former head, to take his place. Wine was plentiful and food of the best. The most unique part of the Seder centered around the children — both now attending college. It had been the dutiful custom of their parents to prepare them in a big way for the Seder. When they were smaller, the father would go over with them different commentaries and explanations on the Haggadah. Gradually he began making independent investigations for themselves and after each paragraph of the Haggadah they would record their findings and present them to the family. The father, very learned in Talmud, guides their discussions and answers questions. The mother, also a deeply learned woman and daughter of one of the chief rabbi's of Germany, said how remarkably the children's questions matured as the years went by, and cited the development. Everyone understood Hebrew; no one was in a hurry. Mrs. remarked that her father ע"ה used to say that they should hurry with the meal and slow down with the reading and discussions to stress that it was not the meal that was the central point but the Haggadah. Dr Rapp intrigued me with the presentation to me of a Sephardi Haggadah printed in Leghorn with the Arabic translation. Of all the people I would expect to be in possession of that type of Haggadah were the Rapps. But Dr Rapp came in possession of the volume when his brother–in–law, who was a professor of Semitic languages at Aligarh University, India from 1904–1914, presented it to him. While there was intense interest in our Seder customs, like the 'Where have you come from,' 'where are you going,' etc, Dr Rapp took exception to our eating the egg before haMotsie, it being understood that the blessing on Karpas is to be smaller than an olive so

that no Berakha Aharonah would have to be made." [I had no appropriate answer and have not been able to find any in the writings of Baghdad greats, Hakham Yosef Hyeem Z"L or Hakham Manashe Shaharbani Z"L. But I think that the custom of eating the egg early arose to accommodate the appetite of hungry family members whose last wholesome food was a couple of Shooftas at about 11 a.m. and enable them to prolong and enjoy the Haggadah with some amount of satiety. I suppose legitimacy was found in the fact that no Berakhah was recited before eating the egg — just Zekher le–Korban Hagigah, a remembrance of the Festive offering made on each of the three Feasts of Pesah, Shavuoth and Sukkoth — and so, too, no subsequent Berakaha was necessary.]

"One of the Rapp family members wished to prove from Hannah's prayer that the Hallel was appropriate to praise God for the downfall of Israel's enemies: עָלַץ לִבִּי בַּה' רָחַב פִּי עַל אוֹיְבָי כִּי שָׂמַחְתִּי בִּישׁוּעָתֶךָ 'My heart exults in the Lord, I have triumphed through the Lord, I gloat over my enemies, I rejoice in Your deliverance.' (I Samuel 2). As he arose to fetch a Bible, I volunteered to recite the prayer by heart. I don't know if that did the trick, but I was invited for Shabbath dinner. Dr Rapp and I went to synagogue and brought the good angels home for Shalome Aleichem."

April 23, 1950. From Calcutta:

"I have not been able to trace any rule whereby eggs may be eaten before עבדים. In fact, there is no provision, as far as I have been able to discern, for eating eggs during the Seder. All that is said, according to this source, is that it is meritorious to include eggs with the meal on Pesah nights, ordained on Pesah, in commemoration of the destruction of the holy Temple, which, we hope, will be converted to joy and gladness in the days to come. Eggs do not have the same status as those of Massa and Maror. The question, therefore, is: 'Is the egg on the Kayara [tray] merely for display purposes as is the זרוע (shankbone)?" [Dad obviously was referring to the absence of the shankbone in any ritual at the Seder, in contradistinction to the reckoning with Matza and Maror. The egg, therefore, falls in the category of the shankbone. We have continued the practise of eating the egg early, though it goes contrary to strict precept]

THE WAY HOME — FOR A SUMMER

DISCOVERY OF ORTHODOX POLEMICS

April 28, 1950. From New York. As it came closer to my vacation in Israel and India, I began making travel arrangements. The Indian Consulate in New York refused to have an Israeli visa stamped on my Indian passport, but demanded that the Israel Consulate issue its visa in the form of a letter, which the latter rejected out of hand. 'The Israeli Consulate, like any other consul, must issue the visa on the passport.' I then confronted the Indian Consulate: 'Which government does India recognize in the non–Arab part of Palestine?' He was stumped, but reiterated that I could get an endorsement for an Arab state in that region. I told him I wished a transit arrangement to Lydda airport, whichever country he considered it in. 'Well,' he said, 'we must give you an endorsement for Palestine, but if you travel in Israel and you want an Israeli visa stamped on your passport, you will not get the protection of the Indian government while you are in Israel.' I consented with a smile, and said: 'Sooner or later.' He laughed and told me: 'Frankly, the Indian government is contemplating recognizing Israel, but as long as it is not official, we have to operate within narrow limits.'

The round–trip fare to Calcutta via Lydda was $1406 dollars. But a friend by the name of Kessler had a friend who pulled strings and gave me a ticket for $940 dollars! In addition, Kessler promised me a present. He took me to a leather baggage store and offered me a brief–case. I already had one, so I fixed my gaze on a suitcase costing $50, which the shopkeeper agreed to sell for $30. I offered to pay. He said: 'Mrs Kessler and I wanted to buy you something for $20, so I'll pay $20 and you pay $10.' Fine. I now have a suitcase for $10!

May 9, 1950. From Calcutta:

> "There is much excitement both here and in Israel over our impending meeting after so long an interval. Although we are at present sans cook, sans boy, sans all help except a new sweeper, we are making every arrangement to see that you will not have to forego your favourite dishes. We have written to 'Song' [the domestic] and he has agreed to come immediately if we send him an advance of 150 rupees. I had also extracted a promise from Rahim [the cook] to be here by the end of June, and if he fails, I shall myself proceed to his village and pull him along! Please order your summer outfit at your end because tailors [most of whom are Muslim] have fled to Pakistan."

June 1, 1950. From Calcutta. [Since I was visiting in Israel en route]:

> "Give Meyer and Ruby our love and salaams, and pinch the kiddies for Aunt Hans. If you can smuggle either of them [Michael, 4, & Yael 3], bring them with you. Cheerio, son, God be with you.

דֶּרֶךְ שָׁלוֹם בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה בְּצֵאתֶךָ וּבָרוּךְ אַתָּה בְּבוֹאֶךָ ['A pleasant trip! Blessed shall you be in your goings and blessed shall you be in your goings.'[2]]

Left New York by Air–Malta June 18, 1950 en route to the Bermudas, Azores, Tangiers, Malta, and Rome (where I was pick–pocketed of a watch which a business associate sent for Uncle Elias). Changed to El Al for Lydda.

The only letter I wrote from Israel, June 29, 1950:

> "Meyer picked me up at the airport and went straight to Ruby and Elias in Ramat Gan where we spent a day bringing ourselves up–to–date and getting acquainted with Micha. He is a little devil, displaying many skillful tricks, bubbling over with energy. The next day we went to Jerusalem where we met the Kriegers [who taught Hebrew for two years at the two Calcutta Jewish schools in the late 30's] who were very helpful. Mrs. Krieger took us to Har Sion, the most inspiring trip I've taken in my life. We visited Herzl's tomb and the sign at it's approach was impressive:
>
> אַל תַּעֲשֶׂה לְיַד הַקֶּבֶר לְפִי כְּבוֹד הַמָּקוֹם אַל תְּחַלֵּל אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת זְכוֹר אַתָּה תִּמְצָא לְיַד קֶבֶר הֶרְצֶל!
> נְהַג. אַל תֵּשֵׁב עַל אַבְנֵי הַקֶּבֶר.
>
> Remember you are at the site of Herzl's grave. Respect the sanctity of the place. Do not smoke near the tomb. Do not sit on the stones of the tomb.

From Har Sion can be seen the walls of the Old City, now in the hands of the Arabs, Migdal David, the Mosque of Omar where the Temple once stood, the Hebrew University, and several Christian holy places. I felt the experience so deeply that streaks of emotion ran up and down my

2. Deuteronomy 28:6

body as I realised in what a historic place I stood. The ascent to Har Sion was replete with Biblical quotations like: מִי יַעֲלֶה בְּהַר ה' וּמִי יָקוּם בִּמְקוֹם קָדְשׁוֹ נְקִי כַּפַּיִם וּבַר לֵבָב אֲשֶׁר לֹא נָשָׂא לַשָּׁוְא נַפְשִׁי וְלֹא נִשְׁבַּע לְמִרְמָה 'Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place?'[3] יְפֵה נוֹף מְשׂוֹשׂ כָּל הָאָרֶץ הַר צִיּוֹן יַרְכְּתֵי צָפוֹן קִרְיַת מֶלֶךְ רָב 'Fair–crested, joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, summit of Shekhina [a term for the Divine abode], city of the great king.'[4]. Not far away were the Arab sentries, laughing and clapping in celebration of their Id–il–Fitr [Ramadan].

> "It's now 8 p.m. on Sunday in Hadera and the sun is just setting. I'm sitting in Meyer's verandah. A few hours ago we returned from a strenuous trip of the Galil — northern Israel. At this point Yael interrupted me to play with her …
>
> "We left for the Galil on Sunday morning, heading for *Haifa and Mount Carmel*, where Elijah proved false the prophets of Baal. A beautiful view of the port on the Mediterranean from the mountain top. *Meron*, The tombs of Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai, his son Eliezer, and Rabbi Yohanan haSandelar. Not far, a cave where Beth Hillel held their study sessions. In the distance, כְּסֵא אֵלִיָּהוּ from where it is believed Elijah will proclaim the advent of the Messiah. On the tomb of Bar Yohai I lit one candle for the Tanna, of blessed memory, and another in Mi Sheberakh for Dad and the entire family.
>
> **Ein Zeitim** and **Safed**, very high above sea–level. I visited the graves of Yosef Karo, Yitshak Luria (Ashkenazi), and the 400–year–old synagogue of Isaac Aboab, where I said my prayers. I must point out, here, that I was disillusioned with the 'rabbis' that frequent this place. They are of no higher calibre than the crowd that frequent Hakham Shelomo's [Twena] synagogue. The money we send there are used by these men for their personal maintenance, and left to me, I would stop their remittance. They did recognise the names Musleah and Hilali. A man by the name of Edrei, written to so respectfully by Dad has no office, and does not live in Safed. We happened to have met his brother in a Chai Khana [Hindi, tea shop] where he told us that his brother was then in Meron. The fund–raisers in Safed and Meron are one clique, and maintain post–office boxes in Safed for prestige sake. *Kfar Blum* — Meyer and Ruby's former kibbutz, where Meyer recognised vast improvements in the last few years. People live more comfortably now. I met many erstwhile Calcutta Jews chosen by [the Shaliah] Benny Port, whose social standard in India was no better than the gambling den and drinking bar, [but in retrospect were retrieved from intemperance for the benefit of the Jewish state.] *Tiberias*, on the Sea of Galilee, below sea–level. The hot springs, about two miles away from the city, are known from ancient times for their medicinal value because of the large percentage of chemical deposits. The town is divided into two — the old including the graves of Maimonides, Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai and his five disciples, Rabbi Akiba and Rabbi Meir Baal haNess. Both Ashkenazim and Sephardim have Yeshiboth here, and as we approached, were beckoned by each to patronise theirs. In the Sephardi section was a man who identified himself as Ohana who visited in Calcutta many years ago and met Grandpa, Hilali, D.J. and I.J. Cohen. I prayed in an old Sephardi prayer place no larger than 8'x 8.'

3. Psalms 24:3
4. Ibid. 48:3

"I took pictures of Rabbi Zrehen [Treasurer of Rabbi Meir's Sephardi Yeshiba] dressed in his regalia. He made Meyer write a letter to Lady Rachel Ezra reminding her of a pledge she made to purchase a set of Talmud for the Yeshiba.

"On the way, we saw horrific scenes of the war [1948] — houses demolished, fields burned, and whole settlements razed to the ground. I was overwhelmed by the notion that no less than a miracle brought us victory over the seven Arab nations whose intention to blot Israel out was foiled. Like with the Maccabees of old, with the help of the Supreme Being, the creative will and overpowering determination of our people, and the belief of right over wrong and its ultimate prevalence, Israel was delivered."

I arrived in Calcutta mid–July 1950, and Meyer and family a few days later. The most cherished of my first acts was to sit beside my father at the dining table. Until Meyer's arrival, we chatted almost non–stop, and provided with festive meals. One of the first questions Yael asked me in #11 Bowbazar Street was: דוֹד אִיזִי אַתָּה מַרְכִּיב אוֹתָנוּ 'Uncle Eze, are you going to take us for a ride (in Saba's car)?' We explored Calcutta, met old friends, and Meyer stocked up with clothes and shoes for the family. I relaxed for the most part, completed a Talmud assignment, and agreed to deliver a sermon on Kol Nidre night at Maghen David Synagogue. One of the fondest photos we have is that of four generations of Family Musleah seated on the sofa — Granny, Dad, Meyer and Yael. A good deal of my vacation time was spent courting, and getting engaged to Kathleen Jacob, a mistake both of us realized after a few months of my departure for the second part of my rabbinical studies. Dad later (February 25, 1951) wrote: "The experience you have undergone will doubtless serve you as a good lesson for the future. There is an Arabic saying: 'il ista'jal a'thar — he who rushes, slips.' By God's help there shall be no more slips, and your steps will be well–guarded."

In the same letter, Dad writes: "It is my intention to retire from public life immediately after you finish with the Seminary, or perhaps a year or two thereafter, provided my health permits. Then I would like to help with my experience and advice. I feel with your assistance I could possibly carry on with the Oseh Haised activities till the age of 60, but at some stage within this period some one must take over responsibility."

April 6, 1951. From Calcutta:

"Kathleen's wedding to Isaac Jacob is to take place at Neveh Shalome, the same day as Flower Abraham's to David Silliman. A conspiracy of fate might have snatched away your birthright but not your blessing. Your family's blessings, coupled with those of outsiders, are mere echoes of Heavenly blessings. For the great sacrifices in the name of Torah, your rewards await you. מַה טּוֹב וּמַה נָּעִים חֶלְקֵךְ אַשְׁרֵךְ בָּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה וְטוֹב לָךְ בָּעוֹלָם הַבָּא 'How good and how pleasant is your lot! Fortunate are you in your present circumstances, and equally fortunate shall you be in future.'

"Let me wish you from me and the family a very happy Pesah. May the Lord guard and guide you and grant you abundantly מְיָדוֹ הָרְחָבָה הָעֲשִׁירָה וְהַפְתּוּחָה from His open, ample and generous hand. וְיִתֵּן לְךָ בַּת זוּג לְקַיֵּמָה רְפוּאָה וְשַׁלְוָה אֹרֶךְ יָמִים וּשְׁנוֹת חַיִּים אָמֵן בְּרוֹב אַהֲבָה אַבָּא ['and grant you a life partner, good health and well–being, and long life.] "Lots of love, Dad"

October 11, 1950. From New York:

> "My visit to India is like a dream — lasting a short time, as long as it takes to close and open one's eyes. Dreams are so intangible that they cannot be made to stay. But their effects measure the value of such visions. I am so vitalised and refreshed by the visit home, I feel I can continue with that energy for whatever time it takes to finish my mission. Of course, I miss everyone immensely and I wish we could meet more often. Such future meetings are in the hands of the Dispenser of fates and no mortal being can supersede His will. We met, as it were, on borrowed time. No one could foresee when I left the previous time that we would meet again in three years. No one can tell now. Suffice it to say that those who are dear to each other are like magnets. There is a pull and a push and we get together again.
>
> "When the plane touched Lydda early the morning after leaving Calcutta, Ruby was waiting with her familiar red woollen coat. Again the meeting was dream–like, just for an hour, and I could very well have been dreaming for that hour. We had breakfast hurriedly, munched on summusucks, almond zalaybees and kakas, and it was time for another hard parting ..."

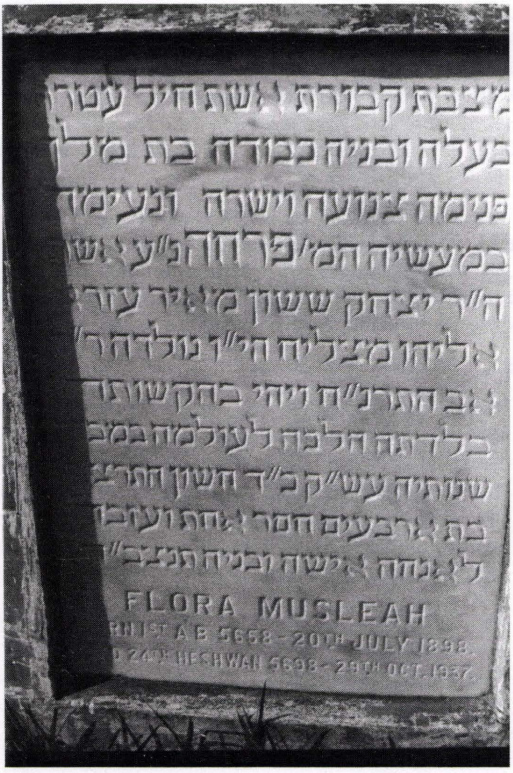


Figure 101. Mum's Tombstone Inscription.

On my return home, I visited my mother's grave and took a picture of it. Translation: The tombstone of a virtuous woman, crown of her husband [Prov.12:4], honored as royalty in her innermost being [Psalm 45:14], modest, upright and pleasant in her deeds, Farha, wife of Isaac Sassoon/Meyer Ezra Musleah, born Rosh Hodesh Av 5658. She died in childbirth in her choicest years, Friday 24th Heshwan 5698, one year short of her age 40, leaving her husband and children to mourn her loss.

FLORA MUSLEAH

Born 1 Ab 5658-20th July 1898

Died 24 Heshwan 5698-29 October 1937



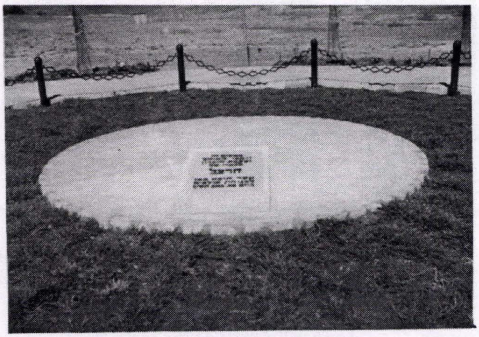




Figure 103. Visiting Herzl's Grave, Israel 1950.

Visiting Theodore Herzl's grave in Israel, 1950, with sister Ruby Mordecai.

Figure 102. Passover Guest of the Halperns.

Passover 1949 at the home of Rabbi and Mrs Abraham Halpern and their son, my Seminary room-mate, Mordecai.

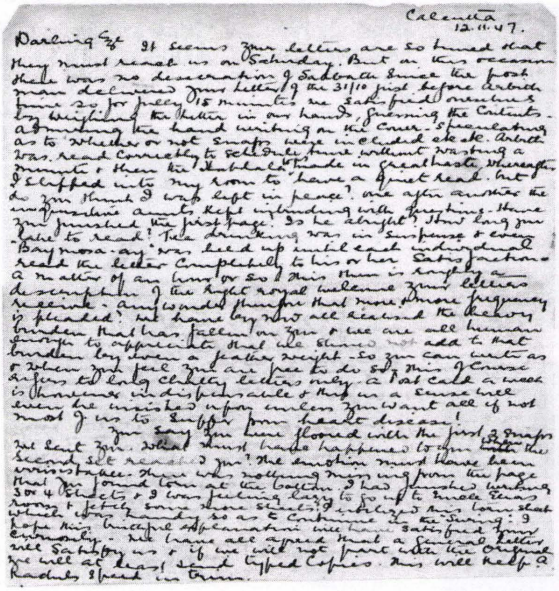




Figure 104. A Family Picnic, Summer 1950.

A family picnic on my 1950 summer vacation: (top) Aunt Mozelle. (middle) ENM sandwiched between Aunts Ramah and Seemah. (front) Cousins

Sammy & Mavis & Uncle Charlie.



Calcutta
12.11.47.

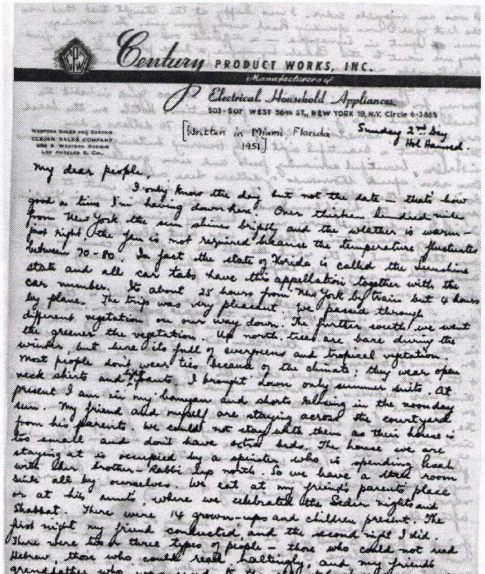
Darling Cyp It seems your letters are so timed that they must reach us on Saturday. But on this occasion there was no deserving in Sabbath since the post man declined your letter of the 31/10 just before Arbeit Time. For fully 15 minutes we Sabbath observers Joy Delight & the Letter in our hands, Guessing the Contents. A Stunning like hand writing on the Cover, Speculating as to Whether or not Snaps were included etc etc. Arbeit Was. Read Correctly to Sell Orders Time willent wasting a Moment & Then the Sabbath Made in great haste Whereafter I Slipped into my room to have a Quiet read. but do you think I was left in peace? one after another the unforeseen events kept intruding with greetings. Have you finished the first page? So he alright? How long you take to read! Tea drinking was in Suspense & over. Bay noon-ay was dead up until past ordinary dinner Read the letter Completely to his or her Satisfaction a matter of an hour or so. This Mum is simply Glorious de scription of the Royal Welcome your Letters receive - and wonder Plumpton Road more pregnancy if pleaded. We have by now all learned the History Burden that has fallen on you & we are all human enough to appreciate that she stands not add to that burden by how a Letter weight so Can write as & When you feel you can pen to she Sir. Mine of Course defers to Early Celibacy Letters only. A Rat Call a week is Thanksgiving in disposable & that in a Sense well every he insisted upon unless you want all of not most of us to Suffer from Heart disease!

Now Sorry you were floored with the first 2 Snaps but Sent You. What could have happened to them after the second set reached you? The Sunshine must Have been overstrained. Those who nothing more from the page that I found time at the Beginning I had wished working 3 or 4 Rickshaws & I Cannot help to put in Smoke Stacks Funny & Jetty Snaps. Have Stacks? Indeed I may Some that which about Sunday so as I Continue to the Evening: I Hope this Unexpected Explanation will have Satisfied your Expectations. We have all enjoyed that a Surround Letter will Satisfy us, & if we will not part with this Confound we will at Long last Stand Typed Copies. This will help a Reader, I feel in Town.



Figure 105. Dad in Pensive Mood.

Dad in pensive mood, as was so often his wont. This time, in the summer of 1950, he meditated on the unconformity of his birth date. He was born on the last day of Hanukka, but sometimes it fell on the day **after** Hanukka.



Century PRODUCT WORKS, INC.
Manufacturers of
Electrical Household Appliances
503-507 WEST 30th ST., NEW YORK 10, N.Y. Circle 6-3605

[Written in Miami, Florida 1951]

Sunday 2nd Day Hol Hamoed.

My dear people,

I only know the day but not the date — that's how good a time I'm having down here. Our thirteen hundred miles from New York the sun shines brightly and the weather is warm - just right. Ode you is not required because the temperature fluctuates between 70 - 80. In fact the state of Florida is called the Sunshine state and all cars have the appellation together with the car number. It's about 28 hours from New York by train but 4 hours by plane. The trip was very pleasant. We passed through different vegetation on our way down. The further south we went the greener the vegetation. Up north, trees are bare during the winter, but here it's full of evergreens and tropical vegetation. Most people don't wear ties because of the climate; they wear open neck shirts and pants. I brought down only summer suits. At present I am in my bonyan and shorts sitting in the noonday sun. My friend Alla Rupell are staying across the courtyard from his parents. We could not stay with them as their house is too small and don't have extra beds. The house we are staying at is occupied by a spinster, who is spending Hanukkah with her brother - Rabbi Lapp notah. So we have a vacant room with all by ourselves. We eat at my friend's parents place or at his aunt's, where we celebrated the Seder nights and Shabbat. There were 14 grown-ups and children present. The first night my friend conducted, and the second night I did. There were the three types of people - those who could not read Hebrew, those who could read fairly, and my friend's grandfather who was used to the old style pronunciation of the Seder. Under these circumstances it was difficult to explain to others the services & everyone's satisfaction. Nevertheless,

Figure 106. Interchange of Our Letters.

Interchange of letters. At one Passover holiday spent at the home of my good friend, David Jacobs in Miami, Florida, I was having so good a time that I wrote: I only know the day - 2nd day of Hol Ha-mo-ed - not the date!

I also made mention of the racial discrimination, particularly in public transportation.

CHAPTER 10

THE WAY HOME — BY LETTER

YEARS FOUR AND FIVE

Calcutta's Ambivalence

October 1950. From Calcutta:

> "I have not stopped dropping your Hamosee in your plate, an action which has an immense magnetic force of drawing you toward me. I had done it once [for three years] and succeeded, and shall not stop now until I succeed again.
>
> "On Friday, I went out to the cemetery [without a Minyan just to do the required readings for Mum's Yartseit] and was there at 6:40 A.M. A crowd of people arrived at about 7 :00 by public bus and were reading at a tomb about four rows above your Mum's [and I was able to say the Kaddish]. On Saturday I 'got up' Maftir and also said Kaddish. So this makes three years that you were unable to do your duty on the spot."

[Dad seemed somewhat peeved that, during my vacation in India, I had needled him about the justification of sharing the home between his wife and children, on the one hand, and his parents and family, on the other.]

> "If, despite all my endeavours I have failed to convince you that what you expected of me was beyond my means, I cannot say more. You must understand that by dividing my paltry income between two establishments, both sides would have suffered in many ways. My children were my first and foremost consideration, and if I did not practice economy in the way I did, you would have been deprived of several of the amenities, possibly your higher education too. If after all I had said and done I still stand guilty in the eyes of my children, it will be my misfortune. But if, at some future date, you review the whole situation dispassionately, I have faith that you will then take a more charitable view of things and be inclined to give me the benefit of the doubt and an honourable acquittal."

[I once read comments of a colleague on the act of forgiveness; they appear to be therapeutic, applied in this instance. 'We don't see and judge part of a given situation — we must view the whole picture. By recognizing that, amid the many things that, as husbands and wives, as parents, as children, amid the many things we did not achieve, there were stirring successes. There were times that we said just the right things; there were times that we saved a situation from getting worse. There were times that we did things, small and large, that, to someone else, made all the difference in the world.' (As when you told me, Dad, that, though I thought my maternal aunts had done you a serious injustice, that I should pay Aunt Helen Hallen a visit during my vacation because everyone had some good qualities, making amends for the other side of them.) We owe it to ourselves to see the whole picture, to judge ourselves on the good as well as on the bad. We have all had our failings. We have all made mistakes. Now it's time to forgive each other. Its time to forgive ourselves!]

Dad's birthday — 1950. December 4:

> "Once again it will miss Hanukka, but thereby will not lose any of its auspicious character. I shall say Yehi Shem [not Tahanun] on 3rd Tebeth, for what greater fortune is there than to have a father such as I have. The Midrash, in interpreting the verse from

Ecclesiastes 7:28, says: אָדָם אֶחָד מֵאֶלֶף מָצָאתִי -- זֶה אַבְרָהָם , 'I found only one human being in a thousand — a distinctive human being, this is Abraham.' I prefer to interpret it: זֶה אַבָּא מָארִי this is my revered father."

November 19, 1950. From New York:

"On idealism and the rabbinate. As a life–long pioneer, I don't let history happen; I direct it. I don't wish to combine money–making with the rabbinical profession. One can live comfortably without excessive luxuries. So the locale of my services makes little difference."

Dad implored me not to consider him in planning my future. How can I not? Even a person with little conscience will try to recompense a friend, let alone a father who made it possible for him to stand on his feet. I would be a brute and worse if I selfishly planned for myself only. I am prepared with my plan even if I am offered a salary below expected figures. Material well–being will be compensated by spiritual satisfaction derived from serving my native community and being with Dad and the family."

Dad was ever deeply concerned about the welfare of his unmarried sisters as well as the married ones, should they become widowed. For these he earmarked his entire Provident Fund. But he wanted further pledges from his children. This was my response: December 25, 1950. "Dad's request touched me deeply. It goes without saying that I will consider it my primary duty to them; perhaps as a way of compensation? By no means! No amount of arithmetic can figure out how much I am indebted to them. I harbour no ill–feeling for in–law victimisation of my mother. That's all passed and forgiven. How then would I forsake them in their greatest need should it arise? I would have stood by them even had you not mentioned it, how much more so now that you have? However, I hope that they will not need any assistance. In an optimistic light, I look forward to your table being enlarged in your lifetime when the closeness of our family will be further knit in an inseparable bond. It is not only economic well–being that makes for happiness but mental health too. If I will be able to contribute to any or both with respect to any member of your family, I will not shirk my responsibility. You can rest assured.

"I have not been induced that you *only* did your duty toward us, your children. If so, you certainly set up a very high standard for all parents. As often as I rehearse all your wholeheartedness and generosity toward children and the rest of the family, a greater deficiency is developed in me. You have certainly set up a challenge to me regarding my own future children. If I will be able to achieve even a fraction of your goodness to them, I will have been satisfied. You as a living example I will find it difficult to emulate."

Dad's response, undated:

"You have afforded me much relief at your agreeing to take up the responsibilities of such of your surviving aunts after my demise. I once made a similar request to Meyer when I made a payment of [a sizable fee] for his solicitor's training, money I had to borrow from my employers. With tears in my eyes I implored him to give me the assurance I have made to you. He replied unhesitatingly: אֲנִי אֶעֱשֶׂה כִּדְבָרֶךָ 'I will do as you say.' Now I have turned to you, and you have cheerfully and dutifully expressed your approbation, and filled my heart with untold joy and relief. I shall now die peacefully in the knowledge that there will be no faltering on your part from this your solemn promise

יִשְׂרָאֵל דִּבְרֵיהֶם כִּשְׁבוּעָה 'A Jew's word is like an oath.' May the God of our Fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob shower His blessings on you and your future home. 'May the doors of your home be wide open,'[1] יְהִי בֵיתְךָ פָּתוּחַ לְרֶוָחָה

אִשְׁתְּךָ כְּגֶפֶן פּוֹרִיָה בְּיַרְכְתֵי בֵיתֶךָ בָּנֶיךָ כִּשְׁתִילֵי זֵיתִים סָבִיב לְשֻׁלְחָנֶךָ 'Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children, like olive saplings around your table.'[2] יִרְאוּ בְּרָכוֹת אָבִיךָ גָּבְרוּ עַל בְּרָכוֹת הוֹרַי עַד תַּאֲוַת גִּבְעוֹת 'My soul shall bless you.' עֵינֵינוּ וְיִשְׂמַח לִבֵּנוּ עוֹלָם תִּהְיֶנָה לְרֹאשׁ יְחֻזְקָאל נְסִים 'The blessings of your father surpass the blessings of my ancestors, to the utmost bounds of the eternal hills. May they rest on the head of Ezekiel Nissim.'[3] I am overwhelmed with the feeling of rejoicing, and I do not know how and in what language to express it."

Dad became a popular marriage performer. His officiating created problems only when the weddings were scheduled in Bethel synagogue where his arch antagonist, D.J. Cohen was in charge. Problems arose for the wedding of Saul Ezra and Seemah Jacob, whose mother happened to have been my wet nurse. December 1950:

"As this wedding is to be held in Bethel, D.J. tried to hinder matters. He demanded a letter from the bride and groom asking for permission for me to officiate. Then he asked the couple to extract a letter from me addressed to the Bethel Board. I told Sarah Saddiq [Seemah's mother] to change the venue to Maghen David or look for a different officiant." [Finally, Rev. Abraham J. Silas, Hazzan of Sha–are Rasone synagogue, did the wedding.]

January, 1951. From Calcutta:

"Here is an interesting narration of my experience with Jewish refugees from Dairen, Harbin, and Tienstein [China], whose plane, bound for Israel, force–landed at Dum–Dum [Calcutta] airport on the eve of New Year. For some unexplained reason, I became the contact person. With Lady Ezra's authority and active help, the sixty–six men, women and children were housed at the Jewish Girls' Hostel, the accommodation becoming available because the girls were on holiday in Gopalpur [a sea–side resort]. There were older people, young men and mothers with babies, (for whom I had Horlicks [powder milk] ready), and good–looking boys and girls. I was helped at the Hostel by the aunts and Uncle Elias, who stayed there till all guests and hosts brought in the new year with great cheer.

1. Pirke Avoth 1:5
2. Psalms 128;3
3. Genesis 49:26

The group remained in Calcutta for about two days during which they were guests for lunch and dinner by Lady Ezra and Nissim Elias, visited the schools and synagogues and had a dance organised for them at the Judean Club. They thoroughly enjoyed the food and dancing, but no one took advantage of an announcement that the bar was open. They talked about their triple persecution under the Japanese, Soviet Union and the Chinese, and were extremely happy to be going to Israel on the last leg of the adventure. On the last evening at Lady Ezra's, where we, too, were invited, the airline buses picked them up and we accompanied them to the airport. They hugged the aunts and gave me, Uncles Elias and Charles warm handshakes. We heard later that they were very appreciative of the hospitality of Calcutta Jewry, in which our family played a prominent role."

February, 1951. From Calcutta:

"I am enclosing two cuttings of the "Hindusthan Standard" and "Statesman" [local daily newspapers] showing the gathering at the All–Faiths Prayer meeting at Government House, Calcutta. [An annual event held on Republic Day, the anniversary of India's adoption of a constitution, held at the residence of the Governor of West Bengal.] Uncle Elias is prominently portrayed behind Dr B.C. Roy, Chief Minister of West Bengal."

April 29, 1951. From Calcutta:

"From all of the above factors [of negative responses of the Jewish institutions to a rabbinical fund], I recommend that you stay in touch with congregations in America, South Africa and Canada, because if the Calcutta Jewish community fails you, you have other avenues to fall back on. Although I would love to spend the rest of my life with you, it would be selfish on my part if I do not give you scope to work out your own salvation. Then again, if you are content to spend perhaps two years in India irrespective of the monetary consideration, I shall be happy to welcome you in my house and give you a free hand to convert it in whatever way it pleases you. You may select any portion of the premises for your office, bedroom, etc, Even if you get married, accommodation shall be provided for the couple. Whatever you do, think first of what is best for you and not of me or anyone else."

May 4, 1951. From New York:

"As I was leaving the hosts' home where I spent the Seder, one of the women told me: "בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה She meant to show off her Hebrew but made a bad error. She meant to say: 'God bless you!' but indeed praised God. So I told her that I interpreted it to mean that she was invoking God to bless me!"

August 26, 1951. From Calcutta to Meyer visiting London:

"With this letter I am enclosing some decisions forwarded by Rabbi Ouziel [of Tiberias, Israel] in response to queries put to him through the Jewish Association of Calcutta. [Apparently, intermarriage was taking a severe toll on Calcutta Jews: An Ashkenazi Jew and his locally proselytized Christian wife, and an indigenous Jew and his locally proselytized Muslim wife, to cite two examples. Are these conversions to be accepted?] This document demonstrates how important the Rabbi considers religious matters locally to be, and exposes the present local exponents of Jewish law as totally unqualified. He

insists on the appointment of an ordained rabbi to decide on religious matters. At the last [Jewish Association's] Governing Board meeting, it was decided with one voice that Ezekiel should fill the gap, and that the question of finances be held over till the next meeting.

"I would like you to discuss this matter with J.R. [Jacob] and Bunny [who are in London] and impress upon them Rabbi Ouziel's opinion about having a rabbi in Calcutta. Dr Finkelstein [Chancellor of the Seminary] is pressing Ezekiel to stay in the States evidently with an eye to his betterment. I think if Ezekiel decides this way, Dr Finkelstein will do some wire–pulling to get him U.S. citizenship on the strength of an American pulpit."

October 1951. From Calcutta:

"Here is an interesting case requiring a rabbinical decision: A, a Jewish man, marries B, a Jewish woman in accordance with Jewish law.

A divorces B according to Jewish law and marries C, a non–Jewish woman, in civil law.

C gives birth to a baby girl. A wishes to have the baby converted to Judaism while her mother refuses to proselytize. Question: May the baby be converted under these circumstances, and if so, what special measures must be adopted? Rabbi Ouziel denied the baby's conversion so long as the mother remained outside the Jewish fold, because the baby's upbringing is carried out primarily by the mother whose religious beliefs and observances facilely influences those of the child."

September 20, 1951. From Calcutta:

"Rabbi Ouziel's response to a question on Meziza, the sucking of blood from the wound of circumcision. A local Mohel would not perform Meziza on the plea that his Baghdad teachers encouraged him not to, arguing that if the Mohel suffered a communicable disease, it could be contracted by the baby. Ouziel ordered the Mohel to resume the practice."

August 29, 1951. From Calcutta:

"It is exactly 24 years since I took this pleasant duty [of your birth and upbringing] in hand, the result of your memorable resurrection — תְּחִיַּת הַמֵּתִים — for which I am ever thankful to God. That was the occasion when Uncle Elias got the inspiration and said: This boy has not come back to life for nothing. He is destined to be a man with some important mission to fulfill. It seems that what Uncle Elias predicted is on the point of being fulfilled. May the Almighty continue with His נִסִּים וְנִפְלָאוֹת 'miracles and wonders,' until the great purpose for which you had been spared is fulfilled to the letter."

September 10, 1951. From New York:

> "The last paragraph of Ouziel's letter to the Association is very interesting and important from my point of view. I am sure the powers that be in Calcutta will be impressed at the request from the highest rabbinical authority to hire a rabbi. Of great significance is Ouziel's reply to the questions being no different from the unofficial responses I sent you. I'm awaiting Meyer's report of his conversations with the Jacobs."

September 11, 1951. Dad's letter enclosing Meyer's reply

> "I am afraid the report is not too encouraging … they (J.R. Jacob and son Bunny) admitted that a rabbi was needed in Calcutta, though the need was dwindling with the decreasing population. However, they thought he was ruining his (ENM's) own prospects in India, for what future could he have there? And if he were to leave after a few years, what would then be Calcutta's benefit? But then, if your father wanted him near him, it's a different matter … It's the good old Calcutta community all over again, not knowing what it wants, nor how to get it. I can see it straggling on to an inglorious end until in 30 to 40 years time, people will rub their eyes and ask: 'Was there really a Jewish community here?'" Dad continues: "So my dear son, that's the position, and it's up to you to make the final decision. I've always advised you not to consider me in your plans, be they in India or elsewhere. Or follow Dr. Finkelstein's advice and continue in America. If, on the other hand, your decision brings you to Calcutta, I assure you that all your needs will be supplied by me until your are on your feet כל מחסורך עלי."

November 20, 1951. From Calcutta:

> "Time' magazine of October 15, 1951 carried the photograph of Rabbi Finkelstein with a fine account of his life. No sooner I came to know about it, I searched the market and obtained two copies."

August 3, 1951. From New York:

> "My last summer away from home, I am preparing for 'comprehensives,' final exams required in each subject before graduation. They entail lots of study, so I'm starting early. I'm also getting something planned for the future, such as school curricula, sermon material, and research outlines for a possible doctorate. I am also seeing parts of New York I haven't seen yet.
>
> "Our President, Dr Louis Finkelstein, left instructions that I should read Parasha every week from מַטּוֹת-מַסְעֵי to שׁוֹפְטִים for a $35 remuneration. Though the money is not too much, I couldn't refuse, the request coming from the highest authority. During the summer all the regulars are away, so he himself had to read somehow, unless I was there. This week he knew it would be very difficult so he took no chances. This is the second time I will be reading this difficult combination.
>
> "Last Friday night, Dr Finkelstein invited me for dinner when he asked me what my future plans were, and I said I was not sure. He told me that, given the emigration of my community, he thought it would be better for me to stay in the United States, reiterating the statement he made a year ago. 'I was thinking on those lines,' I said."

11th Ab–Menahem [August 1951] From Calcutta:

> "After the mourning period of Ab, I take this first opportunity to send you the family's very best wishes for a very, very happy birthday and everything of the best. May the Lord advance your prosperity and grant you your heart's cherished desires. וְהֵסִיר ה' מִמְּךָ כׇּל חֹולִי וְכׇל מַדְוֵי מִצְרַיִם הָרָעִים ... לֹא יְשִׂימָם בָּךְ וּנְתָנָם בְּכׇל שׂוֹנְאֶיךָ 'The Lord shall ward off from you all sickness; He will not bring upon you any of the dreadful diseases of Egypt … but will inflict them upon all your enemies.'[4] 'May the Lord grant you a good and faithful בַּת זוג [wife] who shall fill your home with בָּנִים חֲכָמִים זֶרַע קַיָּמָא וּבְרִיא מַזָּלַיְהוּ [viable, learned children, healthful and destined to good fortune.'] And , as this is your 24th year after birth, let me quote you the blessings of Isaiah, which seems to me most appropriate:
>
> וְשַׂמְתִּי כַדְכֹד שִׁמְשׁתַיִךְ וּשְׁעָרַיִךְ לְאַבְנֵי אֶקְדָּח וְכׇל גְּבוּלֵךְ לְאַבְנֵי חֵפֶץ וְכׇל בָּנַיִךְ לִמּוּדֵי ה' וְרַב שְׁלוֹם בָּנָיִךְ בְּצֶדֶק תִּכּוֹנָנִי רַחֲקִי מֵעֹשֶׁק כִּי לֹא תִירָאִי וּמִמְּחִתָּה כִּי לֹא תִקְרַב אֵלָיִךְ הֵן גּוֹר יָגוּר אֶפֶס מֵאוֹתִי מִי גָּר אִתָּךְ עָלַיִךְ יִפּוֹל ... כׇּל כְּלִי יוּצַר עָלַיִךְ לֹא יִצְלָח וְכׇל לָשׁוֹן תָּקוּם אִתָּךְ לַמִּשְׁפָּט תַּרְשִׁיעִי זֹאת נַחֲלַת עַבְדֵי ה' וְצִדְקָתָם מֵאִתִּי נְאֻם ה'
>
> I will make your battlements of rubies, the whole encircling wall of gems. And all your children shall be disciples of the Lord, and great shall be the happiness of your children. You shall be established through righteousness. You shall be safe from oppression, and shall have no fear; and from ruin, and it shall not come near you. Surely no harm can be done without My consent: whoever would harm you shall fall because of you … No weapon formed against you shall succeed, and every tongue that contends with you at law you shall defeat. Such is the lot of the servants of the Lord, such their triumph through Me.'"[5]

August 17, 1951– 15th Ab 5711. From New York:

> "Its a happy day for me as I think of my last birthday spent at home. Dad's letter with the blessing chosen from Isaiah is cute, something that could not have been duplicated by anyone short of a rabbi. It's ingenious. I went around showing it to all my friends who liked it very much. Dad could have been a rabbi — he is cut out for one. I probably inherit my facility for the job from him."

August 29, 1951. From Calcutta:

> "Thanks for the very appreciative terms in which you referred to my eligibility for the rabbinate. Personally, a solicitor's job would have suited me better. I am a desk man, dislike speech–making, and shun publicity. I prefer a quiet and placid life. What better compensation can I expect than to leave a son conversant with Torah, a רב. לִלְמֹוד וּלְלַמֵּד לִשְׁמֹור לַעֲשׂות וּלְקַיֵּם 'Rabbi, who studies and teaches, observes and performs Torah.'"

4. Deuteronomy 7:15
5. Isaiah 54:12-15, 17

ALMOST HOME

October 6, 1951. From New York:

"I spent Rosh Hashana and Kippur in a congregation just outside the City and will receive $350 for conducting parallel services with the Rabbi and preaching two sermons. With the money I will order two gowns — white and black — I will wear on the pulpit on different occasions.

"By now you must know about the letter the Association wrote to me and the Seminary's reply. I refused to respond directly, when it is the Association that should be negotiating with the Seminary. I explained to the Executive Vice–President that my reply would not hold as much weight as his. He showed me an application by Bernard V. Jacob in December 1947, when he offered to pay 5400 dollars a year. This would come to 1500 rupees a month. I await the outcome of meetings and individual reactions."

October 28, 1951. From New York:

"My programme for my final year includes a sermon to be delivered in the Seminary synagogue in the presence of all the professors in Parashat Emor, sometime in May. It seems so close; I almost feel I were home already. Now I'll count the months for you — Eight before I leave and ten before I'm home! I expect to spend some time in England and Israel, visiting the Sassoon Library in England and the Ben Zvi Institute in Jerusalem. No extra expense for stopping off at these places. I am writing to Rabbi Sassoon to show me around his father's library. Are you excited? I am.

"The pictures of the family group in front of the Sukkah brought me several thousand miles across ocean and sea to celebrate retroactively the joyous festival with my dearly beloved. I imagined myself in the group — on Granny's lap! Elias Cohen's camera showed its worth by bringing me a joy that cannot be expressed in words." [Dad's description of two photos: "A general view of the Sukkah, inside and outside. And a very good snap of the family with me the most prominent in the group (though I had not asked for it). Notice my cap [Kippa] on the head of the Samawa [samovar]."

October 28, 1951. From New York:

"Since Dad agreed to send Meyer and Ruby food packages for Rosh Hashana, I have decided to send them another next week to be paid by me from my Holyday money, being 1/10 of my emoluments going for a good cause. Food today in Israel means more than dollars and cents; it means overcoming one of the worst food crises Israel has faced since its inception. Every analysis of the cause of this crisis leads to the same conclusion — the unabated flood of new immigrants that increases need far more quickly than production can be increased. So we have to increase our liberal contributions."

November 21, 1951. From New York:

"I received a letter from Ruby where she mentioned that Dad was offered a holiday in England and Israel by Nissim Elias and he turned it down. Ruby feels emotionally about not having seen Dad in six years, and her letter proves her feeling. Listen: 'Don't you think it mean of him? and can't you use your great influence with him to make his decision positive? I wish I could convey to him the yearning for a sight of his dear face

— but probably I've failed.' Think about it, Dad. If you can be in Israel in July or August, I will be there too. Can you imagine what a grand re–union it will be? Probably another opportunity like this one will never offer itself again. Give it further consideration and let me know. Don't you want to see Ruby again? And that devil of a grandson? Come on, grandpa. Let's take the initiative" [Dad never did leave India.]

Less than a year before my ordination, the Governing Body of the Jewish Association of Calcutta, in December 1951, could not come to a firm decision on the question of a rabbinical appointment. And Dad wrote that I was a free agent to decide myself the direction of my life:

"If you are determined to return to India, I shall hug you in my bosom and share my mouthful with you. Even with the element of uncertainty, to us it would make no difference if the family is increased by one. Perhaps something could be done when you arrive here and make personal contacts. Once again I say: 'Leave me out of the plans and do not run your life, your future prospects, for my sake, for I cannot live forever. A father is mortal, and while he is alive, a son must learn to hold on to independence and freedom and I am hereby encouraging you to adopt this way of life."

December 9, 1951. From Calcutta:

"I must today give you results of the Jewish Association Governing Body meeting. I was voted to the chair, and I felt strange that the first item on the agenda was the appointment of a rabbi for Calcutta. J.R. Jacob opened with the statement that everyone agreed that a rabbi was necessary, but the synagogues had to be the primary sponsors. Since neither Maghen David nor Bethel took the initiative, the matter was shelved. This negative decision must be a blow to your aspirations and enthusiasm with which you were looking forward to meeting the family and serving the community. You will get over disappointment, as you had got over heavier blows גַּם אֶת הָאַרְי גַּם אֶת הַדֹּב הִכָּה עַבְדֶּךָ 'Your servant has overcome both lion and bear.'[6] Just as you had overcome other sources of danger likened to lions and bears, so you will overcome the unfavourable decision of the Jewish Association of Calcutta with galloping success in other spheres far removed from home. I have read out this my letter to Granny and the others, and all send you their blessings for unqualified success. You must seek other avenues, and God Almighty will help you in your quest. I see God's hand in this trend וַיַּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַיָּד הַגְּדוֹלָה 'The Israelites saw the great Hand of God.'[7] You must shape a new destiny, a new life, full of immense potential for your own good. Seeing the shape of things to come, it is more likely that I may myself have to renounce India and make my home in Israel or U.S.A. It is becoming increasingly unlikely it will be India. Between then and now, with the world getting smaller, we will be able to journey from one place to another in less than a day. I must have your solemn promise that you will not grieve at the change in circumstance which is all for your ultimate good, I assure you. If we are fated to meet, no earthly force can stop it. God's ways are wonderful; we cannot fathom the depths of His wisdom. Have implicit faith in Him, and you will need no human help to make your path successful. Build your plans on actualities and no longer on hypotheses."

6. I Samuel 17:36
7. Exodus 14:31

December 16, 1951. From New York:

"The decision of the Jewish Association is unexpected but not surprising. If members were earnest enough, they would have found a way. J.R. Jacob is absolutely right. B.N.E.'s have borne the lion's share of the financial burden and cannot be expected to shoulder heavier obligations. But his suggestion that if the synagogues fail to contribute, the rabbinical project must be shelved, no! Is the rabbi going only to conduct synagogue services? Is the community appointing a Hazan, or a rabbi? His functions extends to all religious and cultural aspects of the community, including education, both adult and child. His duties as a cohesive element to bring and and keep together various phases of communal life will necessitate contact with every organisation, without exception.

It is therefore right and proper that *all* representatives of the Governing Body assume the onus of maintaining the dignified post of spiritual leader. But perhaps the income thus accrued may not be enough. To supplement it, a fund should be started to which every member of the community be invited to contribute, with persons of more substantial means donating more.

"Now here is my major decision. Even if a rabbinical post fails to materialise, I will return to Calcutta anyway as an ordinary layman, if necessary. I cannot allow you, Dad to be without any of your children any longer. For my personal happiness it is essential that I be with you. I have been forced to be away from you for religious education. But I have also secular education, and if needs be, could put it to use. Once the formal period of Torah study ends, I have no desire, not even for personal promotion or betterment to be away from you. Better is an average livelihood by your side than otherwise all the riches in the world. If the community cannot see its way to hire a rabbi, it is the worse for it. They may stand in the way of permitting the fulfillment of my cherished ideals, but no one can prevent me from doing my duty toward you, my darling father. You have sacrificed enough for all of us, even to the extent of injuring your health, ensuring our comparative economic comfort and mental ease. At a time that I'm deciding my future, I'm not going to do a thing without you *primarily* in mind. No amount of persuasion on your part will shake my conviction to pursue my ideal of giving you the נַחַת רוּחַ [satisfaction] that money cannot buy. I cannot even begin to express my gratitude to you for all the opportunities you have sent my way. I am thankful to the Almighty for so unfaltering and unselfish a father, and pray for your continued good health and unsurpassingly delightful company, so that ought but death part me from you. כֹּה יַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה לִי וְכֹה יוֹסִיף כִּי הַמָּוֶת יַפְרִיד בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵךְ Ruth told her mother–in–law, Naomi: 'Thus and more may the Lord do to me if anything but death parts me from you.'[8]

8. Ruth 1:17

"I could very easily stay in the U.S., perhaps at the expense of going into the chaplaincy for two years, after which I could opt for a pulpit, plentiful at most times. Perhaps Israel would be a better choice after a few years, but for now I have cast my lot with you. Therefore, סוֹף דָּבָר הַכֹּל נִשְׁמָע 'the sum of the matter when all is said and done,'[9] God willing, I shall see you soon. With great humility I have the זְכוּת [merit] to be your loving son, Ezekiel Nissim."

December 30, 1951. From Calcutta:

"Darling sweet child, Eze, Today is the English date of my birthday, and in 36 hours I will enter my Hebrew date. As luck will have it, I will have to say אָנָא (תַּחֲנוּן) instead of הַלֵּל on this auspicious day. Grandpa's record shows I was born at noon when the day was brightest, so that every dark spot was eclipsed by the strong rays of the sun. Possibly it was for this reason plots of my antagonists never worked, and I got the better of all of them except one, and here too I shall not own defeat yet!

"It was very sweet of you to send me that much treasured birthday present [יִצְחָק שׁוּשָׁן Rashi–script silver cuff–links] which I shall keep with me till my last days, and thereafter it shall go to the first male grandchild named after me. In novelty, your gift surpasses everything of similar value. I wore them yesterday, שַׁבָּת חֲנֻכָּה [Shabbat Hanukka], and intend to reserve them for future Sabbaths. Ruby has sent me a cable wishing me a happy birthday, and Meyer did the same by letter. With greetings following me from all sides, I consider myself a lucky father who is held in such esteem and affection by his children in different parts of the globe. May my blessings for them reach, so that they may live in happiness, health and security.

"I think you should train yourself as a Mohel. It is a very essential among the duties of a rabbi. I know how tender your feelings are, but with a little practice, you will overcome your initial fastidiousness. Will you take my advice and start at once?

"If you are determined to return to India, come what may, I shall receive you with the greatest pleasure and hug you in my bosom גַּם תֶּבֶן גַּם מִסְפּוֹא רַב עִמָּנוּ גַּם מָקוֹם לָלוּן [Rebecca told the servant of Abraham] 'there is plenty of straw and feed at home, and also room to spend the night.'[10] I shall share my last morsel with you, and, God–willing, make you as comfortable as I can. And if you should return without the element of certainty of a job, I assure you of the equivalent of 160 dollars a month I have been sending you in the U.S.A., which is 800 rupees. The difficulty will arise only after my retirement or upon my being served with notice of termination of services, but neither of these is likely to happen in the very near future. And if you should not return and set up a home elsewhere, you will be free from a haunting rabbinic saying

אוֹי לָהֶם לַבָּנִים שֶׁנָּלוּ מֵעַל שֻׁלְחַן אֲבִיהֶם

'Woe to the children who are removed from their fathers 'table.' This does not refer ח"ו [God forbid] to a relationship like ours but only when incorrigible sons are at cross–purposes with their parents. In fact, I think you are governed more by the following

9. Ecclesiastes 12:13
10. Genesis 24:25

positive exhortation: לֶךְ לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַרְאֶךָּ וְאֶעֶשְׂךָ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וְאֲבָרֶכְךָ וַאֲגַדְּלָה שְׁמֶךָ וְהְיֵה בְּרָכָה 'Go forth from your native land and from your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you.'[11] Would the Almighty have promised Abraham "בְּרָכָה" [blessing] if leaving his father's house was a discourteous or a reprehensible act? Once again I appeal to you: Do not ruin your life, your prospects, for my sake. Do not abandon the substance and pursue the shadow. יָמַי כְּצֵל עוֹבֵר 'My days are like a passing shadow.'[12] Rashi's comment on these words reads: אָבִיו כְּצֵל עוֹבֵר צִפּוֹר שֶׁל עוֹף הַפּוֹרֵחַ 'One's father is like a passing shadow, the shadow of a bird that flies away.' The brave King David was a far–sighted man. What did he tell his son Solomon before his death? אָנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ כׇּל הָאָרֶץ וְחָזַקְתָּה וְהְיִיתָה לְאִישׁ 'I am going the way of all the earth; be strong and show yourself a man.'[13] He follows that with the words: לְמַעַן תַּשְׂכִּיל אֶת כׇּל אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה וְאֵת כׇּל אֲשֶׁר תִּפְנֶה שָׁם 'in order that you may succeed in whatever you undertake and wherever you turn.'[14] What do we learn from the above? That a father is mortal and therefore has a limited span in this world; that a son must respect independence of thought and freedom of action even in his father's lifetime; that it is up to the father to give courage to his son and inspire him to this way of life.

"I fully realise you will never be a burden on me, nor will you permit yourself to be such. But you must think of your future, your wife and your family, who will be consoling factors after me. Remember, the Patriarch Jacob was concerned about the future of his own family when he told Laban: מָתַי אֶעֱשֶׂה גַּם אָנֹכִי לְבֵיתִי 'Now when shall I make provision for my own household?'[15] Therefore my darling son, think of the future. Do not take a false step which you will rue for the rest of your life. Good opportunities do not occur often, but when they do appear, be quick to recognise them and do not fail to seize them. הַשֵּׁם הוּא הַטּוֹב בְּעֵינָיו יַעֲשֶׂה 'He is the Lord; He will do what He deems right.'[16]

December 13, 1951. From Calcutta:

"Let me wish you a very happy Hanooka. מִי שֶׁעָשָׂה נֵס לַאֲבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָאֵלּוּ הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה גַּם לָךְ נִסִּים וְנִפְלָאוֹת וְיִרְאוּ עֵינֵינוּ וְיִשְׂמַח לִבֵּנוּ 'May God Who performed miracles for our fathers at this time, may He perform for you also miracles and wonders. May we witness them and rejoice."

January 31, 1952. From New York:

"I met with Rabbi David J. Seligson for his advice after a lapse of two years. He has the same captivating personality and dignified mannerism he always possessed. Instead of meeting in his office we sat in a coffee shop where I gave him a history and background of the infirmity of purpose and timidity of the leaders of Calcutta Jewry. He was displeased and distressed at the turn of events but asked: 'Do you wish to serve your

11. Ibid. 12:1-2
12. Psalms 144:4
13. I Kings 2:2
14. Ibid. 2:3
15. Genesis 30:30
16. I Samuel 3:18

community?' to which I answered: 'Obviously only if those at the helm gave me a chance.' On his own initiative he thought that the best course would be for him to write 'most undiplomatically' to prominent members of the community. He said he had nothing to lose, and neither did I."

Here is his letter:

Central Synagogue
Lexington Avenue at 55th Street
Community House and offices
35 East 62 Street
New York 21, New York

February 5, 1952

Mr. J.R. Jacob
B.N. Elias & Co.
Norton Bldgs.
Calcutta, India

Dear Mr. Jacob,

As I begin this letter I do so with a heavy heart, in the knowledge that Lady Ezra has passed away ...

I was on the point of writing to you in any case because I feel that you are the ideal person of leadership and understanding to consider the problem to which I refer.

As you know, Ezekiel Musleah is now on the point of completing his rabbinical studies and receive his Semicha in June. I must tell you that he has made tremendous progress and has created for himself a very fine reputation in Jewish scholarship and consecrated religious attitudes. Everywhere I have gone I have heard the very finest things said about him by responsible professors and those with whom he has come into contact. I have not seen as much of him as I would have liked, but that was due to circumstances beyond our mutual control. Always in front of his eyes was the solemn responsibility and obligation that he had undertaken to prepare himself to be the servant of his people and his faith, more particularly in the community into which he was born and where he received his nurture. I am really impressed by his sincerity and by his single–minded sense of loyalty. He is impelled by everything sacred to return to Calcutta and to give his entire life to the religious needs of the community.

From our many conversations in the good days when I could look upon your face, I remember how we agreed that the greatest need in terms of a future dignity of our faith in Calcutta was to have a Rabbi duly trained in both our sacred lore and modern educational and organizational techniques. It behoves us in every generation to provide the instrumentalities for the survival of Judaism in every quarter of the globe.

I am convinced that if a constructive attitude is taken in the matter of providing adequate rabbinical leadership, that nothing would stand in the way of the spiritual prosperity of the Calcutta community. Knowing as I do from personal experience your own unselfish

humanitarian nature and the generosity of which you are always capable, I want to make the strongest appeal I can to you to surround yourself with a group of influential well–to–do people of the community in order to make it possible for Rabbi Musleah to serve with proper dignity the cause of Judaism. This is, I believe, a sacred responsibility and I know that you will meet this obligation in the best way you can.

With all affection and kindest regards,

Sincerely yours,
Sd — David

Rabbi David J. Seligson

P.S. I am sending a copy of this letter to Mr. [Aaron] Curlender, who expressed a great interest in this matter.

February 19, 1952. From Calcutta:

"The happiest news I have from Israel is that [sister] Ruby is expecting her second child in September. I had been pressing her for some time to increase her family, and she has at last relented. I hope [sister–in–law] Rachel will do likewise. I once wrote to [brother] Meyer on this score yielding a not–too–tasteful reply, so I refrained from mentioning the matter any more.

"Rabbi Solomon D. Sassoon, in Calcutta for his aunt, Lady Rachel Ezra's demise, has repaired the community's Mikvah at his own expense in memory of his late aunt. He was also summoned to give evidence in the case of Beatrice Jacob vs Ezekiel Jacob, which the judge summed up: 'The husband divorced himself in order to get rid of financial liability towards his wife.' Rabbi Sassoon said, on being questioned by the court, that Beatrice continues as Ezekiel's wife, that the divorce is contrary to the law of Moses and Israel, that Beatrice is not a Moredet, 'a rebellious wife,' as she had done her duty and bore her husband four children, that since the couple of their own free will renounced conjugal rights, Jewish law would not consider any such mutual agreement as ultra vires, provided, of course, the wife remains chaste throughout the period she receives alimony.'"

February 29, 1952. From Calcutta. Dad writes that he had met Rabbi Solomon Sassoon on three occasions. Once Dad broached the subject of a rabbi in Calcutta. Sassoon's own estimate of a rabbi's salary was 20,000 rupees a year, a sum the synagogues would have to provide, not necessarily from their own coffers, but help raise the required amount. He would not give an assurance that a proper qualified man would be available, and if he were asked to look for such a person, he would not agree to be the agent. He thought that I would be the best choice in the circumstances, but that I was young and inexperienced, and according to him Calcutta was too big a place for a newly–ordained rabbi to start in. He suggested that I attach myself to a small 'parish' and get versed with the problems of a community before I assumed charge of Calcutta Jewry.

Apparently, he had not forgotten the former polemics involving his suggestion of an orthodox rabbinical training for me. And when I met him at his residence in England on my way home, he plainly told me that he would not contribute from his aunt's estate toward my salary in Calcutta. In addition, he drew to his side some influential members of the local community.

His antagonism extended to my father. When Dad was recommended to serve on the Board of Maghen David, Rabbi Sassoon objected on the ground that Dad was reportedly in favor of changing the synagogue's 60–year–old constitution. If, he said, Dad would give an undertaking that he would leave the constitution in place, the Rabbi would withdraw his objection. When an official invitation was extended, Dad made it clear that he had many irons in the communal fire and could not do justice to further responsibilities. In any case, he would not sell his conscience to please anybody.

Ironically, Rabbi Sassoon lost out on being elected to Maghen David's presidency in succession of his aunt by a clause in the synagogue's constitution that barred a foreign resident from that position.

Rabbi Sassoon had a much–publicised interview with the Governor of West Bengal, Dr H.C. Mookherjee, an Indian Christian, after the death of whose only son gave away all his possessions to charity, asked if there was a spiritual head in the Jewish community of Calcutta, and, if not, how the community was functioning without one. The Rabbi steered clear of an answer which, he claimed, he did not have. A former professor and a keen educationist, the Governor offered to visit the Jewish schools and spur interest in Calcutta University, on whose lists he found no Jewish names. Incidentally, Dr. Mookherjee recalled his partaking of 'Hammin' with a Jewish family on a Sabbath morning and said he would love a taste of it again!

Rabbi Sassoon examined the condition of the books and manuscripts that comprised Hakham Shelomo's library and came to the conclusion that they were not worth anything. Because of neglect and dampness, the pages were reduced to dust. He thought that the Indian climatic conditions had brought about deterioration faster. He admitted that some books are very valuable and out of print, but they could not be stored for long to be prepared for use.

Dad and I have had great esteem and admiration for Bernard V. Jacob and his father, J.R. Jacob, so I insert here a letter Dad received from 'Bunny" from his home in London, England.

> "My dear Mr. Musleah, Only part of the explanation [for my not having replied earlier] is to be found in the fact that I have been busy conducting a number of concerts.

Receiving a letter from you is like renewing my contact with the community — in fact, I feel that I am there and have never been away, so detailed and informative is your news …

It happens that I received a letter a few days ago from Rabbi Seligson, saying that Eze was shortly going to be qualified and is anxious to serve his community in Calcutta. Seligson has also written to my father on this subject. I sincerely hope that a decision will be reached by the community soon that will afford Eze a salary dignified and worthy of his calling. You know how strongly I have always felt about Calcutta not having a fully–qualified rabbi, and now we have a real chance of obtaining a sincere worker who, I am sure, will agree to reasonable terms. If you think it may help in reaching a decision, you are, of course, quite at liberty to use my name and the opinions that I have just expressed in this connection. I certainly also think that the salary should come from the Association, which can in turn collect from the other institutions that may be willing to help. But that is a private arrangement and nothing to do with the rabbi …

I should be very glad to hear from you from time to time on matters of common interest to us. Yours sincerely, Bunny"

February 25, 1952. From New York:

"With the passing of weeks, I come closer and closer to the end of my rabbinical training and closer to you. In exactly four months, I will leave the United States for home via a few stops. The separation that forcibly kept us away from each other will soon come to an end. The sacrifices that all of us had made in order for me to pursue the course of studies closest to my heart will, I hope, be well worth it. You have been the ideal family, real fine folks, to me in my most needy moments. The encouragement you gave me and the anxiety I caused you, and your silent prayers and active help toward my success, will never be forgotten. They will all stand me in good stead. Dad, of course, has been the pillar of my inspiration, without whose help and blessings I could not have moved an inch. עַמּוּד הֶעָנָן יוֹמָם וְעַמּוּד הָאֵשׁ לָיְלָה לִפְנֵי הָעָם לֹא יָמִישׁ 'The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night'[17] did not depart from me. Whenever I wrote home the first impulse I got was to thank him for the opportunities I have been given, again and again and again. Till I draw my last breath, the song of his goodness to me will be sung by me and by my children after me

מִפִּי עוֹלְלִים וְיוֹנְקִים יִסַּדְתָּ עֹז 'From the mouths of infants and sucklings [and understanding children] you have founded strength.'[18] אַשְׁרֶיךָ בָּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה וְטוֹב לָךְ בָּעוֹלָם הַבָּא 'Happy are you in this world and it shall be well with you in the world to come.'

Commencement (Graduation exercises) has been set for June 15th. I am making arrangements for a series of photographs to be taken by friends so that you would get a first–hand impression of the proceedings.

"All this is very exciting, but the serious backdrop is the intricate formalities in the negotiations with the community."

This backdrop became clouded with the deaths of three prominent Calcutta Jews within the space of six months — Lady Rachel Ezra, Jack Elias, and Aaron Curlender. With Lady Ezra's passing, her estate came into the hands of her nephew, Rabbi Solomon Sassoon, whose

17. Exodus 13:22
18. Psalm 8:3

opposition to the appointment of an American Conservative rabbi I have recounted. The sudden death of Jack Elias, of the philanthropic family of B.N. Elias at a comparatively young age, came as severe shock. I wrote a letter of sympathy to his brother, Nissim:

> "It is with a heavy heart that I write to you on hearing news of the sudden passing of Mr. Jack. Few were closer or more dearly beloved than you were to your brother. In business as in private life you addressed each other in matters of mutual concern. He respected you as his elder and you showered upon him affection and brotherly care. Each and every one who knew this relationship is grieved over its untimely separation.
>
> "We mortals cannot understand the ways of God. To fathom the mysteries of life is indeed impossible. It is the will of the Almighty that they be hidden from us. We must accept this judgment as that of the Dayyan Emeth, the True Judge. We must have faith in His Divine mercy. What we do know, however, is that man on earth should live a good life. Death has no fears for one who has lived a life as well as Mr. Jack. During his comparatively short span of life, his accomplishments surpass the fruits of 70 years of labour. A devoted father, a loving husband, a loyal son, a matter–of–fact and understanding employer ... all these qualities endeared him to all who came in contact with him and made the towering personality he will always remain in our minds and hearts.
>
> May the Almighty God comfort you and yours in your sad bereavement. Very sincerely yours, Ezekiel"

In July, a month after my ordination, the biggest blow to my rabbinic chances in Calcutta was struck by the death of Aaron Curlender while on vacation in Bangalore, South India. He had expressed significant support for a rabbi in Calcutta and for me in particular. A patron of the Jewish Association of Calcutta and other local institutions, and having been elected president of Maghen David Synagogue to replace the late Lady Ezra, he nurtured plans for the leading role that Maghen David would play on my return. He was senior partner of Curlender & Co., an assemblage of bone mills the foundation of which was adeptly laid by his father, a European immigrant.

With his demise, J.R. Jacob became the sole basis and pivot for my potential ministry, and Rabbi Seligson continued communication with him on the subject. A second letter from Seligson, dated April 30, 1952, arrived in Calcutta after Jack Elias's death:

> "... This event so overshadows anything that I wish to say, that I am most hesitant to return to the subject of my previous letter, the forthcoming Semicha of Ezekiel Musleah on Sunday June 15, at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City.
>
> "I have been seeing Ezekiel both at the Seminary and in my study. More than ever, I am convinced that he is spiritually and intellectually equipped to do a consecrated job as spiritual leader of the Calcutta Jewish community.
>
> "I recognize, of course, that the community has decreased in numbers due to emigration to Israel as well as natural causes. Nonetheless, I am sure you will agree with me that the old historical Jewish community with such leadership as you represent, in your own good person, will continue to exist and to maintain its religious and cultural institutions. I cannot conceive that it would be beyond the means of the community to provide a

moderate stipend for the Rabbi who is prepared to devote his life to its religious needs. I think there is so much potential among both young and old, that if this reasonable effort was made it would gather strength as it went along, and be a real Kiddush Hashem [sanctification of the Divine Name] in that part of the world. Ezekiel is returning home fully equipped with the best of educational and communal techniques and with a high sense of personal consecration.

"I now need not belabor this matter with you any further. You have always been ready to give Lifnim Mishurat Hadin, beyond the requirement of the Law, to your fellow Jews. Without dramatizing this undertaking, I feel that unnumbered generations to come will bless you for your initiative in the matter.

"With kindest affection to you and to all the family,

Sincerely yours,
David
Rabbi David J. Seligson"

My brother, Meyer, ever my role model and several years my senior, served as a close adviser and mentor from my school days, in Habonim, and by correspondence, from Israel and Australia. Writing from Israel in April, 1952:

"I am not very happy about your returning to India — not the mode (or hope!) of appointment, nor the timing. I do believe that you might very profitably have "done" six months or a year of field work in the U.S.A., seeing and experiencing some of the practical problems that have to be faced. This would have strengthened you personally as also vis–a–vis the Calcutta people. I am assuming that the decisive consideration is being with Dad. If this is so, I have nothing to counter it with and must admit it is praiseworthy. However, I would advise you not to have too much hope of what you can do in Calcutta or even of the attitude you could expect there. I would advise you to have at least one eye on possibilities that might develop outside India. I do not know if you have kept any of the letters I wrote before you started on the rabbinical course. If I remember correctly, I warned you then that there might not be much of a community left to return to. However, as long as you do not see Calcutta as the be all and end all of your work, you should not be fated to too much disappointment. I hope you will excuse my pessimism, but then, Calcutta is Calcutta after all."

Sage advice, indeed, that turned prophetic! Meyer did not, however, consider the pioneering element in my decision in favor of returning to Calcutta.

I interrupt the trend of diplomacies for goings–on with my ordination process. The last Pesah as a foreign student I spent at the home of my friend's [David Jacobs] in Miami, Florida. Over thirteen hundred miles from New York City, in April, the sun shines brightly and the weather is warm. From my letter to Calcutta:

"At the moment, I am in my undershirt and shorts, relaxing in the noonday sun. My friend and I are staying in a three–room suite belonging to a friend who is spending the feast with relatives up north. The house is just across the court–yard from his parents' home, too small to accommodate us all. Seder nights we were at his aunt's house, fourteen adults and children. The first night, [David] conducted, the second night, I did.

The people could be divided into three — those who could not read Hebrew, those who could read haltingly, and [David's] grandfather, an old style veteran. The first day we went to the Beach synagogue, a huge edifice with 2000 worshippers. Hotels on the beach, towering buildings, with gorgeous interiors, beautiful swimming pools and grander halls, cost thousands of dollars, and rich Jews don't miss the opportunity. The second day we attended a small synagogue where the rabbi spoke in Yiddish, and [David] gave me a running translation. On Shabbath night, we sang our throats out, and neighbours came in to watch and learn a few of the songs we sing at the Seminary.

"One of the greatest social drawbacks here is the discrimination of whites over blacks. The blacks are restricted to inhabit only certain parts of the city, and in railway stations may sit only on certain benches. On trolleys [trams] and buses, they are given seats at the back of the vehicles. I was very annoyed at this arrangement, so I pulled myself away from [David] and took a seat at the back. He warned me to expect surprised glances and be called 'Negro lover.' Coming from India, I was used to a mixed passenger load in public conveyances, and risked the contemptuous looks of white neighbours. All this is the result of a civil war between the Northern and Southern American States in the 1860's on the issue of giving the Blacks, formerly slaves, civil rights as the whites had. The North wanted equality, the South didn't. The North won the war, but the South never accepted the principle of equality fully. The Blacks vote in different places, and White taxi cab drivers will not pick up black passengers. So American democracy is not of the he highest after all."

March 27, 1952. Rosh Hodesh Nisan, 5712. From Calcutta:

"And now, dear child, I must close with the blessings of the Mo–ed [Festival of Pesah] which is fast approaching. I fully appreciate your loneliness these past five years, but the streak of light is already visible heralding your חֵרוּת freedom. You can therefore recite זְמַן חֵרוּתֵנוּ Festival of Freedom with all the emphasis at your command. The anticipation of doing the next major festival in your own home in company of your loved ones should be like tonic to a weary soul. May the Lord grant you health and strength to assume the onerous duties for which you have equipped yourself. תִּזְכּוּ לְשָׁנִים רַבּוֹת חָגּ שָׂמֵחַ וּמַזָּל

Rabbi David J. Seligson - Obituary

With a sense of profound disconsolateness, I reproduce here the obituary of Rabbi David J. Seligson, who died on August 3rd, 1999. My native community of Calcutta and I personally will ever be in his debt for his leadership and foresight as chaplain in the China–Burma–India sector of U.S. Forces during World War II. The article, written by Laurie Goodstein, appeared in the New York Times on Friday, August 6, 1999.

Rabbi David J. Seligson, a nationally known Reform rabbi and an eloquent orator who held the pulpit at Central Synagogue in Manhattan for 20 years, died on Tuesday on the way to a hospital in Manhattan. He was 92 and had lived for the last two years at the Jewish Home and Hospital in Manhattan.

Central Synagogue is in some senses a national pulpit. The memorial service Rabbi Seligson led there after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy was broadcast on network television. He was also regularly heard on radio as host of the syndicated "Message of Israel" program.

Rabbi Seligson was among the first Jewish chaplains to volunteer to serve overseas during World War II. As an Army chaplain, he held Passover Seders for hundreds of soldiers in Calcutta, India [delivered moving addresses from Maghen David Synagogue's pulpit], and comforted those hospitalized with jungle fever in Burma. He traveled old Burma Road in a jeep with Christian chaplains, holding Sabbath services before sundown to avoid the malaria–bearing mosquitoes that emerged at nightfall.

Although Rabbi Seligson went on to achieve national prominence, his chaplaincy to soldiers in wartime was his touchstone. "I feel that it was the greatest work that I have done in my entire ministry," he wrote in his memoir. "Rabbi, Chaplain and Burra Sahib."

He was born on the Lower East Side of Manhattan on May 10, 1907, and was brought up in the traditions of Orthodox Judaism.

He graduated in 1929 from both Teachers College of Columbia University and the Teachers' Institute of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary and Yeshiva College. But he decided that the future of Judaism in America lay in the modern and adaptable Reform movement, and he enrolled in the Reform–affiliated Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. He graduated and was ordained a rabbi in 1933.

With pulpits scarce during the Depression, he moved to Birmingham, England, to help a group of liberal Jews organize a Reform synagogue. There he met and married an Englishwoman, Minnie Cohen. He returned to the United States to enlist in the military chaplains corps.

On his homecoming in 1945 after 32 months overseas, he was invited to assist the rabbi at Central Synagogue in Manhattan, an East Side landmark that is the oldest temple in New York State in continuous use by one congregation. He was made senior rabbi in 1950 and held that position until he was named rabbi emeritus in 1972.

In the temple's magnificent Moorish–style sanctuary, which was burned in a fire last year, Rabbi Seligson delivered sermons about the path to God, the likely success of the civil rights movement and Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. In one sermon, he said God was not "a great heavenly bellhop who will satisfy our needs if we press the button."

Rabbi Seligson helped to expand interfaith relations between synagogues and churches in New York, speaking in churches and inviting them to join an annual Thanksgiving interfaith worship service.

Rabbi Seligson was president of the New York Board of rabbis from 1952 to 1954 and president of the New York Association of Reform Rabbis in 1954 and 1955.

He never really retired from pastoral work, serving as interim rabbi for congregations in Lawrence, N.Y., West Port, Conn., and Tenafly, N.J., in the 1970's. For 10 years, until he was 75, he flew to Dublin each year to lead High Holy Days services at the Progressive Synagogue there.

His wife died in 1994.

Rabbi Seligson is survived by his daughters, Michelle Seligson of Boston and Jill Seligson Braver of Brooklyn, and three grandchildren.

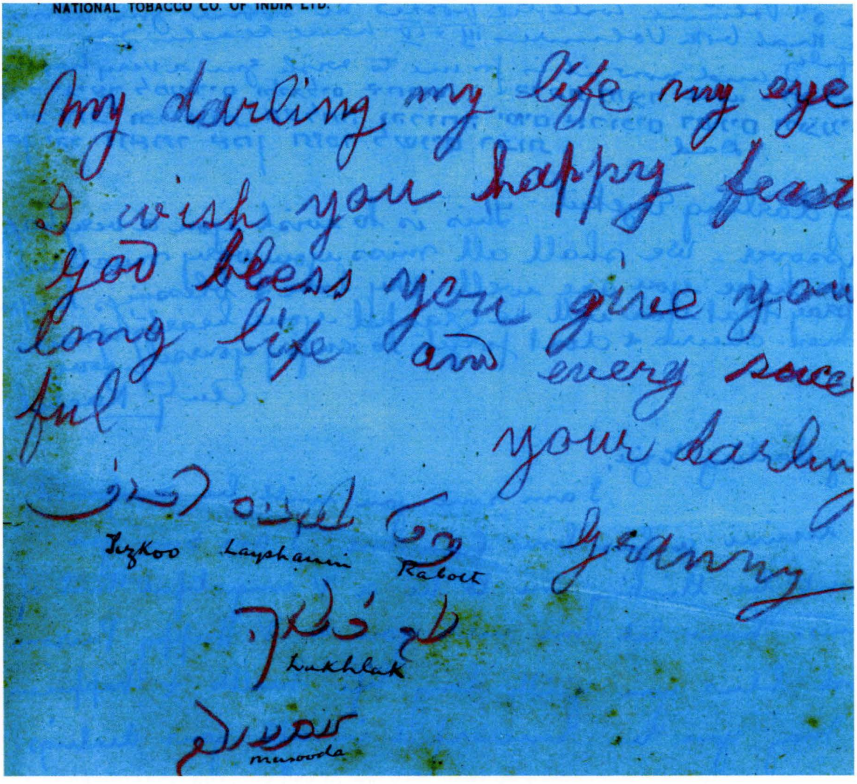
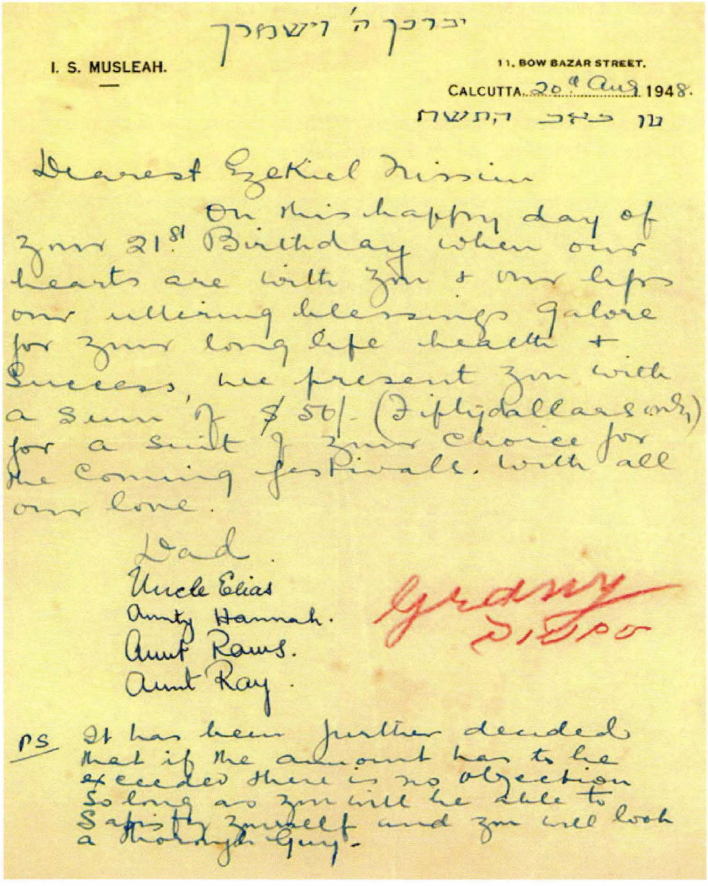


Figure 107. Granny's Passover Greetings #2.

Granny's Passover Greetings: My darling, my life, my eye, I wish you happy feast. God bless you, give you long life and every sucesful [sic]. Your darling Granny. Tizkoo Layshanim Raboth. Lukh Lakh [=Arabic, you are missed] Masuda.



יברכך ה' וישמרך

I. S. MUSLEAH.

11, BOW BAZAR STREET.

CALCUTTA. 20th Aug 1948.

עון בשבט התשח

Dearest Ezekiel Nissim

On this happy day of
Zmm 21st Birthday when our
hearts are with Zm & our lips
our ullering blessings galore
for Zmm long life health &
Success, we present Zm with
a Sum of $ 50/- (Fifty dollars only)
for a suit of Zmm choice for
the coming festivals. With all
our love.

Dad.
Uncle Elias
Aunty Hannah.
Aunt Rams.
Aunt Ray.

Granny
Dilpo

PS It has been further decided
that if the amount has to be
exceeded there is no objection
So long as Zm will be able to
Satisfy Zmself and Zm will look
a thorough Guy.

Figure 108. Family's Greetings On My 21st Birthday.

Birthday greetings from Dad, Granny, Aunts Hannah, Ramah & Rachel, and Uncle Elias. Plus, sanction of $50 for a suit, and more, if the extra expense will have me look "a thorough guy!"

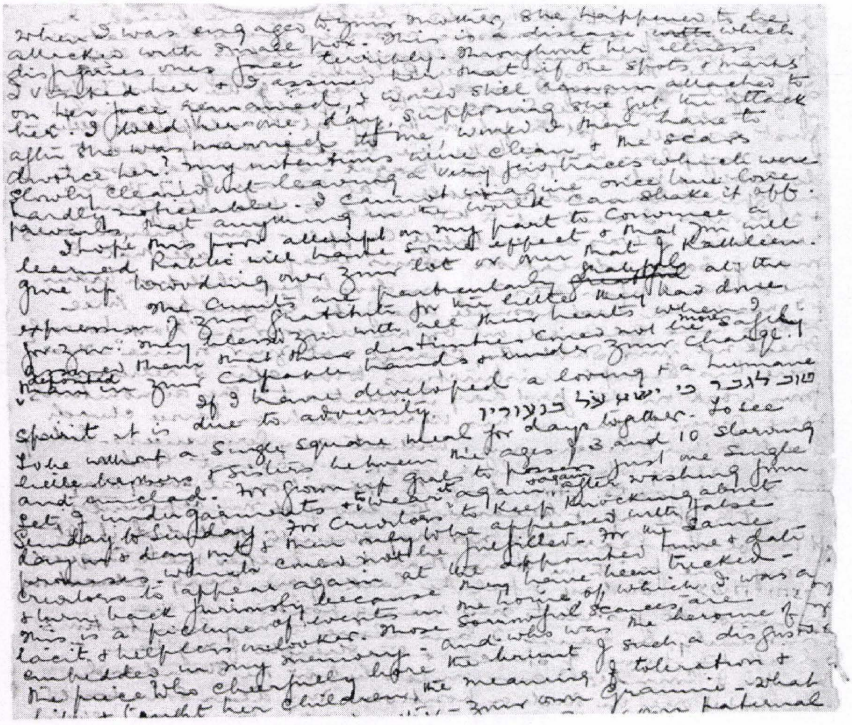


Figure 109. Dad Consoles Me On Being An Orphan.

Dad writes: I hope this poor attempt on my part to convince [you] will have some effect, and that you will give up brooding over you lot [of being without a mother] …

If I have developed a loving and humane spirit, it is due to adversity, for it is said [in the Book of Lamentations 3:27] It is good for a man, when young, to bear the yoke of adversity.

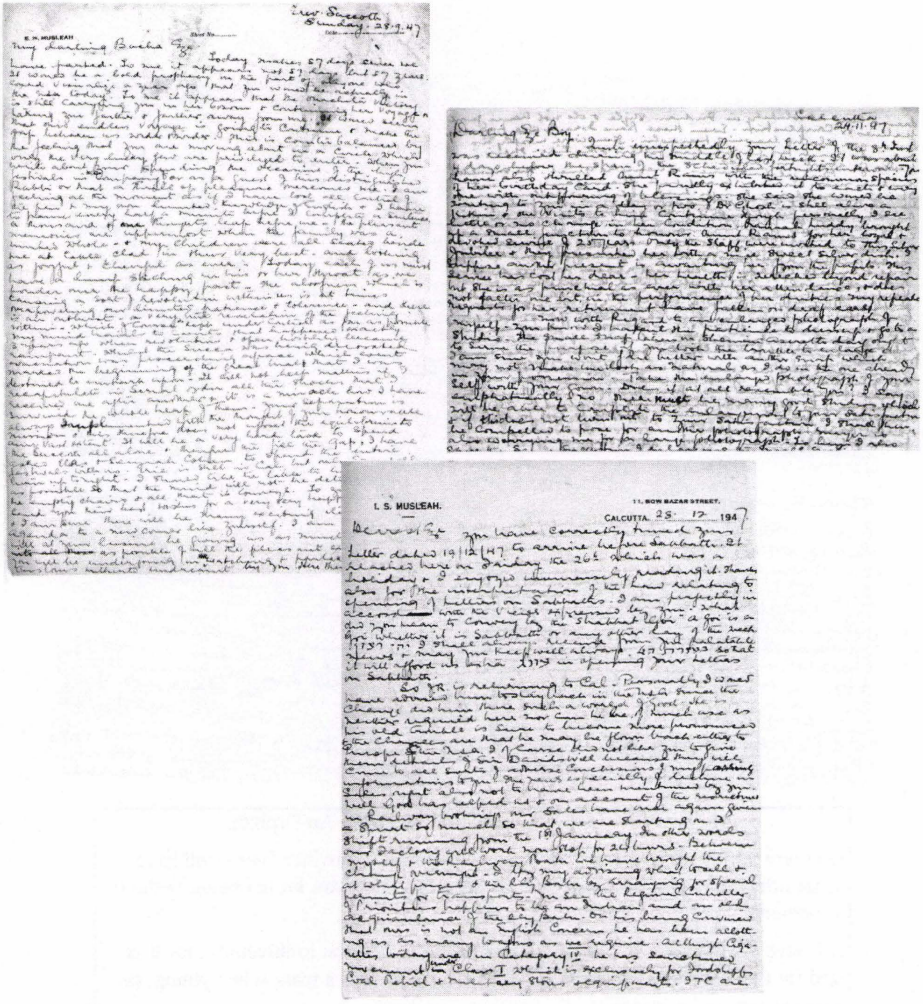


Figure 110. Living from Letter to Letter — Three of Dad's Letters.

As I lived from letter to letter, I became convinced of the notion that no one may justifiably look upon himself as being 'self-made.' Our wisdom is the wisdom of past generations. I was ever fortunate to have had a father whose heart throbbed with consideration and passion, and whose fluent pen beautifully expressed that moving quality.

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA
CHAPTER 11

ORDINATION

HOME FOR REAL AMID ORTHODOX POLEMICS

My "Senior" sermon was moved one Shabbath back, from Parashat Emor to Parashath Tazriah–Tehorah *[instead of Metsorah, meaning leprosy, the Middle–Eastern Jews prefer the "purer" name]*. My first reaction was "How could they do this to me?" What wholesome text can be the basis of a sermon to be presented for critique of the entire student body and subsequently to the Faculty in the Seminary synagogue? Let you, the reader, be the judge, and I will let you know what some of the students had to say as well as the judgment of the Homiletics Professor. I entitled it "***Our Twin Faith***."

> "More important than what we say to others is what we say to ourselves. Of greater significance are our conversations with our noblest selves. Sometimes we recount a passing event, sometimes we evaluate a given situation, and sometimes we make resolutions. Deeply impressed by a verse in the Psalms, Rabbi Yose, a Palestinean Rabbi, once said to himself: אַל יְהִא פָּסוּק זֶה זָז מִפִּיךָ 'Never forget the implications of this verse': 'The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our haven.'[1] ה' צְבָאוֹת עִמָּנוּ מִשְׂגָּב לָנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב סֶלָה
>
> Rabbi Abbahu was inspired by yet another verse: ה' צְבָאוֹת אַשְׁרֵי אָדָם בֹּטֵחַ בָּךְ 'O Lord of Hosts, happy is the man who trusts in You.' [2]
>
> Like many of the private prayers and meditations of the Rabbis, these verses have been included in the Siddur. What is so extraordinary about them? Both verses have something in common — they express faith, the one great moving force that can neither be weighed in the balance nor tested in the crucible. Faith is universal. In every enterprise we use not only our systematized knowledge, but we use something else as well with which we feel our way forward — intuition, insights, hopes, unverified convictions, which are the building blocks of faith. We project our lives forward by building bridges: Part of the structure is solidly bolted; but ever beyond this established portion we audaciously thrust out new beginnings in eager expectation that from the other side something will come to meet us. Without this no progress would be possible. Try to imagine the world with all faith gone. You then conceive of a world with no conscious life or effort. Take trust in testimony from courts of law and unsure experiments from the physician's practise; refuse the teacher his confidence in growing minds and the business man his right to uncertain ventures; abstract from social reforms all faith in a better future, from society all mutual trust, from science all unproved postulates, and from religion all belief in the unseen, and life will become an inane sand heap. [A note to myself: raise voice] A man who tries to live without faith will die of inertia; a society that makes the attempt will be paralyzed. The question is not whether or no we shall live by faith, the question is rather, what part shall faith play in our lives. [Till here]

1. Psalms 46:8
2. Ibid. 84:13

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA

The Haftarah for the Parasha Tazria tells of how the captain of the Aramean army, Naaman, was cured of his leprosy on the advice of the prophet, Elisha. Naaman's wife had a Hebrew maid who was captured by the Arameans. She suggested to her mistress to have her husband seek the services of the Hebrew prophet from Samaria. Naaman had enough faith in Elisha's powers to drive up with his horses and chariots to the door of Elisha's house. But when he heard the prophetic advice, 'Go and bathe seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean,' Naaman was angered and walked away. 'I thought,' he said, 'he would surely come out to me, and would stand and invoke the Lord his God by name, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the affected part ... and he stalked off in a rage.'[3] Naaman thought that all that was required for his cure was a belief in the miraculous powers of the Prophet. But Elisha reminded him that he could not invoke God till the initiative came from Naaman himself. Naaman was not cured till he supplemented his faith by a positive though simple act — immersion in the Jordan.

That is what Rabbi Yose meant when he said: Don't forget that implications of the verse

יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת עִמָּנוּ מִשְׂגָּב לָנוּ 'the Lord of Hosts is with us and is our shelter, because אֵין בְּטָחוֹן אֶלָּא שִׁצְרִיךְ אָדָם לַעֲשׂוֹת פְּעֻלָּה 'faith can be most effective only if it is implemented by action.' Thus he takes the verse to mean: אִם עָשִׂינוּ אֶת שֶׁלָּנוּ אָז מִשְׂגָּב לָנוּ 'In the words of the common expression, God helps those who help themselves.'

One of the contributing factors in the continued existence of the Jewish people has been the intense will to live even in adverse circumstances. When the Jew had peace he gave thanks to God; when in distress, he persevered in his faith. In the severest crisis, Jewish leaders stood their test. When the Temple was destroyed and Jerusalem laid waste, and the study of the Torah temporarily halted, the courageous and far–sighted Yohanan ben Zakkai convened a meeting of scholars in Yavneh. He sincerely believed that the Temple would soon be rebuilt and that Jerusalem would once again become their spiritual headquarters. Till such an opportunity offered itself, however, he tried to continue in Yavneh the laws and customs that were hitherto limited to Jerusalem. Thus he kept alive the traditions of the past, which everyone hoped would be restored by Divine Providence.

A more recent episode in the life of our people shows at once the blessings of faith plus timely action, on the one hand, and the tragedy of mere faith and inaction. In its early beginnings in Europe, the Zionist movement was looking for supporters. Erets Yisrael was ready to receive its sons and daughters, of course at much personal sacrifice. But some sections of European Jewry refused association, much less cooperation, with the Zionists, who were branded secularists and heretics. These people had faith that the Messiah would lead them to the Holy Land. Their leaders forbade them to emigrate. Some enterprising and foresighted Russian Jews, however, no less endowed with faith in their people's future, left their birthplace and settled in Palestine. At the cost of privation and vital sacrifice that typified a Joseph Trumpeldor, they built the foundations of the Third Jewish Commonwealth.

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3. II Kings 5:9-12

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA

Most of European Jewry was devastated by the Nazis, while the product of non–religious pioneering in Israel resulted in the preponderance of secular leadership in the new Jewish State. Thus it has been said that Orthodox Jewry had lost Erets Yisrael by default. ה' צְבָאוֹת עִמָּנוּ - אִם עָשִׂינוּ אֶת שֶׁלָּנוּ - אָז מִשְׁגָּב לָנוּ 'If we do our bit, we have faith that God will help us.'

[A note to myself: Slow and pathetic] But very often it may be beyond our immediate capacity to do anything about the things we believe in. In war–time, when men are missing in action, relatives and friends are hopeful that their loved ones are prisoners of war. Their only recourse is prayer and faith. All effort on their part is unnecessary and in vain. In many instances their prayers are answered and their faith rewarded, as happened recently with the announcement with the prisoner of war list by the communists in Korea. Again in the recent coal–mine disaster in Illinois, when over a hundred miners lost their lives, only one survivor was brought to the surface. During the frantic and vigorous search for possible survivors lasting thirty–six hours, pictures of the nearest of kin illustrated grim faces — hope in their hearts and prayer on their lips. The lone survivor's first words to his rescuers were: 'I had confidence you would come!'

The question remains, however: 'What of the soldiers whose names were not on the prisoner of war list? What of the men who were killed in the coal–mine disaster? What happens to the faith of their relatives and friends?' We may add: 'What of children who lose a parent at a young age, or of people rendered homeless by earthquakes and floods?' There can be only one answer: 'We must resign ourselves to the inevitable; we must make peace with the unavoidable.'

The resignation taught by Judaism in times of bereavement and misfortune is expressed by the classic statement: כל דְּעָבִיד רַחֲמָנָא לְטַב עָבִיד 'Whatever God does is for the best.' We do not understand His ways for the time being. Maybe we will, at another time; maybe we will never understand.

This is also part of the lesson of the Book of Job. His seven son and three daughters perished, his property destroyed, his wealth forcibly taken away. Though advised to 'Blaspheme God and die,'[4] he chose to say: ה' נָתַן וַה' לָקַח יְהִי שֵׁם ה' מְבוֹרָךְ 'The Lord has given, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord forever.'[5]

To take another example, The Kaddish is a solemn affirmation of the acceptance of God's will. What greater comfort might be experienced by a woman who has lost her husband than to see her son say the Kaddish for his father?

That is what Rabbi Abbahu meant when he realized the importance of the verse: אַשְׁרֵי אָדָם בּוֹטֵחַ בָּךְ When faith in God goes, man the thinker loses his greatest thought. When faith in God goes, man the worker loses his choicest motive. When faith in God goes, man the mortal abandons his most vital hope.

4. Job 2:9
5. Ibid.1:21

Though we can do nothing about the inevitable, we can do something about the possible. Though we cannot do anything about stopping an earthquake or preventing death, we can do something about removing slum conditions and fighting poor education standards. Usually the process is reversed. People rebel against that which cannot be helped, pointing to the inadequacies of Nature and the tragic instances of life, and neglect that which is in our hands to rectify. The Book of Deuteronomy (29:28) sounds the right note: הַנִּסְתָּרוֹת לַה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְהַנִּגְלֹת לָנוּ וּלְבָנֵינוּ עַד עוֹלָם 'Concealed acts are in the hands of God; but the overt acts are for us and our children after us to do all that is required by the Teachings of the Torah.

The story is told of a woman who became so morbid after the death of her husband that she virtually retired from life for a number of years. Her disposition changed, however, when she was persuaded to became an active worker for the Red Cross.

Thus we become co–workers with God in the conduct of the universe. The Zohar, in commenting on the phrase תְּנוּ עֹז לֵאלֹהִים 'Give strength to God,' says: כַּד עַבְדִין דְּלָא כְּשָׁרָן מִתְיְשִׁישִׁין הֵילָא דְּקב"ה כַּד עַבְדִין דְּכְשָׁרָן יַתְבִין תֻּקְפָּא וְחֵילָא לְקב"ה 'When we don't do the will of God, we weaken, as it were, the power of God; when we do His will, we increase His power and might.'

This then is our twin faith: ה' צְבָאוֹת עֲמָנוּ--אִם עָשִׂינוּ אֶת שֶׁלָּנוּ--אָז מִשְׂגָּב לָנוּ 'Faith can be most effective when it is implemented by action on our part.' But if conditions of faith make our action impossible, אַשְׁרֵי אָדָם בֹּטֵחַ בָּךְ 'happy is the man, blessed is the man, who trusts in God.' Amen."

Rabbi Simon Greenberg, Professor of Homiletics, [the art of preaching], had me share the Homiletics prize for the year with my class–mate, William Berkowitz.

Looking back, my remarks seem to be a prediction of the difficulties and obstacles placed in my way to assume the position of rabbi in Calcutta, by powerful forces both internal and external. Had it not been for my twin faith — taking what was my God–given initiative to serve my native community, being away from father, family and home for five years, battling hindrances along the way — and at the conclusion of my term of studies, when all action on my part seemed doomed to failure — putting my trust in God and returning to India — this history would have been so different; it would not have been describing yet another pioneering path. I probably would have settled in Israel, and Calcutta would have been deprived of the religious leadership I had provided for twelve years. The community's blessings as well as mine are here recounted as I planned to return to Calcutta despite overwhelming odds. I quote Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr: 'Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple–tree.'

"June 11, 1952. From the office of the Vice–Chancellor, Dr Simon Greenberg, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Dear Ezekiel, I am very happy to inform you that you have completed all your requirements for graduation from the Rabbinical School of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

"I look forward, therefore, to the pleasure of ordaining you in behalf of the Faculty at the Commencement Exercises this coming Sunday afternoon.

"My sincere congratulations to you upon successfully completing your course of study and best wishes to you for a very happy, long and fruitful service to Israel and to God.

Very cordially,

Simon Greenberg"

Eighteen of the twenty–three members of the graduating class of rabbis had volunteered to serve as armed forces chaplains [in the Korean War]. One of the graduates became a Halutz/Rabbi in the pioneering services of the Indian–Jewish community, fulfilling the prediction of Rabbi David J. Seligson.

The invitation to commencement exercises:

The Board of Directors and the Faculties of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America request the pleasure of your presence at the COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES of the Seminary and the Teachers Institute at the Seminary, Broadway and 122nd Street, New York City, on Sunday Afternoon, June 15, 1952 at Four o'clock Program on page following A card is enclosed for your reply

On the invitation I sent Dad, I inscribed in Hebrew:

נְצֹר בְּנִי מִצְוַת אָבִיךָ וְאַל תִּטֹּשׁ תּוֹרַת אִמֶּךָ
קָשְׁרֵם עַל לִבְּךָ תָּמִיד עָנְדֵם עַל גַּרְגְּרוֹתֶךָ
בְּהִתְהַלֶּכְךָ תַּנְחֶה אוֹתָךְ בְּשָׁכְבְּךָ תִּשְׁמֹר עָלֶיךָ
וַהֲקִיצוֹתָ הִיא תְשִׂיחֶךָ

'My son, keep your father's commandment, do not forsake your mother's teaching. Tie them over your heart always; bind them around your throat. When you walk, it will lead you; when you lie down, it will watch over you; and when you are awake it will talk with you.'[6]

And on the reserved seat ticket, I wrote in Hebrew: יִשְׂמַח אָבִיךָ וְאִמֶּךָ וְתָגֵל יוֹלַדְתֶּךָ

'Your father and mother will rejoice; she who bore you will exult.'[7]

Baccalaureate sermon by Rabbi Alexander J. Burnstein

Saturday, June 14, 1952, 9:30a.m. at the Sabbath services in the Seminary Synagogue

Commencement Program June 15, 1952, 4 p.m.

Coronation March Meyerbeer

Invocation Rabbi Morris M. Goldberg

Conferring of Degrees, Presentation of Diplomas and Certificates, Award of the Louis Ginzburg Fellowships

6. Proverbs 6:20-21
7. Ibid. 23:25

Inauguration of Rabbi Judah Goldin as Dean of the Teachers Institute and Seminary College of Jewish Studies

Musical Interlude

Address Rabbi Judah Goldin

Closing Prayer Rabbi Harry E. Schwartz

Adon Olam

March From "Athalia" Mendelssohn

The Hebrew version of my rabbinical diploma was signed perhaps for the last time by two of the giants of Jewish scholarship in the twentieth century — Louis Ginzburg and Alexander Marx. All the signatories I am profoundly honored and highly privileged to have on my certificate:

Louis Finkelstein, Louis Ginzburg, Saul Lieberman, Alexander Marx, Mordecai M. Kaplan, H.L. Ginsberg, Shalom Spiegel, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Simon Greenberg, Hillel Bavli, Boaz Cohen, Robert Gordis, Max Arzt, Moshe Davis, Bernard Mandelbaum.

The Seminary wished to acknowledge Rabbi David J. Seligson's role in influencing me toward the rabbinate. Here is Rabbi Simon Greenberg's letter and Rabbi Seligson's reply:

"May 23, 1952. Dear Rabbi Seligson, As you may know, Ezekiel Musleah will receive his ordination at the Seminary Commencement exercises on June 15. All of us at the Seminary have been extremely happy with the development of Ezekiel. There is no doubt he will contribute a great deal to the development of Jewish life wherever he serves. We know that you were responsible for directing him along this path. It would therefore be most appropriate if you could join us and participate in the procession of our Commencement exercises.

When Ezekiel receives his degree, I would like to express publicly our recognition of your devotion to the community of Calcutta as well as your selfless service in guiding young Musleah.

I hope we will have the pleasure of having you join us.

Sincerely yours, Signed, Simon Greenberg"

"May 26, 1952. Dear Dr. Greenberg, Many thanks for your good letter and kind invitation to attend the Seminary Commencement Exercises and witness the ordination of my young friend and colleague, Rabbi Ezekiel Musleah. I have been happy to observe his good progress at the Seminary, and have been in constant touch with the lay leadership of the Calcutta Jewish community. As you know there has been a large scale emigration from there and other Jewish communities in SouthEast Asia to Israel. This has impoverished the resources and weakened communal life. Yet there is a great need for qualified rabbinical leadership. I think Musleah is well able to provide it.

I had counted on Lady Ezra to sponsor his ministry, but with her passing last August, the responsibility for leadership has been transferred to her nephew, Rabbi Solomon Sassoon. I have written to him in the hope that he could underwrite Ezekiel's initial salary.

It would be very helpful if an official letter from the Seminary were sent to Rabbi Sassoon indicating the high degree of satisfaction that Musleah has given to his teachers, and his extraordinary devotion to Jewish learning. Rabbi Sassoon's address is ...

With renewed thanks for your kind invitation and looking forward to greeting you personally, Sincerely yours, signed, David J. Seligson""

"June 5, 1950. Dear Rabbi Sassoon, I know of your deep interest in the Jewish community of Calcutta, and particularly of your concern about one of our students, Ezekiel Musleah, who came to us from that community some five years ago. You will be happy to learn that on June 15th, Ezekiel will be graduated and ordained as Rabbi, Teacher and Preacher in Israel.

"During his years of study at the Seminary, he earned the respect and regard of all his professors, as well as the admiration and goodwill of all his fellow students. On the basis of our experience with him, we feel certain that he will be a distinguished leader of his people, and that his sincerity and devotion to truth will contribute to the advancement of a better life amongst any group of people that he leads.

"This information should be a source of gratification to you and all those who are in direct touch with the Jewish communities of South East Asia. Sincerely Yours, Signed, Simon Greenberg"

Rabbi Sassoon's response to the Seminary is not known to me, but here is his reply to Rabbi Seligson:

"Dear Rabbi Seligson, Many thanks for your letter of the 7th instant.

I was most interested to learn that Ezekiel Musleah will be ordained during the month of June. Presumably you mean ordained as a Rabbi, although you do not say so explicitly as to whether he will be ordained as a Rabbi or a Minister and Preacher, so that I am not quite sure what it actually is, nor do I know what the standard of the Seminary is, as I have no previous experience of their examinations.

"Calcutta indeed stands in great need of a Spiritual leader and I was extremely interested to ascertain the chance Ezekiel stood of obtaining the position of leadership of the Calcutta community, as I have always been of the opinion that it would be a great thing for him to succeed in serving the community as an orthodox rabbi.

"Therefore, when I was in Calcutta a few months ago, I made widespread inquiries concerning his prospects there, but it seemed to me that without exception everyone was of the opinion that he was too young to have the necessary influence. Do you know whether there is anyone or a group in Calcutta who is desirous of having Musleah? Because unless he has a group of supporters, how could his life even be tolerable in Calcutta? If he has supporters, could you tell me who they are? This would give a better idea as to his chances he has and I could then discuss it with some Calcutta friends. Signed, S.D. Sassoon"

2nd June 1952. From J.R. Jacob to Rabbi David J. Seligson:

"I really don't know what to write about Ezekiel Musleah. There is absolutely no co–operation from the synagogues and the two other institutions, the Jewish Girls' School and the Elias Meyer Free School. The general cry from all these institutions is lack of sufficient funds to meet further obligations, and the trend is to throw the whole burden on the shoulders of the Jewish Association of Calcutta. [that is, the B.N. Elias group]. This Association is not in a position to shoulder the whole burden, but is willing to do its bit and more in conjunction with the others. D.J. Cohen, of Bethel, is an out–and–out non–co–operator, and since my return in March, the Hony. Secretary of Maghen David Synagogue, to the utter disgust of most people, has taken up the same attitude.

I have had a talk with Ezekiel's father, who tells me that, in any case, Ezekiel is returning in August, irrespective of what the community decides, but it is my intention, when Aaron Curlender returns to Calcutta about the end of this month. to have a close talk with him."

[As I mentioned, unfortunately, Aaron Curlender died in Bangalore during his vacation there.]

The absence of my family at the ordination ceremonies was made good in part by the presence of a very good and sincere friend of mine at the Seminary, Esther Gershone, a student from Karachi, then India. Esther wrote Dad an unsolicited letter, dated the day after the commencement. "June 16, 1952. 419 W. 119 Street, Apt IA, New York, 27 N.Y.

Dear Mr. Musleah, I know you don't know me personally, but since I am the only other Indian student at the Seminary, I am taking this bold opportunity of writing to you, Ezekiel's father, of his graduation, which took place only yesterday. There was a special applause for Ezie!

"With my girl friend and me, his graduation celebration began on May 23, when we had him over for an Indian dinner in his honour. Of course we had other friends over too. Ezekiel came a little earlier so that we could take some pictures before Shabbath. Since Ezekiel had his father waiting half–way across the globe for him, my girl friend and I decided to cheer him up. The dinner turned out very well, though it is very difficult to secure Indian spices in America.

"After that, the two special invitation cards that Ezekiel received for his parents or anyone near to him came to us, and so both of us represented you at Ezekiel's graduation exercises. When we reached the Seminary we found many more parents and relatives of

graduating students without seats, so both of us gave up ours and we stood in the passageway to greet Ezekiel as he came up marching with the rest in his beautiful black robe and cap. I must say he looked handsome, but as he appeared on the huge lawn, he seemed to be in a very serious mood indeed, maybe his heart was 12000 miles away from here, with you, because I know personally how I miss my parents when something good happens to me. But in our way of cheering Ezekiel up, we waved and smiled, bringing him back to consciousness that something great was happening to him, and we were proud of him. The students of each Seminary school were called individually to receive their diplomas, and Ezekiel looked very serious when he received his. After a long address by the guest speaker, a special mention was made of your son as 'the first Western–trained Indian Rabbi' now returning to serve his Jewish brethren in Calcutta.

I must here say Mazal Tov to you all, his father, his grandmother, his aunts, his uncle, for the happiness that has come to you and to the Jews in India. Ezie has always been a very serious student, and I feel sure he will do justice in serving our people. I sincerely always pray to God to always be by his side, to guide him in the right path.

"As soon as the ceremonies were over, we went on the other side of the big lawn to await Ezie's arrival in the return march to wish him a hearty Mazal Tov. One of his friends took a number of pictures, and on Ezekiel's return home, you will have some idea, I hope, of the beautiful graduation your son had. We then joined him and the others to drink wine to his health and happiness. Believe me, the party was just grand.

"Ezekiel had always talked highly of you and the family, and I am sure he will make your heart happy in the days to come.

"P.S. It is said of רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן חֲנַנְיָה. אַשְׁרֵי יוֹלַדְתּוֹ Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hananya: Happy is she who bore him! I am sure Ezekiel's mother is very happy in Heaven for having given birth to such a son, but I feel much honour goes to you, his father and the rest who brought him up so well. Esther Gershone"

Dad's reply. "June 26, 1952. Dear Miss Gershone:

Many thanks for your letter bearing the admirable description of my son's graduation. Your presence had given him no little consolation and encouragement on that great occasion …

Perhaps you are not aware of the fact that Ezekiel hails from a family of rabbis. Between 1775 and 1825, Hakham Saleh and Hakham Nissim Musleah were Nesiim and Rabbanim of the community of Baghdad. A grandson [grand nephew] of Hakham Nissim, well–versed in Kabbalistic learning, died in Calcutta in 1830 [1824] … It has fallen upon Ezekiel to carry forward the tradition of his ancestors and become the torch bearer of the modern generation. The great devotion and love with which he pursued the learning of the Torah will stand him in good stead עֵץ חַיִּים הִיא לַמַּחֲזִיקִים בָּהּ וְתוֹמְכֶיהָ מְאֻשָּׁר 'It is a tree of life for those who grasp it, and all those who uphold it are blessed.'

"I feel very happy that so many of Ezekiel's well–wishers rejoice with me on this very happy occasion. You and your girl–friend deserve special mention and thanks, and I hope we will have the pleasure of returning the complements when the happy occasion of your

graduation comes along. Eze once mentioned that you had done some typing for him, and also gave him a short history of your family in Karachi and your flight from there on account of communal persecution. Let's hope all that will be forgotten, and a new life will spring up when you too will take your place in educating the rising generation in Torah. You need to be praised for choosing the path of Torah in which I wish you success and happiness. Yours sincerely, I. S. Musleah"

The controversy surrounding my credentials and eligibility for the Calcutta pulpit did not dampen my spirits. From my perspective, it was my unfettered right to express my truest self, to realize my greatest potential, in the area of my roots, something I was sure no one else could do. I had always been imbued by one of my favorite biblical verses, Jeremiah 17:7–8: בָּרוּךְ הַגֶּבֶר אֲשֶׁר יִבְטַח בה' וְהָיָה ה' מִבְטַחוֹ וְהָיָה כְּעֵץ שָׁתוּל עַל מַיִם וְעַל יוּבַל יְשַׁלַּח שָׁרָשָׁיו וְלֹא יִרְאֶה כִּי יָבוֹא חוֹם וְהָיָה עָלֵהוּ רַעֲנָן וּבִשְׁנַת בַּצֹּרֶת לֹא יִדְאָג וְלֹא יָמִישׁ מֵעֲשׂוֹת פֶּרִי

"Blessed is he who who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord alone. He shall be like a tree planted by waters, sending forth its roots by a stream. It does not sense the coming of heat, its leaves are ever fresh; it has no care in a year of drought, it does not cease to yield fruit." I resisted being blocked by the "heat" of physical or psychological barriers, by the "drought" caused by institutional impediments, or by the blasts of overseas obstruction. I determined "to yield fruit," once "planted" in the confines of my roots. I persisted to ferret out first–hand what I could truly achieve in an environment I felt was ripe for pioneering leadership. This historic decision was connected to the spark of the divine within me to becoming what and who I am capable of becoming. I took my initial step in Halutzic fashion, and lived out the consequences bravely. Now it was time to take the next pioneering path, and harvest the outgrowth with courage. My rabbinical training in my view, however others judged it, was the means by which Calcutta Jewry could be helped bridge a gap between present crisis and future emigration and degeneration. I was not prepared to allow Calcutta or me to miss the opportunity. At the expense, then, of my services being set at naught, I set out to meet the challenge of an incipient rabbinate replete with hindrances, but assured that, if my native community failed me and itself, I would take Dr Finkelstein's directive and take a pulpit waiting for me in America. Such is the badge of an explorer on a pioneering path.

JUNE 18, 1952 The day is upon us. The day I leave as a rabbi for my native Calcutta. Tomorrow is not guaranteed. So the future is always now. I made a conscious decision to deal with it when it arrives.

I never doubted myself. I never disputed my sacred resolve. The long–term future may very well say I made a mistake by spending the initial years in Calcutta. Then again it may not. For now, the only future that matters is the first few months to demonstrate if Calcutta wants me to serve it. It is worth a try. I think I can afford the risk. Remember what Helen Keller, the blind deaf–mute, whose education and training represent the most extraordinary accomplishment ever made in the education of persons so handicapped, said: "Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see the shadows." So the Halutz sets out once again, not sure where to or for how long, hoping to face sunshine but unafraid to catch sight of shadows.

Before embarking on the "Queen Elizabeth," the Seminary authorities gave a breakfast in my honor presided over by my mentor, Dr Simon Greenberg. Some faculty members and student friends too were present. Dr Greenberg said how happy the faculty and students were in coming to know me closely, and wished me well. Two of my good friends, David Jacobs and Gilbert

Epstein accompanied me to the ship; in fact, Gil filled in the luggage cards, which I still have. After a very restful five days, I arrived at Southampton, England at 12:30 am., slept over on the ship and disembarked at 8:45 am. In London, I was guest of N. B. Elias, Dad's boss. We had lunch at a nearby Kasher restaurant where, of all people, we met Dr Louis Finkelstein, Chancellor of the Seminary, who was on a tour of Europe after having given an honorary degree to David ben Gurion in Israel! LF was having lunch with his former brother–in–law, Prof. Norman Bentwich, a famous English scholar. After lunch, he sat briefly at our table.

Nissim Elias wrote about my being his guest in London, and Dad replied:

> "... I cannot adequately thank you for taking the trouble of making him your guest during his stay in England. A bigger favour you could not have extended to me or him, for in your company he must feel quite at home because I cannot think of anyone else who could extend to him that fatherly care which you are capable of doing so ungrudgingly.
>
> I am glad you met Dr Finkelstein who is very fond of Ezekiel, and has often tried to persuade him to stay back in the USA."

Friday, June 27, 1952. From Ralph Arakie's office, London. [son–in–law of B.N. Elias] I wrote:

> "Mr. Nissim [Elias] has been an angel to me. He is paying every penny of my expenses here. I have protested to him about his generosity, but he won't hear of it.
>
> "He has a programme for me we are keeping to very carefully. The first night we took a tour of London by floodlit bus via Westminster Abbey, Hyde Park, Marble Arch, St. Paul's Cathedral and the River Thames.
>
> "The following week in London. Monday, June 30 — Tea at Ralph Arakie's. When the guests had left, Ralph and I sat down to chat. He showed me the Sefer he would practise Parasha in before the War, which was safe during the bombing. He was so moved when he heard about what I had planned that he said Calcutta would be hapless were it not to have me as its rabbi. He said that if nothing were done by the winter when he hoped to be in Calcutta, he would launch a campaign on my behalf in vigorous moral support."

Tuesday, July 1 — Luncheon with Finkelstein, {postponed to Friday July 4, invited – Lily Jacob and N.B.E., Ralph Arakie and wife, Flora. L.F. spoke about how the Seminary accommodated me academically and physically.

Wednesday, July 2, all invited to Rabbi Kopul Rosen's house. He runs a Jewish day school about 11/2 hours from London. The grounds are vast with an enrollment of about 170 pupils from Israel, Egypt, South America, South Africa and a boy from Rangoon (Solomon family), studying secular as well as religious subjects. He told a story about an orphan boy who, after spending a delightful Shabbath at the school, came up to Rabbi Rosen and asked if could spend every Shabbath there! Rabbi Rosen commented: See how important it is to teach by example rather than just by theory! I told him: If I had a son today I would have sent him there. We had lunch with him and his lovely wife, the daughter of a Manchester rabbi.

Thursday, July 3, To Letchworth, Rabbi Solomon D. Sassoon. We talked about the Calcutta community at length. One of the first questions he asked me was whether I was Orthodox, a reflection, not surprisingly, of the trend he was to take. I answered in the affirmative without going into details. Satisfied with this answer, he continued: "Since both of us are Orthodox, we

have a common goal. But don't you think you are too young to lead such a difficult community?" I explained that I was interested mainly to lead the youth, the adults being too solidified in their views for me to influence. That answer pleased him, though he brought up problems of the past and those of the adults. "About one thing I must warn you: 'your father deals with too many organizations and had made many antagonists. They will probably be biased against you.'" At this, my pressure rose several degrees when I said most emphatically about how my father was doing a much better job everywhere than any of his predecessors, and people had turned against him out of envy. But he continued to put me on trial for my father's activities: 'Your father wants to shut down the synagogues!' I then described the state of degeneracy of the synagogues and their services — for instance, the tea–shop environment in Maghen David's courtyard before services and the farcical worship that follow. My father wants to save the sanctity of the synagogue, not to close it down. Sassoon preferred to run it the way it had been. He then switched to the syllabus of Seminary studies, which he deemed insufficient, but I told him I was going to be a student all my life. He seemed convinced. He showed me a part of his father's library pertaining to Calcutta. We discussed salary and he was prepared to share the expense from Lady Ezra's estate. We parted good friends. He presented me with a book he edited with the autograph לִידִידִי הַנֶּקֶר וְהַנֶּעֱלֶה אִישׁ בְּתוֹרַת ה' חָפֵצוֹ וּלְהַרְבִּיץ תּוֹרָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יְחֶזְקֵאל כה"ר יְהוּדָה נִסִּים מַזְלִיחַ ה' יְזַכֵּהוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת חַיִל בְּעַמּוֹ וּבְכֹל אֲשֶׁר יִפְנֶה יַצְלִיחַ ['To my cherished and honourable friend, one for whom the teaching of the Lord is his delight, and to disseminate the Torah among the Jewish people his pleasure, Ezekiel Nissim Musleah, may the Lord bestow upon him to do worthy deeds for his people, and wherever he turns he will be successful.']

The next morning, Friday, he called Ralph Arakie's office and left a message for me to see him again for tea on Sunday. I thought he had found something interesting to show me or that his family was so impressed that they wanted to host me again. Nothing of the sort! He wanted to let me know that the previous day he was so taken by my enthusiasm and idealism that he consented to support me. But after I had left he was constantly reminded of a passage in the Talmud which visited punishment on one who recognized a "rabbi" who was actually unfit for his position. He said that rabbis of the Seminary should not be considered so because they did not cover much Talmud and Jewish law. He gave me a lecture as to how important Jewish law was, as if to say I didn't agree with him. I couldn't believe that I heard him say that Christianity, which rejected Jewish law, could not be at peace with itself! [Was I to be reckoned on the same basis?]

He asked why I did not study the theoretical laws of Shehitah, nor was I expert in the laws of Niddah (Menstruation). I told him that the Seminary recognized certain branches of study to be specialized, and that I was trained in the laws of Kiddushin and Gittin [matrimony and divorce], a specialty that had prepared me for some of the problems I would be confronted with in Calcutta.

He didn't agree. He wanted to see more women going to the Mikvah and that all facilities be given to those who wanted to. He had me read some Talmud and apparently was satisfied at the attempt. He finally came out with his opinion — that he would not recognize my full rabbinical degree, — only that of a Preacher and Teacher, — and in order to obtain that title, I would have to study a year of further Rabbinics either in England or in Israel.

Thoroughly exasperated but still calm [because I remembered Dad's advice], I thanked him for his attention but expressed disappointment at the outcome. He then went on to say that he had completed all of the Talmud in seven years when his father was alive, but after his father's death, he could not study steadily. I told him he was in a unique position with no responsibilities whatsoever when tutors were at his disposal at home, and that if I had the same opportunities, I too would have been able to study freely.

We parted, this time my mind made up that here was to be a source of constant opposition, dissension and cross purposes, but that it was also meant to be a preamble to my tortuous ministry in Calcutta.

On the way back to London from Letchworth, I pondered my up and down meetings with Sassoon. No doubt we are deprived of much that we might enjoy in this world because so many of us are so willing to let others create ideas and make opportunities for us. God would not have given us the ability to think and act independently if He would not have expected us to use our own free will and initiative to think useful thoughts and to trudge pioneering paths. No one is justified in expecting the world to lay its treasures at his feet. For the good things of the earth and for the enjoyment of them we must use the best powers of mind and matter and spirit we have been brought up with and have studied for.

This London schedule was interspersed by visits to places of interest. Met L.F. in synagogue on Shabbath.

I left London on July 17 for Paris, Lausanne and Geneva, Switzerland, after expressing my profound thanks to the generous host of my European tour, N. B. Elias. I had thoroughly enjoyed myself in Europe; the only thing lacking was company. My most indelible remembrance is the Theatre National De L'Opera [The Opera National Theatre] in Paris. The building inaugurated in 1875 is justly considered one of the most splendid palaces ever built for the arts — music, acting and ballet. Then recently renovated, the opera building had been endowed with stage contrivances of unrivaled modern effects. The aim, as a commentator remarked, was to hold both sight and hearing equally enraptured. "The Metropolitan Opera in New York was constructed for accommodation; the Paris Theatre, for aesthetic admiration and architectural genius," is a note I made on my program, "La Semaine A L'Opera," 13 July 1952. Then, on to Switzerland. Lake Geneva is spectacular, its boat–trip most enjoyable, but Lausanne, on Lake Leman, is located on the slopes of hills over 2000 feet high, which fall gradually away to the lake. I went on two excursions — Chillon Castle and a lovely vineyard with plenty of free drinks. A natural resort, the air is crisp and pure. Sorry I missed Dad's last letter redirected to Israel, where he directed me to buy a watch for myself in Switzerland.

> From Marseilles I embarked on an Israeli ship, appropriately named, The Kedmah [=Eastward], flying the Israeli flag, making announcements in Hebrew and serving Kasher food to all. I have the menu for dinner on July 25, 1952, serving macaroni soup, lamb roast, cooked fish, cabbage and pea salad, and coffee/cake. "If you are on a diet, please let the head waiter know."

> Morning and evening prayers were held in the ship's synagogue, and on Shabbath, over fifty people were cramped in the small enclosure — in all, one of the most Jewishly exhilarating experiences I ever had. With one exception — money was spent at the bar and elsewhere on Shabbath, treated as a Sunday, where people smoked and played cards all day. Arriving Haifa in four days, Meyer took me by cab [five persons to a cab] to his home in Hadera where I spent the night. Next morning, I rushed off to Ruby's in Ramat Gan en route to Jerusalem.

Letter dated Tu b'Av, Beth Mordecai, Ramat Gan. From ENM To Calcutta:

> "While Ruby [looking after Micha and expecting her second] is trying desperately to secure her forty winks this afternoon, I finally have the time to scribble a few lines to the family … I spent my birthday with Ruby who made me a lovely cake. It was the night of the eclipse, so she sat quietly and we talked."

I interrupt the account of my Israel tour by a letter written by Dad I received in Israel.

> "Let me congratulate you [on your ordination] and wish you many happy returns of your 25th birthday. May God grant you the strength, health and vigour to carry on the very onerous duties that now face you. Your days of recreation and relaxation will soon be over and you must then confront the battle of life which I pray will be lightened by the whole–hearted blessing of a father: וְאֵל שַׁדַּי יְבָרֵךְ אוֹתְךָ וְיַפְרְךָ וְיַרְבֶּךָ וְהָיִיתָ לִקְהַל עַמִּים 'May God Almighty bless you, make you fertile and numerous, so that you become a community of peoples.'[8] This verse also has reference to your 25th birthday. [In the Hebrew, the second, third and fourth letters of the word for 'you become,' hay, yode, yode, have the numerical value of twenty–five, appropriate for my twenty–fifth birthday.] Another verse[9] also has significance for this occasion: וַאֲמַרְתֶּם כֹּה לְחַי וְאַתָּה שָׁלוֹם וּבֵיתְךָ וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר לְךָ שָׁלוֹם Say as follows: 'To life! May you and yours have peace! [In this verse, the two letters of the second word, kaf and heh, similarly add up to twenty–five.] Granny and all the aunts and uncles join me in giving you their heartfelt blessings in wishing you a very happy and successful career. Granny is particularly happy in witnessing you, her grandchild, a Rabbi in Israel, well–versed in Torah and carrying aloft the torch of Torah which your ancestors had borne for one and a half centuries and more."

Israeli tour continued. "Jerusalem was the best place to be in on Tisha b'Av. I spent most of the evening and the next day on Mount Zion, the closest place to the site of the Temple now in Jewish hands. We could see the walls of the Old City from the top. It was distressing that I could not be at the Wall at that opportune moment, but the scenes at קֶבֶר דָּוִד Tomb of David on the way up compensated a bit. [Who knew I would have an opportunity to be at the Wall itself several times after 1967!]

All types of Jews from various parts of the world assembled at that central spot — Ashkenazim, Sephardim, Yemenites and Iraqis all huddled in different corners of the building on Mt. Zion mourning the loss of the Temples of old and the persecutions throughout the ages that decimated our co–religionists by the millions. Each group practised its own rites handed down to them by

8. Genesis 28:3
9. Samuel 25:6

their ancestors. I found my place among the Iraqis who were surprised that a young man looking like an American knew their tunes. A former Hazan in Baghdad set himself up as the leader and practised the same way in Israel. The atmosphere was reminiscent of Calcutta, where, instead of concentrating on what was being read, they preferred to compete for turns. I was presented with third place throughout, a prominent precedence, because of my knowledge of the melodies.

Having completed the formal order of Kinoth in the evening, we went on to the roof of the building and had a look at the Old City with the help of clear moonlight. I will never forget the dramatic effect of chanting the Book of Lamentations by moonlight. A youth group sang עַל נַהֲרוֹת בָּבֶל and their leader commented on the Psalm (137). The road winding its way to the top was full of pilgrims wishing to catch a glimpse of the site on which stood the sanctuary of old. Though out of place on Tisha b'Av, I was reminded of the Psalm of the pilgrims on Festive days: (122) "I rejoiced when they said to me, 'We are going to the House of the Lord.'" Arched over the top of Mt. Zion was the impressive sign: יְבָרֶכְךָ ה' בְּצִיּוֹן וּרְאֵה בְטוּב יְרוּשָׁלָיִם 'May the Lord bless you from Zion; may you share the prosperity of Jerusalem.'[10]

"In a separate room, a museum, in memory of the Six Million Jews murdered by Hitler, pathetic scenes — pieces of Sifrei Torah cut up into shoe–sizes for children, the portions of וְזֹאת הַבְּרָכָה made into a jacket, the Ten Commandments into the two sides of a drum. In an inner room were rolls of Torah besmirched with blood, probably held in the arms of victims when they refused to hand them over to the Germans. On a wall hung a copy of a song in the handwriting of a victim sung before inmates of the concentration camps were herded to the death."

While in Israel, wheels of political machinations were churning. Rabbi Sassoon had gotten Haham Solomon Gaon, of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews of Great Britain, to intervene on his behalf. Haham Gaon was highly regarded by the Eastern communities, which had settled in England, and support from him was thought to go a long way. The trend of these alarming occurrences is reflected in letters written by N.B. Elias to Dad:

> August 14,1952. "[The day before yesterday] Dr Gaon was on the telephone asking that Lily [Jacob] and I should see him in regard to Ezekiel. Evidently, Rabbi Sassoon had been telling him that Ezekiel might be appointed Rabbi for Calcutta and Bombay, but owing to his not being versed in the laws of Shehitah, etc., that he cannot be appointed as a Rabbi. Dr Gaon says he met Dr Finkelstein and mentioned to him [their objections]. Dr F. it seems told Dr Gaon in reply that the qualifications of the term Rabbi passed in his Seminary are higher than those of a minister in England, and that the equivalent of a Rabbi of England is called Rab in U.S.A., and that Ezekiel did not sit for a Rab's exam. So, armed with what they claim came 'straight from the horses mouth,' Dr Gaon and Rabbi Sassoon say they cannot consider Ezekiel as a Rabbi and therefore he cannot be appointed in that position.
>
> "P.S. I have just returned from a meeting with Dr Gaon at his request. To the above he added that Rabbi Sassoon told him that he was in an awkward position as it may be construed that he was a obstacle in Ezekiel's way because he does not want to pay from Lady Ezra's estate, and he suggested to Dr Gaon to have a talk with Dr F, which he did. Dr F told Dr Gaon that he had asked Ezekiel to study for that degree [of Rab] for another

10. Psalm 128:5

two years, which Ezekiel was not inclined to do, [could this have been a misinterpretation at some point, because I was never approached by the Seminary to take the Semikha course] and so Ezekiel's present degree does not qualify him to take on the functions of a Rabbi. Dr Gaon said he was very impressed with Ezekiel and suggested that he should come to Jews' College, London, for his Rabbi's exam, which will take two years. Of course, if Ezekiel is not so inclined, he could very well teach, deliver sermons, conduct services and do social work, all of which are much needed in India. But if he took upon himself the duties of a fully fledged Rabbi and gave decisions on Jewish law, there will be complications of a serious nature."

This statement was accurately rendered by NBE, but Dr Gaon's and Rabbi Sassoon's versions were distorted and exaggerated to suit diplomacy and politics.

The uttermost degree, call it desperation, even Chutzpa, to which the Orthodox establishment was prepared to go, manifested itself in reply to a letter addressed to it by Bernard V. Jacob, at the time Acting Honorary Secretary, Jewish Association of Calcutta, seeking guidance on my appointment as Rabbi in Calcutta.

Office of the Haham of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews of Great Britain,
2 Ashworth Road, Maidavale, London W.9

23 Heshvan, 5713
(11 November 1952)

Dear Mr. Jacob, Your letter of the 14th October ... we have duly considered it.

We find paragraph (a) perfectly satisfactory because we feel **Rev.** [emphasis mine] Musleah can be of great service to your community through his efforts in the educational, social and religious fields.

We are, however, still somewhat disturbed about your Beth Din. You point out that you would not be *creating* a Beth Din, which is already in existence, and you refer to the Haham's letter of 18th March 1952. It seems to us that you have to some extent misunderstood the implication of the Haham's letter, in which he referred to straightforward cases of Gittin, [religious divorces,] that is, where both parties had agreed to the Get. He said that three laymen could constitute themselves into a provisional Beth Din, meaning that it should constitute itself for each individual case. He did, however, emphasise that any case, which was out of the ordinary, must be referred to a competent rabbinical authority.

It does not seem to us that the Haham in his letter gave any indication that you would be creating a Beth Din, [with ENM as a member], and we are fully aware that Beth Din existed in your town well before the date of his letter. We know also that some difficulties arose in connection with a ruling passed by that Beth Din and that Rabbi Sassoon himself had to give evidence when he was in Calcutta. For this reason we should like to be assured that, in spite of Rev. Musleah's presence in your community, any provisional Beth Din, which you would find it necessary to constitute would undertake not to deal with any matters other than those mentioned in the Haham's letter of the 18th March.

It is painful to us to have to remind you of Rabbi Raymond, whose knowledge was greater than the other members of his Beth Din, but who, nevertheless, in trying to decide a case which was not as simple as he imagined, brought much needless suffering by his decision in a particular case, which is still pending in the High Court.

The urgency of public work will bring upon Rev. Musleah a steady pressure to deal more and more with matters lying outside his competence, and it will become ever more difficult for him to resist becoming involved in matters for which he is not qualified. The difficulty which he will find in resisting such complications will stem directly from the title which suggests a full qualification in the whole of the Eastern hemisphere. Here is the stumbling block. It is as if a man who has not been trained in the cure of disease should set up a practice as a fully qualified physician. The public is bound to become muddled, and Musleah will feel himself ever more pressed to assume functions, which his incorrect title has led the public to expect from him.

We most emphatically state that we consider that the only safeguard for the public and for Rev. Musleah against a gradual arrogation of duties for which he is not competent is that he gives up the title of "Rabbi" to which in all honesty his studies do not entitle him. He is now in India and not in America, and to continue using a title, which in Asia and Europe has a totally different connotation, is morally indefensible. Nor is it only at the Beth Din that his rights should be circumscribed; in his relations with the public it is imperative that they know on how much knowledge his opinions are based. To attach to his opinions the prestige due to a "Rabbi" when he is not a "Rabbi" would be reprehensible, and we feel that the sense of responsibility with which the Jewish Association is imbued will prevent, for Musleah's own sake, that public opinion should be misinformed.

The correct title for Musleah is "Minister and Preacher," and he should be addressed as the Reverend Ezekiel Musleah. Truthfulness demands this course, and we have no doubt whatsoever that the Rev Musleah would himself not wish to choose any other course! [The exclamation mark not mine.]

Yours sincerely,
SEPHARDI RABBINIC COUNCIL
Sd/ Dr Solomon Gaon Haham
Sd/ Rabbi Solomon D. Sassoon

Sd/ Rabbi E. N. Adess
Shaare Sedek Synagogue, Manchester

Meantime, those not interested in diplomacy or politics applauded an editorial entitled "The Opportunity Is Here" in the Jewish Association of Calcutta's monthly, "Shema."

"For some years now, it has been a matter of regret to the community here and to our well–wishers abroad that we have in Calcutta no fully qualified religious leader to minister to our needs. For instance, our honoured patron, the late Mr Aaron Curlender, repeatedly expressed his personal interest in this matter. Rabbi David J Seligson, who endeared himself to us by his generous friendship during his war services here, has written often to our Association that steps should be immediately taken to fill the gap.

In a very recent communication, Chief Rabbi Ouziel of Israel wrote:

"I am again suggesting to appoint an established Rabbi for your community to teach properly our Torah and Mitzvoth in all matters like these that you ask me. You must repair this defect as soon as possible so that your congregation should not be 'like sheep without a pastor.'"

"Let us consider generally the tasks a qualified rabbi may perform in our midst. There is an obvious yearning for religious faith in the present day world, and the faith of our fathers does not satisfy us in the form it is served up to us. It needs to be interpreted afresh. This is where a rabbi trained in modern methods will fill our needs. He may speak with authority and knowledge to youth in a language that they may understand. Youth is willing, even eager, to learn and to have some faith to cling to. Plain dogma will not satisfy them. They must have reasons for everything. A trained rabbi will be in a position to provide reasons.

"The Young People's Congregation functioning in Calcutta is served by a band of sincere young workers. How much more successful would be their efforts if their efforts were buttressed by a rabbi? Oneg Shabbaths would be so much more enjoyable under the supervision of one imbued with the spirit of youth. The Jewish schools here would benefit immeasurably by improving their religious instruction and Hebrew teaching.

A trained rabbi as head of the Beth Din will guide the deliberations of that body to greater respect and authority. He will enhance the prestige of the community in the eyes of both other communities in India and our co–religionists abroad.

"Personnel and finances have, in the past, precluded the training of such a man. Due to the kind assistance of Rabbi David J. Seligson and Dr David deSola Pool of New York, and the co–operation of the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, this limitation has been overcome in the person of one of our community who is shortly returning to our city as a fully–qualified rabbi. The gap will soon be filled. The opportunity is here. Let us make a concerted effort in our own interests to grasp it."

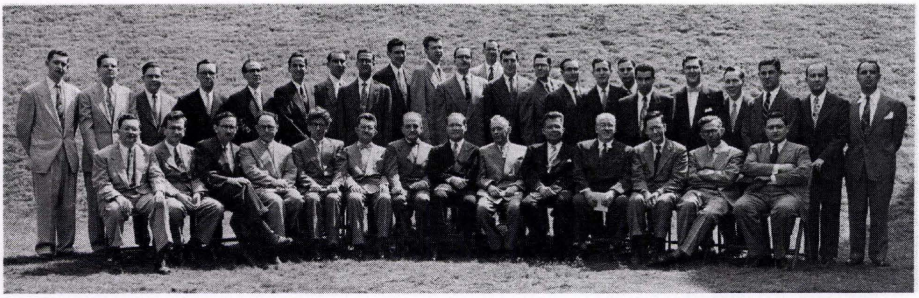


Figure 111. Ordination Class of 1952.

Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Rabbinical School Ordination Class of 1952

Faculty (seated l to r) Marvin Wiener, Gerson D. Cohen, Bernard Mandelbaum, Mordecai Margalit, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Hillel Bavli, Shalom Spiegel, Simon Greenberg, Saul Lieberman, Robert Gordis, Max Arzt, Judah Golden, Dimitrovsky, Seymour Siegel.

Ordained (l to r) Sam Chiel, Lester Segal, Mordecai Simon, William Berkowitz, Gilbert Epstein, (?), Alex Goldman, Ezekiel N. Musleah, Arnold Goodman, (?), (?), David Wolf Silverman, (?), Bernard Mussman, (?), Moses Samber, Raphael Gold, Milton Rube, Sam Schaffler, Chaim Feuerman, Richard Rubenstein, Shalom Segal, Jerome Bass.



Figure 112. Seminary Social With Esther Gershone.

(above) Seminary social. Esther Gershone is my date.

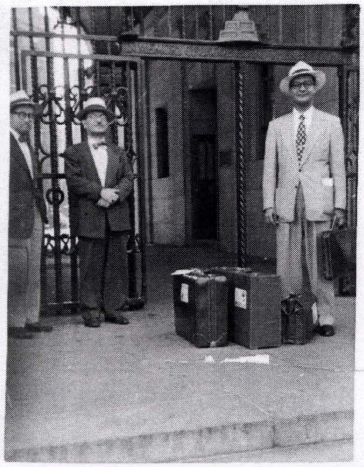


Figure 113. Leaving the Seminary.

Looking on: Prof Hillel Bavli and Shalom Segal.

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA
CHAPTER 12

EVERY BEGINNING IS DIFFICULT

I arrived in Calcutta on August 20, 1952 to warm family greetings lasting several days. We talked almost incessantly. My favorite foods came before me. I learned to drive my father's chauffeur–driven car. Synagogue services became familiar again. I attended as a member of my family, with no official designation. I delivered my first sermon on Kol Nidre night at Neveh Shalome Synagogue, in the hearing of a large audience drawn from neighboring Maghen David and Bethel, still with no official rabbinic appointment.

MY FIRST MESSAGE: "CHOOSE LIFE"

"Life! Life has been the cry of Jewish places of assembly for the past ten days עֲשֶׂרֶת יְמֵי תְּשׁוּבָה the ten days of penitence.

"We want life. We ask God for life. וּבְסֵפֶר חַיִּים נִזָּכֵר וְנִכָּתֵב 'May we be remembered and inscribed in the Book of Life.' Tradition tells us that on Rosh Hashana the Book of Life is opened in the heavenly court. All inscribed therein are assured of another year of life. So we pray זָכְרֵנוּ לְחַיִּים מֶלֶךְ חָפֵץ בַּחַיִּים 'Remember us for life, O King Who delights in life, כָּתְבֵנוּ בְּסֵפֶר הַחַיִּים לְמַעַנְךָ אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים 'Inscribe us in the Book of Life for Your sake, O God of Life.'

"During the Kol Nidre service we heard the Hazan recite the שֶׁהֶחֱיָנוּ a formula of thanks to God for having preserved us in life and brought us to this holy day.

"To understand the great stress the Jew places on חַיִּים we have only to turn to the Kiddush, the sanctification over wine, where the only wish expressed in that ceremony is לְחַיִּים To life!

"And then, few languages have חַיִּים as a man's name, further proof of our emphasis on life.

From all these examples it is clear that what the poet Tennyson wrote about human beings in general is particularly true of the Jew: 'Life, not death, for which we pant. More life, and fuller, that I want.'

It therefore seems strange the Torah specifically advises: Choose Life. In Moses's farewell address to the Israelites before they entered the Promised Land he said: 'I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day: I have put before you life and death, blessing and curse. וּבָחַרְתָּ בַּחַיִּים לְמַעַן תִּחְיֶה אַתָּה וְזַרְעֶךָ 'Choose life, if you and your offspring would live.'[1] A positive command to choose life! A direct injunction to elect the blessing! Was it necessary, after our exposition that humans love life and instinctively choose it over death and naturally choose the blessing over the curse? My friends, there is infinite wisdom in Moses's advice to choose life, for hardly had the Israelites left Egypt than, faced with physical dangers, they clamored to return to the fleshpots of Egypt where they enjoyed delicacies like cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. They preferred the curse of slavery to the blessing of freedom. They preferred the living death

1. Deuteronomy 30:19

among an alien people to the deathless life of a land flowing with milk and honey. That is why Moses had to *urge* them not to follow their wonted ways leading to depravity, but to choose life resulting in blessing.

"We find that after all people do not naturally choose the good life. Look around us and observe the petty squabbles and paltry differences bringing in their wake unpleasantness and sorrow. Note the causeless hatred diffused far and wide because of which our Rabbis say the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. Look at the jealousy and envy burning in the hearts of people whom you least suspect of these vices. Witness the strife and unrest raging between nations, giving rise to instability and death to their peoples. Do all these instances not prove that humans voluntarily choose the curse of death? So we must be constantly reminded, and even commanded as Moses did, that life is to our benefit.

"Darwin is famed for his theory that the human species is descended from the ape. But a more recent writer of note remarked that when he looks upon man and upon man's doings he feels that science had paid no compliment to the ape. The ape at least respects his own species. It were better to say that humans are descended from the wolf which loves to tear and destroy even its own. Or as the great Indian philosopher and President, Dr. Radhakrishnan wisely wrote: 'Man has learned to fly in the air like the bird, to swim in the sea like fish, but has not yet learned to live on earth like a human being.' Hence the wisdom of the advice בָּחַרְתָּ בַּחַיִּים 'choose life,' be human, give expression to the Godly in you.

"Indeed, half the evils in this world can be attributed to Godlessness, to indifference to what the Psalmist (16:8) said: 'I am ever mindful of the Lord's presence. If only we realized in Whose presence we live and have our being …' This is the spirit of the Hassidic comment on the verse (Hoshea 14:2): 'Return, O Israel, unto the Lord your God. This Sage recognized something unusual about the word עַד. It means not only "to" but also "until." So he interprets: 'Return, repent, O Israel, **until** the Lord becomes your God. Continue the process of your introspection until you bring God into your lives again.

"The primary purpose of Rosh Hashana and Kippur is to to do so through prayer, for תְּשׁוּבָה and תְּפִלָּה, repentance and prayer, go hand in hand. Prayer does not depend on the splendor of the words employed, on on the erudition of the person who prays, nor on the beauty of the place of worship; rather it depends on the devotion כַּוָּנָה of the worshiper. A little farmer boy was left an orphan at an early age. Unable to read, he inherited a large, heavy prayerbook from his parents. On Kippur he brought it to synagogue, lay it on a stand and cried out: 'Lord of Creation! I do not know how to pray. I do not know what to say. All I know is the Aleph Beth. As I recite the Aleph Beth, You, O Lord, put it in the order of prayer! I give You this entire prayerbook!'

This story is an excellent example of what the Talmudic rabbis mean by prayer, עֲבוֹדָה שֶׁבַּלֵּב the service of the heart. For them וְכָל שֶׁאֵינוֹ מִתְפַּלֵּל אֵל תַּעֲשֵׂ תְּפִלָּתְךָ קֶבַע אֶלָּא רַחֲמִים וְתַחֲנוּנִים לִפְנֵי הַמָּקוֹם 'He who prays by rote, his/her prayers will not be accepted as supplication before God.' There must be כַּוָּנָה concentration, during prayers. They must be offered in a reverent manner. The worshiper must direct the heart to Heaven. Even if we do not understand our prayers, we should read their translations and sit reverently during services.

> "If you wish to choose life, persevere in prayer and be repentant, in order to love the Lord your God and serve Him with all your heart. And which is the service of the heart? ask the rabbis. Prayer to the Lord of the universe, כִּי הוּא חַיֶּיךָ וְאוֹרֶךְ יָמֶיךָ 'for He is your life and the length of your days.' Amen.

More sermons on Sukkoth and Shemini Atsereth by public demand, as a "guest" preacher, but no sign of contractual terms!

The Jewish Association had circulated a letter to affiliate institutions to raise the requisite amount that the Rabbinical Plan be implemented. The Secretary wrote: "I shall be glad if you place the scheme before your committee and advise me to what extent your institution is prepared to contribute towards its fulfilment."

RELIGIOUS AND EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF THE COMMUNITY

It took four months for the Association and its constituents to decide on a contract for me, but even before my formal appointment, I was called upon to testify in civil court in the very type of case that the London rabbinical authorities assessed me to be unfit to give judgment on, an "unusual" case of a Get. A's marriage to B ended on the rocks, and was being contested in civil court. B refused to grant a Get to A, who claimed mental cruelty. My evidence was based on the fact that civil courts in India did recognize the personal law of the Jews, which included matrimonial law, and recommended that the civil court bring pressure on the husband to grant his wife a Get. In Talmudic parlance, the husband is coerced until he says: 'I agree.' The court went along with my deposition, and the Get was written under my auspices and delivered.

This case exemplifies the very confused state of Jewish communal life in Calcutta upon which I had set foot. The vast majority of Jews who arrived in India were Orthodox in practice and in outlook. However, they were in the main not very learned and their observance of Judaism began gradually to fall away.

The Jewish population in Calcutta, 5000 souls at its height, was, for the most part, white collar workers, who depended for their livelihood on a normal work week of five–and–one–half days, the half day being Saturday. Those who would have normally observed Shabbath all day were forced to limit it to at most half a day, and, as a result, many considered desecrating the other half of the day warranted.

I recall several Orthodox men attending our very early Shabbath synagogue services and then hurrying off to work. Since the Sabbath is the cornerstone of all Jewish family life, it is not surprising that the descendants of those who were forced by economic necessity to work on Shabbath are even less observant, if at all identified as members of the Jewish community in the lands to which they emigrated.

When I arrived in Calcutta, our numbers had already halved because of deteriorating economic and political developments. Tightening fiscal policy and the concomitant lowering of the British standard of living had shrunk the opportunities for small businessmen and threatened the erstwhile comforts previously enjoyed. Additionally, Communist pressure and influence in the State of West Bengal, the capital of which was Calcutta, had intimidated many to leave the country. Driven by the historic Zionist urge charged with messianic undercurrents, local Jews opted to brave the economic and social stringencies in Israel rather than undergo the worsening economics in India.

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA

Without formal spiritual leadership, one marvels how Oriental communities like India flourished for centuries. Individuals who attended Yeshivoth in Baghdad and cities in the Holy Land would settle in one of the far–flung centers of Oriental Jewry and assume its unofficial leadership while carrying on their own avocation. In this framework, Orthodoxy of sorts was well maintained. Three synagogues and two prayer halls held regular services, conducted by Hazanim who often combined their qualifications of Shohet, Mohel or Sofer with their cantorial skill.

Jewish education had seldom reached a higher level than fluency in reading Hebrew mechanically, and one of the worthy attainments of a Jewish child seems to have been the ability to render flawlessly the weekly Sabbath portions from the Torah. A commendable but rare achievement was an understanding of the Bible through the medium of Arabic.

With this limited curriculum, two Jewish schools, The Jewish Girls' School and the Elias Meyer School, functioned as parochial institutions providing nominally religious as well as secular education.

In contradistinction to the Western set–up where all communal organizations are in centripetal relation to the synagogue, in India the latter is one of the many institutions represented on a central body. In point of time, too, most of the constituents preceded the formation of the pivotal associations, instituted comparatively recently to coordinate the activities of the affiliates and to present communal solidarity. The Jewish Association of Calcutta sponsored a religious committee working closely with the rabbinates of London and Tiberias, published a newspaper, and served as the spokesman of the community vis–a–vis the Government.

Western enlightenment asserting itself during and after the two World Wars of the 20th century weakened the sense of loyalty to Judaism. When Sabbath observance languished in well–to–do circles, the racecourse increasingly took the place of synagogue attendance. Carelessness for dietary regulations set in, and intermarriage became more manifest.

It might have been too little too late, but in order to arrest some of the decay, the Jewish Association appointed me rabbi in December 1952. I was able to organize activities for Jewish youth, introduce modern methods for teaching Jewish subjects and Hebrew in the two Jewish schools, inaugurate an institute for adult studies, and generally guide the destiny of the shrinking community, then passing through a critical stage.

As I look back at my ministry in Calcutta, I am amazed at the difficult terrain I had to encounter. The Seminary, or any other ground for rabbinical training, could not have imagined a tougher tract. From beginning to the end of twelve years, it was breaking ground after ground of rigid and unyielding subsoil, unprepared for preordained mechanics.

The community had to be initiated and familiarized into what a rabbi does. Some called me "Mr. Rabbi," in total ignorance of the title. Official communication knew no better. A letter addressed to me from Raj Bhavan, the Governor's Mansion, bore the caption: "Mr. and Mrs. Rabbi Musleah!"

Some local Jews came to me for employment, as though jobs could be obtained merely at my instance. (My office happened to be perched atop the mercantile establishments of B.N. Elias & Company, which provided me with office space.) Some conducted themselves as if all the local Jewish institutions were made over to me as an absolute gift and mine was the final word.

Some made impassioned appeals for financial aid, soon to realize that funds were not in my charge, except my own pin–money I often shared with the destitute. And, as if to add richer variety to my official experience, some made their discourtesy and irreverence felt by a plethora of abuse ... a fire engine was sent to my residence in the middle of a Hebrew lesson, and our family physician, on an urgent message that I was seriously ill, arrived while my wife was nursing our child!

Every beginning is difficult, say the Rabbis of the Talmud. Nothing so new could be readily accepted or appreciated. Even the ground resists human attempts to "break" it. Handicapped by being the lone builder of the religious edifice and burdened by tedious administrative duties, I had to be content with small–scale successes.

"You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today," declared Abraham Lincoln. However hard the task, it was my pleasant duty to serve the people among whom I grew up. Seldom do members of the clergy occupy pulpits in the cities of their nativity and childhood, for there is obvious disadvantage to listen to elders saying tenderly they remember you as a child. This drawback was somewhat offset by knowing my community the way I did instead of feeling my way at the outset. It was still a field of unexplored endeavor, an uncharted road map whose direction I began carefully steering.

EDUCATION AND CULTURE

My primary emphasis lay in teaching in both schools. Modern Hebrew texts were supplied by my teacher at the Seminary, Dr Simon Greenberg, author of the Harishon series, who generously donated six dozen of the entire series on two separate occasions. Students were attracted to my teaching of the Literary Prophets and selected Psalms and Proverbs. With the backing of Rahma M. Luddy, principal of the Girls' school, I introduced in her school Biblical Hebrew as part of a paper in the Cambridge School Certificate examination and delighted in the results. I also laid emphasis on the meaning of religious concepts as a moral and ethical code in Jewish history.

Instruction in the two schools made me aware of a serious problem in the Jewish syllabus, placing an added, unnecessary strain on our resources. For instance, the course I offered in the Literary Prophets in one school had to be repeated in the other. If both these classes were combined, the hour of teaching "saved" could have been applied to a course in Biblical History, which could not be given for want of time.

In the spring of 1953, the Seminary began publishing "You and Judaism," an inspirational four–page bulletin before the High Holydays and each of the Festivals. I based my teaching in timely fashion on the material presented in each issue, and distributed copies to every student in my classes. So effective a pedagogical instrument were those pamphlets that almost fifty years later, I received an inspiring request through a rabbinical colleague who had visited India, from a former student of mine, now intermarried and living in New Delhi, to find out from me if I could send her imprints of those informational leaflets! I had some copies on file and sent them to her. She was thrilled, and began once again to observe some of the traditions associated with the auspicious days.

The first issue, "Passover: Instrument of Liberty" carried an introduction by Chancellor Dr Louis Finkelstein. "The Passover celebration commemorates an event which will probably symbolize for all time the essential meaning of freedom — namely, freedom directed to a purpose. When Israel went forth from bondage, it was not simply to enjoy liberty, but to make of liberty an

instrument of service. There have been countless other emancipations of subject peoples ... but none of these acquired any ethical significance. None of these people have left records interpreting their liberation as a means to a higher end ... The Israelites alone made the moment of their origin as a people one of permanent self–dedication to the principle of universal freedom as the essential prerequisite for spiritual growth. Hence the event has meaning for all living peoples.

"Because Jewish tradition holds that God must be worshiped not only through prayer, but in equal degree through study and learning, the Passover celebration is arranged primarily as a lesson, in which are mingled Jewish history, literature and religion. Regarded as a means of instruction, it is the oldest and probably the most effective pedagogic instrument ever devised ..."

The following year, the monograph featured "Dayyenu: A Hymn of Redemption in Our Generation" suggesting a fifth cup be raised "in accordance with the view of Rabbi Tarphon, who reminded the people that while the four cups of wine all symbolize past redemption of Israel, a fifth cup is recommended by the promise for the future: I SHALL DELIVER THEM, [Talmud Bavli Pesahim 119a]." The place of this cup is just before the eating of the Afikomen, at the end of the Seder meal. The head of the household gives thanks to God on behalf of the family for the miracles performed for us in our time, which are as remarkable as those performed for our ancestors in Egypt. The ritual:

> "Had we only survived two thousand years of persecution ... it would have been ample.
> Had we only preserved our spiritual heritage through these years of suffering ... it would have been ample.
> If Providence only revealed to us the New World, when many lands in the Old World were being closed to us ... it would have been ample.
> Had our merciful Father only saved us from modern Pharaohs who threatened us with complete annihilation ... it would have been ample.
> Had only the State of Israel emerged in our time as a refuge for the oppressed of our people and the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophetic hope for a fountainhead of Torah in the Holy Land ... it would have been ample.
> Had we been granted only the vision of a better world in which free peoples and that of Israel could work together for the betterment of the human race ... it would have been ample.
> How much then have we to be grateful to the All–Merciful who caused us to survive these many centuries, provided us with our great heritage, and opened to us the promise of a better world. Let us then drink the fifth cup, celebrating the redemption which we pray may be our portion, as we celebrate the redemption which came upon us and the world, in the time when the Lord brought His children out of bondage."

Of remarkable help in the field of youth education was the Jewish Agency's Department of Torah Education and Culture which assigned a cultural representative to conduct a program of Jewish studies in Bombay and Calcutta with a view to train young boys and girls to become teachers of Jewish tradition. Seven graduates, one from Calcutta, returned to India. Strange to relate, their services could not be fully utilized because indigenous congregations could not muster adequate funds for their full time employment.

Outside the schools, the Young People's Congregation, founded by Rabbi David J. Seligson as chaplain of the American Armed Forces in the China–Burma–India sector during World War II, and aided remarkably by my brother Meyer E. Musleah and Rahma Luddy, continued its good work. Before I left for my rabbinical studies, Flower Abraham (later, Silliman) and Regina Abraham (later Meyer) helped me organize services. In my absence, other young leaders continued in leadership roles. On my return, I organized a Leadership Training Fellowship in conjunction with the Y.P.C. to train budding youngsters to take over as future leaders, this despite our dwindling numbers. The syllabus included Bible, Hebrew, Jewish History, Beliefs and Ideal of Judaism, the Siddur and Jewish Worship, and Customs, Forms and Ceremonies. The study of four hours of Judaica per week was required.

I helped organize Y.P.C.'s Hanukka week–end program. At a Shabbath service well–attended by children and grown–ups, I stressed not the might of the Maccabean army but the miracle made possible by the re–dedication of the Temple. Sunday's impressive entertainment, organized by Rahma Luddy and Y.P.C. members, provided much fun. I highlight the events to recall the leadership that did yeoman service for the first few years of my ministry in Calcutta.

The littlest kids were shown slides that drew squeals of delight. The choir of the Girls' school sang the song "Israel," and followed it by a "Candle Dance" appropriately in Menorah formation supervised by Marina Sopher. An amusing classroom scene, conducted by Helen Thebith, dealt with the events leading up to the Hanukka festival. Florence Sopher and Regina Abraham directed an adult play, "Pictures Out of the Past," that told the story of a Jewish family in America who abandoned Hanukka for Christmas. The grandmother, played by Rachel Jonah, visited the semi–assimilated home of her daughter (Michal Elias) and reprimanded her and the children (Helen Kelly, Eze Silas, Errol Silas and Helene Sopher) for observing Christmas. She won them over by telling them the Hanukka story vividly depicted by shadow acting.

A Y.P.C. reporter in the local press offered the following comment: "We have among us a competent organiser in Rabbi Musleah and we hope that in future we will continue to give our best efforts that he may go on with his good work in trying to create a more Jewish atmosphere especially among the youth of Calcutta."

A striking thought kept recurring in my mind — most Jewish children never enjoy a holiday out of the city. If only sufficient funds became available, a refreshing few days could be arranged at a camp site. I got a committee together to investigate. We concluded that a play be produced in aid of the camp, requiring the co–operation of a large number of persons and organizations. Admission would be charged. I undertook to produce the play and my good friend Elisha Sassoon agreed to direct it. The play was entitled "Out of Egypt." Act I — A Deliverer From Egypt — Court before Pharaoh's Banquet Hall. Act II — God Hardens Pharaoh's Heart — Pharaoh's Throne Room. Act III — Israel Leaves the House of Bondage. Scene I — The House of Moses in Goshen. Scene II — The Shores of the Red Sea After the Crossing.

Co–operation from young persons was delightfully widespread.

EGYPTIANS

Pharaoh, Ruler of Egypt	...	David David
Bithiah, his daughter	...	Maisie Sadka
Shepi, his eldest son	...	Israel Sopher
Randor, Governor	...	Joe Shoheth

Orus, his son	...	Eze Silas
A Prince	...	Charlie Morris
Counsellor	...	Ezra Ezekiel
Priest	...	Aaron Silas
Slave	...	Ezra Barook
Peasant	...	Shalome David
Dancers	...	Rahele Silas, Helen Kelly, Lillian Kelly

HEBREWS

Moses	...	Maurice Morris
Aaron	...	Ellis David
Abiram	...	David Meyer
Dathan	...	Eze Sopher
Elizur	...	Manashe S. Levy
Miriam	...	Ruth Ezekiel
Dinah	...	Louisa Lanyado
Rachel, her daughter	...	Simha Silas
Sarah	...	Hazel Silas
Marah	...	Molly Kelly
Leah	...	Rachel Isaac

We acknowledged the help of Madame Vladimorova a professional dancer, for training the dancers and the loan of costumes, and of Mr. Osbourne, Principal of the Hindi High School, where the play was performed.

I initiated an Institute of Adult Jewish Studies, the first course entitled, "The Jew in the Modern World." Results were gratifying. Many showed genuine interest in widening their Jewish ken. The genesis of all education is the awareness of problems. Issues such as the modern attitude to the observance of Jewish law, and diaspora Jewry's relationship with Israel evoked sharp controversy, proving that the material presented did not enter a tabula rasa but a considerable amount of sense perceptions. Other topics pertained to "Biblical Translations," "The Biblical Book of Amos," "Women in Jewish Life," "Israel and the New Galuth," "Jew among Gentiles," "The Golden Age in Spain,"and "The Passover Seder and Rabbinic Lore." Tangentially, we organized Jewish Book Month during which I urged taking stock of our attitude to Jewish books, and to lend sharper ears and keener eyes to the message of their authors. To support my launching of Book Month, an edifying editorial appeared in the Jewish Association's monthly, "Shema", of which I append an excerpt:

> "We Jews have been called "People of the Book." Once we deserved the title, but by our actions we have lost the right to it ... Our leisure–time activities are confined to watching others act, perform, pray, etc.
>
> "Reading aloud, quiet moments of solitude in which to recall past experience and emotion in solitude, all are now things of the past ... What sets the creative thinker apart is the relationship he establishes with the ideas or with the people he comes in contact and what he does with the information he has acquired. When he opens a book, he literally takes the plunge into another world [given to him by the author] ... Creative experience must be shared ... This is true of all aesthetic experience. It becomes art when

the scene is painted on canvas, chiselled in stone, translated into music, or apprehended in words. Yet hope remains. Perhaps we are not all lost. We may be a little rusty, yet imbedded within each of us are unexplored depths of insight, sympathy, understanding and imagination.

"To live as creative human beings, we must learn again to live with books, love, cherish and understand them, and take interest in the problems that abound around us ... To become a creative reader or thinker, it takes love of books, it takes identification with other persons and places, and above all, it takes time ..."

I took great pride in Jewish Book Month celebrations. Here is a report in "Shema," February 1956:

"The celebration of Jewish Book Festival was a tremendous success. The [Judean] Club was packed to capacity, and it was generally agreed that the evening dedicated to Jewish cultural activity was thoroughly enjoyed ...

"The Club wore an entirely new appearance for the day. Besides an exhibition of Jewish books and literature, the walls were adorned with handsome posters bearing slogans like "Make Jewish Books Your Daily Companions," "Either the Book or the Sword will Prevail," "Medicine for the Soul," — all artistically illustrated. The boys and girls from our Jewish schools worked with a will under the direction of Rabbi Musleah and Elisha Sassoon to make the celebration the success it was. Charming were the Hebrew songs and poems in praise of Jewish books, and the quiz in which everyone participated was exhilarating, the children particularly.

"The highlight of the evening was biblical sketches, reliving the stories of Samuel and his mother Hannah, Ruth and mother–in–law Naomi, genuine friends David and Jonathan, and the Prophet Jeremiah. Delightful costumes added to the high calibre acting ..."

And Jewish Music Month. With a view to laying greater emphasis on Jewish music in the community, I formed a committee to explore organizing concerts with a Jewish flavor.

To connect with my plans, in May 1953, I received an invitation to Raj Bhavan, the official residence of the Governor of the state of West Bengal, of which Calcutta is the capital city. I was introduced to the unassuming charm of the incumbent, Dr. H.C. Mookherjee, a former professor of Calcutta University, whose interest in comparative religion symphonized our meeting. Among other things, we discussed his advocacy of bringing together diverse religions and cultures in the Indian province of West Bengal, and the possibility of the local Jewish community presenting a cultural program to which all communities would be invited.

The Governor wisely and with insight realized that the Jewish community was virtually unknown to members of other religious and cultural persuasions. In complete accord, I related my experience with a well–known professor of history at the Calcutta University to whom I turned for sponsorship of my doctoral thesis on the Jewish community of Calcutta. 'Was there a Jewish community in Calcutta?' came his astonished query. With a view, therefore, to having the local Jewish group acquainted with other fraternities, I pledged to work with local Jewish talents in bringing up a program.

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA

On March 21, 1954, a Jewish Dramatics Society presented Christopher Fry's "The Firstborn" at Raj Bhavan, the official residence of the governor of West Bengal, in aid of the Governor's Deshbandu Memorial Fund, with the Governor, Dr H.C. Mookherjee in attendance. Produced and directed by Jeffrey Isaac, costumes were designed by Madame Vladimirova, and the concert committee was composed of, in addition, Florence Sopher and Marina Sopher and me. The action takes place in the summer of 1200 B.C.E., alternating between Pharaoh's palace and Miriam's tent.

Characters, in order of their appearance:

Anath Bithiah	Pharaoh's sister	Mavis Morris
Teusret	Pharaoh's daughter	Marina Sopher
Seti the Second	The Pharaoh	Alan David
Rameses	His son	Harry Morris
Moses		Mervyn Mingail
Aaron	His Brother	Ellis Reuben
Miriam	His Sister	Rachel Samuels
Shendi	Miriam's son	Edmund Jonah
An Overseer, a Guard and a servant		Maurice Morris
An Israelite Boy		Alvin Jacob

A lively and colorful supporting program was organized.

Psalm 150 is part of the repertoire of the guilds of singers employed in the Temple worship. We could not conceive of a more fitting close to one of the most sacred sections of Hebrew literature. Ladies of the Choir: Rachel Barook, Matilda Ezekiel, Matilda Kelly, Louisa Lanyado, Mavis Morris, Rachel Morris, Rachel Silliman, Florence Sopher, Helene Sopher, Marina Sopher. Gentlemen of the Choir: Nissim Abraham, Ellie David, Haskel Joshua, Ezekiel Musleah, Eze Silas, Simon Silas, Eric Solomon.

"Twilight Among the Flowers," a play. Jews have ever loved Nature, behind which they recognized the handiwork of God the Creator. An Israeli composition, it takes into consideration the innate affinity of the Jewish people for the rural.

The Flowers dance gaily toward the going down of the sun. They are joined by the chief flower and pride of the Land of Israel — the Anemone, given a rousing welcome. After the dance, they fold their arms and fall asleep.

The melody of the Butterflies is now heard. They fly in and out among the Flowers and induce them to participate in their dance.

Blowing of the Wind, breaking through and dancing around the Anemone and other Flowers, extending and folding his arms vigorously, disturbs the happy atmosphere. Visibly affected, the Flowers sway in all directions.

The Wind rushes out as fast as he dashed in. Much relieved to be left alone, the Flowers and Butterflies make ready to retire as the dark shadows of night cover the world of Nature.

Characters:	**Flowers**	**Wind**	**Butterflies**
Anemone	T. Peasley	Louisa Jacob	D. Rosenberg
Cyclamen	R. Duke	Lulu Levi	R. Rosenberg
Lily	L. Jacob	S. Abraham	

Narcissus M. Sultoon H. Solomon
Autumn Flower K. Rosenberg

Arrangement: Marina Sopher
Costumes: Ramah Musleah
Choreography: Madame Vladimirova
Chic Parisienne (Modern Ballet)
Marguerite Shannon
Louisa Lanyado at the piano
Israeli Folk Dancing Rachel Ephraim at the piano

Sherele is an old wedding dance of Eastern European Jewish communities. Its name, Sher, meaning scissors, is probably derived from the crossing movements of couples resembling the movement of scissors.

In its tempered movements and graceful bowings, the dance is reminiscent of the influence of European courts of 18th century kings and nobles reflecting the somewhat suppressed joy of the Ghetto and the shyness dominating the relations between the sexes; the partners in this dance do not join hands, but hold the ends of a handkerchief.

In its new Israeli version, the rhythm has quickened, but it has retained its delicate character and gracious form. The melody is an ancient chant sung without words.

Hora, the most popular of Israeli folk dances. Vigorous and stimulating, it energetically typifies the hectic life of modern Israel.

Participants: Rachel Barook, Matilda Ezekiel, Matilda Kelly, Hazel Lanyado, Louisa Lanyado, Tryphosa Manasseh, Helene Sopher, Marina Sopher.

The talent that this competent young group displayed was later that year exhibited in the production of Gilbert and Sullivan's "Pirates and Penzance" by the Calcutta Light Opera Group and Society at a local theater. Marina Sopher, an exquisite soprano, took the leading role, and Rachel Ephraim, Florence Sopher, Rachel Barook and Blima Shohet had parts in the chorus.

Bernard V. Jacob, too, demonstrated musical dexterity in conducting The Calcutta Mozart Orchestra, already at a relatively young age in 1953, a veteran in the musical life of Calcutta as well as those of England and Japan, including Britain's leading orchestra, The Philharmonia.

The Calcutta community enjoyed the excellent performances of its local Jewish artists.

The Governor gave us the benefit of his wisdom again in December 1954 when he presided at the Annual Prize Distribution of the Jewish Girls' School. He mentioned that, as an observant Christian, he loathed people who admittedly belonged to a religion and were derelict about performing the tenets of their faith. The Jewish people in particular, he said, possesses one of the richest religious heritages, and should be punctilious about their fidelity to Judaism. Jews, he said, should not fall in with the religious climate of our age — a general passivity and laxity, to say nothing of the want of faith, of new century humankind. To blame is the excessive stress on materialism and the lack of awareness in the ultimate values of life.

The Governor also found fault with the poor recognition of the teaching profession.

> "In the fullest sense, a school is its teachers — their dedication, talents, and living personalities. If schooling is indispensable to the future of a community, then the educator and his calling should be accorded recognition and prestige."

Well said. Our Jewish forbears understood this duty well. One of the cardinal precepts in the Pirke Avoth is: "Let the honor of your teachers be as sacred to you as the honor due God." And the Talmud asserts that paying respect to one's teachers should take precedence even over honoring parents. In 1960, the American Association for Jewish Education recommended the designation of Yom Hamoreh, a day during the week of Lag BaOmer, a festival intimately linked to the theme of education, to revive that Mitzva and raise the morale of teachers in Jewish schools.

At a special Shabbat service of the Young People's Congregation, Rahma M. Luddy, principal of the Jewish Girls' School, was given center stage.

She said she was a teacher for over twenty–five years and could not think of a more noble profession. It brought her close to her students and that made her able to influence them in their daily living and their future way of life. She quoted a thoughtful American: A teacher affects eternity; she can never tell where her influence stops. It was her hope that wherever her students would ultimately be, they should remember their teachers as having giving them the basics for a Jewish education and taught them conduct worthy of decent upbringing.

In my message that day, I quoted my teacher, Professor Abraham Joshua Heschel who said that while other people celebrate the memory of kings and of heroes of the battlefield, we celebrate the memory of great teachers like Mosheh Rabbeinu and Rabbi Akiba. This is well and good. But let us accord this recognition to our teachers while they are still in our midst. It was therefore fitting to give Miss Luddy a certificate of recognition, which contained two Talmudic statements. "He who teaches a neighbor's son (or daughter) Torah is as though he (or she) were his (or her) parent." Sanhedrin 19b. "The parent only brings the child into the life of this world, whereas the teacher brings him (or her) into the life of the world–to–come (with moral and religious instruction). Bava Metzia 33.

From the booklet prepared by the Yom Hamoreh committee of the AAJE, I read this concluding prayer: "My God and God of my Fathers! Hearken to me as I stand before You in prayer. I come to request Your aid in my labor, this work of dedication I have chosen for Your sake and for the sake of Your people Israel to whom You have promised eternal life. Gird me with strength that I not look with envy in those engaged in more lucrative professions, but that I impart Torah with devotion and gladness. Grant me understanding, discernment and knowledge to enable me draw the hearts of our children closer to the words of Your Torah, and to direct them in its paths. Instill in our children a pure heart and a willing spirit, the desire to hold our people dear, love of Zion and Jerusalem, our holy city. Make the language of our sacred treasures come alive in their mouths. Implant in their hearts noble qualities of character; the love of truth, peace and human beings whom You have created in Your image.

"May I be blessed in my endeavors in that my students not forget Your teachings all the days of their lives. Let this be my reward — that teaching will be a constant source of delight. Strengthen me and imbue me with Your spirit of sanctity. Amen."

When schools broke for winter vacation, December 1952–January 1953, Rahma Luddy and Saul Ezra organized a camp at Jamshedpur, a resort about 100 miles from Calcutta. I joined the camp for a week–end of Shabbath services and Oneg Shabbath. Friday night Kiddush under the stars and a bright clear moon added luster to the keen shining faces of the children. For me as for them it was a memorable Shabbath. On Sunday, the Fast of the Tenth of Teveth, I conducted ceremonies commemorating the Shoah. The camp proved to be a stirring success, thanks to the enthusiasm and ability of the volunteers. For the children, it was a change of environment and a two–week outdoor atmosphere that made them look forward to another vacation.

A practice I found that put Jewish family life in jeopardy consisted of parents sending their children for nine months in the year to so–called 'hill–schools' in different heights of the Himalayas. Various alibis were proffered to justify the despatch of the little ones far away from home and the protection and love of their parents. Agreed, some motives might have been justified. Perhaps a domestic situation vindicated the absence of the children, such as parents' drinking or gambling habits, or their constant bickering. But I argued that the pros of having the children at home far outweighed the cons. By and large, I found fault with the protagonists of 'hill–school' education on the following grounds:

1. Jews have always treasured the institution of the family and the customs and ceremonies surrounding it. Despite the conditions of modern life, Judaism prescribes a way of life which brings family together at home, at least once a week. Thus on Friday night, father, mother and children should pointedly be home to make Kiddush and partake of the Sabbath meal together. The Passover Seder also helps the strengthening of family bonds by requiring a domestic celebration. If the children are away, what chance is there to observe these holy days en famille? How difficult it is for them to experience home solidarity without receiving the affection and care of their parents close up? By parting with our children for so long a time, we break down normal parental relations, proving ourselves remiss in our paramount duty toward them.
2. We also deprive our children of a Jewish environment and education. With a few exceptions, products of non–Jewish boarding schools seldom grow up as caring Jews. A Christian missionary boarding school in Calcutta, with a very popular and charismatic principal, effectively used its far–reaching, foul influence to attract Jewish boys away from Judaism. And the fault did not lie with our children. They could not but imbibe non–Jewish ideas skillfully thrown their way. Unfortunately, the Jewish community was not in a position to offer facilities to parents desirous of keeping their children in a paid boarding school. The absence of such facilities, however, did not exonerate a continuance of a nonchalant and apathetic attitude on the part of parents.

Finally,

3. Many children themselves were not eager to separate for so long a time; they would go reluctantly. They would beg to be spared the severity of another parting, but they pleaded in vain. Not directly as a result of my antagonism to hill–school education but closely following it, the son of well–to–do parents was withdrawn from a well–known hill school and became a boarder in the Jewish Boys' School. Wisely, the school's authorities accepted him though many children of deserving poor parents were still on the waiting list. This was a controversial move, but I commended it as a step in the right direction. The boy turned out to be a good influence on his peers and helped raise the standard of discipline.

ZIONISM AND ISRAEL

Following the funeral in Tel Aviv in November 1952 of the first President of Israel, Dr Chaim Weizmann, I held a memorial service at Maghen David Synagogue. J.R. Jacob and Dr. Tajkef, a Western Jewish ophthalmologist, eulogized the late Zionist leader, and I highlighted episodes in his ingenious and resourceful life leading to the fulfillment of his ideal of the Jewish National Home.

Here is some of what I said:

> "His life was the scene of a battle of ideas. From his native town of Pinsk, his battle on a small scale began with the assimilationists on the importance of the use of Hebrew and Yiddish rather than Russian. He wrote to his father only in Hebrew. Once he wrote in Yiddish but got no reply! Throughout his Zionist career he advocated the Jewish over the non–Jewish, the Hebraic over the Russian and German.
>
> "The Second Zionist Congress in 1898, where Weizmann met Herzl for the first time, started the controversy between the two Zionist leaders which was never to be resolved. Herzl wished to solve the Jewish problem anti–Semitism — *immediately*, even if it meant settlement in Uganda. But for Weizmann and his group, Uganda was a snare and a delusion. There could be no immediate solution to historic problems.
>
> "Perhaps his fiercest antagonism came from the sponsors of his demission from the presidency of the Zionist Organization in 1931. Weizmann was always a strong supporter of cooperation with the Arabs in Palestine. Here he was encountered by Jabotinsky, the leader of the Revisionists who based their philosophy on Biblical boundaries governed by Jews. History had vindicated Weizmann's stand. In 1935 he was reinstated as President of the Zionist Organization, and on November 29, 1947 the U.N. decided to partition Palestine between Arabs and Jews. The greatest tribute paid by a grateful people was to appoint him first president of Israel.
>
> "It is the purpose of this memorial service to enkindle in us the fervent will to continue the work for which he lived. In accordance with scriptural parlance, we may liken his demise to the going down of the sun. When the sun sinks beneath the horizon, the glow and warmth of life seem to depart. Yet for a while the brightness lingers and a mellowed luster still irradiates the horizon. Even thus, the influence of Chaim Weizmann will long be felt; the glow of his life's work will never die. May we be worthy of his powerful and moving example, Amen."

As a mark of respect to the late President of Israel, flags on all government buildings flew at half–mast on the day of the funeral. Rajendra Prasad, President of India, sent an official message of condolence to F.W. Pollack, Israel's representative in India. Weizmann's successor in the presidency of Israel, Yitshak Ben Zvi, briefly visited New Delhi in October 1959, where he was met, among representatives of the Government of India and Jewish communities of Bombay and Cochin, those of Calcutta, in the persons of Ezekiel H. Levy and E. Gubbay. In his short speech, the President conveyed greetings from Israel to Jews of the Diaspora, and suggested that they should see for themselves how Israel had been transformed from barren rock and malarious swamps to thriving cities bustling with activity. He was then taken on a whirlwind tour of Delhi including the new Judah Meyer Hall and community center, which impressed him as being the product of a handful of Jews in the Indian metropolis.

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA

I was still in Calcutta when Yitshak Ben Zvi died. On April 28, 1963, a large number of mourners gathered at Maghen David Synagogue to memorialize him. Here are excerpts of my comments at that occasion. "Our Rabbis tell us that the angels struggle for possession of the souls of the pious individuals. אֲרֵאלִים וּמְצוּקִים אַהֲזוּ בָּאָרוֹן הַקֹּדֶשׁ נִצְּחוּ אֲרֵאלִים אֶת הַמְצוּקִים וְנִשְׁבָּה אָרוֹן הַקֹּדֶשׁ 'the angels prevail and the Ark of Covenant [the pious souls] are removed from us.' Yet death is blasphemy when used in connection with so great a personality. When Rabbi Judah the Prince passed on, the Rabbis declared a fast and issued a proclamation: He who utters the words 'Rabbi Judah has died deserves to be slain by the sword.' They meant that only the mortal remains lie buried in the earth; Rabbi Judah lives on in his spiritual gifts to humanity and the Jewish people. So Ben Zvi lives on in his lasting contributions to Israel and the world. He has left too indelible and impress on human and Jewish hearts to be forgotten, to pass away.

> "The difficulties and ultimate triumph of Yitshak Ben Zvi are exemplified by those of the Patriarch Isaac. When in search of water during his travels in the Negev, Isaac's servants dug a well. They drank of it a little while but were driven away by the Philistines. Isaac called it עֵשֶׂק, because the Philistines *contended* or fought with him to possess it. Another favorable spot, another well, and Isaac was driven away from there too. He called that well שִׂטְנָה in token of the *hatred* of his neighbors.
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> "Ben Zvi's first area of opposition was in his native Russia, where he started the Poale Zion movement. The Russians contended with him, pogroms arose and he had to leave Russia, which became for him a land of contention and strife. He looked for another congenial spot — Palestine. He founded the Poale Zion in Palestine and laid the foundations of the Shomer, which became the nucleus of Israel's Defense army. He thus incurred the jealousy and hatred of the Turks who, during World Was I, deported him from Palestine to Egypt from where he escaped to America.
>
> "Like Isaac, his ancestor, Yitshak Ben Zvi returned and dug yet another well. This time it went well with him and he called it רְחוֹבוֹת , for he said: Now at last the Lord has granted us ample space to increase in the land.[2] The interests of Ben Zvi really prospered in the Holy Land. He was one of the founders of Histadrut, Israel's Federation of Labor, and of Mapai, Israel's Labor Party. He was elected to the General Assembly of Palestine Jews, 1920–31, and became its president till 1948. Elected to the 1st and 2nd Kenesset and ultimately reached Rehovoth as president of Israel in January 1953.
>
> "Ben Zvi was amply worthy of his second name, Zvi, meaning gazelle. Just as a gazelle is fleet–footed and surmounts all its obstacles tenderly and graciously, so did Ben Zvi overcome the difficulties that beset him, leading to the highest office in the land.

David's lament over his friend Jonathan is most appropriate הַצְּבִי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל בָּמוֹתֶיךָ חָלָל אֵיךְ נָפְלוּ גִּבּוֹרִים Your Zvi (beauty), O Israel, lies slain on your heights; how have the mighty fallen![3] We cherish the memory of Ben Zvi whose glorious life is worthy of emulation. Amen."

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2. Genesis 26:18-22
3. II Samuel 2:19

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA

In January 1953, we in Calcutta welcomed Israel's Foreign Minister, Moshe Sharett, on his way to and from the Asian Socialist Conference in Rangoon, Burma. He had been on a goodwill tour of South–East Asia and was due to be overnight in Calcutta. He surprised us with a two–day visit to meet the community and address us.

He had three missions: First, as an unofficial ambassador of goodwill on behalf of the Israel government. Second, as a representative of the Mapai Party, to attend the Socialist Party Convention in Bombay. And third, as a member of the Kenesset, to attend a meeting of parliamentary delegations of several countries.

Regarding the first object of his tour, he had met with the governments of the Philippines, Burma and Laos, where he addressed their Jewish communities. In Burma, a unique system of mutual aid had been established to the immediate benefit of the Burmese and to Israel's long–term advantage.

He then painted a disconcerting picture of Israel's political and economic situation. Israel was making exciting plans to absorb tens of thousands of Jewish refugees from North Africa. These had to be shelved because of arms deals between Arab nations and the Soviet bloc, upsetting the balance of power in the Middle East. Fortunately, Israel could procure arms from other sources, but this has caused postponement of much–needed internal building.

Mr. Sharett went on to speak in glowing terms of Israel's contribution to Jews of the world, standing as a beacon of pride and achievement.

Our honored guest then moved about among his listeners. When he and I got talking, he was interested in the fact that I had a brother and sister in Israel who, he said, he was proud of for braving the trying economic and political conditions of the country. He commended me on my efforts on behalf of Aliya from Calcutta, which he hoped would continue apace.

After the Sinai Campaign in 1956, we celebrated Israel's victory and mourned the loss of lives in battle. I stressed the great need for moral and financial help for Israel at that critical juncture. The Judean Club, a social organization, donated the proceeds of its annual Purim Ball to Israel.

Calcutta actively supported the Jewish National Fund in an annual ball at Riverside, on the River Hooghly, the Agarpara grand residence of family B.N. Elias/J.R. Jacob.

Yom Ha–aztma–ut, Israel Independence Day, ever breathed a spirit of Jewishness in Israeli songs and dances. I joined the community celebration sponsored by the Zionist Association and designed by Regina Abraham.

Annual celebrations of Yom Ha–Atzma–ut, Israel's Independence Day, were happy days in Calcutta. What follows are **my remarks at Israel's fifth and tenth anniversaries** of its founding, 1953 and 1958.

> "Let's recall November 29, 1947. An historic decision was in the offing at the United Nations headquarters in New York. Within its walls was being debated the future of the Land of Israel. Outside, I was among the hundreds of Jews, old and young, bearded and clean–shaven, orthodox and atheist were breathlessly awaiting the results of the vote.
>
> "Never did the U.N. have so many visitors in one day. Religious Jews were praying and chanting Psalms. It was bitterly cold outside, but the emotions of Jewish visitors kept them warm. Then the decision was announced — a Jewish State was to be established in

Palestine after 2000 years! We sang and we danced. The sun was about to set. Shabbat was about to set in. More frenzied singing and frenetic dancing. The Jewish State was not going to be quite as large as its Biblical boundaries, but a Jewish State it would be — a Jewish majority, a Jewish government, a Jewish home. That night, we walked home — no, we danced and sang home, ten miles, driven by the impact of our joy. A few months later, the the State of Israel was established.

"Since then, the Jewish population has trebled, persecuted Jews of Europe and Moslem countries have found some place to place their weary heads, and Israel has found prestige and honour among the nations of the world. On this fifth anniversary, let us think about our acquisition. In the Torah, the word for acquisition מוֹרָשָׁה HERITAGE appears only twice, in two different contexts, once in connection with Torah, תּוֹרָה צִוָּה לָנוּ מֹשֶׁה מוֹרָשָׁה קְהִלַּת יַעֲקֹב 'Moses charged us with the Torah as the HERITAGE of the congregation of Jacob,'[4] and a second time, in connection with the Land of Israel וְנָתַתִּי אוֹתָהּ לָכֶם מוֹרָשָׁה אֲנִי ה' 'I will give it (the Land) to you for a HERITAGE, I the Lord.'[5] The word is not יְרוּשָׁה but מוֹרָשָׁה. יְרוּשָׁה passes on to us by a deceased relative or friend, for which we did not actively work. מוֹרָשָׁה implies subjective action, it must be *made* into a יְרוּשָׁה , a possession. With Faust we must say: 'That which you inherited from your parents, *acquire it yourself*, so that you may possess it.'

Torah must be acquired in every generation. A scholarly father does not necessarily have a scholarly son; neither does a religiously inclined parent have religiously inclined children. By dint of your observances and study of Torah, you acquire it.

The Land of Israel has similarly been acquired — drained swamps, risked lives, selfless sacrifice, matchless courage, and undaunted will of the Jewish People. Building and more building!

"Since the creation of the state some have taken it for granted — treat it like a יְרוּשָׁה, an inherited acquisition. But the process of acquisition is not yet complete.

[After more than fifty years, that process is still under way.]

1958

"If it is true that history repeats itself, we must go back about 2,500 years to find a parallel to the establishment of a Jewish state. In the year 538 B.C.E., the Persian King, Cyrus, made a proclamation granting permission to Jewish exiles in Babylonia to return to their homeland, rebuild the Temple and reestablish their state, which had been destroyed by the Babylonians.

"Compare this, the Third Commonwealth, in our days, with that, the Second Commonwealth, in the days of Cyrus.

"Then, the exile after the demise of the First Commonwealth lasted just forty–eight years.

4. Deuteronomy 34:4
5. Exodus 6:8

"Now, almost two thousand years, or forty times forty–eight years.

"Then, the initiative for the return was taken by the considerateness of a foreign ruler.

Now, the groundwork for restoration was laid by Jews, though the United Nations' decision called the State into being.

"Then, the immediate achievement of the returnees was the rebuilding of the Temple, while political independence had to wait another 400 years.

"Now, the immediate achievement is political independence, while the building of a Temple or, in other words, the universal acceptance of the centrality of Judaism as a way of life of the people is still far away.

"One thing there is in common — the feeling of joy, of exultation, of thanksgiving, of the awareness of the miraculous working of Almighty God in history. Even today, we can sing with the Psalmist (126) who felt then as we feel now: בְּשׁוּב ה' אֶת שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן הָיִינוּ כְּחוֹלְמִים 'When the Lord restores the fortunes of Zion — we are veritable dreamers.' אָז יִמָּלֵא שְׂחוֹק פִּינוּ וּלְשׁוֹנֵנוּ רִנָּה 'Our mouths are filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy.' אָז יֹאמְרוּ בַגּוֹיִם הִגְדִּיל ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת עִם אֵלֶּה 'Then shall they say among the nations: The Lord has done great things for them.' הִגְדִּיל ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּנוּ הָיִינוּ שְׂמֵחִים 'The Lord will do great things for us, and we shall rejoice.'

"The first days of Passover recall to us the exodus from Egypt, from the bondage of Pharaoh, to freedom. Our joy is full and complete and we chant the full Hallel — all the psalms of praise (113–118). No sooner are the first two days over than we think of the tragedy of the drowning of the Egyptians and remind ourselves of what the Midrash attributes to God at that time: מַעֲשֵׂה יָדַי טוֹבְעִים בַּיָּם וְאַתֶּם אוֹמְרִים שִׁירָה לְפָנַי 'The work of My hands are drowning in the sea, and you, Israelites sing praises to Me?' So we chant only the half Hallel (omitting 115:1–11, and 116:1–11) from the third day of the Festival on, to commiserate with the plight of the Egyptians. The Jew's joy is always tempered joy. So the day before we rejoice over modern Jewish freedom in the land of our ancestors, we declare a day of remembrance to pause and think — think with sorrow and pride — of those who, throughout the checkered and blood–stained history of our people, gave up their lives bravely and gloriously for the sanctification of God's holy name.

"We recall today with reverence our fellow Jews who resisted the Roman ban on the study and observance of the Torah and died as martyrs as did the Ten Sages among whom was the sainted Rabbi Akiba.

"We remember with deep fellow–feeling the Jews who were victims of persecutions in almost all the major countries of the world, including the Spanish Inquisition and those burned alive at the stake.

"More poignant in our memories is the brutal annihilation of six million of our co–religionists by the blood–thirsty and God–less Nazi hordes who sent to their deaths innocent Jews whose only crime was that they were of the people who possessed the Torah. Our Rabbis teach: 'He who is responsible for the death of one soul of Israel is

accounted as one who has destroyed the world.' See the enormity of the Nazi Crime — they destroyed six million worlds with all the budding possibilities of those worlds. Even though in the millions, let them not be mere numbers to us — they were fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters, live souls, our own dearly beloved — all met the cruel fury of those modern scientific barbarians.

"A particular event in connection with this onslaught will be treasured for all time in the chronicles of our people. I refer to the epic heroism and the supreme sacrifice of the men, women and children of the Warsaw Ghetto. Their Maccabean determination adds a page of glory to Jewish history.

"Finally, we recall with gratitude and pride the soldiers of Israel's Defense Army who willingly offer themselves for the protection of the Land of Israel. Because of their valiance, self-denial and their military prowess, Israel still lives and will continue to demonstrate its strength and daring ability in the face of dangerous foes. As long as blood flows in Jewish veins, those soldiers will be remembered with admiration, respect and sacred praise.

"One of the masterpieces of eloquence preserved for us from antiquity is the funeral oration delivered by Pericles for those who had fallen in the Peloponnesian War. After praising in glowing terms the greatness of Athens, the freedom and justice accorded to all its citizens alike, he ends his discourse with the words: 'Such a country well deserves that her citizens should die for her.'

"The Land of Israel, our beloved Erets Yisrael, where the Temple, the symbol of peace and love, once stood, the Land which has been the center of Jewish religion and Jewish life for centuries, the Land which was the subject of Jewish dreams and prophetic visions, the nucleus from which would go forth the Torah and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, its capital, such a Land is indeed worthy that her sons and daughters should die for her."

In July 1954, the Jewish world commemorated the 50th anniversary of the death of Theodore Herzl, founder of modern Zionism and in a sense, of the State of Israel. In my Zionist studies, I had found an unusual juxtaposition of Herzl's Yartseit, 20th Tammuz, with that of Hayyim Nahman Bialik, the great Hebrew poet, essayist, story writer and translator of modern times, on the following day, 21st Tammuz, who died in 1934, then 20 years before. So I called a meeting of the Jewish community to observe the anniversaries of two ranking Zionist personalities. In my remarks, I contrasted Herzl and Bialik as Prophet and Priest, and compared them with the classical pair of Moses and Aaron.

"**The Call** — Moses, as a result of injustice, Egyptian vs Jew; Jew vs Jew; Egyptian nation vs Israelites
Herzl, also as a result of injustice, Dreyfus's trial in France.

Administration — Moses, negotiations with Pharaoh.
Herzl, negotiations with emperors and rulers.

Main contribution — Moses, the Torah, code of future Jewish life.
Herzl, Jewish State, code of Jewish settlement.

Neither saw the fulfillment of their mission — Moses died before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, but the Torah concludes confirming his role as a prophet: 'Never again did there arise a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord singled out face to face.'[6] And Herzl died at the young age of 44, only after he wrote: 'In Basle (where he convened the Zionist Congress in 1898), I created the Jewish State. If I said it today, it would be greeted with laughter. But fifty years from now, the truth of this assertion shall be universally recognised.' Some prophesy! The Jewish State was established in 1947!

Aaron and Bialik. Aaron, symbol and expression of the Israelites' religious life — attended to the moral and religious needs and was their spiritual adviser. Aaron's death was mourned by כֹּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, the whole House of Israel
Bialik too expresses the spiritual and cultural life of the Jewish people. He describes their common work–a–day existence, as well as their cherished ideals. For instance, he vividly recounts the life in a Yeshiva בֵּית הַיּוֹצֵר לִנְשָׁמַת הָאוּמָה 'the workshop of the soul of the nation, in his celebrated poem entitled הַמַּתְמִיד 'The Eternal Student.' He stirs the conscience of the Jew to his national culture. He chides his people for being spiritually inert. In his biting poem, אֶכֶז חָצִיר הָעָם, the Jewish people compared to grass, trampled underfoot, he ends with the words: הֲיִתְעוֹרֵר הַמֵּת? הֲיִתְדַּעֲנֵעַ הַמֵּת? 'Will the dead soul be aroused? Can the dead spirit be revived?'

"And the crucial question: 'Who is more important, Prophet or Priest?' For an answer, let's turn to rabbinic literature. A Rabbi quoted a verse in the Torah,[7] וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל אַהֲרֹן 'So the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron.' כֹּל הַקּוֹדֵם בַּמִּקְרָא קוֹדֵם בְּמַעֲשֶׂה 'Is it not an exegetical rule that the name mentioned in the Bible before another is actually more important?' So according to this rule, Moses would be considered more important than Aaron. But the Rabbi quickly discovers another passage in which Aaron's name precedes Moses's: הוּא אַהֲרֹן וּמֹשֶׁה 'It is the same Aaron and Moses,'[8] זֶה מַגִּיד שֶׁשָּׁנִיהֶם שִׁקּוּלִים כָּזֶה 'Scripture thus declares that both are as important as the other.' In other words, the ideal prophet like Moses or Herzl and the ideal priest like Aaron or Bialik have equally important functions to perform, each in his own sphere.

With priests and prophets like Moses and Aaron, Herzl and Bialik, the continued existence of the Jewish people has been assured. Descartes, a famous philosopher of the 17th–18th centuries has formulated the mystery of human existence in the words: 'Cogito ergo sum,' 'I think therefore I am.' Imbued by prophets and priests both ancient and modern, the secret of the national existence of the Jewish people may be expressed in the formula: 'I *hope*, therefore I am.' A nation not subject to physical death lives as long as it hopes, as long as it has something to live for. The Judean exiles in Babylonia who

6. Deuteronomy 34:10
7. Exodus 6:13
8. Ibid. 6:26

complained to the Prophet Ezekiel: 'Our bones are dried up, our hope is lost, we are doomed,'[9] were soon lost themselves and disappeared. But those who were taught by the Scribes, successors of the classical priests of old, and cheered by the Prophets, continued to hope, and survived. Their eyes were opened, and they perceived

הַשָּׁמַיִם הַחֲדָשִׁים וְהָאָרֶץ הַחֲדָשָׁה 'a new heaven and a new earth.'[10] And that earth was none other than their old Land ready to be worked on, and the new heaven was the very sky that ever shone over Zion and then glittered again."

Two years later, in August 1956, I gave a lecture on Bialik's poems at a well–attended meeting reported in the Shema: "Rabbi Musleah treated his subject with great feeling and left his audience deeply impressed with the power and depth of Bialik and the influence he has had on all who have read his poems. A few more lectures on Modern Hebrew literature would be very welcome."

My efforts in behalf of Youth Aliya and Aliya in general will be discussed below.[11]

POVERTY — BENEVOLENCE WITH WISDOM

About a half of Calcutta's Jewish community were in straitened circumstances, some depending entirely on dole. One of the variegated functions I was called upon to perform was to administer to that unfortunate element. Occasionally, I found myself in an embarrassing position when the indigent came to me in the throes of destitution asking for monetary assistance. It is little comfort to one living precariously, whose children go to bed hungry, only to be told to have faith. I tried to show justification in this process by proving that the present is not entirely hopeless by frequently doling out money from my own pocket. I had no public funds at my disposal. I was guided by a rabbinic comment on alms–giving: 'When a needy person stands at your door, the Holy One, Praised be He, stands at his right hand.' This is the rabbinic way of saying that, to turn away a person in want is to insult the Divine image in which he or she is created. Yet the Psalmist emphasizes אַשְׁרֵי מַשְׂכִּיל אֶל דָּל that one must wisely consider the poor (41:2) so that the contribution may be a blessing to both donor and recipient.

Here is a typical example. A Jewish man who had lost his job because of failing eyesight came to see me at my office. He felt his way around and could see me hazily. The world was daily growing darker for him. He had no relatives or friends. His abode — a public square, drenched by rain and scorched by the sun. He sought friendly advice and sympathetic attention. I was pained and anguished. Could I be of service?

I extended all the moral encouragement I could muster. But he needed to live. To tide him over, I gave him a small amount of money. But more vitally, I made arrangements for him to see a doctor through the auspices of the Clinic inaugurated by my father as Secretary of the Oseh Haised (=Doer of Good Deeds). The doctor certified that it was the first step to complete blindness, holding out little hope for recovery. Nevertheless, he took a course of injections and was supplied with nourishment. I managed a monthly allowance from the Jewish Women's League. For the first few months he felt no improvement. Later, his vision began slowly improving. Over and above his allowance, I would occasionally add a few rupees of my own.

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9. Ezekiel 37:11
10. Isaiah 66:22
11. Page 289.

About a year after his initial visit, he walked into my office on the heels of an examination and reported that the doctor allowed him to put on the same glasses he used while he worked. He could now see me clearly. He was almost cured. The miracle was over. For me, a new phase in this exciting episode was about to begin. I received this salutary letter from him:

> "Dear Rabbi, I want to take this opportunity of placing on record my deepest gratitude to you and the organisations at your disposal for having exerted your unstinted efforts with time and money to restore to me my most cherished possession, my vision. You have guided me over the most dismal and heartbreaking period of my existence, for which may the blessing of God be upon you and yours forever, Amen.
>
> "I now am happy to inform you that I have secured a caretaker's job in Delhi on a salary of Rs.150 per month and free living quarters. My work will not impose undue strain on my eyes. Would you, therefore, Rabbi, stop my monthly allowance of Rs.15 per month, and grant me a one–time sum of Rs.50 for transportation to Delhi right away.
>
> "I wish to add that I will send you Rs.20 per month to help repay in part my gratitude to you.
>
> "Thanking you for all you have done and wishing you every happiness.
>
> Yours ever gratefully,"

I thanked him for his letter, sent him the required amount for his train fare collected through the generosity of friends, assured him it would not be necessary to reimburse me for money or services expended toward his cure, and pleasantly confident that he would not need another installment.

I encountered successfully the effects of poverty in yet another way. We were faced with the possibility of losing a Jewish child to a Christian missionary school because her poverty–stricken parents could not pay her fees. The school authorities were prepared to waive the fees if the child was handed over to the school, a veiled way of expressing readiness to convert her to Christianity. When I became aware of the intended transaction, I did not leave a stone unturned until I had Rs.200 collected from generous friends. The girl was transferred into the happy and comfortable environment of the Jewish Girls' Hostel, a place for children of needy parents.

I faced and opposed practises associated with poverty in other ways. It became fashionable in some circles to provide sumptuous lunches to the boys and girls of our "free" schools, (so–called because indigent parents were not charged the usual fees,) to observe Yartseits of nearest–of–kin whose relatives had to be present during the meal and respond to the memorial prayer recited at the end of the repast. Based on the humanitarian penchant for feeding the hungry, it was argued that the children would not have had so rich a meal but for the largesse of their benefactors who believed that the gastric satisfaction of the little ones somehow produced a good effect on the soul of the departed.

Granted that it is meritorious to feed the hungry, it is fallacious to presume that the school children feel hungry after eating school food. The schools had budgeted for daily lunches and would not be the worse if those "outside feeds" were stopped. In fact, they were educationally and morally inappropriate. Some boys had expressed their dissatisfaction to me. They were averse to the practice, which shrunk their self–respect and dignity, and prevented them from

holding their heads high as equals. I argued that there were other devices which would provide greater happiness for our youngsters — improved libraries, games equipment, conversion of hard playing fields into grassy ones, and provision for many extra–curricular activities to spur mental and physical growth. Donations for those facilities could be made in the name of deceased relatives fittingly memorialized.

Some headway was made. Our boys' school required sports' shirts to play in the Inter–School Hockey and Table–Tennis tournaments. Other schools, including a Catholic orphanage, played wearing their school colors and ensigns. Our school had no funds for that purpose. Mostly by private donations, I had shirts bought, and the kids proudly donned them, enhancing their sense of dedication to the school. They felt elevated, encouraged, fully satisfied, more than the most gratifying meal ever. I made a suggestion, which never got off the ground. I recommended that the schools start an "extra–curricular fund" to which the regular contributors of free meals would donate the monetary expense of those lunches to the schools for library, sports and excursions. Old habits die hard.

SYNAGOGUES: OLD PRACTISES PREVAIL

On March 18, 1953, I led a small group of worshipers to the roof of the Maghen David Synagogue in observance of a rare practise — the blessings of the sun. Blessing the moon from the seventh to the fourteenth of every month is a common custom in traditional Judaism. But a ritual involving the sun every twenty–eight years is hardly known.

Since biblical times, Jews have been inspired by nature. The author of Psalm 104, for example, is drawn into the open fields, gazing wondrously at the heavens studded with adornments of light and seeing the Divine handiwork in fleeting cloud and breathless wind. The Rabbis of the Talmud continue this tradition. For them, every movement of the elements is a manifestation of the power of God, each provided with a benediction. If one sees the sky in all its purity he should say: 'Blessed is He who has wrought the work of Creation.' Storms, earthquakes, lightening and thunder, even the appearance of the rainbow, evokes a blessing for God who remembers faithfully His covenant with Noah. In like manner the Sages taught: He who sees the sun at its turning point should say: 'Praised is He who has wrought the work of Creation. 'And when does the sun appear at its turning point?' asks the 4th century Rabbi Abaye: 'Every 28 years when the solar cycle begins again and the spring equinox falls on the evening of Tuesday going on to Wednesday.' On the strength of this passage, the blessings of the sun had been ordained. The time before, the Rev E.M.D. Cohen, Hazzan of Maghen David Synagogue conducted the ceremony on April 1, 1925. [The date of this ceremony in 2009 – April 7.]

Having grown up in traditional ritual, I am attracted to rites with meaningful background. But even before I left for my rabbinic training, I fell foul of some unsavory forms. In the issue of the local paper, the Shema, dated December 1946, there appeared a letter I wrote under the caption, "Tishri in Retrospect." Among things I pointed out was this: public auctioning of religious privileges in synagogue on both days of Rosh Hashana conducted in Arabic took a good three–quarters of an hour. Lack of interest and an understanding of the medium prompted many to leave the synagogue while the Sefer Torah was still on the Tebah (Bimah) to participate in, to them, a more conducive social atmosphere on the grounds outside. There the agenda was varied — a smoke, a business inquiry, a possible date, giving the impression of a party.

Inside, the state of affairs was no better. Upstairs, women formed congenial groups to gossip about dress–styles, domestic occurrences, and rising prices of chicken, vegetables and eggs. Downstairs, the proceedings compared favorably with those of a stock market. Booklets containing the auction of the previous year were zealously held by every prospective buyer. Keen eyes scrutinized prices and watched the trend of the "market." Competition became sharper. Excitement ran high. All in the name of the Torahs still in view.

Nay more! The highest bidder of each auction was mentioned in a prayer: 'He (God) Who blessed our ancestors ... bless, guard and preserve (the man who "bought" the privilege of opening the Ark doors, for example, for so–many rupees; so may it be His will, and let us say, Amen.') And the synagogue authorities subscribed to such desecration and granted their hearty approval.

To save our religious institutions from irreverence and profanation, I suggested that the service would be considerably shortened and interest preserved were the auction held on the Sunday preceding Rosh Hashana at a previously appointed time and a specified place. Those interested in buying privileges would then be present, while the synagogue service would retain its decorum.

It pained me to learn that the boards of the synagogues turned my proposal down on the plea of loss of a substantial part of their income derived from the sale of privileges on two of the most sacred days in the calendar. How sad! Florence Nightingale once said: "There is one thing hospitals must do — they must not spread disease." In our own terms, there is one thing Judaism in Calcutta should not have done — it should not have encouraged *misdevotion* and irreverence.

Some members themselves deprecated the conduct of fellow congregants during services. I append below three opinions expressed in the "Shema" in October 1953 and December 1954.

"A Kingdom for a Front Seat"

> "Certain happenings in one of our synagogues during the recent High Holidays have brought to a head the problem of proper seating arrangements for our ladies.
>
> "We men have a goodly sense of proportion and realise that Divine worship is as acceptable at the Heavenly Gates, whether offered from the nave or from the isle. So year after year, one may see stolid males repairing to their time–honoured seats, which have been reserved for them by mere usage. In case some other person occupies one's seat, the matter is politely overlooked and the service continues as smoothly as before.
>
> "Not so, unfortunately, with certain members of the fair sex. For them the acquisition of a front seat, commanding a view of the lowly occupants [the men down below] is a prize so highly esteemed that they consider no length too far to go to capture it. Atmosphere during worship is not so important a factor to men as to their more sensitive partners. Certainly, the constant permutation of personalities and the shifting display of colours by some unwelcome Jezebels, flaunting the latest creations of fashion in the next or possibly one's own seat is somewhat hard on the nerves of those ladies trying to concentrate on prayer on those solemn days. Sometimes we men wonder whether the feminine goal is more to see than to be seen from their front seats. Anyone with even an elementary knowledge of female psychology knows quite well that to be seen is infinitely more important to them. Perhaps we men should be forgiven in the midst of our galling self–examination during High–Holiday services — our sorry recollections of sins

committed and bitter fears of failings that may be repeated — if we cast our eyes aloft in a moment of relief and diversion from our sullen thoughts. This is not so much to seek inspiration from Heaven as to see who may be the current winners of the Front Seat Stakes above.

"Putting aside the higher aspect of this question, however, will the synagogues authorities try and devise some means of stopping what is nothing short of front seat piracy? It is disconcerting, to say the least, to find one's seat, hallowed by years of usage, now setting off the beauty of another form, the [new] owner of which is prepared to defend her 'right' to it to the last heated argument.

"Will readers please suggest how to remedy such an unfortunate state of affairs in future, so that our ladies, who are supposed to be a civilising influence, will have no more occasion not to behave like 'gentlemen' on our most solemn days?

Shalome David"

[Time and circumstance remedied the situation — emigration from Calcutta.]

"Discord During Services"

"These days when synagogue attendance is small and irregular ... our synagogue committees and ministers should try to encourage attendance by making services pleasant for people who attend, as well as try to get more people interested. Instead, every time I am at service, which is fairly regularly, I hear arguments and bickering during prayers between ministers and (lay) leaders, on the one hand, and individuals who consider their knowledge of Torah far superior than that of others. These are clearly struggles for power, unpleasant and disruptive, which should take place outside synagogue premises.

"We, the praying public, are not interested in taking sides. We merely wish to exercise our right to pray. Decorum and quiet during services should be restored for the sakes of those like me who don't wish to abandon our tradition to attend synagogue. As for the querulous and dissident voices, let them pray as they want to in their own homes.

Elias Abraham, 6 Tottee Lane."

"Simhath Torah Decorum"

"I must bring to the attention of the community the disruptive atmosphere in the synagogue on Simhath Torah Evening and the next morning.

"On the eve, some women attend service dressed more for a theatrical performance than for a religious service ... They should remain in their seats instead of parading downstairs in the men's section, thus deliberately causing a distraction.

"It is fully understood and appreciated that the latter part of the service (Hakafoth) is devoted to rejoicing as Sepher Torahs are carried around the pulpit (Bimah), but sometimes the conduct of some becomes unrestrained and unseemly, causing disrespect to the Sepher Torahs. The use of squirts, water of scent, [called pandora] further spoils the sacred atmosphere of the synagogue.

"In the morning service of one of the synagogues, a member was dressed as an old man playing the role of a clown. This added to the confusion, as children were attracted to the amateur performer who should have been asked by the authorities to change his make–up.

Sarah Abraham, 21 Royd Street."

Mrs. Abraham did not relent from her good fight over proper dress in synagogue. On another occasion she wrote: "I am astonished at the indifference and slackness shown by many women who appear in synagogue on High Festivals in sleeveless dress or low necklines ... Women must dress in accordance with the occasion, particularly in synagogue, a place of devotion and prayer. I clearly recall the late Rev. E.M.D. Cohen, of Maghen David Synagogue, warned one Rosh Hashanah, that women who were inappropriately dressed on Kippur would not be allowed in the House of Worship. His warning was heeded. Our Synagogue committees should do likewise ..."

In part to rectify such abuse of religious conduct, the first major experiment in Calcutta in the field of Jewish worship was a service I conducted on the first day of Rosh Hashana at the Jewish Girls' School. The event was unprecedented in many respects. First, it was held outside the sacred precincts of a synagogue. This kept away many whose deep sense of religiosity and tradition would not allow them to pray in any place other than a synagogue. Obviously they forgot the verse in Exodus 20:21: 'In every place where I cause My name to be mentioned, I will come unto you and bless you.' Besides, the hall so impressively resembled a formal place of worship with Torah scrolls and parochets, loaned by Maghen David Synagogue, that none of our worshipers complained they felt out of place.

Another unique characteristic of this service was the decorum maintained throughout the prayers. Our people have become accustomed to dress–parading and chatting in synagogue. I had often wondered at the glaring absence of solemnity in the House of God. In my service, though held in a place not officially a House of God, no one cared to talk to a neighbor, neither was there any demonstration of uneasiness such as frequent reference to the clock among the congregants. The only disturbance came from "picnickers" from neighboring synagogues, evidently tired of their services and desirous of relaxation, paid us courtesy calls to see how we were doing. Instead of departing quietly, they walked away with copies of my supplementary readings they were loathed to read at my service. Some of these stray sheep were apparently so impressed with the pamphlets that, ashamed to reappear, sent their agents to loot the prayer sheets lodged at the entrance. Apparently, they must have found something interesting!

These acts of piracy were all the more astounding when considered against the background of pre–service mis–information. It was proclaimed an "English" service. But those who attended experienced a preponderance of Hebrew and traditional melodies, the outstanding feature being that, for the first time, they understood and appreciated the entire proceedings. The response, expressed and unexpressed, from protagonists and antagonists alike, was most favorable, and I was amply rewarded by the spiritual satisfaction achieved by so many members of our community.

As a direct outcome of encouragement and heartening response, I began Friday evening services at Neveh Shalome Synagogue. The time was not convenient for many, nor was the place centrally situated. We could not start much later, else the ceremony of ushering the Sabbath would be rendered meaningless, nor could the locale, in close proximity to my residence, be changed. It didn't work. I would have preferred a Shabbat morning service, but that, too, was impractical, largely because the Young People's service held immediately following regular services.

MATTERS OF JEWISH LAW

Proselytism

Conversion to Judaism, infrequent until World War II, became an issue to be increasingly reckoned with. Before my arrival in Calcutta, the Jewish Association's "Beth Din" liberally authorized the performance of conversions. Early on, I made it plain that brakes would have to be applied. The conversion of a friend of an influential member focused attention on the issue. I explained Jewish law on the subject at public meetings and subsequently appealed for adherence to the law with sympathetic human consideration.

That Judaism discourages proselytism is a well–known fact. Only once in his long history did the Jew go out of his way to persuade members of other faiths to enter the Jewish fold. But generally, a traditional Jewish practise down the ages had dampened the spirits of a prospective convert by every method in its power. There are many prerequisites for his/her acceptance. The applicant must be motivated by a sincere attachment to Judaism and must give a solemn undertaking to observe the Jewish precepts. Even then, Jewish courts are in the habit of procrastinating to clear every doubt as to the superficiality of his/her attachment to Judaism.

Let us look at the problem from a realistic point of view. Rarely, if ever, do we meet prospective proselytes who convert purely out of an attraction to Judaism per se. Even those who are admitted after allegedly pledging to comply with the above conditions may have some ulterior motive. Few non–Jewish lay persons have so good an idea of Judaism as to compare it with their own religion of which they probably have little knowledge anyway. The most common cause for conversion is an attraction to persons of another faith rather than to its forms and principles. To overlook this is to shut one's eyes to a fact from which we cannot get away. Yet, it would be unwise to bar converts completely. Rejection may be disastrous. If there must be a marriage, it would willy–nilly take place civilly or under the auspices of non–Jewish ecclesiastics. We then stand to lose a Jewish soul, however lacking in Jewish content. On the other hand, we may likely create two Jewish individuals with as much Jewish knowledge as our society is able to supply. Besides it is fair to assume, in keeping with a rabbinic saying, מִתּוֹךְ שֶׁלֹּא לִשְׁמָהּ בָּא לִשְׁמָהּ "though an endeavor is undertaken not with the right intention, such a right intention can develop and ultimately supersede the previous one." For example, though one may wish to be converted for matrimonial purposes, this intention being contrary to strict law, the desired end of keeping a Jewish home and bringing up one's children in a Jewish atmosphere may gradually be developed. The case of Jonah was exemplary.

Everything said, intermarriage or conversion is basically unhealthy. I served a caution that the Beth Din would discourage proselytism — which would take months, if at all, for a conversion application to be granted. But I was prepared to alleviate challenging situations. I announced a course in practical Judaism to all candidates for conversion because I believed no step should be taken without a fair knowledge of what to expect after the step is taken. During the course of my

Calcutta ministry, I gauged the interest and the enthusiasm for Judaism or otherwise shown by the would–be proselyte, when I was sure in my own mind whether or not the applicant would be an asset to us. After being satisfied that the case was genuine, I made my recommendation to the Beth Din. My constraints were adhered to.

I had occasion to reprehend a gross violation in the performance of a **Berith Meela**, postponed from Friday to Sunday on the ground that more visitors would attend the ceremony on a holiday. The baby was normal and healthy. The Mohel brought the potential violation to the attention of those responsible for the postponement, but his pleas went unheeded. The enormity of the violation may be evaluated, I pointed out, when it is considered that, according to law, a Meela must not be postponed even if the eighth day fall on Kippur, not to mention the Sabbath, and a special place is assigned to it in the order of the service for the day. The exception is, of course, when the child is not healthy enough to stand the operation.

M.E. Rosenberg, a British Jew married to a Cochin lady, took up cudgels for me, in light of criticism leveled at me on this and other topics. "I note ... one of the letters to the editor bears the title 'Bouquets.' Perhaps you might very well have used the term 'Brickbats' as a title of some of the other correspondence:

> "I am reminded of a classical Jewish story wherein a rich man who would give a weekly donation to a schnorrer (Jewish beggar) went into a restaurant and was surprised to see the object of his beneficence enjoying a meal of smoked salmon [among Western Jews an expensive delicacy]. He immediately upbraided the schnorrer for wasting his money, whereupon came the response: 'If I have no money, I *cannot* eat smoked salmon. If I have money, I *mustn't* eat smoked salmon. When then *can* I eat smoked salmon?'
>
> "The same with our religious head [Rabbi Musleah]. When he does something which the zealot considers to be outside the letter of the law, he is accused of being Reform, etc, etc. On the other hand, when he points out certain strictnesses (sic!) to be observed, he is accused of being inconsiderate, interfering, etc.
>
> "I do not deny that I have been at times a severe critic of some of his actions, but I shall be the first to back him up to maintain and improve orthodoxy in the community.
>
> "As far as Milah is concerned ... it matters not whether either or both parents are available. [The child's] health is the only criterion. If the mother cannot be present ... one nursing Jewish mother can be found to be near the child for a couple of hours, as occurred in the case of my son some years ago in Cochin. Alternatively, the Milah can be performed in the Nursing Home. I recall in my home town, when a milah fell on a Sabbath, a gentleman then aged 70 years, walked to and from the Nursing Home to perform the ceremony, a distance of over four miles each way."

Jacob Twena, the Mohel, once became the bone of contention over his performance of circumcisions when three consecutive Meeloth did not come off as well as his previous operations. This flash in the pan was exaggerated to such an extent, perhaps because the affected parties were from the upper strata of society, that it created trepidation in the hearts of parents–to–be– who resolved to keep at a respectful distance of Mr. Twena were they blessed with sons.

These misgivings were justified to a point. Twena possessed a diploma from the Baghdad Beth Din for proficiency in performing Meeloth. He used up–to–date methods and medicines, and had, up to that point, over two hundred successful operations to his credit. Major Fisher, a renowned surgeon, who was reported to have called the Mohel a butcher after one of the hapless incidents, was on another occasion, so impressed with his conduct of the Meela, that he gave Twena a certificate implying his satisfaction with his performance as a Mohel. I did not enlist under the banners of Twena as a professional, but I emphasized that he was the only Mohel we had, besides Dr. Isaac H. Meyer, Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons, a local hand, returned to Calcutta after a very successful medical career in England, continued a flourishing practice in his native city, and began doing Meeloth as a Mitzva.

Under the caption, '**Disgusted**,' Florence Cohen wrote a column–long letter protesting that I was the victim of 'slander, degradation and even assault ...' "The Rabbi is putting himself out for the betterment of his people ... highly noteworthy are the Hebrew and Religious Instruction classes he conducts at his residence. He conducts these classes in the evenings to accommodate those of us who work during the day ... a more patient and painstaking teacher is yet to be found ... Despite the inconvenience he is caused, he carries on his good work ..."

A different controversy of sorts arose when Isaac J. Jonah's letter appeared in the April, 1958 issue of the "Shema":

> "A decade ago, I was confined to bed and took to reading the Bible edited by the Chief Rabbi, Dr. J. H. Hertz, and came across two significant passages which I had not known before ...[12] "**Seven** days shall no leaven be found in your houses ..."
>
> "It struck me that the observance of **eight days for Passover** was wrong and I set about to rectify the error ever since by observing seven days according to the law. Whatever the reason ... the theories advanced A. To keep in line with the Holy Land who are still in Passover when we finish, and B. When in the old days beacons were lit on hill–tops to indicate the commencement of the feast, the farthest settlements added a day as they were in doubt if the message had reached them on the same day — it is meaningless now when the exact date can be determined for any given year. Why then are we still adhering to eight days? ... I have spoken to several people and have failed to secure a single convert [to my side].'"

I was duty bound to respond at length. ... First there are flaws in his statement of both theories A and B. I am not aware of rationale A, which, in my opinion, is completely erroneous. Jews all over the world cannot start and end the observance of a festival of a fast at exactly the same time. Even if the theory could apply to Jews living east of Jerusalem who finish the seventh day of Passover about three hours after we do in Calcutta, what of the Jews residing in places west of Jerusalem for whom the seventh day terminates *after* their co–religionists in the Holy Land?

Theory B is also fallacious. The correct expression of this rationale is as follows: During First Temple Days, the new moon would be proclaimed by the Sanhedrin and report of its proclamation would be conveyed to every part of the Land of Israel by runners or by means of beacons lit on hill–tops. After the destruction, when our people were taken into Babylonian exile, this procedure could no longer be followed because of the distance from Jerusalem. The

12. Exodus 12:17-20 and Deuteronomy 13:1

Sanhedrin continued to declare the beginning of the new month in Jerusalem, but Babylonian Jews were in doubt about the exact date of Rosh Hodesh, and therefore the festival, that is, the fifteenth day of Nisan for Passover. The doubt extended for only twenty–four hours because the moon was clearly visible everywhere thereafter. So they added a day to be rid of the doubt.

Wherein lay the authority of the Rabbis in Babylonia to add to the days of the festivals when the Torah expressly says: 'Be careful to observe only that which I enjoin upon you: neither add to it nor take away from it',[13] so aptly quoted by Mr. Jonah? It lay precisely a few chapters later,[14] 'If a case is too baffling for you ... you shall promptly appear ... before the Levitical priests or the magistrate in charge at the time and present your problem. When they have announced to you their verdict in the case ... You shall act in accordance with the instructions given you and the ruling handed down to you; you must not deviate from the verdict that they announce to you either to the right or to the left ...'

The great and illustrious Maimonides (1135–1204), of sacred memory, rabbinic authority, codifier and philosopher, commenting on the above–quoted law, wrote: 'The great Sanhedrin of Jerusalem, is the root of the Oral Law. The members thereof are the pillars of instruction; from them go forth statutes and judgments to all Israel. Scripture bids us to repose confidence in them, as the Torah records, 'You shall act in accordance with the instructions given you ...;' this is a positive command. Whoever believes in Moses, our teacher, and his Torah, is bound to follow their guidance in the practice of religion and to depend on them.'[15]

How does this authority apply to the Rabbis of Babylonia? Maimonides, in another section of his Mishneh Torah, [16]states: The Exilarchs of Babylon stand in the place of (a Jewish king). They exercise authority over Israel everywhere and sit in judgment over the people, with or without the consent of the people. Therefore, any competent judge who has been authorized by the Exilarch to exercise judicial functions, may act as judge everywhere, in or outside the land of Israel ...

In yet another passage, Maimonides comments: Before the observance of all the commandments issued by the Rabbis (not mentioned in the Written Torah), such as the Reading of the Megillah on Purim, the lighting of candle on Shabbath and Hanukka, or the ritual washing of the hands, one must say the benediction: אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ (God) Who has sanctified us by Your commandments and instructed us to ... But where were these prescriptions commanded in the Torah? Rather, because the Torah ordains: You shall act in accordance with the instructions given you.[17] This is how we should understand the benediction: Who has ordained upon us, among other commandments, to light the Hanukkah lamps or to read the Megillah, and similarly, all the other commandments of the Rabbis [called the Oral Law].[18]

Simhath Torah is one of the rabbinical commandments not mentioned in the Written Torah. Does Mr. Jonah suggest that we stop celebrating it?

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13. Deuteronomy 13:1
14. Ibid. 17:8,9,11
15. Mishneh Torah, Book 14, The Book of Judges, chapter 1
16. Sanhedrin chapter 4
17. Deuteronomy 17:11
18. Mishneh Torah Book 2, Laws of the Benedictions, chapter 2

Mr. Jonah has then made the grievous error of reading a legal part of the Bible and interpreting it simply as a layman, and neglecting its technical and historical implications. The Oral Law cannot be separated from the Written Law, for that is the suicidal method of the Karaites and the more modern technique of Reform Jews. It has no support in Jewish tradition and is utterly foreign to the involved fabric of Jewish values. By the interpretations given in the preceding paragraphs, the whole Torah, Written and Oral, becomes the "Law of God," and not only the Written ...

Without prejudice to the above discussion, it is in order to mention that in our common social world, there are many customs, which have lost their meaning but are still considered very much in fashion. For example, it may not be common knowledge that the three buttons attached to a man's coat sleeve were intended to discourage the unbecoming habit of wiping his nose with his sleeve. It may still be required by some as a deterrent, but for most people the original purpose has become obsolete. Then again, the tie was a sign of distinction of country squires in the Middle Ages. Today, it has become a sign of respectability, but the original purpose has become outdated. Does anyone advocate the abolition of the tie except when the temperature is soaring?

I wish Mr. Jonah would have more leisure time in good health than the short period of confinement to bed, when he could study portions of the Bible and other portions of Jewish literature more intensively. Perhaps then he would change his mind about the eighth day of Passover. "The unlearned rush in where wary scholars fear to tread."

To conclude this section, it should be said that Judaism or any other religion is a voluntary matter to be decided by each individual. There are certain ways and means laid down by rabbinical authorities throughout the ages for the proper adherence to the principals, forms and ceremonies of our Faith. These are interpreted and handed down by rabbis and teachers wherever Jews live. In Calcutta, a properly ordained rabbi, assisted by a Beth Din of lay persons elected by the community and guided by the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of England, functioned in order to advise and direct faithful adherents in their performance of Jewish practice. On occasion its decisions had been unheeded and its authority flouted. It is the responsibility of a religious leader, however, to courageously and openly declare important teachings; it is meritorious for a spokesman of religion to stake unpopularity if his conscience dictates that he has done the right thing.

YOUTH ALIYA

One of my most cherished goals as a rabbi had been to foster close ties between Israel and the Diaspora. After all, to be a Halutz in the Holy Land was my first choice before I decided on being a Halutz in the rabbinate. In Calcutta I had to energize the local Zionist movement to an awareness that, even in post–statehood, Zionism was a continuous process embracing the important tasks of rehabilitating the Land of Israel and stimulating its development by financial, moral and political help toward the ingathering of the Jewish people on its sacred soil.

I appealed for a token membership of the Zionist movement through the Shekel to throw in our lot with world Jewry, sharing the ideals of emancipation and freedom. The uniqueness of this method of taxation has scarce been surpassed in the economic history of the world, and spells a democracy in keeping with the social justice of the Torah. Shekalim were sold at a meeting of the community convened for the purpose, and volunteers made house–calls with the slogan: "Buy a Shekel and strengthen the Jewish nation." This was a continuation of an old tradition, I explained, whereby a shekel was collected in the month of Adar from each Jew for maintenance of people and institutions in the Holy Land.

The attachment to Zion was reflected in past generations in the generally warm welcome granted visiting Palestinean emissaries who represented shrines in the Four Cities of Jerusalem, Safed, Hebron and Tiberias. The visitors distributed pictures of the "Holy Ones" buried in the Land, made presentations of holy earth from the Mount of Olives, and awarded amulets and talismans.

In anticipation of the next emissary's visit, money–boxes were installed in each of the synagogues for the agencies that made past requests for help. The wealthy made mention of those agencies in their wills as an everlasting sign of the religious zeal for the land of their ancestors. It was in keeping with this hoary tradition that the Zionist Shekel was being collected.

With the establishment of the State of Israel, the symbolism of the Shekel took on a more realistic tone. Immigration to Israel from Calcutta commenced with a bang in 1950 when scores of young people answered the call of the Jewish Agency to pack their bags for Israel. Local organizational problems put a stop to the rush of prospective emigrants. My arrival in Calcutta brought Jewish Agency officials from Israel and Bombay for discussions on how to re–start the process of Aliyah. I was appointed in an honorary capacity to oversee the recruiting process.

Rules, sometimes unpleasant and inconvenient, were laid down, which occasionally required the final word from our Jerusalem headquarters in certain cases, necessitating some delay. The main difficulty I faced centered on the processing of indigent families. The local Oseh Haised clinic agreed to see those unfortunate folk through their medical examinations. I appealed very successfully for winter clothes and train passages to Bombay, where groups emplaned for Israel. By September 1953, Aliyah assumed full swing again. By 1964, I managed to send over five hundred of my community to Israel, in a sense presiding over the liquidation of my own community.

I spurred on the fateful decision–making in personal interviews and from the pulpit. In one such message on Purim 1955, I dwelt on Mordecai's message to Esther:

> "Do not imagine that you of all the Jews will escape with your life by being in the king's palace. On the contrary, if you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another quarter, while you and your father's house will perish. And who knows, perhaps you have attained to royal position for just such a crisis.'
>
> "Esther hesitates. Imagine her mental anguish. Danger to her person was uppermost in her mind. Will I live or will I die? If I go, will my people be saved? If I do not go, will my people be destroyed? Finally she made her decision. 'Go, assemble all the Jews who live in Shushan, and fast in my behalf ... I and my maidens will observe the same fast. Then I shall go to the King, though contrary to the law; and if I am to perish, I shall perish.'
>
> "On this decision depended the future of the Jewish people. Esther's decision meant our success and our good fortune. Shakespeare wisely said: 'There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in misery.' Here is a vivid picture of tides — full–tide and ebb–tide.
>
> "Occasionally, a people's future is fraught with fate, with destiny, when called upon to make fateful decisions. Four or five times in our history as a people, we Jews were called upon to answer the call of fate, and we instinctively at those moments made the right decisions. In so doing, they revealed our character.

The Red Sea. Shall we go forward into danger, or shall we go back to the fleshpots of Egypt? We instinctively moved forward into the sea, and into life.

Mount Sinai. Be like other peoples or be 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' We chose נעשה ונשמע 'we will do as we have heard.'

In Babylonia, when King Cyrus of Persia gave us the choice of remaining there in comfort or returning to the Holy Land and rebuilding the country, we decided אִם אֶשְׁכָּחֵךְ יְרוּשָׁלַיִם תִּשְׁכַּח יְמִינִי

'If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its cunning.' And many of us moved back to Jerusalem.

"Some centuries later, when we were comforted with the choice of losing ourselves in that beautiful pagan Hellenistic world and giving up our 'burdensome' Jewish identity, we could have decided to assimilate and be like our neighbors. But the Maccabees arose and made a decision, which saved Judaism.

"Not so long ago, another momentous decision was taken: 'Shall we build the Jewish national home in the Holy Land or shall we give up the land to roving Arabs and the corroding influence of Nature?' Strong forces advocated a hands–off policy, but the instinctive genius of Theodore Herzl and his followers laid the foundations of the State of Israel to the glory of the Jewish people.

"'There is a tide in the affairs of men which, when taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. Omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in misery.'

"Now we Jews in India are at cross–roads, when we have to make another fateful decision, not only this year but for many years to come. Each one of us must answer these questions: 'Shall I stay in India or shall I leave? Am I happy here? Am I assured of economic stability, a decent income and a comfortable livelihood during *my* lifetime?' If yes, 'are my children likewise assured of such stability? Can I do better elsewhere? Does Israel beckon to create and advance a better living on the Land of our forebears?'

On such a decision will depend whether we will ride, like Esther and Mordecai of old, on the flood–tide of fortune, or we will lag behind in the shallows and allow our tide to pass.

May we be blessed with the instinct and the foresight to recognize the tide when it comes in our personal lives, and may it lead to good fortune and success, Amen."

So it did. Many years after managing an Aliyah whose success was impossible to predict, I received first–hand reports from Israel of economic consolidation and social well–being that would have been impossible of accomplishment in India.

Progress, however, was necessarily very slow. Early immigrants from India experienced great hardships. A majority arrived with few necessities such as clothes and cooking utensils, having spent their meager savings in India on their plane fares. Their first homes were wooden shacks. They had to learn Hebrew, tried to gain employment in their former occupation, and if not, learn another trade. They had to adapt themselves to the changing needs of the country. Some had to commit themselves to long–term loans to obtain permanent housing. The less fortunate

languished in the transit camps, and many, unwilling to face the physical and social problems, returned to India or left for London, England. Where did they settle in Israel? Some in cities, others in Moshavim, Kibbutzim, and Youth Settlements. Salaries were barely sufficient to provide for necessities of daily living, requiring both parents, even children, to work full–time. To pay for education and other domestic facilities, former Indian Jews were heavily in debt, which took years to pay off. They felt stronger as a group when they formed themselves into Hitahdut Olei Hodu — Association of Indian Jews — making it easier to receive official aid from government sources, and to facilitate the settlement of new immigrants from India. Two generations have grown up as Israelis that have left Indian standards way behind, attained a standard and quality of life that may be placed alongside several European countries. They are becoming better off each year and can assume that their children will have better lives than they have had, just as their lives have been better than those of their parents. They speak Hebrew with their parents and go to the same schools their parents went to. They have a common way of life and common expectations. The dream their grandparents dreamed has turned to reality. I am glad I was instrumental in sending them to Israel.

The outstanding progress of one little boy of thirteen who made Aliya in 1958, illustrates how well the young people fared only after a short breaking–in and training period. Yosef Solomon was introduced with special pride to guests at the opening of the new diamond–cutting center in Beersheva in August 1959. Only ten weeks after Yosef started to learn the diamond cutting and polishing trade, up to IL180 a month, as much as an average worker earned after two years. His foreman at the factory was certain that Yosef would be taking home as much as IL400 a month within six months. A former table tennis champion in India, Yosef was eager to become a diamond–cutting champion!

Others, however, had to work harder. Take the case of Ezra Saul whose letter to me in March, 1964 conveys both his initial problems and adjustments that had to be made:

> "I have been preoccupied working night shifts and studying in an evening Ulpan. I am proud to say that I am so far the best student in the class. My father and brothers Saul and Reuben, are also in an evening Ulpan. My brother Mordecai, studying 41/2 hours every day for five months, completed Ulpan with flying colours, his teacher having awarded him a prize for being her best student … Ashkelon is a new city with a beautiful beach … still prominent are ruins of Crusader Walls, Roman and Greek antiquities, some dating to the time of biblical Samson. We do not want to live in Ashkelon where jobs are difficult to get, and most of people here hail from Morocco, Iraq, etc., are ill–mannered and disrespectful. Their European counterparts from Rumania and England, are refined and more educated. We attend a small synagogue (a srief [= tent] turned into one), but we miss Maghen David and Bethel of Calcutta …"

Some who made Aliya were disappointed, perhaps because they expected a bed of roses. For the most part, the migrants, like Judah and Sarah Ashkenazy and family, settled down after braving early hardships. Judah's first job was "to walk around Dimona with a rifle and 50 bullets … for 3 months. Then I got a job as a Shomer looking after unfinished buildings for 6 months. Then I worked in Kitan Textile Factory, one of the biggest in Israel, where my daughter Becky also is employed." Judah gave us the good news of Becky's marriage and that of their son Robert within

a month of each other. "Dear Rabbi, we want to tell you how happy we are that our children are married. We want to thank you for making it possible to bringing us here. It was the best thing that could happen to us ..." Another daughter, Flora, made Aliya with her husband and in–laws a short while later.

The Association of Indian Jews soon made their presence felt and received publicity in the highest official area of government. Monthly Rosh Hodesh meetings were arranged between President Yitshak Ben Zvi and the Association. At the Elul 1955 meeting at Beit Hanassi, the thirteenth in the series of monthly get–togethers, Ben Zvi commented: "It took 480 years from the time of the Exodus from Egypt to form one nation from the Twelve Tribes; it is our sacred resolve to create a single nation within the space of one generation from the nearly "seventy" tribes which have come to us here in Israel." The three strands of Indian Jewry — Bene Israel, Cochin and Baghdadi — were represented respectively by Daniel Solomon, Joseph Hye, and Meyer E. Musleah, each of whom spoke on the history and characteristics of their constituents. Many of the immigrants appeared in their traditional garb, some women came dressed in multi–colored saris and a few men appeared in flowing silk robes. A silver Kiddush cup, a gift from the Cochin community, was presented to the President.

In the first seven years of Indian Aliya, 5,000 or about 15% of India's pre–War population had migrated, with a potential of another 30,000. They had settled in all parts of the country, from Kfar Giladi to Eilat.

Over 150 years, Calcutta residents donated about 200 Sifrei Torah to local synagogues. As a child I recall some of these being packed from time to time in the courtyard of Maghen David, destined for Eretz Yisrael, Yemen, and other places in need for sacred scrolls. With migration from Calcutta in full swing, descendants of the deceased in whose names the scrolls were donated removed them to their new homes in England, Australia, Canada and the United States. For a while, Indian Government restrictions prevented the transfer of artifacts from India. Then, an understanding with the Jewish Agency on behalf of the Government of Israel made easy the release of unclaimed scrolls accompanying each group of immigrants to Israel. In September, 1960, I received the following letter from Mordecai Sopher, secretary of Kelly Yaakov Eyni synagogue in Kiryat Shemaryahu near Haifa. "... with great difficulty, we succeeded in building our synagogue like that of India. We have come to know of your kindness in helping to despatch some Sifrei Torah to Israel ... Your sending Sifrei Torah to us today is like sending them to yourself tomorrow, for we are sure you and all our brethren in India will be with us in our Indian synagogue in the near future. Then how happy you will be to see with your own eyes the Sifrei Torah that came from a temporary dwelling [India] to a permanent one in the Land of Israel, and more so to an Indian synagogue. We shall be highly obliged if you send us some Sifrei Torah in silver cases and parocheth, for which you will be rewarded by the Most High." In May, 1964, the Jewish Agency furnished me with a list of scrolls distributed among Israeli synagogues to date, among which was the Eyni congregation.

Name of Synagogue	Place	Source
Kelly Yaakov Eyni	Kiryat Shemaryahu	Indian
Bethel	Kfar Hasidim	Indian
Maghen David	Ashdod	Indian
Geuley Yisrael	Ramat Gan (4 Sefarim)	Iraqi
Harambam	Lod	Egyptian

Ohel Yitschak	Poret, Tel Mond	Tripolitanian
Ets Hachayim	Tel Mond	Moroccan
Zechor Avraham	Dimona	Moroccan
Shevet Achim	Jerusalem	Yemenite
Beit El	Eilat	Yemenite
Tsedek	Kiryat Ono	Iraqi
Torah Vaavoda	Kiryat Malachi	Moroccan
Matsmiach Yeshua	Lod	Sephardi
Ohel Moed	Katamon, Jerusalem	Sephardi
Abir Yaakov	Ashdod	Sephardi
David Hamelech	Katamon, Jerusalem	Iraqi
Ahavat Achim	Yaffo	Moroccan
Olei Maroko	Yoknean	Moroccan
Mercaz Shchunati	Beth Shean	
Harashbi	Haifa	
Ets Chayim	Dimona	
Ets Chayim	Kfar Hasidim	
	Bicura, Beit Shean	
Tnuat Hamoshavion	Tel Aviv	
Geulei Yisrael Le–olei Babel (4)	Ramat Gan	Iraqi
Sadek	Shikun Obdim, Kiryat Ono	Iraqi
David Hamelek	Rehov Happortim, Jerusalem	Iraqi
Tiferet Zion	Lod	Iraqi
Ohel Moed	Katamon, Jerusalem	Sephardi

Five scrolls, in addition, were being held by the Ministry of Religions for further instructions regarding their distribution; two required complex repairs; and one was beyond repair.

COMMUNITY ADMINISTRATION

Meantime, the affairs of the Calcutta community moved on apace. The Calcutta cemetery had about three thousand tombs, many with tablets whose inscriptions could barely be read. A man once told me that after an hour's search for a relative's grave he had to give up and return home without visiting it. My father, as head of the Burial Board, proposed that each tomb be numbered and a visible plate be attached to each. To implement this plan, a survey was undertaken and a blueprint prepared. Each and every grave was given a number according to zones and blocks. Besides the facility the plan afforded locating old graves, it helped me in researching material for my history of Calcutta Jewry. I went through the majority of the graves in the cemetery and catalogued the names in alphabetical order. I made it available to every purchaser of my book, 'On the Banks of the Ganga: The Sojourn of Jews in Calcutta,' published by Christopher Publishing House, North Quincy, Massachusetts, in 1973.

I conducted the High Holyday services in 1955 at Maghen David Synagogue, filling in for the Hazzan David J. Cohen who had an accident, incapacitating him. It was precursory to my taking over as Hazzan three years later and for the following few years when the reverend gentleman and his family made Aliya. My father's brother, Elias Hyam Musleah, assisted me on High Holydays.

Midway through my ministry in Calcutta, I began conducting more of the administration of local institutions. The day–to–day affairs of the Jewish Girls' School, including the Girls' Hostel, coincided with plans for a new building, and The Oseh Haised, whose welfare activities with the impoverished sick, needed close, daily attention.

As Rabbi, I piloted the religious program for the foundation–stone ceremony for the new school building in the summer of 1956. Why, it may be asked, was a new building necessary in the wake of Jewish emigration from Calcutta? One, the residential center of gravity had shifted south, many Jewish families then began living in the vicinity of Park Street. Two, the neighborhood where the old building stood became predominantly a business area, and increasingly less congenial with the influx of boys from another school on the same street. And three, the Postal Department showed much interest in buying the property.

Held on the lawn of 63, Park Street, the School's new address, the celebration was a double Simha for an institution offering Jewish and secular education for seventy–five years, preparing itself for a further term of service to the community, Jewish and general.

On the neatly decorated dais were: The Inspector of Anglo–Indian Schools, a vestige of British administration days, who inspected, for educational excellence, schools with the medium of English; members of the School's managing committee; Rahma M. Luddy, Principal, and representatives of former students.

The School's choir began the proceedings with the singing of Psalm 118:1–4, followed by my reciting Psalms 121, 127, and 128, and an address by the President of the Board, D.J. Cohen. Sara Curlender, an outstanding figure in Calcutta both in her own right and that of her family, then laid the foundation stone. Her father, the Reverend E.M.D. Cohen, who steered the destinies of the School for over thirty years, delivered the main prayer when David Ezra (later, Sir) laid the corner stone at 8, Pollock Street, the former building, thirty years before. Her husband, Aaron Curlender, reputed for his generosity and benevolence, created trust funds for five local Jewish institutions. So it was most fitting for Sara Curlender to have been the honoree. The following were placed in a bottle deposited in the Lower Stone: The Humash (Five Books of Moses), specimens of three metals used in Biblical times — gold, silver and copper, one piece each of the current coins of India, and a copy of the day's program dated 14th Ab 5716 — 22nd July, 1956. Holding the bottle, Mrs. Curlender recited the שהחיינו, and I recited the last verse of Psalm 90: 'May the favor of the Lord God be upon us, let the work of our hands prosper, O prosper the work of our hands.' As the bottle was being lowered and set in place, the School choir sang Psalm 118:21–25, 'I praise You, for You have answered me, and have become my deliverance. The stone, which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing, it is marvelous in our sight. This is the day that the Lord has made, let us exult and rejoice on it.'

I read the notice that appeared in E.M.D. Cohen's Hebrew–Arabic weekly, Paerah, dated 7th January, 1881, announcing the establishment of a school, and publicizing the immediate cause:

> "... it was only a few days ago that it came to [our] knowledge that some of the [Christian] Religious Missions ... to which our co–religionists were sending their children, were using the most deplorable means to undermine the Faith of our forefathers, and to entice our children whom we had entrusted to them from that Faith."
>
> (signed) Moses d'J. Abeasis Moses Meyohas"

I offered a prayer, part of which was taken from the prayer of Rev. E.M.D/Cohen, prepared for a similar occasion in 1926.

Marie Mordecai addressed the gathering on behalf of the ex–girl students, and Jeffrey Isaac, for the ex–boy students, some of whose remarks are here mentioned:

> "We the old boys of the Jewish Girls' School are deeply grateful to this institution. It seems not so long ago that I left the School, a very short boy in very short pants, armed with what was probably the best — and I do not exaggerate — I repeat, the best, primary education then available in Calcutta. It was with this knowledge that we dared the hazards of education in a much larger male institution. Being educated in a girls' school was not without its drawbacks, however, and I remember shocking several masters and Jesuit fathers by addressing them as 'Miss" for months afterwards! I remember, too, that as a boy, it was rather embarrassing to admit that one had migrated from the Jewish Girls' School, although the embarrassment was not unmixed — it had a certain amount of pride ... Knowledge was always imparted to us with a personal touch and a care that was almost maternal — more so in my case, as I had to pass through two aunts and a mother before I eventually left the School!
>
> "I would like to take this opportunity of saying a special word of praise for the School principal, Miss Luddy. She has been — and I am sure none of the committee members will grudge her this — the most important single force in the recent history of the establishment. Apart from devoting many years of her life to J.G.S., she had always set and maintained the very highest standard for which the School is justly renowned ... We cherish the hope that from the portals of this new structure there shall emerge a host of new pupils who will carry into life the worthy ideals of the School motto: "Not Failure But Low Aim Is Crime"



Figure 114. Dad Conducting a Wedding.
Dad conducting a Calcutta wedding. J. R. Jacob, witness with ENM reading the Ketubah.



Figure 115. Enacting "The First-Born" and "Out of Egypt".

Enacting "The Firstborn" (above) & "Out of Egypt" in Calcutta in aid of a children's vacation camp.

(Above, l to r) Marina Sopher, Maurice Morris, Haskel David, Mavis Morris, Harry Morris.

(Below) "Egyptians" argue with "Israelites" in "Pharaoh's" presence.





Figure 116. Laying the Foundation Stone

Laying foundation stone of new Jewish Girls' School building, the school choir singing. (l to r)

Committee members: ENM, Sara Curlender, Bernard V. Jacob, D. J. Cohen, Marie Mordecai, Maurice Jonah.



Figure 117. Jewish Girls' School Prize Day.

(l to r) Joseph Curlender, Mozelle Curlender, Margaret Musleah, Sara Curlender, ENM, the presiding officer and his wife, Bernard V. Jacob, Diana Meyer.

Second row, right, Aunts Hannah and Rachel with Uncle Elias.

CHAPTER 13

RABBINICAL SERVICES ON AN ALL–INDIA AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

ALL–FAITHS PRAYER MEETING

On Republic Day, January 26, each year, a national holiday, I represented the Jewish community at an *All–Faiths Prayer Meeting* at Raj Bhavan. I shared the platform with my former Professor of Economics, John Kellas, who said the Christian prayers, as well as representatives of Moslem, Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh clergymen, who chanted from their sacred texts. In 1964, however, the meeting took place at Gandhi Ghat, Barrackpore, a few miles from Center City, Calcutta, to honor the memory of Mahatma Gandhi, who was assassinated January 30, 1948. 'Bhajans' [=musical interludes] were played and 'Ramdhun,' a favorite song of Gandhi, was sung, as wreaths were laid at a spot where part of his ashes are interred. Under the cantilever pandal, ritual spinning of simple garments, which Gandhi donned was done simultaneously. Later that day, a wreath was laid at Gandhi's statue at the corner of Park Street and Chowringhee, while two minutes silence was observe to commemorate all martyrs in the battle for Indian independence while guns were fired from an old fort in Calcutta.

DR. DAVID DE SOLA POOL IN CALCUTTA

In January 1956, I had the honor of welcoming to Calcutta, *Rabbi Dr. David de Sola Pool* and his wife Tamar in a sort of return reception for my stay at his New York congregation and their home almost a decade previously. The Rabbi was one of the foremost spiritual leaders in America, having held the office of President of the New York Board of Rabbis and of the Synagogue Council of America. But the capacity in which he earned the greatest distinction was, from 1907, as Rabbi of Congregation Shearith Israel, the oldest Jewish house of worship in the United States.

Born in London, England in 1885 and ordained at Jews' College, Dr Pool received his PhD degree in Berlin and came to his New York Congregation as Associate Rabbi. In 1954, the American Jewish community had occasion for a double celebration — it was the 300th anniversary of the founding of the first Jewish congregation in America and Dr. Pool's 70th birthday. Among those who paid tribute to him were President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt.

Members of the community present at Rabbi Pool's address were acquainted with his Sephardic ancestry, his authorship of year–round prayerbooks, and his latest book, An Old Faith in the New World." But most interesting was the Rabbi's reference to Rabbi David J. Seligson. It was Dr. Pool, in his capacity as head of the Jewish Welfare Board, deputed to provide chaplains for Jewish servicemen during World War II, who posted Rabbi Seligson in the China–Burma–India sector of military operations. And it was the dual team of Seligson and Pool that chose the Jewish Theological Seminary for my rabbinical training!

UNITED NATIONS DAY

The tenth anniversary of the *United Nations* called for a special celebration in October 1956 with the cooperation of the Jewish Women's League. Beginning with a prayer service at Maghen David Synagogue, I had school children read prayers and Bible passages to impress upon them the importance of the world organization in promoting and strengthening the cause of peace. My remarks reflected that sentiment, underscoring the Jewish passion for peace through the ages. Following the service, a reception was held at 2, Albert Road, the residence of Nissim B.N. Elias, where speakers dwelt on the creation and the scope of the U.N. There, too, the girls and boys of the Jewish Girls' and Elias Meyer Schools actively participated with appropriate recitations and songs.

THE JEWISH WELFARE ASSOCIATION, NEW DELHI

The Jewish Welfare Association, Delhi, a non–political body for social, cultural and religious purposes, in existence since 1949, includes Jews from many countries all over the world. Delhi, the capital of India, has grown to assume international importance. Jews of India, many on the staff of the Government, as well as from overseas attached to foreign embassies, live in this metropolis. Distinguished visitors frequent Delhi, and its Jewish community frequently hosts dignitaries on important national and international occasions.

The Association arranges religious services the year round, and arranges Kosher and other religious facilities from Bombay. The Judah Meyer Hall, dedicated in 1957, serves as a synagogue and school as well as for social gatherings. As the only Rabbi in India at the time, I sent a prayer read out at the opening ceremony:

> "With genuine pleasure I send you hearty felicitations on the occasion of the inauguration of your new Community Hall. It is a unique privilege for me as Rabbi to participate, in however small a way, in the conclusion of the first stage of your great spiritual endeavour — the dedication of your holy edifice to the service of God and man. I am disappointed that I could not celebrate this outstanding Simha personally. You may be assured, however, of the prayers, good wishes and cooperation of your fellow Jews in Calcutta who look keenly toward your significant progress in building a spiritual centre for your small but energetic community.
>
> "Yours is a group of co–religionists in India's capital city destined to play an important role in the future of this country. We Jews have always experienced the goodwill and friendliness of not only the Government of India but also the fellow–feeling of its people. The close ties between the Jew and the land of India have existed since Biblical days. It is left to our present–day Jewish communities to forge this relationship ahead, bringing in its wake a clearer realisation of the common tasks in the service of democracy and humanity shared by the great Indian and Jewish peoples.

"When the structure of the sanctuary was being planned in the wilderness, the Israelites were given the prescription for building the Ark, the holiest part in our places of worship. The Bible says that the Cherubim or angels were to be designed on the golden cover that was placed upon it, "the Cherubim shall have their wings spread out above with faces one toward each other." [Exodus 25:20] In this passage we have a clue to two essential requisites to human behaviour. One, we should always look upward and acknowledge God as the Source of all blessings, giving us inspiration in the attainment of our ideals, and comfort in the time of our sorrow. Through prayer, we can experience the true joy of intimacy with the Almighty, an honourable privilege of all living.

"Second, relates to our duties to each other. One of the great boons of the human species over that of the animal is the consciousness of our obligation to our fellow human beings. Occasionally we may suffer lapses in our responsibility, but if we constantly remind ourselves of the overwhelming gaps in human relationships, we will come to grips with the urgent need for a kind word or a charitable deed.

"Having completed this physical structure we know that, given the material and the finance, the pillars made of brick and mortar are easy to build. Much more difficult to construct and maintain are the spiritual pillars of our benign relationship with God and our satisfactory dealings with humans."

INSTALLING RABBI HUGO GRYN IN BOMBAY

Being the only rabbi in India when it came to inducting a colleague in a pulpit, my services were invited. When *Rabbi Hugo Gryn* accepted the call to one of Bombay's Bene Israel congregations in August 1957, he asked me to install him. Two questions of varying degrees had to be considered — the inauguration was set for two weeks before Rosh Hashana, and, of greater consequence, the Jewish Association of Calcutta, officially under the guidance of the Orthodox rabbinate of Britain, did not view with favor my conducting religious services for a rabbi of the Liberal persuasion. I would not be deterred either by the pressures of the calendar or the restraints of political rivalry. I consented to participate in, what I considered, an historic occasion. Here follows my induction sermon:

"It is indeed a high honour to participate in this ceremony today. This occasion is of great significance not only for the local community but for all of Indian Jewry. For it is the first time that an installation ceremony is being held for a Rabbi in India. Strange to say, I did not have the good fortune to be inducted as Rabbi in Calcutta because there was no one to perform the sacred task I have been assigned to do today. Let me greet you on behalf of all of Indian Jewry: שָׁלוֹם שָׁלוֹם לָרָחוֹק וְלַקָּרוֹב 'A blessed peace be upon all of you who hail from both far and near.'

"My sense of satisfaction is heightened by the knowledge that a colleague has joined me in the service of Judaism in India. Would that there be more to express their religious idealism and apply them in practical situations! But we must face the hard facts that there are few volunteers in the cause of Judaism, particularly in this part of the world.

"These days, Religion is living a precarious existence. The Sovereign of the Universe has been dethroned. Man's hatred for his fellow, his forgetfulness that we are all created in God's image, tend to break down the laws of society. Human decline in the efficacy of

prayer and growing enthusiasm for things material, are leading people further away from the worship of God. in the words of the ancient Jewish mystics, the four letters of God's Name have been divided asunder into two parts. It is up to us to put God back on His throne and bring together the first two letters of His Name, the י"ה, with the second two letters of His Name, the ו"ה. In other words, to restore Him to the traditional place of omnipotence and omniscience, loving kindness and mercy.

"There is an apt comment by a Rabbi in the Midrash. Rabbi Levi notes that, when God spoke to Abraham, He said: לֶךְ לְךָ. The word לֶךְ meaning 'Go,' would have been enough. The second word לְךָ meaning 'you' is superfluous. The Rabbi observes that this phrase is used twice when God addresses Abraham — once, when Abraham is ordered to leave his parents' home, לֶךְ לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ 'Go forth *from* your native land,' And the second time, לֶךְ לְךָ אֶל אֶרֶץ הַמּוֹרִיָּה 'Take your son, Isaac, and go *to* the land of Moriah.'

Rabbi Levi asks: 'which of the two commands is more important?' From the discussion that follows we see that one is as important as the other.

"We draw a vital lesson from this rabbinic passage. In the life of individuals as well as nations, a time for change often arrives. When it comes, we too, like Abraham of old, must hear both callings — we must know *from what* we want to depart, and *to what* we wish to go.

"I have tried to bring out thus far from what this community should want to depart, and it is evident, now that you have Rabbi Gryn, to what you should wish to go. Take your cue from the reported behavior of the angels in God's presence, we read in the morning prayers: כֻּלָּם אֲהוּבִים 'all of them are beloved one of another,' like them, there should be a spirit of friendship and mutual respect among your members. כֻּלָּם בְּרוּרִים 'they all have a sense of clarity,' like them you should have clearly defined goals you wish to pursue. Make it as easy as possible for you to be understood. כֻּלָּם גִּבּוֹרִים 'all of them are mighty.' If you are sure about the clarity and rightness of your convictions, present them fearlessly and with courage. כֻּלָּם קְדוֹשִׁים 'all of them are holy,' any worthwhile way of life should be of consecration to a cause. Your most difficult task will be to devote yourselves wholeheartedly to the sacred cause of Judaism, so that you might be uplifted from the mundane to the uncommon. כֻּלָּם עוֹמְדִים בָּרוּם עוֹלָם 'all of them stand in the heights of the universe,' your spiritual aspirations must be set heavenward, that is, you must try to get yourselves out of those human weaknesses which hinder us from bringing out the best in ourselves. And finally, וּמַשְׁמִיעִים בְּיִרְאָה יַחַד בְּקוֹל דִּבְרֵי אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים 'All of them together utter aloud the words of the Living God.' Nothing should stand in the way of your unity. Unity is strength. If you wish to make significant progress, you will go hand in hand with your Rabbi to the spiritual goals you have set for yourselves.

"And now the next step. The people of Israel by themselves, by their labour and contributions, could not alone build the Tabernacle. They required the guidance of Moses and the skill and supervision of Bezalel. Likewise, the contributions, both material and spiritual made by members of this congregation, are not enough of themselves. You require the expert guidance of a leader in Israel. By your constant labours and dedication, you have made possible the services of Rabbi Gryn who has undertaken an assignment which requires courage, initiative and resourcefulness. May I address a few words to him.

Rabbi Gryn, that you have accepted this pulpit is indeed commendable. Your mission in Bombay will be difficult; it will tax your energies and your spiritual resources, but, with God's help and the cooperation of this congregation, you will be very successful. Your duties may be divided into three parts, and for each of these spheres, there are words of wisdom from the Bible and Rabbinic literature. It is told that six steps led to King Solomon's throne. As he ascended each step, his officers exhorted him with an ethical command from the Torah. Rabbi Gryn, I too have a word of advice about each of your three spheres of activity.

"First, the important role of preaching. Your sermons must have, in the language of the prayerbookשָׂפָה בְּרוּרָה בִּנְעִימָה קְדוּשָׁה clear phraseology, a pleasant tone, and sacred themes.

"Second, the indispensable sphere of *community relationships* . You have the dictum of Shammai: הֱוֵי מְקַבֵּל אֶת כׇּל הָאָדָם בְּסֵבֶר פָּנִים יָפוֹת 'Receive everyone with a pleasant disposition,' and of Hillel: הֱוֵי מִתַּלְמִידָיו שֶׁל אַהֲרֹן אוֹהֵב שָׁלוֹם וְרוֹדֵף שָׁלוֹם 'Be of the students of Aaron, love peace and pursue peace.' I do not have to remind you of the High Priest leaving the Temple with a group of people following him. Soon. Shmaiah and Avtalyon, two great Rabbis who were converts to Judaism, approach. The people left following the High Priest and followed the Rabbis. The insulted High Priest showed his indignation by pointing out aloud the humble origin of the two scholars. In response the Rabbis said: 'We, children of the heathen, can go in peace because we do what Aaron, the High Priest, did, we love and pursue peace; but you, child of Aaron can have no peace because you fail to do what Aaron did.' People will not follow blindly those who bear titles. They will follow those whose titles reflect worthiness, who are the embodiment of the ideals of learning and peace which have characterized the sacred office of the rabbinate throughout the ages.

"Your third function is that of *teaching*. Whatever you teach, let it be לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם or in the words of the Talmud, אֶחָד הַמַּרְבֶּה וְאֶחָד הַמַּמְעִיט וּבִלְבָד שֶׁיְּכַוֵּן אֶת לִבּוֹ לַשָּׁמַיִם Whether you teach much or little, the important thing is that you direct you heart Heavenward.

Your rabbinic task is symbolized by the flag of the Tribe of Judah: מַפָּה שֶׁל יְהוּדָה דְּמוּתוֹ כְּמִין שָׁמַיִם וּמְצָיָר עָלָיו אַרְיֵה 'The flag of Judah — its color was the color of Heaven, and upon the Heavenly background was impressed the image of the lion. The Heavenly color symbolized the Heavenly ideals and goals. In striving to teach these ideals, the leader aspires to have God's kingdom lived on earth. At the same time, with the courage of the lion, he translates these ideals into human terms, into practical ways.

"I cannot resist giving you part of a charge to a minister given by Hermann Adler, late Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, in 1905. which summarizes all I have said today. ' It will be your high privilege henceforth to bring home the message of Judaism to the hearts and minds of your congregants, to show forth its reasonableness, its necessity, its justice, and its beauty, by appealing to every faculty of mind and spirit with which God has endowed them. You have to deal with the sublime doctrines of our faith, and also with the simplest, plainest, duties of the family, the home, the counting house, and the workshop. You have to exhort, to plead, to touch the heart and emotions. But above all, you must preach by your life, by your wholehearted devotion to your congregation, your faith and your God.'

"Friends! No temple was possible without first the blessing of God and then the joint efforts of Moses, Bezalel and his fellow artisans, and also the goodwill and large hearts of the people of Israel. Your Temple in Bombay will be built only if you give Rabbi Gryn and the architects, that is, the officers of this congregation, your wholehearted cooperation, and with the choicest blessings of the Almighty, you cannot but succeed and prosper. Amen."

IN AID OF AN ANTI–NUCLEAR MOVEMENT – BRAHMO SAMAJ

When nuclear competitiveness became rife, and China, India's most powerful neighbor that swallowed up Tibet's independence, joined the nuclear club, a strong anti–nuclear movement unfolded in various parts of India. In the late 1950's, The Brahmo Samaj, a peace–loving society, sponsored a convention of all religions in Calcutta to which I, representing the Jewish community, was invited to participate in the plenary sessions and serve on the committee to draft a resolution for submission to national and world bodies. Here is an excerpt of the invitation:

"The human race acknowledges science as the developer of knowledge so long as that enlightenment is beneficial to mankind and are harnessed to human welfare. But, when spurred by selfish ambition and blinded by suspicion and hatred, and misapplied so as to bring about deformity and large–scale destruction, religion finds itself at variance with such misuse of scientific achievements. Consequently, it behoves Religion to voice its protest against the continuance of these crimes against humanity.

"Of paramount importance for the welfare of the human race is moral control over the application of scientific discoveries. Social and religious organisations in every country should try to bring moral pressure on their governments against the continuance of destructive tests of nuclear weapons. India has proposed a resolution to that effect for United Nations' consideration.

"From Gautama Buddha to Mahatma Gandhi, India has been the cradle of Ahimsa [non–violence]. Shall this spirit not rise again against yet another assault on humanity?

"The Brahmo Samaj now proposes to hold an "Anti–Nuclear Weapons Convention of All Religions" in Calcutta February 28 to March 2, 1958 to express our feelings of horror against nuclear tests, and to appeal to the nations concerned for immediate and unconditional cessation of such tests.

"We request you to take part in this venture and send a delegate to be a member of the Drafting Committee to work on an appropriate resolution. We earnestly hope that we can count on your full co–operation to make the Convention a success."

On Sunday morning, March 2nd, I delivered these remarks at the Calcutta University Institute Hall.

"The story of the creation of the world is simply given in the Jewish Bible. 'The Lord said, Let there be, and there was.' Thus the world came into being by the easiest expression of the Divine will. Jewish tradition, however, sees in the event a more complex undertaking. According to our Sages, before our world was brought about, 'God created many worlds and destroyed them, one after another, until finally our world appeared. Again and again God tried to fashion a world that could endure, but it soon came to naught. What was the cause of the failure of those worlds and the success of ours? ask our Sages. They give an illustration: 'When a human king wants to build a palace, he does not undertake it in a haphazard way. He consults an architect who, too, does not follow the fancy of his mind but studied plans and designs, and builds according to specified, proven and inviolable laws. So too God. When He thought of creating this world of ours, He knew that He had to follow certain laws and plans. He brought into being the moral laws and fashioned the world on their foundations.

"But soon. the Bible says, 'The earth was full of violence.' Men forgot the moral basis on which the world was founded. When corruption and murder became the rule of life, the universe could not endure and the flood of destruction almost erased the world again. The rainbow, full of promise, forecast a colorful future, echoed by Abraham with a warning: 'Either you live according to the moral law or I must turn this world into void and nothingness.'

"The foregoing is a allegorical and symbolic interpretation of the Jewish concept of the world. The Jew considers the creation of our world a sacred act brought about by Divine ingenuity. The most significant and vital characteristic of our world is its moral foundations. The moral law is the supreme law. Whenever the world became 'full of violence' its very existence was in jeopardy. The Nazis, for instance, were responsible for bringing civilization close to its end. When their immoral world caved in, burying their nefarious schemes with them, a rainbow appeared on the international horizon — the United Nations — holding out a great future of cooperation and goodwill.

"The purpose of this convention is to place the warning sounded by the patriarch Abraham squarely before the world: 'Either you live according to the moral law or the world will be turned into void and nothingness.'

"The pace of nuclear research and the subsequent manufacturing of atomic weapons has been rapid, ever since that fateful day in August 1945 when the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Such preoccupation with disclosing and utilizing Nature's destructive potential seems to all of us here assembled a horrible manifestation of man's compulsive determination to end life here on earth. It is for this reason that there is a growing demand for the discontinuance of nuclear tests as a prelude to the outlawing of all atomic weapons, and the ultimate long–range fulfillment of the dream of the Jewish prophets: The nations talk peace but prepare for war, thus undermining the moral foundations of the world.

"With a voice united with other religions, Judaism unequivocally supports the sponsors of this conference in its energetic endeavors for the complete stoppage of the manufacturing of nuclear weapons and their tests. With the help of the Almighty, our combined efforts will succeed."

The following resolution, drafted by the committee, was unanimously passed at the final plenary session:

"While approving the development and use of nuclear science for peaceful endeavours, and blessing scientific research for such purposes, and, at the same time, realising the gravity of the danger posed by nuclear weapons to present and future generations, WE, HINDUS, BUDDISTS, JAINS, MUSLIMS, CHRISTIANS, JEWS, SIKHS, ZOROASTRIANS AND OTHERS assembled at this ANTI–NUCLEAR WEAPON CONVENTION OF ALL RELIGIONS hereby strongly disapprove the use or manufacture of such weapons or their test explosions, and in the name of the noble religious sentiments of Love, Mercy and Compassion, appeal to all men and women of goodwill in India and all over the world to join us in strong condemnation of these horrible instruments of destruction, and to persuade political leaders and scientific workers to desist from carrying out nuclear test explosions ..."

WORKING WITH THEOSOPHISTS

A few months later, I was invited to a meeting of The Bengal Theosophical Federation to study its philosophy and religious thought which claim special insight into the Divine nature and His relationship with human beings (from the Greek for God and Sophia, wisdom). I came away with an understanding of one of its main teachings that was basic also to Judaism — the concept of brotherhood. Why do Theosophists make so much of brotherhood? Because they believe that the primary fault of human beings is 'the illusion of separateness.' From this illusion springs all pain and sorrow. So, to mend this enigma, join the movement of breaking down barriers created by spites, envies, and man's inhumanity to man. Without at least attempting to diminish these vexed questions, nothing constructive can be obtained. I agreed to lead a session of study and prayer on June 4, 1958, on universalism and concord of the human race from the Jewish point of view.

"First, the characteristic of Jewish worship. The Jewish people started their separate existence when they abandoned polytheism, that is, the worship of many gods, guided by the patriarch, Abraham. Jewish tradition tells how Abraham, raised in a idol–worshiping family and society, deduced that icons should not be considered gods. Abraham asked his father, Terah, 'Who created the world and everyone and everything in it?' Terah took his son to the hall of the idols and, bowing down to the stone assemblage, he said: 'Here are

the creators of the earth.' Abraham went to his mother, had her prepare a meal of tasty meat, and offered it to the idols. Not one of them stirred — there was no voice, no hearing, no motion, and no expressed desire to eat. So Abraham concluded: 'Alas that my father and his generation serve these idols of wood and stone, which have mouths without speech, eyes without sight, ears without hearing, hands without feeling, and legs without motion!

"Abraham then took a hatchet and broke all his father's gods and placed the hatchet in the hand of the biggest god, and left just as Terah entered the hall. Terah: 'What is this mischief you have done?' Abraham: 'As I placed their meal before them, they all stretched out their hands to eat before the big one had served himself. This one, enraged, took the hatchet and broke them all. See, the hatchet is still in his hands!'

Terah turned against his son in anger: 'You lie to me. Is there spirit or power in these gods to do what you have told me? Are they not wood and stone? And have I not myself made them?' Abraham answered: 'How then can you serve these idols in whom there is no power to do anything? Can they deliver you? Do they hear your prayers?' Abraham then took the hatchet and broke the big idol.

"Thus did Abraham, Father of the belief in the ONE GOD, introduce monotheism into the world, which today is the way most of the civilized world worship. By that separation, religious union was brought about in Christianity and Islam. And what of Hinduism? Is it polytheistic? Not if we understand Hindu philosophy truly. Many portions of the Vedic literature give the impression of a belief in HENOTHEISM [Greek Heis=one, Theos=God], the belief of One God without denying the existence of other gods, that is, the belief in a Supreme God as well as the various manifestations of that God, such as wealth, wisdom, power, fire, etc. So that, when a Hindu worships any of these aspects of the Supreme Being, he is but serving the Supreme One Himself. And, when the Zoroastrian believes in the eternal struggle between Mazda and his opponent, Ahriman, that theology may, on the surface, be Dualism, but may also be monotheism of sorts, if the victor is believed ultimately to be the good Mazda. I conclude, therefore, that almost all believers in God acknowledge these teachings of Judaism:

"God is the Source of Love, who treats everyone with love.

"God is the Source of Justice, who punishes us for our sins.

"God mercifully forgives us for doing evil.

"God does not allow sin to go unpunished.

"God answers our prayers.

"It is possible to know God intimately.

"God is beyond human understanding.

"How do we experience God? Basically, through our observations of Nature, both scientifically and personally. A scientist, for example, comes very close to feeling God in the laboratory. The story is told of a student who walked into the lab of Pierre Curie.

Seeing him bending low, but not observing the microscope before him, the student excused himself, saying he had not meant to interrupt his teacher's prayer. Dr. Curie replied that he was indeed praying, and added: 'All science, research and study, is prayer, a prayer that God will reveal His eternal secrets to us. God did not make all His revelations in the past to prophets, priests, preachers, poets, musicians and scientists. There is beauty in God's universe, and He reveals that part of His nature through poets. There is melody, rhythm and order in His universe, and He reveals that to musicians. There is kindness, sacrifice and love in the universe, and He reveals that to teachers, children, and kindly men and women.'

"We can experience God through man–made beauty, too. When we stand before an exquisite painting, or listen to uplifting music, recognizing that there is a spiritual Power within man which makes him the only form of life on earth that shares that beauty with the Almighty, we enjoy an emotional experience that brings us very close to God. Thus far the concepts of God which Judaism shares with other faiths, making a common Theosophy possible.

"Next, the leading question of brotherhood. [I felt I had to clarify the much misunderstood concept of the chosen people which could set Jewish groups apart from other thinking persons.] The function of being chosen is to serve as ground for the life of 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation,' a platform for attainment of a high standard of morality by regulation and statute. For instance, Deuteronomy 15:7–10, 'If there is a needy person among you ... do not harden your heart and shut your hand against him. Rather you must open your hand and lend him sufficient for whatever he needs ... give to him readily and have no regrets when you do so, for in return the Lord your God will bless you in all your undertakings.' The nineteenth chapter of Leviticus is a miniature of the Ten Commandments formulating the Golden Rule: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' And then: 'The wages of a laborer shall not remain with you until morning. You shall not insult the deaf, or place a stumbling block before the blind. You shall not render an unfair decision: Do not favour the poor or show deference to the rich; judge your neighbor fairly. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your kinsfolk.'[1]

"Over the years, some Jews felt the concept of being chosen was license for vaunt and boast until prophets like Amos, eighth century B.C.E., reminded them: 'You only have I loved of all the nations of the earth, so I will judge you more strictly.' Being chosen implies duties and obligations, not privileges.

"Amos broke ground for a broader appreciation of the universal outlook of the Jewish people. He was followed closely by Isaiah whose idea of international peace may well form the cornerstone of the United Nations (2:2–4). In describing the close proximity to humankind, the Prophets took recourse to their deepest personal experience — the Fatherhood of God. Malachi's unforgettable words (2:10): 'Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why then do we break faith with one another?' In this universal brotherhood lies Judaism's unique contribution to world civilization

1. Verses 13-18

"Two Jewish Sages were in disagreement about the most fundamental of all principles in the Torah. Rabbi Akiba: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' His colleague, Ben Azzai countered: 'This is the record of Adam's line. — When God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.'[2] Universal fellow feeling is here proclaimed as the highest standard of human relationships. Ben Azzai based his ideal doctrine on the notion that human beings are descended from a common ancestor, and so are bound by a kinship of a common origin. They also share an inestimable privilege of having been created in the image of God.

"The story is told of how Hillel the Elder answered the request of a gentile who wished to be taught Judaism while he stood on one foot. Hillel replied: 'What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. The rest is commentary. Go, study.' A Talmudic formulation of the Golden Rule.

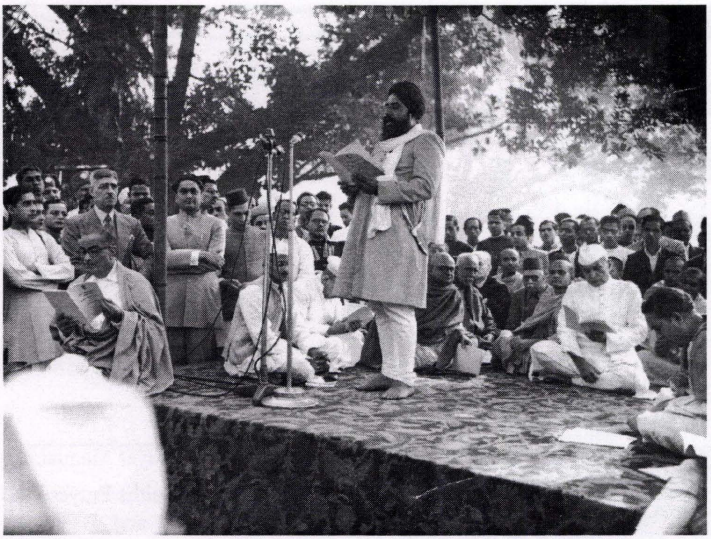
"No better expression of universalism is the rabbinic saying: 'The righteous of all people have a share in the world to come, a compensation for those required to observe but seven laws of the Torah — Refrain from Idolatry, Incest, Murder, Profanation of God's name, Injustice, Robbery, and Cruelty to animals.' Another striking statement: 'The righteous of all peoples are priests of God.' Divine service — the betterment of human beings — is open to all.

Finally, the synagogue, the Jewish House of Prayer, is a venue for all peoples to call upon God's name. And so is this place, where right–thinking people of all faiths have convened in study and prayer, let us pray: 'God of all peoples! Give us peace. Teach us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Teach us to understand and be just to them. Guide us in paths of peace, that we may serve our country in loyalty and brotherhood. Bring close the time when all nations shall beat their swords into plowshares, and live together in unity and peace. And so we hope in You, Lord our God, soon to see Your splendor, sweeping idolatry away, so that false gods will be utterly destroyed, perfecting earth by Your kingship, so that all mankind will invoke Your name. Then all who live will know that to You every knee must bend, every tongue pledge loyalty. To You, Lord, may all bow in worship, may they give honor to Your glory. May everyone accept the rule of Your kingship. Reign over all soon and for all time. Sovereignty is Yours in glory, now and forever. Thus is it written in Your Teachings, 'The Lord reigns forever and ever.' Such is the assurance of Your prophet Zechariah: 'The Lord shall be acknowledged King of all the earth. On that day the Lord shall be One and His name One.' Amen.

CHAPLAIN TO PRISONS' DIRECTORATE

During my stay in Calcutta, I served as Chaplain to the Prisons' Directorate in the State of West Bengal which covered the Presidency Jail in Alipore, a suburb of Calcutta. One year, I volunteered on the committee to organize the annual sports for the inmates held at the Jails' Sports Ground in Alipore.

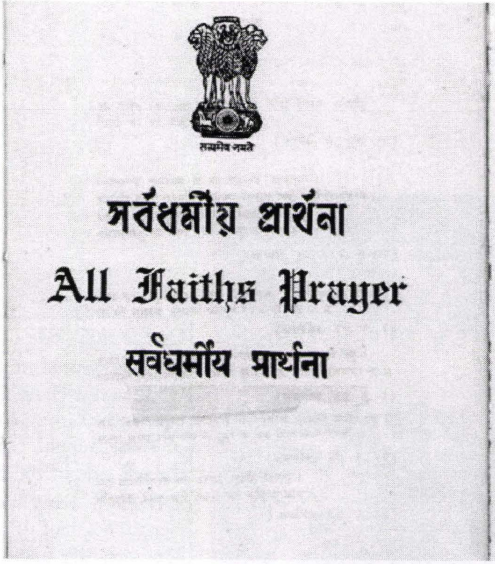
2. Genesis 5:1



On the right side of the dais, seated, in full white and a Gandhi cap, is the Governor of West Bengal. On the left side of the dais is Dr B. C. Roy, West Bengal's Chief Minister. My uncle Elias stands behind Dr Roy.

Figure 118. All-Faiths' Prayer Meeting.

Participating: Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh (in the picture), Jewish, Islam, Christian, & Parsee. Held on Republic Day, January 26 as well as on anniversaries of the deaths of Mahatma Gandhi & Jawaharlal Nehru. Earlier, David Raymond (partially covered by the reader) represented the Jewish community.

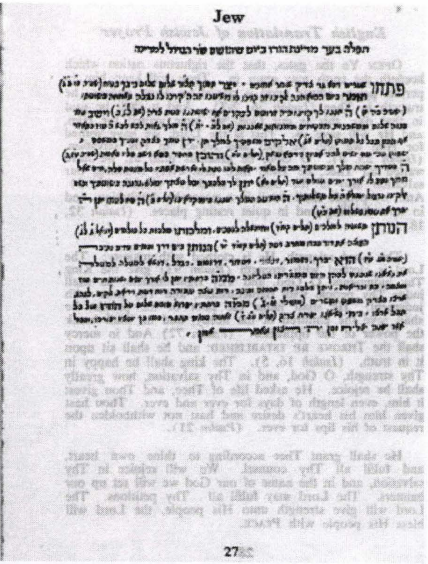


सत्यमेव जयते

सर्वधर्मीय प्रार्थना

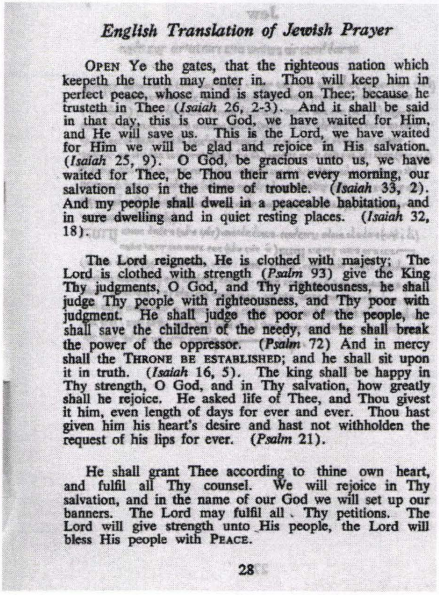
All Faiths Prayer

सर्वधर्मीय प्रार्थना



Jew

27



English Translation of Jewish Prayer

OPEN Ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in. Thou will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee (*Isaiah* 26, 2-3). And it shall be said in that day, this is our God, we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord, we have waited for Him we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation. (*Isaiah* 25, 9). O God, be gracious unto us, we have waited for Thee, be Thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble. (*Isaiah* 33, 2). And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwelling and in quiet resting places. (*Isaiah* 32, 18).

The Lord reigneth, He is clothed with majesty; The Lord is clothed with strength (*Psalm* 93) give the King Thy judgments, O God, and Thy righteousness, he shall judge Thy people with righteousness, and Thy poor with judgment. He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and he shall break the power of the oppressor. (*Psalm* 72) And in mercy shall the THRONE BE ESTABLISHED; and he shall sit upon it in truth. (*Isaiah* 16, 5). The king shall be happy in Thy strength, O God, and in Thy salvation, how greatly shall he rejoice. He asked life of Thee, and Thou givest it him, even length of days for ever and ever. Thou hast given him his heart's desire and hast not withholden the request of his lips for ever. (*Psalm* 21).

He shall grant Thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all Thy counsel. We will rejoice in Thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners. The Lord may fulfil all Thy petitions. The Lord will give strength unto His people, the Lord will bless His people with PEACE.

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Figure 119. All-Faiths' Prayer Manual.

The booklet used at All Faiths Prayer meetings on Republic Day and anniversaries of important Indian personalities. The Jewish reading, taken from the Hebrew Bible in 1950 by Rev. David Cohen and Sam Rassaby, appears in rabbinic Hebrew script and English.

CHAPTER 14

MEMORIALS

Burial services were improved by me with English readings and explanations of customs like upturning the Aron (bier) after the body had been placed in the grave and the practise of covering the eyes with earth.

AARON CURLENDER 1879–1952

Occasionally, I was asked to speak at the first anniversary of death, usually observed with afternoon prayers followed by partaking of fruits preceded by a Berakha. The reason for this ancient custom is the belief that blessing made on fruits may be beneficial to the departed soul.

"We may ponder: Why say a Berakha before eating or drinking or making use of any product of the earth? The Talmud quotes Psalms 24:1, לַה' הָאָרֶץ וּמְלוֹאָהּ 'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it.' But we may argue from Psalm115:16, הַשָּׁמַיִם שָׁמַיִם לַה' וְהָאָרֶץ נָתַן לִבְנֵי אָדָם 'The heavens belong to the Lord, **but the earth He gave over to man**.' A contradiction? A solution: 'The earth is the Lord's — before we make a blessing, but it becomes man's to use when we acknowledge God's authorship and sovereignty when we make a blessing.' Hence the popular rabbinic saying: הַנֶּהֱנֶה מִן הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה בְּלֹא בְּרָכָה כְּאִלּוּ גּוֹזֵל מִן הקב"ה 'Whoever partakes of products of this world without a blessing is as if he robs from the Creator.' Jewish practise has a blessing even after eating and drinking. In other words, it's like saying: 'Please may I have it?' and 'Thank You.'

"Would it not be appropriate, too, were we to have a blessing when one utilizes the services on this earth of human beings, the crowning achievement of God's creation? Like, Blessed are You, Lord, Who has created so gentle a man, or so kind a woman. Strangely, we do have a way. The Kaddish, paraphrased, would be a 'Thank You' to God for having enjoyed the company of a departed soul He had created.

"How grateful to God we of this community must be for **Aaron Curlender**, of blessed memory, for his leadership, and his philanthropy! It can be said of him: פְּרִי צַדִּיק עֵץ הַחַיִּים 'the fruit of the righteous is a tree of life.'[1] Just as fruit of trees contain life–giving seeds, which, when sown in the soil, give forth new living trees, so the fruit of the righteous, their good deeds, give rise to perennial monuments. The tree that Aaron Curlender planted has many leafy branches and bright fruits.

"To understand Aaron Curlender's philanthropic philosophy, we turn to the Psalms: אַשְׁרֵי מַשְׂכִּיל אֶל דָּל 'Happy is he who is thoughtful of the poor.' A commentator, Metzudath David, remarks: הַנּוֹתֵן צְדָקָה לְדַל בְּהַשְׂכֵּל לְבַל יְכָלִימוּ 'the reference is to one who helps the poor intelligently so as not to make him ashamed.' Aaron Curlender studied the problems of the poor. He took an interest in their sufferings. He mollified their troubles by giving liberally. When funds were being collected for the welfare clinic, by my father, Isaac S. Musleah, Aaron C pledged five thousand rupees after the first ten thousand was raised. He honored his pledge.

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1. Proverbs 11:30

"In all this, he was acting in the best traditions of his family. Those who remember his mother know how wisely and sympathetically she treated the poor. Known popularly as Theethoo Mem, she endeared herself to the unfortunate among whom she lived, first in Chatawalla Lane and then in Ezra Street. Whether for bridal trousseau or Meela expenses or for illness, the poor were sure to receive succor from her. She personally investigated each case. In the charge that she gave her children on her death bed, she directed that the charities she had started should not cease. Her wishes were faithfully kept.

"Aaron C was a keen sportsman and a lover of Nature. His interest in human betterment matched his abiding concern for the animal. He was loved and respected by all — his family looked up to him, his co–workers admired him, and his employees adored him.

He was deprived of children of his own. The Rabbis of old in their wisdom were aware of such situations. They say: 'When a righteous man dies, he is depressed. God knows the reason for his despondency and assures him: 'In the world you leave, you have possessions better that children; you have מִצְוֹת וּמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים your acts of righteousness and your good deeds.' And in yet another passage, עִקַּר תּוֹלְדוֹתֵיהֶם שֶׁל צַדִּיקִים מַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים 'the most significant heritage of the righteous are their good deeds.' Do we dwell today on Aaron C's God–given physical bounties and luxurious living? A man is not remembered for these fleeting commodities. Nor did he require a son to perpetuate his memory. He memorialized himself more permanently than ten sons could have done.

"Aaron C has planted a tree of lasting significance and great moment. Its roots are firm and its branches spread out. When we eat the fruit of this tree and are satisfied, we will always recite a Berakha, we will thank God for this extraordinary human being and his spiritual beneficence we reap by the example of his life."

JACOB BENJAMIN ELIAS 1900–1952

In early 1952, the community suffered a major loss in the passing of **Jacob (Jack) Benjamin Elias**. I was informed in New York by telephone by Rabbi David J. Seligson. Did I hear correctly? Was he confusing Jack Elias with someone else? I was thunder–struck. Back in the quiet of my study, I pondered the biblical words we recite in Selihoth: מַה נֹּאמַר לְפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מַה נְּדַבֵּר וּמַה נִּצְטַדָּק 'What shall we say to You, O Lord our God?' How can we express ourselves in any appropriate way? As the dumb who can not open his lips we sit silent. We are in the midst of mystery, I told myself. That this life should have been cut off in its prime is but a part of the unexplained workings of Providence. I turned to the Book of Job for comfort and faith. Here was Job bereft at a stroke, of property, children and health, to whom his wife, sharing his adversities, suggested: 'Blaspheme God and die![2] Instead of taking her advice, he persevered in his faith and made his grandest utterance: הֵן יִקְטְלֵנִי לוֹ אָיָחֵל 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,'[3] thus teaching the world two things: Patience in adversity, and the fact that God's purposes are not understood by man. To the best of my ability, I composed a letter which I sent to his brother Nissim [phrased above].[4]

2. Job 2:9
3. Ibid. 13:15
4. Page 232 (Chap 10.)

Twelve months later in Calcutta, I made these remarks at the official conclusion of mourning:

"At this time, a word about Jack Elias's life. Our Rabbis of old say: שְׁלֹשָׁה שֵׁמוֹת נִקְרָא הָאָדָם 'A person is known by three names: אֶחָד שֶׁקָּרָא לוֹ אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ One that is given him by his parents. אֶחָד שֶׁקְּרָאוּ לוֹ בְּנֵי אָדָם Another by which he is known in community circles. וְאֶחָד שֶׁקָּנָה הוּא לְעַצְמוֹ And a third, that which he acquires himself.'

The first category is not limited to the name given a child at birth. Included are the traditions, ideals and values a person inherits from his parents. in most cases, the spiritual characteristics of one's father and mother are distinctly evident in the children. If upbringing is successful, children follow the example of their parents. Jack was a loyal son in a family rich with tradition. His father, B.N. Elias, of blessed memory, was the symbol of humility. Wealth was no deterrent to his simplicity or his humility. His cherished hobby was to couple people off to be married. Many brides owe their trousseaus to his generosity. In this, he was acting in the best principles of Judaism which allows the sale of a holy Sefer Torah to provide for the wedding of the poor. The nobility of that name — of those ideals and values Jack's parents endowed him with — favorably prepared the groundwork for his other name — that which was dubbed by society.

"As a social worker, Jack was not one who merely wrote cheques for worthy causes. He was more than a cheque–book philanthropist. His unique sympathy for the poor brought about, in consultation with other members of Family Elias, the creation of the Rahma and Benjamin Elias Trust, in commemoration of their parents, from which considerable aid reached the needy. The Maghen Aboth Yeshibath Jacob Benjamin Elia, named for a venerated uncle, was another proof of his farsightedness. If only that institution were allowed to reach its potential, it had rich possibilities to improve Jewish education, among other facilities, in the community. So, his genuine interest in public affairs and liberally giving of his sage advice, made him beloved in all circles. As employer, he used his keen insight, his business acumen and fine sense of appreciation, winning him a healthy respect of his employees. The name given him by the community, then, is praiseworthy.

"Most significant is the name he acquired for himself — a good name. The author of the Biblical Book of Ecclesiastes wisely said: טוֹב שֵׁם מִשֶּׁמֶן טוֹב 'A good name is better than fragrant oil.'[5] The Rabbis in the Midrash justify the Biblical statement: 'Good oil evaporates and becomes less and less, but a good name becomes greater with the passage of years. Good oil is used only at times, but a good name lasts for ever. Good oil can be bought, but a good name comes unbought to all who deserve it. Good oil can be owned only by the rich, but a good name, by rich and poor alike. Good oil can be used only by the living, but a good name endures even after death.'

"The second part of the verse from Ecclesiastes says: וְיוֹם הַמָּוֶת מִיּוֹם הִוָּלְדוֹ 'and the day of death (is better) than the day of birth. The same rabbis commented: 'It is like a boat that embarks on a long, perilous voyage. It is sent off with hopes of safety and security, as its ultimate fate is not known. But a boat that returns is greeted with cheers, as it has come back home safe and sound.' So, at birth, it is not known how a child will fare as an adult

5. 7:1

in life's hazardous path. Judaism declares the day of death better because it is then known how the departed has fared, and is worthy of praise. As Jack's ship returns to its harbor, we hold in high esteem and laud its direction in the stormy course of life, concluded with the appellation, GOOD NAME.

"We can apply to Jack what Socrates, the great Greek philosopher, said of himself: 'I want it said of me by those who knew me best that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower where I thought a flower would grow.' Because Jack tried to brighten the lives of others, he acquired a good name and a beautiful soul.

"Let our comfort be the silent acknowledgement that Jack died after having sanctified God in his lifetime. Let our consolation be the good name he left with us. Let our hope be that all who knew him will try to emulate the goodness and humility he possessed.

May his good name be a blessing for us all. Amen."

JOSEPH SULTOON 1881–1952

One of the most pious Jewish men in Calcutta was **Joseph Sultoon**. He died in the Fall of 1951 when I was still in New York. A year later, I addressed a small gathering of relatives and friends at the conclusion of their period of mourning:

"When God gave the Torah to the Israelites, the earth rejoiced and the heavens wept. It was like a king who celebrated the marriage of his daughter. The men of the cities and officialdom did not attend the feast, but the villagers came in singing praises with musical instruments. The palace attendants wondered: 'It is customary for the officials to know how to honor the king. Would it not have been fitting for them to praise the king's daughter?' So it was when God gave the Torah to Israel. Earth gave praise but the heavens were silent. God chided the heavens who replied: 'Sovereign of the universe! The earth may well give praise, for it is to her that the Torah has been given. But we from whom the Torah goes forth, how can we give praise and not be grieved?'

"When the soul of Joseph Sultoon ascended into its heavenly abode, the earth was sad because it was bereft of one of its righteous sons, but the heavens rejoiced because they were now proud possessors of a pious soul. We were sad because we were deprived of the companionship of so devout an individual.

"But this ceremony, twelve months later, shows that there is a limit to human sorrow. As the Talmud says: אֵין הַמֵּת נִשְׁתַּכַּח מִן הַלֵּב אֶלָּא לְאַחַר י"ב חוֹדֶשׁ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר- נִשְׁכַּחְתִּי כַּמֵּת מִלֵּב הָיִיתִי כִּכְלִי אוֹבֵד 'One stops mourning for one's dead after twelve months, as the Psalmist says: 'I am put out of mind like the dead; I am like an object given up for lost.'[6] How does this verse from Psalms prove that official mourning ceases after twelve months? Rashi, in explaining 'an object given up for lost,' explains: 'An owner who has lost an object despairs to find it after twelve months ...' Therefore, just as a lost object takes twelve months for the owner to abandon hope of finding it, so mourning for deceased relatives must cease after twelve months.

6. BBrakhoth 58b, Mo-ed Katan 8b

"Joseph Sultoon arrived in Calcutta from Baghdad about 1910 on a Friday. That Friday night he was invited for Kiddush by my grandfather, Meyer Ezra Musleah, showing in what great esteem Family Sultoon was held by the Baghdad community. Joseph married his cousin in Calcutta, but she died at a very early age. He led a precarious existence teaching Hebrew and Bible, and was himself fond of studying Bible, Mishna and Zohar, a preoccupation of צַדִּיקִים, the righteous, of whom it is written in Psalms(5:12), וְיִשְׂמְחוּ כֹל חוֹסֵי בָךְ לְעוֹלָם יְרַנְּנוּ וְתָסֵךְ עֲלֵימוֹ 'Let all who take refuge in You rejoice, ever jubilant as You shelter them,' referring to the righteous. God sits among them and explains the Torah to them, as we learn from another Psalm(101:6), עֵינַי בְּנֶאֱמְנֵי אֶרֶץ לָשֶׁבֶת עִמָּדִי 'My eyes are on the trusty men of the land to have them at My side,' and God discloses His glory appointed for them, as a reward for their devotion to the study and observance of Torah in their lifetime.

"His name was Joseph, the same as one of our Patriarchs. We ask: 'Why of all the Patriarchs was Joseph alone called Saddiq, righteous?' Answer: 'Joseph showed the greatest amount of humility: וַיְהִי ה' אֶת יוֹסֵף וַיְהִי אִישׁ מַצְלִיחַ וַיְהִי בְּבֵית אֲדֹנָיו הַמִּצְרִי 'The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man. He remained in the house of his Egyptian master.' From this verse the Rabbis deduce that, whether in prosperous times or in slavery, Joseph remained the same humble, unassuming man. He never allowed the excellency of his office to carry him away.

"Fittingly was Mr. Sultoon called Joseph, a happy commentary on his life. A man more humble and modest I have not seen, transmitting the radiance of the Shekhina, the Divine Presence, on all with whom he came in contact. Because he was so unassuming, virtually hiding his face from the lime–light, he was granted the supreme gift to bestow upon men the Divine Presence. Neither poverty nor other unfortunate incidents of his life could mar the beauty of his soul. He commanded everyone's respect, עֵקֶב עֲנָוָה יִרְאַת ה' עוֹשֶׁר וְכָבוֹד וְחַיִּים 'The effect of humility is fear of the Lord, wealth, honor and life.'[7] Was he rich? Yes, because he was contented with his lot. He was honored, one of the most honored of his community. And he was granted life to a ripe old age. All of these a reward for his piety and humility.

"When the Patriarch Joseph's remains were being carried to the Holy Land alongside the Ark containing the Ten Commandments, onlookers were surprised that the Torah was being conveyed alongside a corpse. They asked: 'What are these two chests?' And the Israelites would answer: זֶה אֲרוֹנוֹ שֶׁל חַי הָעוֹלָמִים וְזֶה אֲרוֹנוֹ שֶׁל מֵת. הַמּוּנָח בָּאָרוֹן זֶה קַיָּים מַה שֶׁכָּתוּב בָּאָרוֹן זֶה 'This is the Ark of the Eternal God, and this is a corpse; the one lying in this coffin (=Joseph) has fulfilled that which is written in this chest (=Torah).' Joseph Sultoon went out of his way to perform as many Mitsvas as he could and exemplified the life of a Saddiq.

"We should no longer be grieved. We should be thankful that we were given an opportunity to have lived with such a Saddiq among us. Amen."

7. Proverbs 22:4

I was taken by surprise early in 1964 to have been invited to a Hindu equivalent of a Yartseit, the first anniversary of the death of Nagendra Nath Chattopadhaya by his son, Rabindranath C. in Ballygunge, a suburb of Calcutta. Mine was one of several Faiths to participate in the ceremony that included prayers and readings from the scriptures. The Hindus call it 'Sradh,' 'for the spiritual happiness of the departed soul.' In his letter of thanks, the son wrote: "The spiritual significance of your prayer and reading, so well elucidated so as to be easily intelligible, moved us greatly, and gave us great comfort, strength and courage to bear our loss."



Figure 120. Aaron Curlender, 1879-1952.
AARON CURLENDER ז"ל
Born 8th October 1879 - 21st Tishri 5640
Died 18th July 1952 - 25th Tammuz 5712



Figure 121. Jacob (Jack) B.N.Elias, 1900-1952.
JACOB BENJAMIN ELIAS ז"ל
Born June 8th 1900 - 12th Sivan 5660
Died 5th March 1952 - 8th Adar 5712



Figure 122. Joseph Jacob Sultoon, 1881-1952.
JOSEPH HYEEM JACOB SULTOON ז"ל

Born about 1881

Died 9th Heshvan 5712 - 8th November 1952

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA
CHAPTER 15

PERSONALLY SPEAKING

A MARRIAGE PARTNER

One of the reasons we in rabbinical school were advised to go married into a congregation was to avoid looking for a bride while trying to find one's feet in new conditions. I could not follow my teacher's advice because I returned home to Calcutta closely on the heels of my ordination. I took my chastening like a man when two choices I had made within the community failed. Fortunately, a charming young lady, Margaret Judah, was waiting in the wings. We were married on September 11, 1955. We have three daughters: Flora [Farha], named for my mother, Rahel, for Margaret's mother, and Aliza, for nobody but the happiness we enjoyed as a married couple.

A DESCENDANT OF HAKHAMIM

When I told my grandmother, Masuda, about my interest in Margaret, she said with a joyful face and sparkling eyes: "Good choice! She comes from a renowned Baghdadi family of Hakham Shimon!" Over the years I researched her family tree and my findings delighted me no end. I have, at the very beginning of this narrative, referred to the Musleah–Shindookh relationship in Baghdad at the end of the eighteenth century. Her family was known as Shindookh in Baghdad, and can be traced at least to the early seventeenth century when a certain Sasone Shindookh was born about 1620. His son, Abraham; his grandson, Mordecai, born about 1670, was Nasi [Head] of the Baghdad Jewish community.

Next, Moses, born about 1690, was Rabbi in Baghdad, 1728–1744. He erected a wooden catafalque and a marble slab over the grave of Ezra the Scribe in 1739. The following year, he shared the expense of a residential building for guests at the gravesite. His son, Mordecai, born about 1715; and grandson, Sasone, born 1746, Rabbi, author, poet, Biblical commentator, Kabbalist, Hazzan at the Slah il–Kibiri (Great Synagogue at Baghdad), equal of Hakham Rav Saleh Musleah in office and dignity. "His descendants enjoyed with Saleh Musleah and others certain shares due to them according to the local custom of Baghdad from every participant at a wedding by the groom during the seven days of festivities. This rite is called 'Minhagh Kirsh Rumi.'[1] In his Ohel Daweed, David Sassoon explains this custom: "On each night of the festivities [=Sheva Berakhoth], the invitees make donations in accordance with their status and ability to pay, the Kirsh Rumi, and the total receipts are divided into five parts … [two of which were the descendants of Hakham Rav Saleh Musleah and the descendants of Hakham Rav Sasone Mordecai Shindookh]. Hakham Sasone died January 1, 1830.

Hakham Rav Sasone and his wife Khatoon had at least five sons. The oldest, Mordecai, born about 1765, and married Gala. A Hakham, he was an expert Sofer (scribe) who is famed for his writing of two Sifrei Torah.[2] He had only one of them in his library, which he describes as follows: 'The scroll contains the whole Pentateuch in 226 columns of 51 lines to a column in a Baghdad square hand of the 18th or 19th century … The scroll is provided with Taggin [the adornments above the letters שעטנ"ז ג"צ in the Torah] … vellum, extremely fine, from the skin of בֶּן פְּקוּעָה [an animal taken alive from the freshly slaughtered mother's womb.][3] The second identical scroll is in our possession, was given to his daughter Margaret by her father, Simon

1. History of the Jews in Baghdad, David Sassoon, Letchworth, England, 1949
2. Ohel Daweed, Vol. I page 554, David Sassoon
3. BAT, Hullin

Sion Judah, the last surviving son of Judah Moses Judah. In a manuscript written by Hakham Mordecai, he records an incident in the Iraqi city of Hith, where there were no fastday Siddur on the Fast of Tammuz. A Jew who had lived many years among Arabs, happened to have invited Hakham Mordecai's group to have services with him, a mark of God's Providence. The Hakham copied the small, one–volume prayerbook a day before the fast, and fastday services were held there. 'Thanks to God, we had three minyaneem, using the *Sefer Torah of the Messiah* that I had with me." David Sassoon, Ohel Daweed I page 838, notes: 'According to a reliable tradition, the scribe of this manuscript possessed a very small scroll of the Holy Law which he kept in readiness for the King Messiah who, in accordance with the command in Deuteronomy 17:18f, will have to provide himself with two scrolls. Therefore, this scroll, [which we now have,] which is identical with manuscript #896, page 554, was called the Scroll of the Messiah. This is the law referred to: 'When he (the King [Messiah]) is seated on his throne, he shall have a copy of this Teaching written for him by the Levitical priests. Let it remain with him and let him read in it all his life, so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God, to observe faithfully every word of this Teaching as well as these laws.' [Deut. 17:18–19]

So our precious little Scroll is what our ancestor, Mordecai, called "The Scroll of the Messiah!" It is enclosed in a metal case made in Hong Kong or Shanghai, two Chinese cities with which Calcutta Jews had business dealings. The gold Rimmoneem [Bells] were made in Calcutta. The unit was housed in Bethel Synagogue, Calcutta, brought from Baghdad in the first decade of the 20th century by Judah, son of Hakham Moses, son of Hakham Shimon [of whom my grandmother, Masuda, spoke in glowing terms], son of Hakham Moses. Judah's great–uncle wrote the scroll in 1820, aged 55. Judah, born in Baghdad in 1843, died and was buried in Calcutta April 12, 1910.[4] Following the practise of migrants from Baghdad, the family took his first name as their family name.

At the base of the metal case is etched these words: "כְּתַבְתִּי זֶה סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה בעזתותי [בְּעֶזְרַת טוֹבָה יִתְבָּרַךְ] אֲנִי מָרְדְּכַי בַּרַבִּי שָׁשׁוּן [בַּר] מָרְדְּכַי [בַּר] מֹשֶׁה [בַּר] מָרְדְּכַי יצ"ו [ישמרו צורו וְגוֹאֲלוֹ] דִּיקוּיִם בָּנוּ מ"ש [מִקֶּרֶא שֶׁכָּתוּב] לֹא יָמוּשׁוּ מִפִּיךָ וּמִפִּי זַרְעֲךָ וּמִפִּי זֶרַע זַרְעֲךָ אָמַר ה' ומ"ש [וּמִקְרָא שֶׁכָּתוּב] לֹא יָמוּשׁ סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה מִפִּיךָ בס"ד [בְּסִיעַתָא דִּשְׁמַיָּא] הִשְׁלַמְתִּי בְּחוֹדֶשׁ סִיוָן תקו"ף לִיצִירָה

'I have written this Sefer Torah with the beneficent help of the blessed God, I, Mordecai, the son of Sason, the son of Moses, the son of Mordecai, may his Rock and Redeemer preserve him. May the verse (Isaiah 59:21) be fulfilled through us: [The Teaching …] shall not be absent from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your children, nor from the mouth of your children's children — said the Lord [from now on, for all time]. As well as the verse (Joshua 1:8), Let not this Book of Teaching cease from your lips … I completed it, with the help of God, in the month of Ivan 5580 [=May–June 1820] of the Creation of the world. [Seven and eight generations later, his hope and prayerful prediction have not failed in the Family Judah–Musleah.]

OUR CHILDREN

Our children were born in quick succession, less than two years separating the second and third. Margaret worked as secretary in Phillips, a British industrial company, so the children had to have a nanny, called Ayah, to help. We were fortunate, too, to have had my father's sisters and brother living, first about a mile away, later, a block away, for the children to spend many hours with their elders for relaxation and entertainment. I recall Flora being perched on the post–dinner

4. His wife, Tuffaha, born in Baghdad in 1843, died and was buried in Calcutta, October 15, 1922

dining table, and the folks having a lot of fun talking with her. Rachel starting talking late and found it difficult to pronounce certain letters. She would call Flora, 'Pola.' At the zoo, when she was shown a polar bear, she was quick to ask: "Where is 'layel' bear?!" As their speech improved, we would get notes from the aunts, like: "Congrats! Rahel can now say 'R' or 'L.'" Once the joke was on me. I was preoccupied with something when the aunts called and asked for Flora. Margaret had the Ayah bundle some clothes and take the child to the car. There was no car. Absentmindedly, I dashed off without the child. The folks looked puzzled. "Where's Flora?" they yelled, thinking something untoward had happened. Sheepishly I acknowledged that I had forgotten, and promptly turned around on the trip back home where I found the Ayah waiting with Flora! This time I made doubly sure I delivered my precious cargo!

Flora learned to recite many nursery rhymes before she could read them. She was a diligent student at playing piano, and would practise at great–aunt Ramah's instrument.

She used her musical knowledge creatively. At six, she told me: "Daddy, I know why there are five lines and four spaces in music — because we have five fingers and four spaces in between!"

Aliza would spend a lot of time at the home of Seemah and Mordi Levi, my brother's brother–in–law, across a narrow street from ours. Their daughter, Lulu, acquitted herself well as an older 'sister', and, in turn, called Margaret, Mumzoo!

I partially relived my childhood holidays in Madhupur with Margaret and the children every winter. The kids loved the grassy Dak Bungalow, chasing and playing with goats, the horse and buggy rides, and plastic bangles and earthen toys, so popular a generation ago. Most enjoyable was the arrival of cattle trains on a siding at the railroad station. We would excitedly run with our buckets across the Dak Bungalow to the train carriages full of cows and buffaloes, whose excess milk their keepers were eager to sell at ridiculously discounted prices.

DAD'S TERMINAL ILLNESS

He complained of pain in two major places — the lumbar region of his back and the under part of his right thigh. On his return from synagogue on Shabbath Beresheeth (October 1954), he took to bed where he stayed for ten weeks. Doctors differed in their diagnoses and prescriptions, attributing different reasons for his discomfort. No one could assuage his physical agony and mental anguish, the latter largely because he was unable to keep up his regular correspondence with Meyer and Ruby in Israel. In moments of despair he would say: "I won't see my children anymore!" Yet, he did not allow Meyer's birthday to pass without a blessing in Hebrew:

לִבְנִי בְּכוֹרִי
כּוֹחִי וְרֵאשִׁית אוֹנִי
בְּבִרְכַּת שָׁלוֹם וְשַׁלְוָה
בְּיוֹם הוּלֶדֶת שָׁלוֹ י״ב כִּסְלֵו התשט״ו
גְּמִירַת ל״ד שָׁנִים לְשִׁמְחָה
יְהִי רָצוֹן יְזַכֶּה עוֹד לְשָׁנִים אֲחֵרוֹת
מֵאִיר מְאוֹד וְטוֹבוֹת
וִיבָרְכֵנוּ בְּבֵן זָכָר בְּקָרוֹב
בְּחַיֵּי אָבִיו וְכל קְרוֹבָיו אָמֵן

"To my first–born son, 'my might and first fruit of my vigour' [Gen. 49:2], with greetings of peace and well–being on your 34th birthday, 12th Kislev 5715, joyfully completed. May it be God's will that you merit many more, very bright (Meir) and good ones. May you be blessed soon with a son in the life–time of your father and other relatives, Amen.'

Dad's sixtieth birthday, 3rd Teveth, 5715 (=December 30, 1954), was spent in bed. I was sure he would want it to be marked in some way, so I prepared this Hebrew prayer he recited choking with emotion:

מוֹדֶה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ ה׳ אֱלֹהַי וֵאלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתַי שֶׁהֶחֱיֵיתָנִי וְקִיַּמְתָּנִי וְהִגִּיעָנִי לְעֵת
זְקֻנָה: אָהֲלָלָה ה׳ בְּכָל עֵת תָּמִיד תְּפִלָּתוֹ בְּפִי עַל כֹּל הַחֶסֶד אֲשֶׁר
עָשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי וַאֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עָתִיד לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמִּי וְעִם כֹּל בְּנֵי בֵיתִי מִיּוֹם
שֶׁיִּלַּדְתָּנִי אִמִּי וְעַד הַיּוֹם -- זֶה שִׁשִּׁים שָׁנָה: בְּאַהֲבָה רַבָּה וּבְחֶמְלָה
גְּדוֹלָה שָׁמַרְתָּ עַל נַפְשִׁי רוּחִי וְנִשְׁמָתִי שֶׁהֶחֱזַרְתָּ אוֹתָם בִּי טְהוֹרוֹת בְּכֹל
יוֹם תָּמִיד וְעַל גּוּפִי שֶׁקִּלַּמְתָּ מֵחוֹלִים רָעִים: וְאַף עַל פִּי שֶׁאֲנִי הַיּוֹם עַל
מִטַּת חוֹלִי בְּרַצּוֹנְךָ הַקָּדוֹשׁ אֲנִי מְקַבֵּל אֶת כֹּל הַיִּסּוּרִים בְּלֵב שָׁלֵם וְעֵינַי
תָּמִיד עַל ה׳ הָרוֹפֵא כֹּל בָּשָׂר וּמַפְלִיא לַעֲשׂוֹת: ה׳ אַל בְּאַפְּךָ תּוֹכִיחֵנִי
וְאַל בַּחֲמָתְךָ תְיַסְּרֵנִי: רְפָאֵנִי ה׳ כִּי נִבְהֲלוּ עֲצָמָי: וְנַפְשִׁי נִבְהֲלָה מְאֹד
וְאַתָּה ה׳ עַד מָתַי: יָגַעְתִּי בְּאַנְחָתִי אַשְׂחֶה בְכָל לַיְלָה מִטָּתִי דְמְעָתִי
עַרְשִׂי אַמְסֶה: אַל תַּשְׁלִיכֵנִי לְעֵת זִקְנָה כִּי עָלֶיךָ בָּטַחְתִּי ה׳ אֱלֹהַי בְּכֹל
לִבִּי וּבְכֹל נַפְשִׁי:

חַסְדְּךָ גָּדוֹל עָלַי שֶׁהֶחֱיֵיתָ אִמִּי לַעֲמֹד רֹאשֵׁינוּ עַד הַיּוֹם וְלִמּוּדֵי תּוֹרָה
וְדֶרֶךְ אֶרֶץ עַל יְדֵי אַבָּא מוֹרִי זְכֵרוֹנוֹ לִבְרָכָה: בָּרֵךְ אֶת אִמִּי וְאֶת כֹּל בְּנֵי
מִשְׁפַּחְתִּי בִּבְרִיאוּת וּבְאֹרֶךְ יָמִים: שִׁמְחֵם בִּבְרָכָה בְּרֵוָה וּבְהַצְלָחָה: מַלֵּא
כֹל מִשְׁאֲלוֹת לִבָּם לְטוֹבָה:

הַפָּעַם אוֹדֶה אֶת ה׳ יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ בְּעַד אִשָּׁת חַיִל הָאֲהוּבָה וְהַצְּנוּעָה
אִשְׁתִּי פְּרִיָּה ז״ל שֶׁנָּתַתָּ עִמָּדִי בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הָרַבִּים לְבַת זוּג נֶאֱמָנָה: שְׁבַע
עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה גֵּרַתִּי עִמָּהּ וּמִגְּזֵרָתְךָ הַמְקֻבֶּלֶת נִשְׁאַרְתִּי לְבַדִּי מִסְפֵּר
שָׁנִים בְּאַלְמְנוּתִי:

אָשִׁירָה לְאֵל לַבָּנִים שִׁגְּדַּלְתִּי וְרוֹמַמְתִּי לַתּוֹרָה וְלַמִּצְוֹת לְחֻפָּה
וּלְמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים: אַזְמְרָה לֵאלֹהַי בְּעוֹדִי שָׁרְאִיתִי בְּנוֹת בְּנֵי בְכוֹרִי מֵאִיר
עֶזְרָא וּבְנֵי בִתִּי רִבְקָה רְאוֹ פָנֵיהֶם לֹא פִלַּלְתִּי וְהִנֵּה הֵרְאָה אֱלֹהִים גַּם
אֶת זַרְעָם: הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר הִתְהַלְּכוּ אֲבוֹתַי אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב
הָאֱלֹהִים הָרוֹעֶה אוֹתִי מֵעוֹדִי עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הַמַּלְאָךְ הַגּוֹאֵל אוֹתִי מִכֹּל
רַע יְבָרֵךְ אֶת הַנְּעָרִים וְהַנְּעָרוֹת וְיִקָּרֵא בָהֶם שְׁמִי וְשֵׁם אֲבוֹתַי מִשְׁפַּחַת
מַצְלִיחַ וְיִדְגּוּ לָרוֹב בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ: יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ שֶׁאֶהְיֶה בָּרִיא
לְחֻפָּתוֹ שֶׁל בְּנִי הַקָּטָן יְחִזְקֵאל נִסִּים וְאָשְׁתַּתֵּף בְּשִׂמְחָתוֹ הַקְּרוֹבָה לָבוֹא:
בְּבִטָּחוֹן שָׁלֵם בְּטַחְתִּי עָלֶיךָ בְּשׁוּב אוֹיְבַי אָחוֹר יִכָּשְׁלוּ וְיֹאבְדוּ מִפָּנֶיךָ
צָלְלוּ כָעוֹפֶרֶת בְּמַיִם אַדִּירִים כִּי עָשִׂיתָ מִשְׁפָּטַי וְדִינִי יָשַׁבְתָּ לְכִסְאָ
שׁוֹפֵט צֶדֶק: וְעַתָּה יָרוּם רֹאשִׁי עַל אוֹיְבֵי סְבִיבוֹתַי: אַל תַּסְתֵּר פָּנֶיךָ
מִמֶּנִּי אַךְ תַּט בְּאַף עַבְדֶּךָ עֶזְרָתִי הָיִיתָ אַל תִּטְּשֵׁנִי וְאַל תַּעַזְבֵנִי אֱלֹהֵי
יִשְׁעִי:

אָנָּא עַבְדָּא דְקֻדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא לָא עַל אֱנָשׁ רַחֲיצְנָא אֶלָּא בֶּאֱלָהָא
דִּשְׁמַיָּא שְׁמַע ה׳ קֹולִי אֶקְרָא וְחָנֵּנִי וַעֲנֵנִי: יִהְיוּ לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי פִי וְהֶגְיוֹן
לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ ה׳ צוּרִי וְגוֹאֲלִי

'I give thanks to You, my God and God of my ancestors, for having kept me alive,

preserved me, and brought me to this age. I praise the Lord at all times, His praise is ever on my lips for all Your kindness done for me, and which You continue to do for me and my family from the day of my birth until today, these sixty years. With abundant love and boundless mercy you have kept my body and soul together, everyday, and provided cures for numerous sicknesses. And though today I am on a bed of illness, I accept my afflictions without demur. I have faith in God, Who cures wonderfully. O Lord, do not punish me in anger; do not chastise me in fury. Heal me, O Lord, for my bones shake with terror. My whole being is stricken with terror, while You, O Lord, — O how long![5] I am weary with groaning; every night I drench my bed, I melt my couch in tears.[6] Do not cast me off in old age, for I trust in You with all my heart and soul[7].

"I am mindful of Your kindness for having preserved my mother, the crown of my head, to this day, and for the study of Torah and etiquette I received from my father, of blessed memory. Bless my mother and family with long life, bless them with abundant success, and fulfill all their desires for good.

"At this time, I acknowledge Your boundless mercy in my choice of a faithful wife in Farha, with whom I made home for 17 years, after which, by Your inscrutable decree, I was left a widower.

"I sing to the Lord for the children I raised for Torah, Observances, Good deeds, and the Wedding Canopy. I will praise the Lord all my life that I have lived to see my grandchildren, Meyer Ezra's daughters and Ruby's sons. 'I never expected to see them [my children] again, and here God has let me see their children as well'[8] 'The God in whose ways my fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob walked, the God who has been my shepherd from my birth to this day — the Angel who has redeemed me from all harm — bless these children. In them may my name be recalled, and the names of my fathers of Family Musleah, and may they be teeming multitudes upon the earth.'[9]

[The rest of the prayer translation, omitted thus far, is found at the end of this chapter.]

Dad's excruciating pain made him wince and writhe, shout and scream, with tears rolling down his cheeks. So unbearable was the distressing spectacle and heart–rending groans, I would leave his presence for a while. Cousin Dr. Isaac H. Meyer, F.R.C.S., was called in and diligently endeavored. But, at the end of the eighth week, he pronounced his own failure. Dad began to lose weight and to be increasingly constipated. Strong laxatives were administered. After one gruelling bout at defecation, he despaired: "Constipation will kill me!"

He wasn't far from what was truly happening. At the end of June, a more prominent surgeon diagnosed enlarged prostate. Surgery was imminent. Not expecting the worst, Dad wanted to be sure he could perform weddings. He had me write to two legal authorities inquiring::

5. Psalms 6:2-4
6. Ibid. 6:7
7. Ibid. 71:9
8. Genesis 48:11
9. Ibid. 48:15-16

"... an incision was made in his bladder and he now passes water through a rubber tube attached to a portable water bottle. Can he put on Tephillin? Can he perform marriage ceremonies?" The replies were similar: He may perform religious acts if the bottle has a greater amount of water than urine. Dad was pleased. When he was operated on July 2nd, however, cancer was detected, and he passed away on July 26th after sunset, in my presence. As I rent my inner garment in grief, I cried out: אָבִי אָבִי רֶכֶב יִשְׂרָאֵל וּפָרָשָׁיו "Oh, father, father, Israel's chariots and horsemen,"[10] recalling the anguish of the Prophet Elisha when he witnessed his mentor, Elijah, taken away from him in a whirlwind. [The message brought to bear the physical and spiritual strength leaders afford their communities. See below.[11]] It was a day before Tisha B'av, a day of national calamities now having struck on a personal level. Incidentally, many years later, my teacher and mentor, Rabbi Simon Greenberg, went to Yeshiva shel Ma'la (On High) on the same date.

MY ADDRESS AT DAD'S SHELOSHIM

At the Sheloshim (thirty Days after burial), I delivered the following address:

"When King David heard about the death of Abner, King Saul's commander–in–chief, he was visibly grieved, and ordered the people around him: 'Rend your clothes, gird on sackcloth, and make lament for Abner, and King David himself walked behind the bier ... and wept aloud.'[12] On returning to his palace and reflecting on Abner's life, David told his soldiers: הֲלֹא תֵדְעוּ כִּי שַׂר וְגָדֹל נָפַל הַיּוֹם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל 'You well know that a prince, a great man in Israel, has fallen this day.'[13]

"There was much sorrow and grief in Calcutta thirty days ago when this community received news of the passing of my beloved father, crown of my head. Many were touched as with a pang of personal bereavement, to bid farewell to their friend and well–wisher. They showed their love and respect by turning out in full force, especially the poor among them, to give their supporter and guide a sad but highly dignified good–bye. The crowds that gathered on that Wednesday morning in respectful homage spoke more eloquently than any words of panegyric. For all this expression of affection, I, his son. am deeply grateful.

"When you returned from the funeral, and reflected on the varied aspects of my father's life, you too must have felt, as King David said of Abner: שַׂר וְגָדוֹל נָפַל הַיּוֹם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל 'You well know that a prince, a great man in Israel, has fallen this day.' A prince and a great man! Not in the sense we ordinarily attach to these words, but one raised above his fellows by the services he rendered his community; great in his selfless and single–hearted love of humanity; great in his devotion to his ancestral faith; great in his native humility and modesty, to the extent that he did not permit praises to be inscribed on his tombstone as I had done for my mother — just his name, date of birth and date of death. A prince and a great man!

"To evaluate my father as father, I utilize the story of Elijah's parting from his disciple Elisha. Why did Elisha say: 'Father, Father,' twice? ask our rabbis. 'Because', they answer, זֶה אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ 'Elijah was both mother and father to his hapless disciple.' He supplied Elisha with his maternal comforts; he was his mainstay and support. In times of trouble and distress he offered him fatherly advice, and his guiding hand provided him with motherly affection and tender care.

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10. II Kings 2:12
11. Pages 325-326
12. II Samuel 3:31-32
13. Ibid 3:38

"Why did Elisha call Elijah רֶכֶב יִשְׂרָאֵל וּפָרָשָׁיו 'Israel's chariots and horsemen?' Because Elijah was his teacher of Torah. Or as Rabbi Yosef interprets it: רַבִּי רַבִּי דְּטָב לְהוֹן לְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּצְלוֹתֵיהּ מֵרְתִיכִין וּפָרָשִׁין 'My teacher, my teacher, whose prayers on behalf of Israel are greater efficacy than the protection of military might.' Here we have the beneficent influence of Elijah on Elisha and the whole community of Israel.

"In like manner, my father was the ideal father. It was he who brought up his three children from childhood after we lost our mother at an early age. Upon him fell the dual responsibility of showering upon us the tenderness and love of a mother, and of protecting us with the attention and discipline of a father. He minimized the ordeal of being motherless with self–sacrificing zeal and large–heartedness. If he thought it was to our benefit, nothing was too good for his children. To the best of his ability, he provided us with our requirements and more. He equipped each of us with a profession of our choice with tenacity of purpose and at considerable sacrifice. This prompted me to tell him as a left for my rabbinical training, in the words of Deuteronomy (2:7): לֹא חָסַרְתִּי דָּבָר "While under your roof, I had lacked nothing." He was visibly moved!

"In the spiritual sphere, my father remained the source of our inspiration. His relentless courage and dauntless determination to observe Shabbath and Festivals and never to desecrate God's Law had earned him the respect of Jew and non–Jew alike. Imbued with a vivid belief in the eternal binding force of the precepts of Judaism, he did not turn from them to the right or to the left. They were the joy of his life, nay, his very life and the length of his days. When the operation he underwent rendered him incapable of saying his daily prayers, he was mentally vexed. His physical agony was a nightmare, yet his uncompromising faith in God made him say in the words of Job (3:10): הַטּוֹב נְקַבֵּל וְהָרָע לֹא נְקַבֵּל 'Should we accept only good from God and not accept bad?" And quoting an Arabic phrase: 'Hamdillah OoShukur, Thank God for His mercies. May He not show me more affliction.'

"This sacred tradition of religiosity imbued me with a fervor to study Torah, and though he did not have the time or sufficient knowledge to teach Torah, he made its study possible and brought it within our reach: כִּי קָרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדָּבָר מְאֹד בְּפִיךָ וּבִלְבָבְךָ לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ 'The Teaching is very close to you — in your mouth and in your heart to observe it.'[14] [Deut. 30:14]

"We know that the Fifth Commandment enjoins us to honor our parents and promises a reward of long life, traditionally estimated at seventy years. Why then was my father, who ever honored his parents, removed from our midst just inside the threshold of sixty? A wrong interpretation renders long life to be physical length of days. Some of the greatest Jewish Sages died much younger. The Prophet Samuel lived to 52, and Isaac Luria, popularly known as Ari, the Lion, to 38. Surely these were men who honored their parents. What then can be the meaning of: 'That your days may be long?' Physically long? Yes, but also full — worthwhile, fruitful, prosperous in your contribution to society. One may live to 100 years and accomplish comparatively nothing matched with another who lived to only 50, but was full of achievements. How fruitful, how worthwhile, how rich in his contribution to society was my father's life — a just reward for the honor he rendered his parents.

14. Deuteronomy 30:14

"During the war between Amalek and the Israelites, the Torah reports that Moses went up to a hilltop to watch the battle. 'Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; but whenever he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.' וַיְהִי יָדָיו אֱמוּנָה עַד בֹּא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ (usually rendered) 'His hands remained steady until the sun set.' A still better and more literal translation, however, would be: 'His hands were אֱמוּנָה *faithful* to the end.'

The keynote of my father's life, the characteristic which gained him the affection and reverence of almost all classes, and alas, made him unpopular with a certain class and specific persons was his unshaken constancy, the dignified firmness in persevering in the line of conduct he struck out for himself, and the indulgence with which he labored for the good of this community and of humankind. One of his true friends remarked: 'He was hard on the surface but very soft below.'

"His many activities on behalf of Jewish institutions are self–evident. He infused vitality into the Oseh Haised by creating the Clinic. It no longer serviced only funeral facilities, but extended lively facilities for the indigent sick and aged. He loved the Clinic as one does an adopted child, and worked for it as for one's family. He tried to save the tottering Maghen Aboth, but his joint efforts with Jack Elias to transform it into a place of higher Jewish learning failed. He served also on the board of the Jewish Boys' School, besides being called upon to perform multiple other duties he carried out ungrudgingly.

"The organization closest to his heart he brought up from infancy and for which he toiled ceaselessly and scrupulously was National Tobacco Company. He did not account the organization through which he made a living as work done by an employee for an employer. The Company's matters took precedence over those of his own family. His leisure was his work for N.T.C., and his pleasure to see it prosper. He told me, once: 'When I feel indisposed and don't feel like attending synagogue, I make the Office my criterion. I ask myself: 'Would my indisposition have prevented me from being at the Office?' 'His hands were faithful till his sun set.'

His mantle has fallen on us. May we be worthy of it."

GRANNY'S DEATH

My grandmother grieved bitterly over the loss of her son. At eighty, she was in fairly good health and felt gratified with her other son Elias and the rest of her family. She saw me married and the births of two of our children. By then it was January, 1958 when she began to feel ill more often. One Friday afternoon in early May, she suddenly became too sick to go to her own bed, so she lay down in Grandpa's room. She lit her Tirya [Shabbath oil wicks], but was not able to sit at the dining table for Kiddush. When I went to kiss her hand [as is the custom for children and grandchildren to be blessed by their elders after Kiddush], she told me in Hindusthani: Hum bahut bemar hai [=I am very sick]. After dinner she was carried in a chair to her bed. Little Flora, then two, asked: 'What happened to Granny? She spent a restless night, asking for cold water, soda, dab [coconut] and even lemon juice, threw up brown fluid, and her stomach became distended. Dr. Nairn, the family physician, thought that her kidneys were failing. When he came

to see her what proved to be the last time, he initiated a conversation about her life. Granny responded well but then became semi–conscious. Dr. Nairn's parting with Granny made a lasting impression on me. He lovingly stroked her head and looked at her affectionately as though to say he was leaving a good friend. He even refused his fee. A day later, she asked for Meyer and Ruby [her grandchildren in Israel], Aaron and Charlie [her sons–in–law]. She passed away peacefully on 24th Iyar, the same date as her husband's uncle, Isaac Sassoon/Yosef Musleah. One of her last requests was to erase her voice from recording tapes.

In appreciation of Dr. Nairn's faithful services, I drafted a letter Uncle Elias signed and sent to him: "On behalf of my family, I wish to thank you immensely for the careful medical attention you gave my mother for many years. The relationship between her and you surpassed even the most ideal mutuality between patient and doctor. She was ever confident that whenever she requested your attendance you never failed her, no matter how busy you were. Your filial attitude towards her and her motherly affection for you gave her and us the assurance that she was being treated by a member of the family. We will treasure your last visit, displaying anxiety and despair at one and the same time, and a full sense of satisfaction that you had exploited the best resources of medical science in your treatment of her."

We lived in Calcutta almost nine years after Dad died. When Margaret's parents emigrated to London, England in 1960, we moved into their house for the next four years. So from 1952 until 1964, as the first Western–oriented spiritual leader in Calcutta, my most cherished function was teaching biblical and Modern Hebrew, and Jewish history and tradition. I also served as Hazzan of Maghen David Synagogue, worked the administration of the Jewish Girls' School and Oseh Haised (including the welfare clinic), and represented the Jewish community in city–wide events, the last of which was the funeral of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru who died suddenly on May 27th, 1964, ending a glorious chapter in India's history. A million mourners witnessed the cremation on the Jamuna River banks, near the Rajghat samadhi [memorial] of Mahatma Gandhi.

LEAVING INDIA

With the passage of the years, Jewish community numbers dwindled from 2500 in 1952 to about 800 in 1964. The Schools' Jewish population receded dramatically, and I had a hand in the thinning numbers, encouraging and promoting Aliya. As the new academic year began in January1964, there were record low enrollments. Shabbath synagogue attendance fell radically. Our last child would be five in a few months, old enough to be admitted into first grade in American schools. Judging from hindsight, destiny was working in our favor. So I wrote to Solomon Gaon in London, then Hakham of the World Sephardi Federation, for leads to an American Sephardi pulpit. He recommended Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia. Within three months, we received a non–quota American visa by which, if clergymen can prove an appointment in the U.S., they become eligible to enter.

We were excited but very concerned. I was ordained twelve years before and had conducted selected services in the U.S., but never held a regular congregational job there. It was a challenge, another pioneering challenge, and like all challenges, one might feel up to them but ever apprehensive of pitfalls. Margaret was very worried. She cried in her anxiety, brought on by having to bring up small children with no help from maids she was used to, unacquainted with even the elements of cooking, and going to a new place with no relatives or friends. The decision, however, was made, and there was no place to go but forward, wherever that might lead. I somehow never doubted in my own mind that we had taken the right step.

To back track, we had previously bandied alternatives. Because of brother Meyer and sister Ruby, we gave a brief thought to Australia — it was too far from the rest of the world and no Sephardi pulpit of worth. The British climate wasn't appealing, and London had the same people I thought I had had enough of. And Israel's religious soil did not bid fair for fertility in my vocation.

So we were bound for the United States. I had made pioneering decisions all my life, far–reaching ones, ever promising uncertain futures in uncharted waters — leaving father and family for five years of study, returning to Calcutta at a position no one tried before, and now this. From a very early age, mine had been a life of precursor including, in a way, an adolescent as an orphan — conceiving, originating, leading off. So far, the ups and downs had no deleterious effect on me, and my first steps seemed to have been crowned with success. Inspired by my family's motto, בְּשֵׁם הַשֵּׁם נַעֲשֶׂה וְנַצְלִיחַ "We will work to success," I was determined once again to make the name a fitting index.

Then came the hardest part, to sever well–loved connections — Calcutta, where we were born and grew up; Calcutta, brimming with memories of the good and not–so–good; Calcutta, the burial place of five generations of family and a century and a half of building and preserving tradition. And Madhupur … But circumstances had forced the inevitable. Not I alone was grudgingly willing to part; Calcutta, too, was slowly letting go. That gave reason for some comfort.

The practical matters — what to take along and what to leave behind, most of all the heartbreaking relinquishing — the family heirlooms. I somehow had faith that the merit of past generations would protect them from disintegrating or getting lost or falling into wrong hands. And I was determined, as with our decision to move, that I would do as much as I could to preserve them. Years later, my faith had proven justified. On two subsequent trips back to Calcutta, I salvaged much of the heirlooms and made a place for many of them under my jurisdiction.

We are proud of our decision to leave India when we did and delighted to have been inspired enough to take it. Our invigorated economic condition, our children's educational and professional excellence, and the promise of their children's Jewish and secular potential indicate the truth of the Torah words: אֶצְבַּע אֱלֹהִים הִיא "This is the finger of God!"[15]

Our pioneering resembles, in a way, the groping and ultimate triumph of our forbear in India who persevered to usher in the ultimately good life the family led there, though with painstaking trials. It was Eliyahu/Yoseph Musleah, born in Baghdad, brought to Calcutta at age 2, and grew up to lay the groundwork of Musleah family life in 19th century Calcutta. A hundred years later, we prepared for the dreary experience of bringing it to a virtual close. To an extent, the finale, too, demanded unusual daring and extraordinary foresight, pioneering of a different sort, emphasizing my characteristic not to spend much time looking back. "Move on" has ever been my mantra. The promise at the end must be worth the journey ahead. עֲלֵה וְהַצְלַח בְּשֵׁם הַשֵּׁם נַעֲשֶׂה וְנַצְלִיחַ Let's aim at success in the next phase! In the name of the Almighty we will work toward success!

15. Exodus 8:15

My first duty was to smooth Margaret's ruffled brow of care in the final birthday greeting given in India. After some endearing words, I wrote:

Life, believe is not a dream
So dark as sages say.
Oft a little morning rain
Foretells a pleasant day.

Margaret wrote to a friend from board ship:

"The Orsova" en route to London. "... Then last Tuesday, the 16th of June, appeared on the calendar. What a day — last minute packing, clearing, visitors, helpers, friends. About thirty people saw us off at Howrah station [Calcutta's railroad terminal]. I sobbed like a babe. I felt sorry for Eze's aunts who were going to be deprived of natural love. They were very attached to the children, especially Flora, who, for past three months, spent night and day with them. Then I felt for [sister] Tryphosa, [a lot older], who had been almost like a mother to me until I got married. I cried not really because I was going to miss Calcutta or anyone, but I felt that I had now to shoulder additional responsibilities and new burdens without much assistance. If Providence has so willed it, we must abide by it. I am sure we will be better off, but it will take time to adjust, and that period is the worst.

"We sailed on Friday 19th June from Bombay on S.S. Orsova to arrive in Southampton on 7th July. The first two days at sea we were sea–sick and seeing the ship's doctor was an expensive proposition. We were in Aden on June 23rd, did some shopping, and took a taxi to a very old synagogue. We conversed in Hebrew with many Jewish shopkeepers, some of whom were afraid to confess their faith until they were sure that we too were Jewish. We are now sailing through the Red Sea, the closest we will come to Israel.

We intend staying two weeks with my parents in London, and arrive in New York on the 28th July ..."

Here are letters dated July 6th, 1964 written on board by Rahel and Flora to great–aunts and –uncle in Calcutta:

Rahel (age 6 1/2): "When the boat stopped at Gigralter (sic!) Daddy and Mummy got off only. They bought all three of us — a doll for me, a monkey for Flora, and a bear for Aliza. The monkey and the bear could sing and the doll could talk. We were very happy with our toys. With all my love and kisses from RAHEL.

"Darling Uncle Elias, Aunty Hannah, Aunty Ramah and Aunty Rachel, When we got off at Naples a launch took us to Capri. While looking for our launch, Rahel got lost in the crowd. Mummy asked some of the men if they had seen her but they only spoke in Italian. Mummy prayed to find her and her prayer was answered. I spotted Rahel standing and crying. [Flora claims that she was first to see her sister.]

We enjoyed our stay in London with Margaret's parents, brothers Moses and Ellis and sister Hannah, and their families, and my aunts Mozelle and Seemah, uncle Charlie, and cousins before launching on the final stage of our voyage across the Atlantic on the "S.S. United States." [Coincidentally, the liner sits in retirement at a Philadelphia harbor on the Delaware River.]

IN TRIBUTE TO MARGARET

At this point, I wish to dedicate the next few paragraphs to Margaret, the mother of our children, originally written in honor of Mother's Day, 1969.

> "A few years ago, Franz Kobler edited a fascinating book entitled, "Her Children Call Her Blessed," an anthology of quotations, stories, letters and memoirs dealing with the subject of the Jewish mother. It set me wondering if throughout our history there had been any one quality of Jewish motherhood that could link not only the Jewish mothers of different countries, but also those of different periods. Such a common denominator is not hard to find — it can be summed up in one word, "sacrifice."
>
> "In Bible times, that sacrifice was for religion. Sarah gave up Isaac literally to be sacrificed to God. Jocheved relinquished Moses to keep alive the Hebrew race. Hannah dedicated Samuel to the service of the priesthood. In the time of the Maccabees, another Hannah sacrificed her seven sons to martyrdom rather than have them betray their faith.
>
> In the generations preceding our own, the spirit of sacrifice was still there, but then the sacrifice was of the mother herself, of her health, her energy, her well–being, her very life. Heine's mother sold her jewels to educate him. The widowed mother of the Hebrew poet, Bialik struggled against bitter poverty and illness in bringing up her three children. Freud and Weizmann pay tribute in letter and memoirs to the encouragement and unselfishness of their mothers.
>
> "The installation of Mother's Day in America was originally sponsored with nobility and tenderness. Today, for the most part, it is superficially observed. A gift, however lovingly presented, misses the mark. For us Jews this is not a yearly affair; it happens every week. From time immemorial the Sabbath has been our Mother's Day. Unforgettably, Sholem Asch describes this weekly miracle when tired little workaday mother of Yechiel is transformed into the radiant Sabbath mother with 'loveliness shining from her eyes … and her brow gleaming like the sun.'
>
> "In our time, the expression of maternal sacrifice has changed once more. It now takes the form of companionship. Our present age recognizes that for mother to work incessantly with complete self–abnegation is not good for the moral fiber of the family. The modern Jewish mother gives of her time and energy to share in the growth process and education of her children. From the period of early morning chores, through the rigors of school schedules, right up to the launching of her child into a university or profession, the Jewish mother is a constant 'guide, philosopher and friend.' One has only to look at the innumerable parent–teacher associations, conferences and home–work assistance to realize that the mother is a vital partner in education.

> "I feel at times that emancipation has not been fair to womankind. She now shoulders increasing burdens outside, while her responsibilities at home have not abated. In rare cases she might have the most co–operative spouse, and rare is the husband who feels he is not, but the brunt of domestic chores still devolve upon her. A day, though filled with felicitations, is not sufficient to tell this magical formula, this mother, 'thank you.' Everyday and every week, in the words of the last chapter of the Biblical Book of Proverbs, should 'her children rise up and call her blessed, her husband also, praise her.'

Margaret's husband, children and grandchildren have, in token of our love and gratitude, dedicated a social hall in Beth Hakenesset Hagadol Pisgat Ram, a synagogue in Jerusalem, Israel, in her honor, called ***OOLAM MIRIAM***, Miriam Hall.



Figure 123. Welcome, Margaret.

A happy family welcoming Margaret, June 12, 1955. (Also seated, top) Dad and Mavis. (Standing) Aunt Rachel, Uncles Elias and ever-clowning Charlie.

(Bottom, seated) Uncle Elias, Granny, Aunt Hannah. (Standing) Aunts Mozelle & Rachel, ENM & Margaret, Uncle Charlie, Mavis, Aunts Ramah and Seemah.



Figure 124. Under the Huppa.

Under the Huppa, Bethel Synagogue, Calcutta, September 11, 1955 -- 24th Elul 5715.



Figure 125. Our Wedding Portrait.



Figure 126. Sheva Berakhoth.

Ninth cloud spells Sheva Berakhoth — the seven blessings of post-Huppa rejoicing.



Figure 127. Six Tiers of Wedding Cake.

Six tiers of our wedding cake. We were able to cut only the first!



Figure 128. Margaret Lighting Her Tirya.

Margaret lighting her Tirya, the glass top belonged to my great-grandmother, Esther.



Figure 129. "Hakham Sassone" Sefer, 1820.

The "Hakham Sasone" Sefer written in 1820 in Baghdad by his oldest son, Mordecai. The scroll is 91/2 inches tall, the metallic case produced in Shanghai, the gold bells made in Calcutta.



Figure 130. Oolam Miriam, Honoring Margaret at a Jerusalem Synagogue.
Oolam Miriam — The hall in honor of Margaret at a Jerusalem synagogue.



Figure 131. Bethel Synagogue.
Facade of Bethel Synagogue, Calcutta.

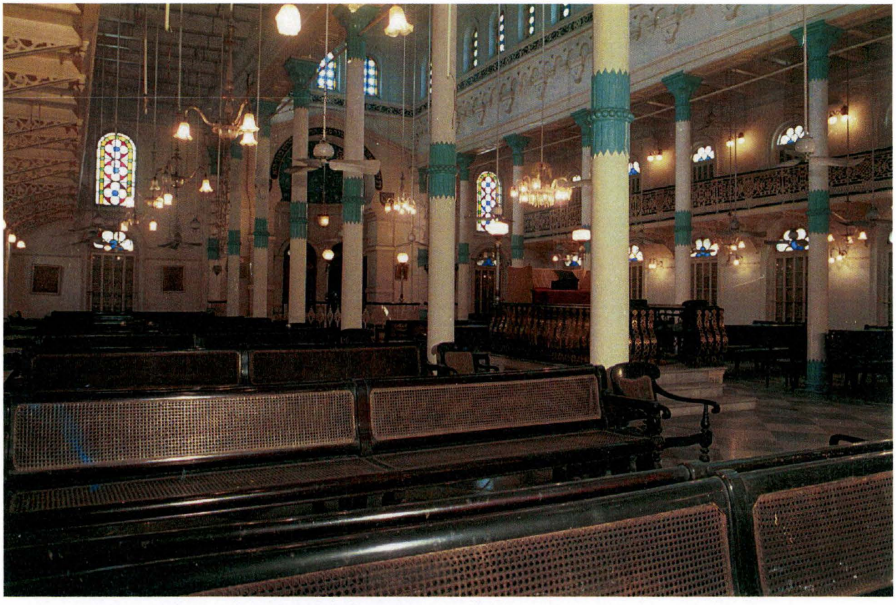


Figure 134. Defining Men's Seats.
Defining men's seats to the left.



Figure 131. Bethel Synagogue.
Facade of Bethel Synagogue, Calcutta.



Figure 132. Steps to Entrance — Bethel Synagogue.

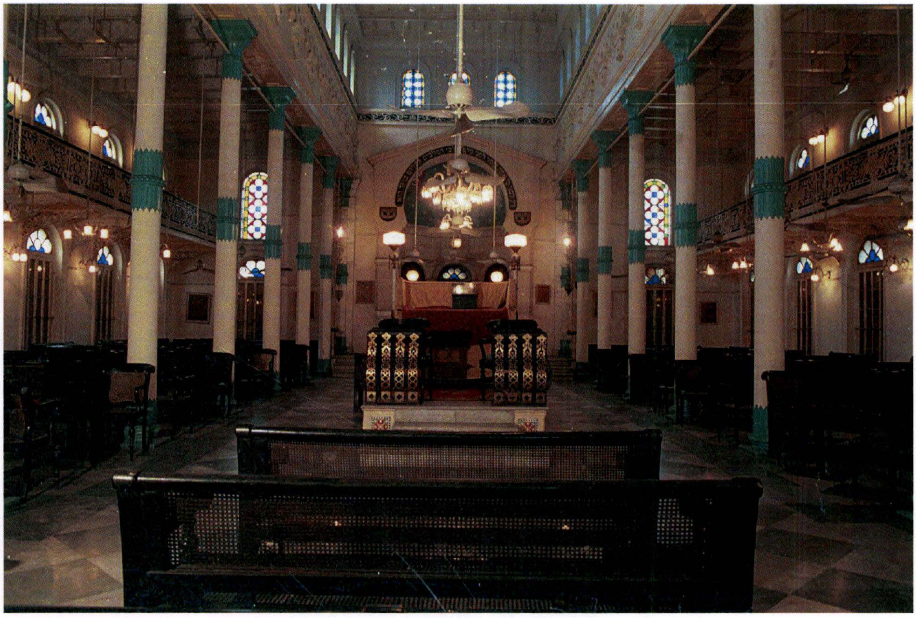


Figure 133. Synagogue Interior — Bethel Synagogue.
The women of Margaret's family, Judah, sat behind the first pillar to the right.

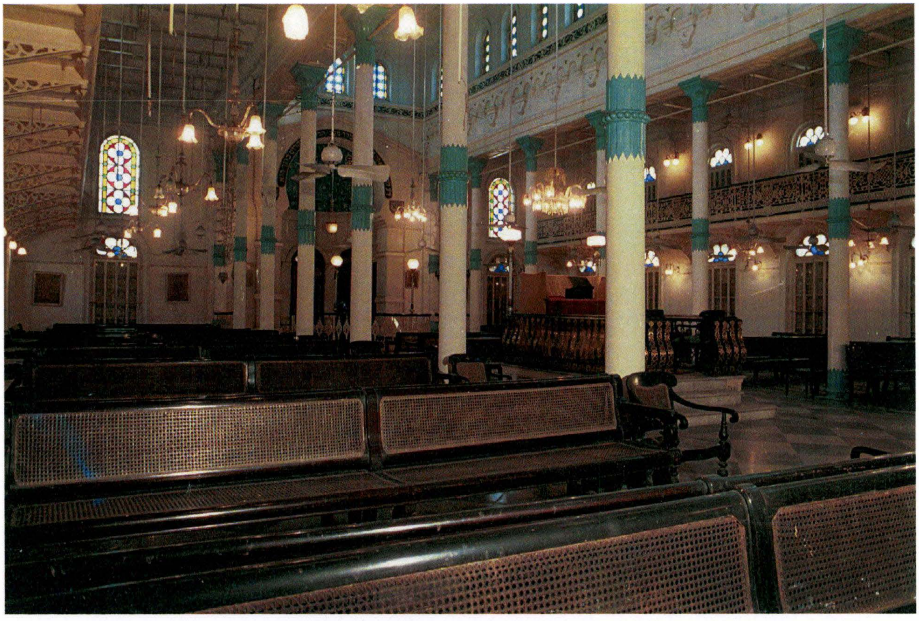


Figure 134. Defining Men's Seats.
Defining men's seats to the left.



Figure 135. Bethel Synagogue Tebah.

The Tebah from where Bethel's ministers conducted services:

Saul Lanyado
Abraham Abid Twena
Abid Abraham Twena



Figure 136. Where Our Huppa Stood.

Between the railing and the Ark Room stood the Huppah under which we were married in 1955.

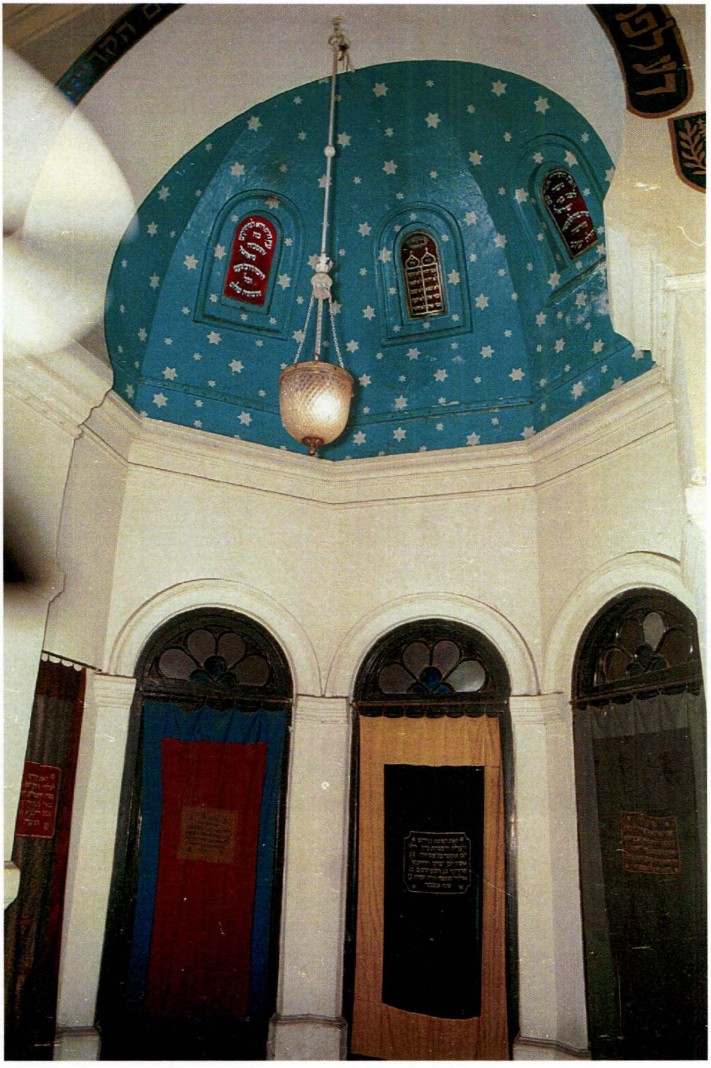


Figure 137. Bethel Dome, Ner Tamid, Ark Room.

Dome, like Maghen David's starry skies.

The Ner Tamid ("Eternal Light") in a white bowl, and the Ark Room doors covered with Parochets (curtains), each dedicated to the memory of a deceased member.



Figure 138. Bethel Entrance, Tebah and Stained Glass Window.
The synagogue's entrance, Tebah and beautiful stained-glass window above the rear section of the women's gallery.

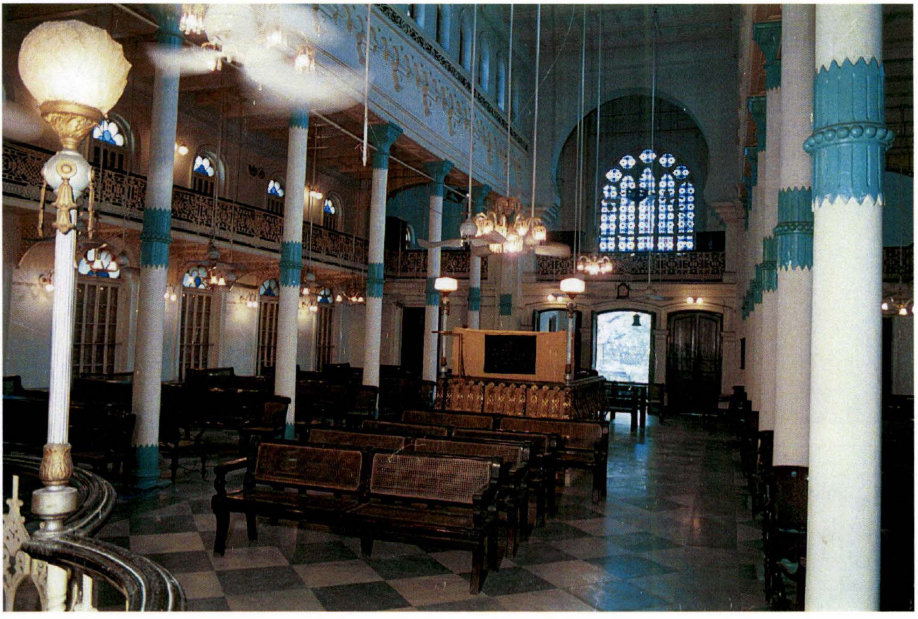


Figure 139. A Different View.



Figure 140. Annual Ball in Aid of the Oseh Haised Clinic.

Annual Ball at Firpo's, Calcutta.

(l to r) Dad, Uncle Elias, Aunt Rachel, Esther Jacob Raymond, Aunt Seemah, Uncle Charlie.



Figure 141. From a Grateful Community.

[The Prayer continued]

"May it be Your will that I be sufficiently well to witness the wedding of my youngest son, Ezekiel Nissim, and participate in his happiness that may soon happen.

"With my full trust in You for having had my antagonists retreat and stumble to their doom at Your presence — they sank like lead in the mighty waters. For You, enthroned as righteous judge, upheld my right and claim, now making me hold my head high.

"Do not thrust aside Your servant in anger; You have ever been my help. Do not forsake me, do not abandon me, O God, my deliverer.

"I am the servant of the Holy One, praised be He. I have not put my trust in human beings, only in the Lord in Heaven. Hear my voice as I call and answer me with mercy.

"May the words of my mouth and the prayer of my heart be acceptable to You, my rock and my redeemer."

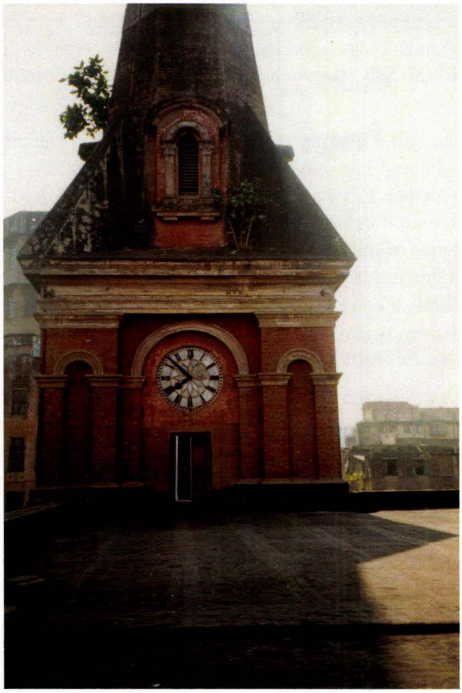


Figure 142. Clock Tower.
The terrace of the Maghen David Synagogue where the blessing of the sun took place every 28 years.

CHAPTER 16

AN AMERICAN CONGREGATION

HISTORICAL SURVEY

Congregation Mikveh Israel, a small, historic synagogue of Spanish–Portuguese rite, similar, but variant in important liturgical respects from what may be called Oriental Sephardic usages. The Parasha Te–ameem are close to the Syrian prescription, but not quite those chanted in Calcutta. The Haftarah resembles Baghdad Nebi–eem. The Bimah, called Tebah, is in the center of the sanctuary as in all Sephardi places of worship, but the Sifrei Torah are not encased. The Ner Tamid (Eternal Light) is a seven–day wax candle. Pews for women rise on either side of the Tebah. It did not take me long to master the melodies which I came to like. The Rabbi chants a part of the service. I prepared for the first Rosh Hashana and Kippur services in less than a month from recorded tape.

The Congregation takes great pride in the beauty, stateliness and great dignity of the services. Men usually wear hats instead of skull–caps. (In earlier days, they would often come to services formally attired — wing collar, cutaway coat, striped trousers, silk hat and all.) The Oriental pronunciation of Hebrew is akin to Arabic — Waw and Bei and 'Ayin as a guttural. The Spanish–Portuguese version has Vav and Bei, but renders the 'Ayin as 'ng (example, Shang'arei). I pronounced the Vav as Israelis do, but retained the Oriental Bei as well as the 'Ayin as a guttural.

Mikveh Israel is more than half a century older than the Jewish community in Calcutta, its cemetery even older than its first house of worship. In 1740, John Penn, proprietor of Pennsylvania, granted to Nathan Levy a plot of ground "as a burial yard for several Jews." Its first synagogue was consecrated in 1782 out of a collection to which the largest donor was Haym Salomon, a primary financier of the Revolutionary War, with a gift of over 600 dollars. Levy, born in London, England where he belonged to Bevis Marks, the Spanish–Portuguese congregation, arrived in Philadelphia via New York (then New Amsterdam) in 1737. Fact or fiction, it was believed that on one of his ships, "The Myrtilla" the famed "Liberty Bell" was transported across the Atlantic from England.

Sephardi Jews had come to America just a step or two behind the Pilgrims, back in the 1600's. The first Jewish communities in the New World all followed the same Sephardi liturgy. Nathan Levy and company adopted it and flourished under its banner. Centuries of power, grandeur, failure and achievement followed. Its history includes a repository of characters cut out of the cloth of fiction — heroes of every war the United States has ever fought, distinguished rabbis, pillars of the community, and civic leaders. Assembled in its archives are letters to and from Presidents of the United States, from George Washington on down to the present day. Portraits and artifacts go back to Colonial times. The liturgy traces back to medieval Spain and Portugal.

To each of its four locations, the Congregation brought along the outstanding marble Tebah and gorgeous silver Ner Tamid. With some pride the Congregation justifiably calls itself "The Synagogue of the American Revolution" because it was the only synagogue in operation during much of the course of the war for American Independence. The other synagogues "in exile" from their cities took refuge in Philadelphia. "It was, for Mikveh Israel, one of the fortunate accidents of history," in the words of Maxwell Whiteman, foremost historian of early American Jewish history. Its ranks had been swelled by patriots from New York, Charleston and Richmond, and

after the war, it was time to go home. And home they went. It wasn't too long before the reduced numbers in the synagogue had difficulty keeping up the mortgage payments. The year was 1788, the bank was getting ready to sell the building, when stepping in like some biblical patriarch, was the very old Benjamin Franklin, who had known Nathan Levy in his younger days. A fund–raising petition to save the synagogue was drawn up and the members of the synagogue, "flattering themselves that their worshipping Almighty God in a way different from other religious societies will never deter the enlightened citizens of Philadelphia from generously subscribing toward the preservation of a house of worship." Old Ben's signature was first, at the top of the list, having contributed five pounds, a substantial sum in those days. Some highly placed friends of his, such as the Biddles, the Rittenhouses and the Bradfords were asked to do the same. They did. With their help the synagogue was saved in one of the first recorded examples of ecumenism in the young country.

Mikveh Israel, however, did not lose its preeminent position in the Jewish community. Over the signature of its President, Manuel Josephson, a letter of congratulations was written in the name of the congregations of Philadelphia, New York, Charleston and Richmond to George Washington on becoming President of the United States, to which the President responded in writing.

Many of the ceremonial objects used in the synagogue service date from the earliest days of the Congregation, some made by Myer Myers, the early American silversmith. The bells on the Torahs are gifts made to the synagogue over the course of two hundred years. On holidays, a chair, gifted in the early 1800's and constructed to hold the ewer and basin for the ritual washing of the Kohens' hands, is placed in front of the Tebah.

I was slowly to absorb this fascinating history. But there was also the day–to–day religious, administrative and political facts of life among an intricate though hardy group of people, struggling for survival in what was hoped to be transient, short–term quarters, and looking forward ultimately to a return to the elegant neighborhood of the congregation's birth and that of its nation which, at the time, one could have only a glimpse. It had all the appearances of another pioneering job — keeping people together in trying circumstances in which my family and I had much to sacrifice.

The Congregation's bulletin, called The Mikveh Israel Record had an old tradition, going back to the early twentieth century. I ran a column, "A Word From the Rabbi," the first of which described the welcomeness shown us.

THANKS FOR CONGREGATION'S WELCOME

"Describing the extraordinary hospitality of the Patriarch Abraham, the Rabbis declare that his tent opened up in all directions so as not to put his guests to unnecessary inconvenience. He would run to meet them and entreat them not to pass by without being refreshed in the comfort of his home. They left with glowing praise of their host and of Him Who is the source of all living.

"I am a newcomer in your midst. My wife and family have never been in this country before. But there is one thing we shall always hold dear — how the members of Congregation Mikveh Israel welcomed us to Philadelphia and made our initial stay as warm and as comfortable as though we had come home.

"We were met in New York by distinguished company, driven to Philadelphia on one of the hottest days of the year in the cool of an air–conditioned automobile, stepped into an apartment full of much more than the necessities of life, and slept that night as snugly as the torrid weather we seemed to have brought with us would allow. And ever since, not a day had passed without someone being put out for our sakes, our lot being constantly being improved from sojourners to that of settlers, or at least earnest solicitation of our needs."

For all this we were gratified and highly appreciative. I concluded: "You have proved to be worthy descendants of Father Abraham and we are touched by your considerate reception. We are happy being with you and for the fresh opportunity of serving God and you, His people Israel.

"It is our sincere prayer that the new year will witness our community revitalized with spiritual verve worthy of our glorious past."

SEMINARY'S WELCOME

In the midst of getting settled in our new surroundings, I was delighted and honored to receive the following letters of welcome from my Seminary teachers, Professors Louis Finkelstein and Simon Greenberg.

The Jewish Theological Seminary of America
Northeast Corner, Broadway and 122nd Street,
New York 27, N. Y.

Office of the Chancellor
October 12, 1964

Dear Ezekiel,

It is indeed a great pleasure to extend best wishes to you and Congregation Mikveh Israel. I was very happy to learn that you have accepted a call from that distinguished congregation. Through the years, the congregation's steadfast adherence to the principles of our faith has been the constant source of much blessing to the entire Jewish community.

Just as you are very fortunate in this new association, Congregation Mikveh Israel is likewise to be congratulated on having chosen you as its spiritual leader. Your presence will go far to help bring our people to a deeper understanding of the great traditions of our ancestors and to enhance the love of Torah.

With warmest regards and best wishes,

Affectionately, as ever,

Louis Finkelstein

P.S. I would appreciate it very much if you would put my name on the mailing list to receive the congregation's bulletin.

Dr. Louis Finkelstein,
3080 Broadway,
New York 27, N.Y.

October 21, 1964

Dear Dr. Finkelstein,

I was gratified by your gracious message of greetings and congratulation. Despite your very busy schedule, you still find time to reach "men in the field," especially one as insignificant as I. I want you to know how deep a source of encouragement and inspiration you are to us.

As you can imagine, the call to Mikveh Israel, because of its historic past, is a great challenge to me and to my physical and spiritual energies. As I had responded to other challenges in the past, so I look forward to meeting this one with all the resources at my disposal for the glory of God and the honor of His people. In this sacred task, I will try to demonstrate the blessed influence of the Seminary as a means of not only imparting valuable Jewish knowledge but also of inculcating an attitude of immense regard for piety, scholarship, and the sanctity of life.

The Hope of Israel is my hope and strength.

I am sending you the current issue of The Mikveh Israel Record and have put you on our mailing list.

Respectfully yours,

Ezekiel Nissim Musleah

August 13, 1964

Office of the Vice–Chancellor

Dear Ezekiel,

I was very happy to learn that you and your family are now in the States and that you have been elected as the Rabbi of Congregation Mikveh Israel.

I hope the association between you and the Congregation will be blessed with man many years of fruitful co–operative effort bringing joy and blessing to you and to the congregants. Philadelphia, as I am sure you know, contains one of the most distinguished communities in the country. I am sure also that you will be warmly welcomed by your colleague in the rabbinate and particularly in the Rabbinical Assembly in Philadelphia.

With repeated good wishes for the New Year.

Very cordially,

Simon Greenberg

THE FIRST SERMON, AUGUST 1, 1964

"The Torah portion, Ekeb, contains Moses's vivid description of the Promised Land in his farewell address to the people of Israel before his death. '... a good land, of brooks of water, a land with streams and springs and lakes issuing from plain and hill; a land of wheat and barley, of vines, figs and pomegranates; a land of olive oil and of honey; a land where you may eat food without stint, where you will lack nothing ... when you have eaten your fill, give thanks to the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you.'[1]

"A colorful picture of richness and abundance. But for Moses, a poignancy and a heartache to speak thus of a land he would not enter and share with his fellow Israelites.

Moses of all people deserved to enter the land. He sacrificed everything for his people and played a central role in their emancipation. One thought had sustained him — to see Israel settled in the Holyland. But at the end, he merely had a glimpse of it and died with the kiss of the Almighty.

"Was then his life a failure? Is the criterion of success or failure merely the fulfillment of a task or is it rather the earnest experiment with one's noblest aims? Other great men and women had apparently not achieved the height of their ambition nor seen their cherished hopes realized. King David, Ezra and Nehemiah, Judah Maccabee, Theodore Herzl, Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy to name a few, seemingly failed. But we do not associate failure with them. Their seeming failure was the touchstone of their success.

"The Jewish prescription for assessing a career is epitomized in the following rabbinic dictum: 'It is not your duty to complete the work, neither are you free to desist from it.'[2] [Pirke Aboth 2:21] If, before undertaking a worthy task, we stop to ask ourselves if we were capable of accomplishing it, whether its achievement was within our scope, we would never even begin it. The right thing to do is — start and do our best, and make as much progress as possible. Leave the end to look after itself. The bigger the undertaking the less likelihood of our completing it, but that should not deter us from attempting it.

The test we should apply to a great life is, not 'did he do all he wished to do?' but 'did he aim high and have a lofty purpose?' Not 'did he reach the summit?' but 'did he scale the heights?'"

RESPONSE TO UNANIMOUS ELECTION

Here is some of what I said at the Congregation's annual meeting, October 11, 1964, in response to its unanimous election of me as Rabbi:

1. Deuteronomy 8:7-10
2. Pirke Aboth 2:21

"Thank you for the confidence reposed in me ... I do not need introductions to most of you. Some I have met casually — with parents of school children I have the pleasure of sharing some of your problems ... but I am fortunate that none of you has sought recognition like the man in this story:

"The famous Ezekiel Landau was well–received when installed as rabbi of Prague. But the rabbi had heard that one man, Velvelle der Schneider, did not spare an opportunity to criticize him. Wanting to get to the bottom of this surprising situation, he invited Schneider to his home and questioned him about his unusual conduct. Velvelle squirmed and blushed and replied with a forced smile: "Gott zoll aphitten (God forbid), most reverend Rabbi, that I should have anything against you. But my situation is peculiar. When you came to this city, the rich introduced themselves with presents, the learned by their display of scholarship. I could not do either. And if I had not criticized the Rabbi, how would you ever have known that Velvelle Schneider existed?"

"I reiterate the expression of gratitude my wife, children and I owe you for your hospitality ... and acknowledge the understanding, patience and energy of the chairman of your Pulpit Committee, Mr. Daniel C. Cohen, who handled correspondence with me for eight months ... and the sagacity and perseverance of your Board whose members labored meeting after meeting to try arriving at a solution that would be beneficial to the Congregation and fair to me. I do not blame those who had equivocations or mental reservations to giving a firm commitment to somebody 10,000 miles away and about whom they knew nothing. It reminds me of Shadkhanim (marriage brokers) who canvass with only a photograph in favor of a young boy or girl, or sometimes not so young a woman or man, who pledge with great ingenuousness: 'Believe me, he (or she) will make you happy!' *Our* association is also a made–up one with several Shadkhanim acting as intermediaries. All we can hope for now is that there will be mutual happiness and reciprocal cooperation and understanding. Believe me, old–fashioned made–up marriages have a greater success rate than modern love–ones!

"In my opinion, a rabbi should have two characteristics, symbolized by the emblem of the tribe of Judah: מַפֶּה שֶׁל יְהוּדָה דְּמוּתוֹ כְּמִין שָׁמַיִם וּמְצֻיָּר עָלָיו אַרְיֵה 'the emblem of Judah had a heavenly blue background and superimposed was the image of a lion.' A rabbi should have heavenly ideals that are worth striving for. These lofty goals should be brought down to earth into the lives of human beings to whom he ministers. Back of his mind and heart should always be the Divine imperatives of religion and decent living. But an ivory–tower rabbi is a visionary. He must translate his ideals into practice. He must possess the courage of a lion and strive against all odds to persevere in his sacred calling.

"To achieve this, one must have הִתְלַהֲבוּת enthusiasm. The word is derived from the Hebrew root לַהַב meaning a flame. It is my burning desire that my programs and my methods 'catch on.' I would like my enthusiasm to be transmitted to you so that the action your Board had recommended to you would be amply justified and our united zeal will result in a strong, vibrant and prosperous community."

EDUCATION

In the New World, education continued to be my prime goal. A school building, miles away from the synagogue, housed four classrooms catering to mostly six– and seven–year olds. A staff of three taught twice weekly, and one other on Sundays only. However, the long–standing tradition of a Sunday School functioning within a three–day–a–week set–up was slowly done away with. A full educational program was chalked out, leading to 'graduating' at age fourteen instead of the usual thirteen. My carefully chosen staff and curriculum met with the approval of the venerated educationist, Dr. William Chomsky, whose periodic visits ever let me know of the success of my pedagogic plans. He once told me that my grades were a year higher than normal Hebrew afternoon schools, and by age fourteen made the 'graduates' eligible to enter a Hebrew high school.

I once had my ten–year–olds write an essay on "What God Means To Me." Here are two attempts:

> "God is the Father of all of us. He cares for everybody. We think of Him and pray to Him whether we are in trouble or in joy or any kind of mood. God is in every person so we think a little bit like him. One of the ten commandments is, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." God meant that all men are equal. This is true. You are just as good as your neighbor. Your neighbor is just as good as you. God has no appearance to anyone but angels. We owe our lives to God. He gives us the energy to think. Every Friday night and Saturday we go to synagogue to pray. God is good and His mercy lasts forever and ever. He shall always be our master." Judy Spungen

> "God is the creator of us all. The Lord is one being. God created us all in the same way. We should all give thanks to God for the many things we have. We should thank the Lord for shelter, knowledge, wisdom, food, and happiness. We should thank Him for His help. God has great powers which we do not have. God will punish us if we are unkind to Him. He will reward us if we are kind to Him. God gave us a wonderful brain which He did not give to animals. This is one of the things that differs us from animals. If you don't use your brain it will get rusty (sort of). That means, if you do not think, or use your head, you will grow up to be a Nothing. You will not grow up to be like God." Rachel Helfand

On another occasion, the children were invited to write about Shabbat.

> "Shabbat is on the seventh day of the week when God finished creating the world. And He rested. So we start resting by lighting candles. My sister has her own set of candlesticks. We say Kiddush beginning with "Yom Hashishi" and have Shabbat dinner. And the night passed. When we wake up, get dressed, eat breakfast, and go to synagogue. There they have the morning Amidah. The Rabbis read the Torah. Near the end of the service, they sing songs, En Kelohenu, Alenu L'shabeah, and Adon Olam.
>
> Jonathan Cohen"

"Shabbat begins when we light candles. I recite the blessing. When Daddy comes home, we bless the wine and challah and sit down for dinner. What I like best about Shabbat is going to synagogue. I try to follow the service. Sometimes I am allowed to dress the Torah. I have learned how to do it. After they put the Torah in the ark, I make an offering. At kiddush I like the cakes and wine. Shabbat is a day of peace, rest and joy.

Joel Sarner"

"On Friday evening, Father comes home from synagogue. Mother recites the blessings over the lighted Sabbath candles. Father recites the Kiddush over the wine and makes motzie. After dinner, we sing songs. One of them is Shalom Aleichem. In many of the songs, the Sabbath is called the queen. On Saturday morning, the family goes to synagogue ... As evening approaches, we get ready for Havdalah. First, Father says the blessing over wine. Then over spices and the spices are sniffed. Then a blessing is said over the braided candle. All to remind us of the taste, smell, and the warmth of the Sabbath. Sabbath is now over. Have a happy week! Rachel Helfand"

Jonathan Cohen writes about his family

"My family almost came out of the Bible. Well, the names. Let's start with the oldest.

Daniel, my father was fed to the lions, but God saved him. His name also appears as Dan, one of Jacob's sons. Louise, my mother doesn't appear in the Bible, but her Hebrew name is Leah, one of Jacob's wives.

"Eve, my sister, was the first woman in the Bible (surprisingly, she is the first girl in our family). Her middle name, Rebecca,was Isaac's wife. Judy, my other sister, doesn't appear in the Bible, but her middle name, Hannah, does. She was Samuel's mother. "Who doesn't know another Hannah? She would not allow her seven sons to bow down to Antiochus' idols. But the story is not in the Bible.

Benjamin, my brother, was Jacob's youngest son, and he is the youngest in our family. My name, Jonathan, appears as David's friend. My middle name, Reuben, appears as the eldest of Jacob's sons, and I am the eldest son in my family. Jonathan Cohen (9)"

The children speak out on the Israel–Arab War and Jerusalem

The War

"June 5: What was the cause? The Israelis got most of their oil from Iran. The Egyptians wouldn't allow Israeli ships through the Suez Canal. So the Israelis used the Gulf of Aqaba. But the Egyptians stopped that too. Soon the Middle East was up in arms. At the end of the war, Israel had captured: in Egypt the Sinai Peninsula, in Jordan land west of the Jordan River, and in Syria the mountains on the border. Result: The Israelis got to use the Gulf of Aqaba and had a border on the Suez Canal. Jonathan Cohen (9)"

"Just think: Israel now holds the land which Moses and the Jews wandered in for forty years. It took Israel only eighty–eight hours to capture it. Joel Sarner (10)"

"The Arabs had more soldiers and more guns but the Jewish soldiers were braver and smarter. Jessica Helfand (7)"

"The people in Israel do not fear the Arabs, ki haym gibborim, because they have courage. Robert Berenholz (8)"

"Last June, Nasser of Egypt declared war on Israel. Russia supplied them with tanks and guns. Syria and Jordan helped fight.

"The Arabs said they would wipe Israel off the map. One week later Israel had won the war and regained old Jerusalem.

"Its important to me because Jews can finally go to the old city, and I also have relatives in Israel. Geoffrey Newman (9)"

Jerusalem

"Jerusalem is our capital city in Israel. We have the Western Wall back, which represents the Temple that we owned. If we lost the war, Egypt would have ruled us. Now we have our holy city back. We can live in freedom. David Solis–Cohen (11)"

"Israelis should have the Western Wall back because it belonged to them first. When Jordan did take the Wall, I thought it was unfair. The Western Wall was the one wall that was left when the Romans destroyed the Temple. Eve Cohen (7)"

"When Jerusalem was united after 20 long years, men and women went to the Wailing Wall. There they prayed and were crying not because they were sad but because they were happy. Beth Gabai (7)"

"The old city has many holy and historical places that have more to do with Israel than it has to do with the Arabs. Lyn Leventhal (10)"

"The Jews and Arabs had a fight and Jerusalem was divided into two parts. This year they had another fight and the Jews got back the Western Wall. So the Jews hope that Jerusalem is theirs for ever and ever! Stephen Specter (7)"

Eilat Looms Large in Israel's Future

"Three thousand years ago, King Solomon's merchant ships left the bay of Eilat with wine, olive oil, dried figs, earthenware, purple dye, and copper ingots. Later they returned with goods from Africa, Cathay and the Indies.

"2,500 years later in 1948, it was becoming very important, After the 1956 war, a port was built there.

"When visitors travel to Eilat they can easily see Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. Eilat is located at the southern tip of Israel. This was one of the most vital cities during the June war and in all of Israel.

"Eilat has 1400 residents. It has a shuttle plane service and a Negev highway to the rest of Israel. At the moment, they are looking forward to the railroad to Beer–sheba. Geoffrey Newman (10)"

Masada

> "One of the most important events in Jewish history — the last Jewish stand at Masada nearly 2,000 years ago — has been recreated in an exhibit now at the Jewish Museum, N.Y. It was at the top of Masada, in the year 73 that 960 Jews sacrificed their lives rather than become slaves to the Romans. Lyn Leventhal (9)"

A cherished project of mine was to see that our children were comfortable in adult synagogue services. Childrens' services were not for me. In my opinion, children never 'graduate' from that kind of service. So I instituted a method of gradually introducing each child to parts of the regular Shabbath service until he was ready to conduct the entire service, including in many cases, large portions of, if not the entire, Parasha. Since girls were not permitted on the Tebah, I had them recite their portions in the synagogue lobby on Sunday afternoon following their Bat Mitsva Shabbath. I encouraged the children to attend services regularly by presenting them with attractive little booklets to record their attendance at synagogue in a pleasurable way. At the beginning of every term, I had them assemble in synagogue where I explained the symbols in a house of worship.

In March,1972, seven years after the first service, I reported an extraordinary development in the quality of our special services:

> "Despite the specified age of Bar Mitsva, there is no fixed time at which a boy becomes a man. The elements of manhood are apparent even in the very young. Those who were in synagogue on March 18, (1972), must have been impressed at the number of sage adults among our young people. Though all except one were fifteen and under, ten boys conducted the entire service, including the reading of the entire Torah portion. And three girls, too, could have joined their male peers had they been allowed."

At our first service, one of the Torah readers chanted merely the Yimlokh. The children have fulfilled my fondest dreams. The boys not only showed ability; their cooperation and spontaneity are highly to be praised. By way of striking example, the attitude and performance of Jonathan Cohen and Joel Sarner showed through when they volunteered the division of a difficult portion of the Torah with less than ten days remaining, over and above the ones assigned them previously. From earliest years, these children of ours indicate in large measure the traits of character that may later be expected. May their like increase among our people! The list of gallant participants:

Nishmat, Yotser	Joel Segal
Shema	Jonathan Cohen
Amidah	Mark Alsher
Kohaneikha	David Solis Cohen
Haftarah	Gabriel Schaff
Prayers for Govt.,	Cong.,
Ashrei, Yimlokh	Meir Segal
Musaph	Joel Sarner
Ein Keloheinu, Alenu, Adon Olam	Edmund Newman
Kiddush	Joel Segal
Torah Readers:	Jonathan Cohen, Joel Sarner, Geoffrey Newman, Josef Schaff

The Children's Opinion Of Their Services

"I like our services because it gives us a chance to learn. They stretch the mind in the learning of Hebrew. By learning how to read the service, I am able to participate like an adult. Therefore, I enjoy the service. As I learn the service part by part I begin to understand the meaning of the Hebrew prayers. Since I began to take part in the Children's Services at Mikveh Israel, I do not like to pray in any other synagogue. Joel Sarner (10)"

"I think that the Children's Services this year have been excellent. Everybody knew their parts and had done beautifully. After you do your part you feel so happy and proud of yourself. I am amazed that children who have had so little Hebrew education can participate in an adult service. I personally have enjoyed our services this year. Marc Litz"

To encourage synagogue attendance among adults, I once told this story:

"Only the diehards will gainsay that, for the average Jew, it is an act of self–sacrifice to rise up early that day and spend the rest of the morning in synagogue. There is a consensus, however, that it makes for good Jewishness, especially if the act be performed out of habit.

For many it is habitual; but for some it is still self–denying. With the first hues of dawn, a dialogue between Abe and 'an inner voice' begins.

–Are you going to synagogue today?

–Isn't it too early to decide?

–It takes time for you to make up your mind.

–Once more and no more after, (and he turns over to snatch those forty precious winks.)

He is awakened by brightening daylight. The dialogue becomes a controversy.

–You'll be late for services!

–I had a late night last night.

–Shabbat services come but once a week.

–I went last week. Not everyone attends regularly anyway.

–The children need to be taken. They like to go and depend on you.

–I'm sleepy right now.

Abe is able to uncomfortably shuffle off these thoughts and is snug again. An uneasy interlude follows, but he loses the final round, throws off his covers, gets washed and dressed. On his way to synagogue, he thought remorsefully: Perhaps they are short by one. A little earlier I could have made the Minyan!

They were awaiting a tenth man. The Rabbi reminisces over a story he had heard about the Vilna Gaon. At a service, the Gaon's congregation could muster only nine. He went to the Ark and explained that the Hebrew word for Ark, Aron, was an abbreviation for the Hebrew words: Ehad Ro–eh V'Eyno Nir–eh, One Who sees but is not seen, meaning, of course, God. The Gaon opened the Ark and said: God will be the tenth at our minyan!

"Sephardim never accepted the Gaon's tradition so we remain more self–sufficient. Abe arrives at 10:15, he hopes unobtrusively. As he joins the worshipers, he feels better conscience–wise. He likes coming to synagogue and is happier when he does. But back of his mind, skirting the sub–conscious, is the gnawing question: 'Shall I win the encounter next week?'"

Mikveh Israel Teens

A group of thirteens to sixteens, began meeting informally a year before I arrived to learn by informal discussions, have social activities, and help the synagogue in any way they could. Said one of their reporters: "Rabbi Musleah has been wonderful to us. He has prepared discussions of all sorts for our benefit. Each week we leave an hour of our time open for his intellectually stimulating discussions. The MIT's truly appreciate the efforts he has made in our behalf. Later this month, we hope to visit the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York by car and spend a day looking around the campus and the library." Using the "LIFE" issues of the Bible as reference, we discussed biblical topics as they appeared. The group helped organize a fun–filled Purim carnival for the Congregation.

The Young Marrieds Group

I converted into an Adult Institute for the entire congregation. We began by studying Pirke Aboth (The Ethics of the Fathers), an historical relevance and the material itself. Meetings were held in private homes.

I took an active part in the issuing of the **Mikveh Israel Record**. Those who ran it before were not pleased with my innovations. One sent a letter of complaint to the president, another resigned from the editorial board.

Once, in honor of Purim, my "Word" spoke about the Jewish calendar, a unique and extraordinary institution. "Our monthly basis is lunar. The moon completes her phases in 291/2 days; the Jewish month contains almost alternately 29 or 30 days. Our calendar would probably have been solely lunar as is the Moslem almanac had the Torah not required that the month in which Passover is celebrated should be in the spring. To meet this requirement, there has to be an adjustment with the solar year, about eleven days longer than the lunar. How was this inequality resolved?

"Seven times, that is, every two or three years in a nineteen year cycle, a month of thirty days is added in every 'leap' year. This is known as intercalation or insertion of an additional month called Adar. In intercalary years the two Adars are differentiated only by the ordinals 'first' and 'second.' The intercalary month is the First Adar, and customarily, sad occasions like a Yartseit, are observed then, while happy events like Purim are celebrated in the Second Adar."

Social Action

During the 1960's and 70's, the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry provided yeoman leadership in stirring the consciousness of Jewish communities to the plight of Jews in the Soviet Union. On one occasion, I led a group of my Congregation in response to a call by the Conference for a one–day Eternal Light Vigil in Washington, D.C. By kindling a symbolic Eternal Light, we joined persons of different races and religions to proclaim our determination to continue our protests until Jews in the U.S.S.R. were assured the freedom to practice and perpetuate their religion and their culture. It took decades, but more than a million Jews from the former Soviet Union ultimately found homes in the Jewish State of Israel.

The Sukka

My childhood enchantment by the beauty of the Sukka extended to helping build Mikveh Israel's ornate structure traditionally coordinated by the Congregation's Women's Group. I sounded disheartened when pointing out that, for all the pains taken over its construction, we used it minimally. So I had the Women's Group institute their annual dinners at the Sukka and told them: It is significant that the same difference exists between a house and a Sukka as exists between a palace in a town and a cottage erected at a summit on a hill. We enjoy many more comforts in the palace but on a hill we breathe purer air. At the meeting, someone made an announcement that the old Sukka Hallah cover, repaired many times, was no longer fit to use. I volunteered to request my Aunt Ramah, in Calcutta, India, to embroider one and donate it to the Synagogue. The following year, and years afterward, my Aunt's ornate cover was being used in the Sukka.

Fellowship With Christ Church

Mikveh Israel's first synagogue was built in 1782 and for the next 127 years the Congregation operated in what has been called "Society Hill," one of the oldest and prestigious neighborhoods of Philadelphia. It developed friendly relations with its neighbor, Christ Church, a Presbyterian institution, where Benjamin Franklin worshiped and in whose cemetery he is buried. The two Revolutionary–era Congregations carried on a tradition which annually celebrates their friendship by a dinner at which each in turn is host. An exchange of camaraderie, greetings and good wishes accompany dinners cooked in loco, more remarkable when Christ Church are the hosts because they must cater to the kosher requirements of a traditional Jewish synagogue. In 1976, Mikveh Israel returned to the historic area after an absence of sixty–seven years, though the dinners' record was more or less unbroken.

For the 1977 dinner at which Mikveh Israel was host for the first time in our new premises on Independence Mall. I prepared a four–page brochure showing the program and the menu.

Christ Church — Mikveh Israel Dinner
May 19, 1977
PROGRAM

Opening Remarks	Rabbi Ezekiel N. Musleah
Invocation	Rev. James L. Shannon
Grace	Rabbi Ezekiel N. Musleah
Greetings	Mr. Meyer Klein President, Mikveh Israel
	Rev. Dr. Ernest A. Harding
	Mr. Frank Dyer

Accounting Warden
Christ Church

Guided Tour of Exhibit
"Jews Across the Plains and
Rockies 1810–1900"

Robert A. Goldstein
Research Associate
Museum of American Jewish
History

Mikveh Israel Synagogue
Some Artifacts and Documents

Benediction — Rev. Dr. Ernest A. Harding

MENU

Pineapple Supreme
Chef Salad — Dressings
Boneless Breast of Capon —
Rice Bed and Mushroom Sauce
French Beans Amadine — Glazed Carrots & Raisins

Fancy Twists — Dinner Mints

French Pastry
Coffee — Tea — Sanka

The cover page displayed one of the most cherished documents of Mikveh Israel. It is a plea "To the Humane, Charitable, well–disposed People" of Philadelphia to subscribe to "the preservation of a religious house of Worship" of "the good People of the Hebrew Society of the City of Philadelphia." It pledged that "The subscription paper, will be enrolled, in the archives of their Congregation, that their Posterity may know and gratefully remember ..." Among the donors were Benjamin Franklin; William Bradford, Attorney General of Pennsylvania; Thomas McKean, a signer of the Declaration of Independence; and David Rittenhouse, the scientist.

Almost 175 years later, in similar vein, Christ Church made an unsolicited donation to Mikveh Israel's Building Fund.

The back page of the brochure carried the Philadelphia Inquirer's report of the donation at a ceremony in Christ Church, May 30, 1961.

Christ Church Gives Mikveh Israel $1,000 for Synagogue Fund

The Congregation of Christ Church, 2nd St, near Market, contributed $1000 Monday to the Building Fund of Congregation Mikveh Israel, to help the Jewish Congregation reestablish itself in the Independence Hall area.

Mikveh Israel, presently housed in a synagogue at Broad and York Streets, was located at Sterling Alley and later at 3rd and Cherry from 1740 to 1860, and at 7th and Arch Streets until 1910 [1909] when it moved to its present location.

Ceremony at Church

The Rev. Dr. Ernest A. Harding, rector of Christ Church, presented the gift in a ceremony at the church.

"Christ Church has always hoped that Mikveh Israel would be re–established in this historical area," Dr. Harding remarked. "Now Mikveh Israel has decided to come back."

Members of Mikveh Israel have contributed more than $250,000 to their Building Fund. The site for the synagogue has not yet been chosen.

Fellowship Proof

David Arons, president of Mikveh Israel, said the gift of Christ Church was "in keeping with our traditional association and friendship, and a tremendous contribution to fellowship."

For many years, Christ Church and Mikveh Israel were located about a block apart. The Church was founded in 1695, and the edifice was built in 1727.

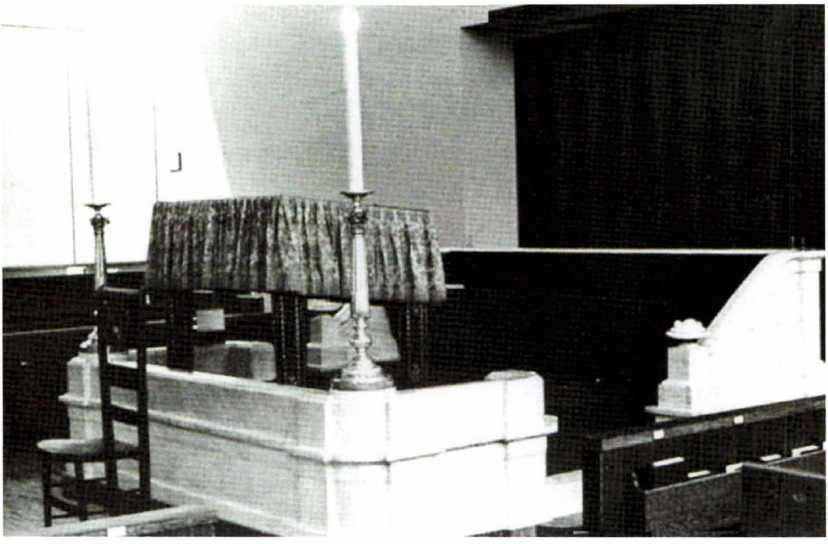
The Christ Church contribution to the Mikveh Israel Building Fund was the first made by any organization in the area.



Figure 143. ENM at Mikveh Israel's Pulpit.
Rabbi Ezekiel N. Musleah at Mikveh Israel's pulpit, 1964-1979.



Figure 144. Conducting Services from the Tebah.
In front is the chair used by Kohens of old before they made Duchan — blessed the congregation.



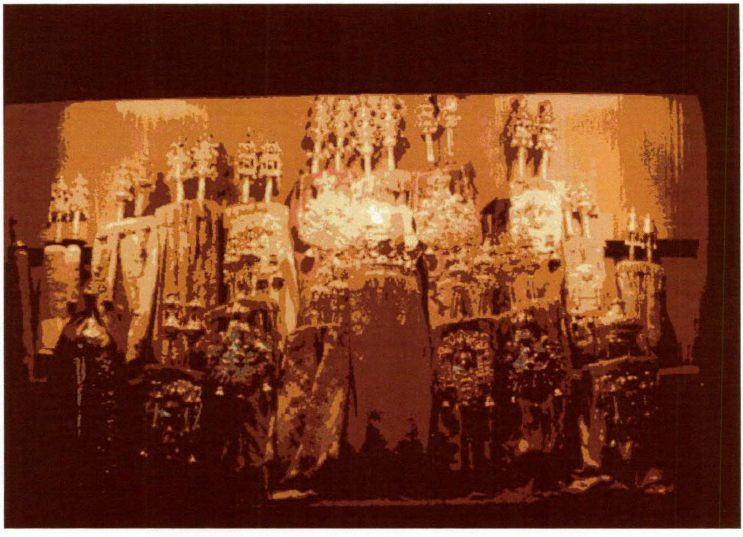


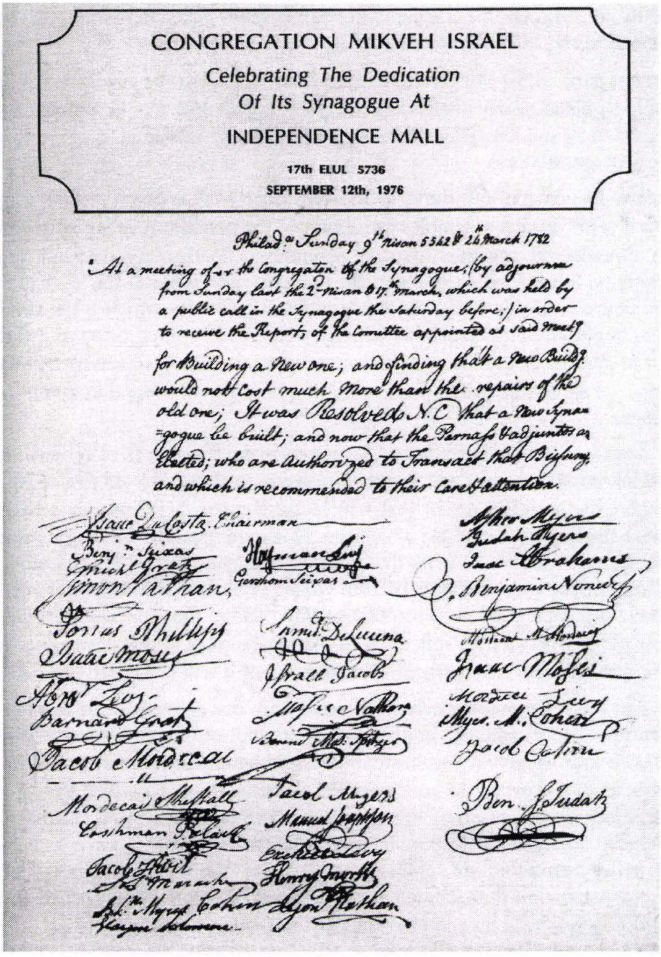
Figure 145. Mikveh Israel's Tebah and Ark, Including the Calcutta Davids' Sefer.

Mikveh Israel's Tebah (Bimah) and Ark, with the Calcutta D.H. and Norah David's Sefer to the left.

Slow Pace of Move To The Mall. Reason?

But when I arrived on the scene in 1964, the moving process was perhaps midway, with more than a decade to go. I thought I had characterized the slow–paced activity in this regard in an article I published in the Mikveh Israel Record.

> "For the most part, we of Mikveh Israel know hardly any strong reaction. Causes and effects seem to blend nearly always together. Even a change in spiritual leadership hardly ever is regarded as sudden. There is an ugly but effective modern expression — the inevitability of gradualness.
>
> "The tortoise–like pace of our move to Independence Mall is about to take a significant step forward. This project resembles the action of the pendulum swinging to and fro. It should be remembered, however, that the pendulum's horizontal movement causes also a forward activity, almost indiscernible at the moment but visible in the long run on the face of the clock. So, only today we are experiencing activity which is the result of years of decision, negotiation and patience, activity which can be interpreted as a distinct step forward. The architectural monstrosity that stood on the site has been torn down and, before long, we should be proud possessors of a bare parcel of land in lovely surroundings.
>
> "There is deep reason, I believe, for all slow movement in matters of religion. For it is religion which points the way and directs our vision to those objects that abide; it is in religion where the search is on for that which changes not. It is this changeless element in an otherwise fleeting existence for which the Synagogue stands. The very stones and pillars, the sacred Ark and the wick that is never quenched (but changed before it is extinguished) reflect and remind us of Him whose years have no end. And yet the world and we move on, sometimes fast, sometimes slow, and in the creations of today we strive to find new glory with its own reflection of the Divine. It is in this new glory we should strive to find in our new environment, but the hope of it will not speed our pace thereto.
>
> "The fact that it has become necessary to move from our present locale teaches yet another truism — that sameness and stagnation are not only impossible in the nature of our lives, both individual and corporate, but would be unwholesome were they possible. Which leads us to the matter of holidays. The communal season which lasts from Labor Day to Shavuoth, or by reason of strength to the third or fourth week in June, is about to bow out briefly. Its main purpose in bringing refreshment to the spirit is to provide us with some relief from the more serious aspects of life. Yet we should recognize this temporary suspension of duties much as the purpose of soft continuous background music is to a soloist — it is held on and helps to play up the more intensive voice or music of the soloist.
>
> "And so do we do well to regard the holidays as a time when forces are still at work within us, helping gradually and perhaps unconsciously to prepare the way for more fruitful labor, for a more perfect reconciliation with the busy world, which normally perplexes and distracts us.
>
> "We may, therefore, hope and believe that, as a result of the quiet days most of us hope to enjoy this summer, we shall be gifted with a fresh insight to see that our toil is not all a beating of the air, a ploughing of the sand; and that, with God's blessing, it will bear, as it so often does, unexpected fruit."



CONGREGATION MIKVEH ISRAEL

Celebrating The Dedication
Of Its Synagogue At

INDEPENDENCE MALL

17th ELUL 5736
SEPTEMBER 12th, 1976

Philad.a Sunday 9th Nisan 5542 th 26th March 1782

"At a meeting of ye the Congregation of the Synagogue; by adjournment from Sunday Last the 2d Nisan 0 17th March, which was held by a public call in the Synagogue the Saturday before; in order to receive the Reports of the Committee appointed at said Meeting for Building a New one; and finding that a New Building would not Cost much More than the repairs of the old one; It was Resolved N.C. that a New Synagogue be built; and now that the Parnass and Adjuntos are Elected; who are Authorized to Transact that Business and which is recommended to their Care and attention.

Figure 146. Mikveh Israel's Dedication Booklet.

For the cover of the dedication booklet, I chose appropriately the minutes of the meeting of the Congregation, 26th March 1782, authorizing the construction of the first building almost two hundred years before, signed by several notable members of that day:

"Resolved that a new synagogue be built; and now that the Parnass and adjuntos are elected; who are authorized to transact that business, and which is recommended to their care and attention." Until that time, they were conducting services in a house.

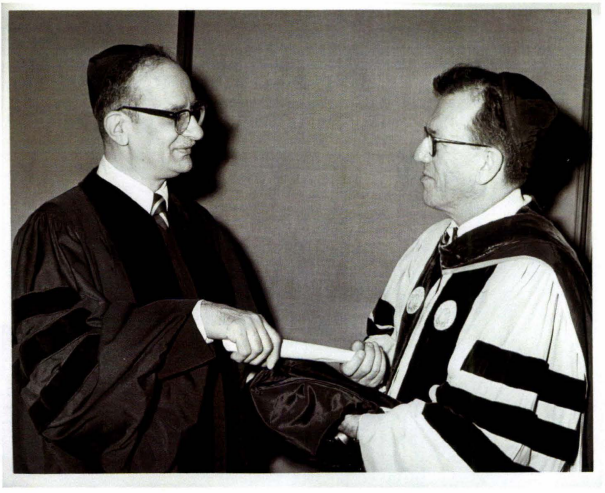


Figure 147. ENM Being Presented With D.H.L Degree.
Seminary Chancellor, Gerson D. Cohen, presenting me with the diploma of Doctor of Hebrew Literature, 1968.

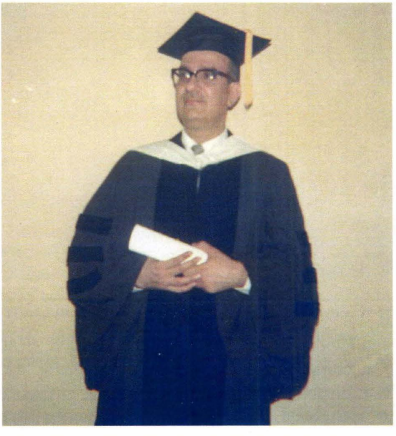


Figure 148. In Academic Cap and Gown.
In cap and gown with appropriate colors.

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA

CHAPTER 17

FAMILY INTERLUDE

DOCTOR OF HEBREW LITERATURE

For me, one of the highest aspirations in life was to write an historical treatise of my native Jewish community of Calcutta. I believe that that which we plan to do should begin early and should be pursued diligently. For many years, I had studied, researched, collected data, and written a few chapters. In our new home, I continued to revise, improve, refine, rectify, and elaborate the material. I divided my time between official duties, family, and writing history. I registered for the Doctor of Hebrew Literature program at the Seminary, requiring three summers of residency with Prof. Abraham Halkin as my proctor. He examined parts of my thesis as I completed them, offered suggestions, issued directives, prescribed readings of particular Jewish communities the world over, and finally submitted me to comprehensive questioning. I received my diploma at commencement exercises from Seminary Chancellor, Prof. Gerson Cohen in 1968.

If satisfaction could be measured in words, this 'word' could span a ream. My heart overflowed with thanksgiving to God for having kept me in life and brought me to that auspicious occasion. I pondered the value of mere academic achievement, which, I thought, was not enough. Institutions confer an infinite variety of honors, titles, degrees and awards of one kind or another, recognitions of excellence in some field of thought or action. But amid all this variety of honors and awards, there is one achievement of highest distinction, seldom mentioned, yet happily not so rare. It is a distinction that receives little of the world's publicity and for which perhaps, no medal was ever made, no degree ever conferred, but which enables one who has it to take from life some of the greatest enjoyments. These are: the approval of his own conscience, the confidence of wife and children, the respect of neighbors, trust of friends. In short, it is the high distinction of having earned the right to do mitsvoth [good deeds].

He it is who makes life worthwhile. And even though he may never see his name in print, yet he is the reason people can live in decency, he is the factor that makes virtue possible. This indeed is a noble creed: greater than cleverness, greater than knowing all the answers, is the right to be able to do the right thing. A good person may have all these other things besides, he/she may have received many other honors and citations, but the quality of goodness transcends them all.

A SECOND RECOGNITION OF MARGARET'S OUTSTANDING ROLE

This is the citation I am fortunate to bestow, a second time, upon Margaret, wife and mother par excellence. My seemingly eternal quest to complete my research and writing placed an immense burden on her. It was a trying period for her. She assumed a double load. The children were given all the time they needed. Enrolled at Solomon Schechter Day School in grades 1, 2 and 3, she drove them to school, only a small part of her motherly passion. She attended to their every need, counseled them, stimulated in them the best they could achieve by cultivating the beautiful inner universe, which lived within them. As her husband, I stand in awe of her devotedness to our children and me.

OUR CHILDREN'S AFFECTION AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

Our children excelled in filial affection and academic achievement.

In 1967, when Flora (11) returned from summer camp she enjoyed, she addressed me as follows:

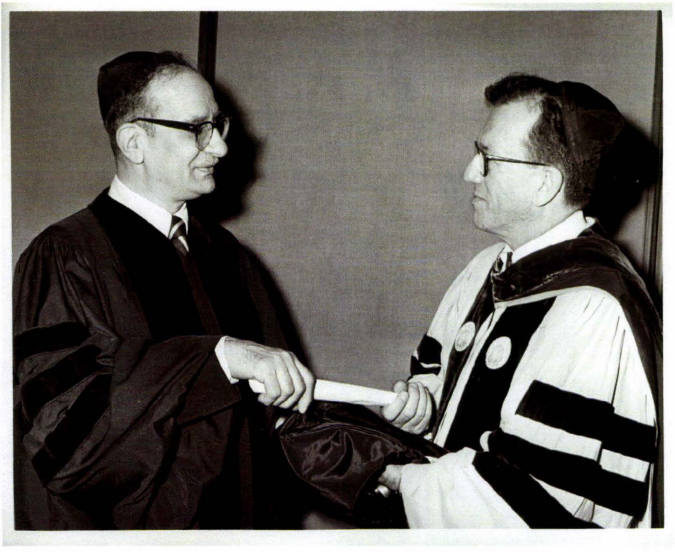


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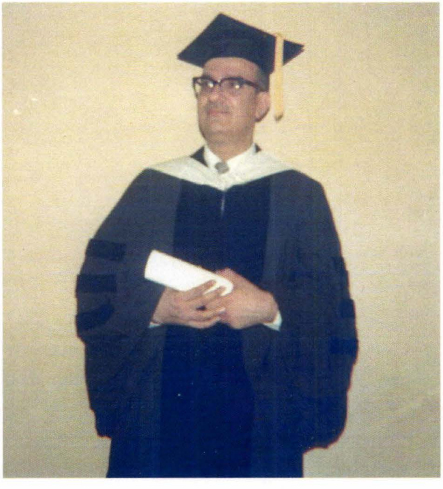


Figure 148. In Academic Cap and Gown.
In cap and gown with appropriate colors.





Figure 149. Our Children Growing and Grown.

Our girls — growing in 1968 at our cross-country expedition — and grown, about thirty-five years later, accomplished in their fields of endeavor. Flora (middle), talented and resourceful teacher in Bible and Rabbinics. Rahel (right), author of Jewish books; award-winning writer; lecturer in Indian-Jewish history and culture. Aliza, among the most skilled hands in massage therapy; gifted artist and calligrapher.



Figure 150. My Diplomas.

My testimonials, bottom to top.

(Right column) In English, Title of Rabbi - Rabbi, Teacher, and Preacher. In Hebrew - Hakham & Rabbie, 1952. In English, Doctor of Hebrew Literature, 1968. (Middle) Bachelor of Arts, with Honours in Philosophy, 1946. Doctor of Divinity, Honoris Causa, 1977. (Left) Cambridge School Certificate, 1942. Mesadder Gittin (Organizer [and writer] of Jewish Divorces), (in Hebrew & English), 1989. In Hebrew, Doctor of Hebrew Literature, 1968.

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OUR CHILDREN'S AFFECTION AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

Our children excelled in filial affection and academic achievement.

In 1967, when Flora (11) returned from summer camp she enjoyed, she addressed me as follows:

"Dear Daddy, I don't know how I can thank you for helping me make this the best summer I've had in my entire life. Mostly, I had fun. But also, the amount of knowledge the girls had, made me appreciate even more your value to me.

I appreciated before camp the value of your knowledge and your teaching me. But now I realize even more what good it has done me.

Once more, I want to thank you for the best summer in my life.

All my love, Your בְּכוֹרָה [firstborn], Flora"

In February 1968, Rahel (10) demonstrated her writing talents in a poem we preserved.

"Poetry
(Imitating Langston Hughes)
The Aim in Life
While playing ball
I hit it high,
and got some praise.
It made me feel good
Like in the field,
in life,
I try to aim high
As high as the sky.
"Not failure,
but low aim is crime."
[quoting the motto of the Jewish Girls' School, Calcutta, instituted by its principal, Rahma M. Luddy.]

We also have a record of Rahel's perseverance and discipline amid all of her naughtiness. Her mother and I realized that to threaten her with the punishment of not allowing her to do her homework for something we don't remember she had done, would have been enough for her to be repentant. She scribbled a note: 'Dear Mummy and Daddy, Please let me do my homework. If I go to school without my homework done, I'd never forgive myself. If I ever do this again, you can give me two tight slaps across my dumb face. With all my love, Rahel'

When we relented, she came up with this note: 'Darling Mummy and Daddy, Thank you for being generous enough to let me stay up [and do my homework]. I hope I can keep to my promise. Love, Rahel'

For Tu b'Shevat, 1967, Rahel (10) wrote the following:

"***Trees***
The roots of trees help save the soil,
But, of course, a little we must toil.
A lot of beautiful trees grow,
They wave their arms to and fro.
Tu b'Shevat is the holiday of trees
In Israel, where they do not freeze.
Around them gaily dance the children,
who celebrate the trees' creation."

Our children were mostly straight 'A' students. They excelled in General as well as Jewish subjects. In June, 1968, Flora, and the following year, Rahel, finished elementary school, 6th grade, to high, all–around commendation. They then attended Akiba, a secondary–high Jewish day–school, where we intended them to complete high school. But circumstances changed our plans. We thought she was capable of a more intensive program. [Details below.]

When Flora was in 7th grade, the Bible Contest conducted under the auspices of the Society for Bible Research in Israel, came to our attention. It is run on three levels — District, National and International. For the District and National she had to prepare Beresheet and Yehoshua, placed 1st in the District and 3rd in the National, becoming eligible for the International held in Israel on Yom Ha–Atzma–ut, where questions are asked in Hebrew. It was a grinding syllabus — over five hundred chapters of Bible and two parashas of Humash and Rashi! This, besides her regular schoolwork. Like a sport or a martyr or a pioneer in her own right, Flora agreed to meet the challenge, giving up all her leisure time for eight months. She gave up watching television, reciprocal visits with friends, family outings, and extended telephone conversations with peers so characteristic of American children. She and I went over the material again and again, and I quizzed her at every opportunity. She went to Israel fully confident and placed fourth of almost thirty contestants from all over the world. When we called Flora on the telephone, she was so excited she told me: "Thanks for the disciplinary schedule. It was all worth it!"

In June, 1970, I recorded the following:

> "The long–awaited, drama–filled International Bible Contest is now history, and the stake that the Congregation Mikveh Israel and Philadelphia Jewry had in it was well rewarded. Flora, the only Philadelphia representative in the decade of that type of competition, placed fourth of twenty–eight contestants from seventeen countries. She was among four finalists who each received a scholarship of one thousand Israel pounds for study in Israel, as well as several books.
>
> "Flora, 14, was the youngest of the four. The champion was an eighteen–year old resident of Petah Tikvah, Israel, and the other runners–up were an Israeli boy at seventeen and an American girl at fifteen. The latter took first place in last year's National Bible Contest.
>
> "The contest was conducted in four rounds, the first in writing and the last three orally. Going into the final round, Flora had a point less than perfect score. In the last round, in which the four winners competed for the title of World Champion, each contestant in turn answered the same questions while the other three waited in a sound–proof room, very much in the tradition of American beauty contests.
>
> "Speaking at the prize–giving session, former prime minister, David Ben Gurion welcomed the participants in his characteristic manner: 'I hope you will come also to build the country.' The participants are proud possessors of certificates signed by him and Welfare Minister, Yosef Burg. Deputy Prime Minister, Yigal Allon closed the ceremonies. Among other distinguished guests were the widow of the late President, Ben Zvi, cabinet ministers and members of the Israel rabbinate and courts.
>
> "Next to the contest itself, most exciting was a visit in Jerusalem to the home of President Zalman Shazar, who personally presented each contestant with an autographed copy in Hebrew, "Morning Stars," and talked to them. He asked Flora to carry greetings to

Congregation Mikveh Israel and to her father, the Rabbi, and noted the similarity in name between the Congregation and the Israeli agricultural school then celebrating its centennial. A photograph taken with this conversation in progress is one of Flora's treasured mementos.

"Indeed, one of the highlights of Flora's stay in Israel was a Shabbat at the School where the authorities expressed, in a letter to me, interest in establishing ties with the Congregation. What they and Flora did not know was that, at the instance of Mr. Moshe Yegar, Israel's Consul–General in Philadelphia, the Congregation had already made an introductory move but the letter did not reach its destination when Flora visited."

Rahel, meantime, entered an essay contest, which won her first place. The prize money of both girls helped toward sending them to Israel over the summer. There they made a big impression, with offers to continue schooling there. The girls were eager but we put our foot down. When Flora came back home, the Akiba authorities in jest expressed dismay at their inability to provide her with a course of studies in keeping with her level of knowledge! It set *me* on a different trend of thought. Why not remove her from day school and have her attend a public high school. For one thing, it would save several hundred dollars a year on fees as well as enable her to continue her Judaic studies at home under my direction. The day school authorities were dumb–founded but saw the logic of my thinking. As part of her admission process, Flora took a test and placed in the 99 percentile, that is, only 1% of students could have gotten a better grade. The vice–principal who interviewed Flora told her that she had not seen that grade in many a year. Rahel, barely two months at Akiba, too was transferred to Philadelphia High School for Girls, where she did exceptionally well in the admissions test. In the National Bible Contest, she placed second and third in the Internationals. Aliza, in 6th grade at Schechter's, was admitted into Masterman's, an institution for superior students, where she worked out very well. The following year, she joined her sisters at Girls' High. She won first place in the National Bible Contest, but did not enter the International competition.

The three of them were exceptionally cooperative and persevering. Not unusually they would come to me at 10 p.m. for Judaic tutoring only after finishing their school homework. The weekends, especially Shabbat afternoons, were more amply suited for study with me. Their gruelling application to the double–edged studies program brought them well–deserved accolades. In classes of 400 in each of their graduating years, our girls placed in the first ten — Rahel, 1st, winning the Hannah M. Dodd Gold Medal, Flora, 4th, and Aliza, 9th. And they ventured another formidable, painstaking project of Judaica and General studies in the Joint Studies Program at the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York and Columbia University, earning simultaneously degrees of Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Religious Education, Flora majoring in Talmud, Rahel in Creative Writing, and Aliza in English. Flora went on to receive a Master's Degree in Talmud from the Seminary.

On May 9th, 1970, my pulpit remarks were given in honor of the Eleventh International Bible Contest, Flora participating.

"When Haim Weizmann paid his first visit to Erets Yisrael in 1907, he reported to his newly wedded wife on his return that one of the things that had struck him most about the land was that the air was so transparent. 'The air so transparent?' she asked. 'Yes,' he replied, 'it is so transparent you can see back through it two thousand years.'

"How true! Perhaps it is transparent 3500 years and more when we consider a verse in this week's Parasha [Kedoshim]. 'When you shall come into the Land and plant any tree for food, you shall regard its fruit as forbidden. Three years it shall be forbidden for you, not to be eaten. In the fourth year, all its fruit shall be set aside for jubilation before the Lord; and only in the fifth year you may use its fruit.'

"Every year since 1956, members of forty agricultural settlements offer up their grape harvest to the Almighty at Kibbutz Ta–oz on the road to Jerusalem. This is a faithful re–enactment of the ancient ceremony when Israelites from all corners of the Land brought fruits of the fourth year to the Temple at Jerusalem.

"Among those taking part in the ceremony are immigrants from Yemen, Cochin in India, and Kurdistan in Northern Iraq, who have covered Judea's bleak hills with vineyards and orchards. The Shofar is blown and baskets of grapes are presented to a Kohen, and then a departure from the past, the grapes are distributed among the onlookers. A program of folk–dancing and songs by children of Kibbutz Ta–oz follows. (A group of folk–dancers from nearby Tzor–a, the birthplace of the biblical Samson, also participate.) Many visitors from abroad are present. Thus, true to the ancient edict, the fruit are set aside for jubilation before the Lord.

"The transparency of the air in modern Israel is evident also in the study of the Bible. The great academies of ancient Babylonia and Palestine, where Jewish law and practice were formulated amid persecution and comparative freedom, are well–known. Even when the Romans imposed a ban on the study of the Torah, a few Rabbis got together in hiding in Bnai Brak to discuss the intricate laws of Pesah. They talked all night, and interrupted their study only when reminded by their students that dawn had broken. Only such dedication to the study of Torah could keep our people from disintegration.

"Today in Israel Jews do not have to study Torah in secret. Biblical study has been revived primarily by a group called The Society for Biblical Research with a membership of no less than 12,000, including 500 Bible study groups in Israel. Group Number One — the so–called Ben Gurion Group — generally meets in President Shazar's home in Jerusalem, though its members trek several times a year to Ben Gurion's cottage at Sde Boker. Two other members are: Supreme Court Justice, Moshe Silberg, and Yigal Yadin, the noted archeologist.

"A year after Israel was born, nine students of the Hebrew University joined with three Bible professors to establish a Bible Research Society. Starting modestly, they did not realize that they were inaugurating a cultural movement, which was to spread throughout Israel and world Jewry, and achieve a key position in the spiritual life of the Jewish people.

"Its first project was a national Bible convention: already, [in 1970] sixteen conventions have taken place. At each convention two books of the Bible are studied. The Society also publishes books and minutes of the meetings of the Ben Gurion study group which serve as guides for other study groups.

"Out of this Society has also come the National and International Bible Contests, the world–wide contest for Jewish youth held in Jerusalem on Israel's Independence Day. This year, the eyes and ears of Philadelphia Jewry are keenly set for the results because of our stake in it — Flora Musleah's participation. Let us examine the uniqueness of these contests.

"Every nation has its favorite sport and contests. In America, baseball, in England, cricket, and in India, tennis. As for Jews, during our many centuries of dispersion and disenfranchisement, we had neither the mood nor the opportunity to perfect ourselves in any physical sport. Whatever energy we could muster was applied by us to the realm of the intellect. Since Israel's birth its inhabitants do engage in physical sports including the Olympics and are slowly making headway.

"In 1958, when Israelis were celebrating the tenth anniversary of their independence, the Bible Research Society evolved a novel sport all their own, again in the realm of the intellect, a contest for the world championship for knowing the Bible. Following District and National exercises, national victors are flown to Jerusalem to compete in the "World Series" for the supreme crown of Bible championship. This year, students from France, Denmark, Canada, Venezuela, South Africa and Australia, besides of course Israel and the United States, will participate.

"The setting of the Contest is impressively dramatic. It is moderated by a justice of Israel's Supreme Court, and is carried live on Israel's national television and radio. Each contestant stands by his/her national flag, and whenever any one of them is called upon to answer, his/her colors are momentarily illuminated by an electric light. Great dignity is lent to the proceedings by the presence of the President and Prime Minister, heralded by the sounding of trumpets. Also present are members of the Cabinet and Kenesset, university professors and theologians. The only resemblance to the Olympics is in the prizes — the champion receives a gold medal, the second place winner, silver, and third place gets bronze. The past is thus being translated into the present, if not religiously then as part of the culture and history of the Land. One can see it in the transparency of the air.

"Yigal Yadin, who led Israel fight for independence, wrote a book about war strategy in the Bible. It is said he based his successful battlefield plan against the Arabs on the strategies of Joshua and Gideon and other biblical heroes. I once read an anecdote about a visit of the wife of the Israeli ambassador to the U.N. to her physician. He prescribed treatment by sound. 'I suppose you never thought of that before,' he said. 'Oh,' she replied, 'in Israel we had that three thousand years ago. Joshua used that against the walls of Jericho!'

"As Israel and the Jews of the world celebrated the 22nd anniversary of its founding in the midst of turmoil and vital struggle against inveterate enemies, they demonstrated characteristics once described by Harold Macmillan, Britain's former Prime Minister who was asked what sort of future he envisaged for Britain without its empire. Would it be like modern Sweden or ancient Athens? He pondered, then answered: 'No, the future I hope for Britain is more like that of Israel. In the time of Elizabeth I, they were only two

> million — in the time of Napoleon, only ten million. In 1967, while the world debated, Israel imposed its will on its enemies. They exhibited what great people need — resolution, courage, determination and pride. These are what really count in both humans and nations.'
>
> "And we might add, these are the sterling qualities that Israelis inhale from what Weizmann called their transparent air, saturated with the tomes of the living Bible going back 3500 years."

It is not easy to understand why some opt for missions impossible and seem to enjoy them. The decision to become a candidate for the International Bible Contest held in Jerusalem on May 7th, 1973 was no easy one for daughter Rahel, even after she won second place in the Nationals. But once the decision's taken, the direction is self–evident, a seemingly endless confinement within the four ells of the Bible. Like Flora before her, she sweated through its consequences ever since. The moment of truth, however, was more pleasurable. The trip to Israel and a two–week stay there, including Israel's 25th anniversary celebrations, was an exciting culmination to the vigil. The Contest itself posed its own peculiar problems, as national Israeli television and the presence of Ben Gurion and other state dignitaries might help one's ego but certainly not one's fright. Surely, by then, Rahel knew the biblical word to the wise: Hazak ve–Ematz — Be strong and of Good Courage! She placed third of five finalists and thirty–three contestants from eighteen countries. At fifteen, she was the youngest of three Americans and two Israelis who reached the final round of questions, and the only one who did not get the benefit of formal instruction from a Jewish educational institution. This fact was drawn to the attention of one of the judges, Yigal Alon, by Dr. Abraham Katsch, President of Philadelphia's Dropsie University, who was present at the Contest.

David Ben–Gurion, Chairman of the roster of judges, read a few biblical verses and signed the winners' certificates. Each finalist also was awarded IL 1,000 scholarship for a year of study in Israel as well as some books. All contestants visited the home of President Zalman Shazar, who talked informally with them.

Aliza was in a grade higher in public school when she took the national Bible Contest, and though she placed first, did not go on to the international level.

MIKVEH ISRAEL'S MINYAN CLUB

In 1973, then a mature young lady, Flora delivered a D'var Torah at a breakfast of Mikveh Israel's Minyan Club, a Sunday morning entry. This was in keeping with the tradition being built up of having Mikveh Israel's young people show off a bit of their Jewish education. Flora discussed woman's role in Jewish law and focussed attention on the rabbinic rule: 'A woman is exempted from positive laws that are dependent for their fulfillment on fixed times.' The reason for this principle, apparently discriminatory, affirms the separate but equally responsible roles held by men and women in the family. The need for equal education for girls was stressed. Examples of outstanding women in Jewish history were given. Flora concluded by expressing the need to modify some of the laws regarding women, which make them less than equals in certain aspects of the law.

Jonathan R. Cohen, 14, had the spotlight at the Minyan Club breakfast a month previous. He traced the history of rabbinic leadership beginning with Johanan ben Zakkai and showed how Jews had been blessed with a continuous stream of brilliance and dedication in those who came

to the helm of religious life. The teachers of the Mishna were followed both in Palestine and Babylonia by those of the Gemara, and the, in turn, were succeeded by generations of Geonim. Jewish learning then shifted to Spain, France and Germany. This illustrates the figure of speech: 'When the sun of such–and–such rabbi sets, the sun of his successor has already risen.'

To celebrate the end of the first year of the Minyan Club, its youngest member treated it to an historical treatise. Mark Alsher, 13, spoke about the Chinese Jews and some of their rituals. From a sketch of their synagogue he brought along, one could detect similarities to the Temple at Jerusalem, since the structure was oriented to an ascending scale of sanctity. It differed from Chinese temples, which faced south, in that the worshiper turned toward the West and Jerusalem. As a relic of the ancient Jewish system of offerings, incense was used, but animals not killed. There was an abattoir near the temple used only to ritually kill for food, and from this custom did the local Jews become distinctive among fellow Chinese, they came to be known as "T'iao–chin Chiao," literally, "the sect which plucks out the sinew." They also practised ablutions before they took part in religious services.

They possessed all five Torah Books, read in synagogue, and many of the other Books, including Esther. This does not help dating the Chinese Jewish origin, because, as was pointed out in the discussion that followed, Christian missionaries had a hand in the trend of local Jewish practices. A clear indication of this is the fact that they had the Book of Maccabees, retrieved from oblivion, not by Jewish scholars, but by being incorporated in the Christian canon

The following **essay on Brotherhood, written by Flora** without preparation in less than a class period, won first prize in the Omin Essay Contest for High School Seniors at the High Schools For Girls in Philadelphia, 1974.

> "'Brotherhood' is one of those words that has been used and overused until it has reached the stage of being a noble word one uses in a speech but that most people don't really pay much attention to. But in this age of big cities, large groups of people, and impersonalization, it is important to look beneath the surface, the sound of the word, at least occasionally.
>
> "Every human being is separate from every other one. We are all individuals, and usually take pride in our separateness. But each man is not an island, or a peak among valleys. Each person cannot exist alone. We all need others with whom we can share our thoughts and ideas, our likes and dislikes, the very essence of our personalities. To me that is what brotherhood is all about — sharing with others the things that are important to us.
>
> "In urban communities, brotherhood too often means a few racial problems, as opposed to many. We are told by government officials or people otherwise in authority, that blacks have just as many rights as do whites, that they, or Chinese, or American Indians, or Jews, must not be discriminated against when they look for schools or homes or jobs. They talk as though the idea is relatively new, maybe about fifty years old. But brotherhood is as old as the Bible. When God said, nearly 3500 years ago, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' and all the other laws about being kind to your neighbor, He could have been talking to us today. In fact, the Hebrew word translated as

'neighbor,' is really: 'brother.' The theme of brotherhood has recurred time and again throughout history. In our own revolution against the British, the Colonial Americans exemplified it. The French Revolution, following closely after, used it as part of its slogan. Liberty, Equality, and *Fraternity*. All men are equal; all men are brothers. On this basis, the American Negro was freed from slavery. The list is endless.

"And yet, in spite of the quest for realizing the principles of brotherhood, the word remains a principle, an ideal. The innumerable wars in human history attests to that. Brotherhood means peace among all mankind. Brotherhood means you, living side by side contentedly with your neighbor, and me living next to mine, if the color of his skin is the same as mine, and or even if it is different. Love (an even more maligned word than brotherhood) knows no bounds or bars, as the color of one's skin of one's religion. My friend, my brother or sister, is one I can turn to in joy or sorrow and feel comforted to know that someone is there. And that other people seem to feel the same way. That might be why brotherhood seems to be an out–dated word, which went out of style with a low–decibel environment. We have had only patches of love, of brotherhood, of fraternity between individuals and nations. They are the Camelots of history, those little pockets of peace. We must accept the fact that men have conflicting tendencies, and we must strive to make the gentlest ones the strongest of all, and the most enduring. Then, of course, King Arthur [!!] will return for a lengthy reign, and the Messiah will come, and peace will rule the world. If we try ***very*** hard." [Incidentally, Flora married Arthur Yavelberg; ideally related to King Arthur?]

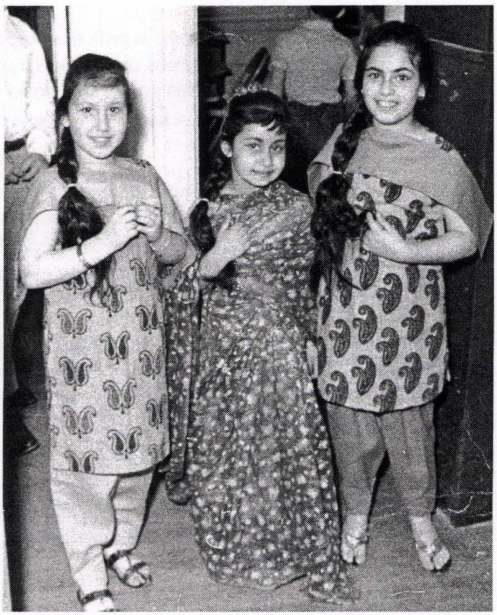


Figure 151. In Indian Garb at a Purim Carnival.
(Right to left) Flora, Aliza and Rahel in Indian garb at a Purim carnival sponsored by the Mikveh Israel school in 1965.



Figure 152. Rock and Roll Spree.

Rock & Roll spree at the Dukes' home, Los Angeles, CA, 1968

(l to r) Aliza, Rahel, Flora.

CHAPTER 18

CROSS–COUNTRY VACATION

My doctoral thesis completed in 1968, we awarded ourselves — myself as well as Margaret and the children who endured three years of penance — with a long trip three thousand miles across the United States by car, June 24 to July 30. American roadways make driving so easy that it wasn't nearly as far as it seems. We obtained road maps and directions, and tips from a couple of Congregation members. Details were comprehensive and minute — names of hotels and their facilities, routes and counter–routes, climatic conditions and motor requirements. We drove a compact GM that had done 30,000 miles, and took along our good friend, Esther Gershone. We thought Margaret would help with the driving, but on the second day high winds terrified her and she gave over the wheel to me for the balance of the trip.

On most days, the children enjoyed the trip except for longer jaunts. They compiled scrapbooks in which they drew places we visited, colored natural scenes, recorded license plates of cars from different states, sang, quarreled, picnicked, and took offence to Esther's crotchety conduct.

We set out at 2:30 in the afternoon on the Pennsylvania Turnpike and, after driving 250 miles, stayed overnight at Pagano's Motor Lodge at Stanton, PA.

Tuesday, 6/25. The car began consuming an excess of engine oil through which we drove to West Virginia and Ohio, and spent the night at Terre Haute, Indiana, 462 miles. Wednesday, 6/26. Spent all morning repairing defective radiator and water pump. Thirty–five miles ahead, the fan belt snapped. Fortunately, we carried a spare. We held white handkerchiefs to indicate, not that we were giving up but that we were disabled. Cars passed us by except one driver who stopped to help and told us: "Would you believe I do this for a living?" I thought of telling him: "Would you believe that I think you are Eliyahu Hanavi?" [This was not the first time he 'visited' with us, nor will it be his last!]

Toward the evening, we passed the St. Louis area near the Onondaga Caves discovered in 1798 by Daniel Boone and opened to the public in 1904 during the exhibit of the St Louis World's Fair in 1904. Spent an intriguing two hours looking at extraordinary formations of calcium carbonate — stalactite, a deposit resembling an icicle hanging from the roof or sides of the cavern, and stalagmite, an inverted stalactite, formed on the floor of the cave by a drip of calcareous water. The two Lily Pond Rooms and the Lily Pad Room are the most beautiful. Sparkling calcite formations in a multitude of colors and shades present a jewel–like effect in a land of fantasy. On the way out, more trouble with the car — it landed heavily on a sharp pebble damaging one of the tires. Fifteen miles ahead, it was flat. Unable to use our jack, we were aided by a kindly couple. Thus ended the adventure associated with the car. It performed almost perfectly the rest of the way. We spent the night at the Forest City Motor Lodge in St. James, MO — 300 miles. [Worthwhile visiting, though we did not go there — Meramic Caverns, the world's only five–story cave.]

Thursday, June 27. Oklahoma. Will Rogers Turnpike, Claremore exit. Visited Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Oklahoma. In tribute to Will Rogers, native son. Dedicated 1938. In 1911, Rogers, part Cherokee Indian, purchased 20 acres on which the memorial is located. The West Gallery contains many personal items that reveal his versatility. A top movie star played a

leading role in 70 movies. A great trick roper. Newspaper writer and feature columnist and impromptu speaker, philosopher and humorist. The Diorama Room contains thirteen scenes in his life. Killed in an airplane accident in Alaska, 1935, age 55. Body permanently interred on memorial grounds, 1944.

Passed Tulsa and Oklahoma City. Western entertainment at Frontier City camping ground off main highway. Dinner. Spent night at Yukon, Ok, Taff Motel. 449 miles.

Friday 6/28. Installed screen around radiator to safeguard against bugs. I had a haircut at Weather Ford. At Amarillo, Texas, stopped for drinks and to cool engine on a very hot day. Highway 66. At Tucumcari, New Mexico, 108 degrees. Car wheels aligned. Had sherbets and ice–cream. The hot winds made us feel we were at the edge of an oven. Highway 104, 31 miles north of Tucumcari, is Conchas Lake and Dam, second largest body of water in N.M., fishing, boating, water skiing. Mountain and desert merge into contrasting terrain. Colorful aspens cover the Northern N.M. Mountains, sand dunes lie alongside mountains and flowering cactus lend color to desert shrubs. Most interesting is the Continental Divide at an elevation of 8112 feet above sea–level, where a marker reads: 'Rainfall divides at this point.' To the west it drains into the Pacific Ocean, to the east, into the Atlantic.

New Mexico is home to American Indians of the SouthWest. They are silversmiths, weavers, and pottery makers. We looked for Indians in their colorful native dress but didn't see any as we were in some hurry because Shabbath was about three hours away and Albuquerque was 175 miles away. We made it in time, after buying groceries.

Observed Shabbat with candle, Kiddush, Motsi and corned beef sandwiches (Kasher, of course, which kept unbelievably well), but too tired to sing. 541 miles. Stayed at Luna Lodge.

Shabbat, 6/29. After breakfast, went for a walk, intending to visit the old town, eight miles away. After 21/2 miles, we felt the heat and unable to proceed. Surrounded by hills, the town is beautiful. On the way back, Esther was knocked down by a car and hospitalized. Fortunately, suffered only bruises. After Kiddush and a delightful lunch of tuna fish, fresh vegetables and watermelon, I gave Flora a Talmud lesson. Spent a relaxing few hours the rest of the day, part of which the kids enjoyed the cool water of the pool.

Sunday, 6/30. Drove to Sandia Crest in Cibola National Forest towering over the central New Mexico at the height of 10,678 feet by zigzag paths and scenic beauty. Took a picture at the marker, everyone feeling the temperature of 40 degrees! Did not have time for the chair lift. Tried again to see Indians at least at work, but failed again because it was Sunday.

Thirty miles from Flagstaff to the Grand Canyon. [Real Estate note: $5.00 down, $10.00 per month for over an acre of land.] No accommodation at the park. Stayed the night at Red Feather Lodge, five miles from the park. Saw sunset at Hopi Point. A little disappointing, judging from reports. Returned to Motel at 9 p.m. 508 miles.

Thought we could see sunrise, left motel at 5:30, but sun had risen an hour earlier. Drove 24 miles to Observation Station (Watchtower). En route saw Lipan Point, exquisite views. By 10:00 a.m. completed tour of East Rim. We didn't see too much of the Canyon, but our drive followed a picturesque road through fragrant forests with many stops at lookout points along the rim. Got

enough of the breath–taking panorama of the spectacular power of erosion though the trails of the Colorado River in northern Arizona. Rahel remarked in her scrapbook: 'At Kaibab Trail, pony riders had to be: 1. over twelve years old, and 2. below 200 lbs. fully dressed. Disqualified under one, Rahel and Aliza, and under two, Ezekiel.' Equity demanded we abandon the trip!

Monday, 7/1. Left the Canyon about 10 a.m. arrived Kingman at about 1 p.m., 175 miles away. Took route 93N to Las Vegas. En route passed Hoover Dam, seventy miles from Kingman. Took a hurried look at the dam site converting the mighty Colorado River into vital electricity. Passed very pretty Boulder City, Nevada, a town born because of man's need to create an important landmark to progress. On to Las Vegas, thirty miles away. Checked into "Purple Heather Motel," family unit. 364 miles.

Las Vegas. Stayed at 'Dante in Hell,' 'Paradise Lost,' for the night. Played bingo, slot machine, kino and wheel of fortune — all so strange. Nothing to show for it — lost $10.00. Witnessed a floor show at the beautiful Dunes Hotel. Attractive. Back to the motel at 1:30 a.m. Paradise Regained!

Tuesday, 7/2. Thru' desert to Barstow, 150 miles. Inspection station checked for fruits coming into California. On to San Bernadino and then to Lake Arrowhead, twenty–five miles away. Driving time, one hour. Roads winding through the mountains reminded us, native Indians, of drive from Siliguri to Darjeeling in the Himalaya Mountains. Beautiful scenery. From a height looking down, cars driving up looked like toys. Highest point, over 5000 feet, but the lake, a little lower. Rahel and Aliza enjoyed a dip in the lake. Spent three hours picnicking.

First experience on the Freeway, I was being 'honked' while doing 70 miles an hour in the left lane. Arrived at the Cohens at 6:15 p.m. 359 miles. Dinner at Cohens.

In Los Angeles, we were guests of Margaret's school friend, Seemah Cohen's cousin, Maurice Duke. Seemah had stayed with us in Philadelphia over several months a year earlier.

Philadelphia to Los Angeles — 3300 miles including about 400 miles outside the direct route.

Wednesday, 7/3. Got to know how different California is. Making a left turn in the face of oncoming cars, I was stopped by a police car. What did I do wrong? In California, oncoming cars have the right of way. In Pennsylvania, a driver may make a left turn if it is safe to do so. Went shopping at Farmer's Market, a center for food, clothes and gifts and dining outdoors. Very expensive. We preferred to shop at Safeways on the other side of the street.

Thursday, 7/4. Universal City, L.A. — The world of simulation. Its studios are the largest movie–making and television production facility in the world. Located at the gateway of Hollywood on a 420–acre site, the studio consists of 36 sound stages (1968); the world's largest property warehouse with an inventory of 5 million items; man–made lakes; towns with European, Western and modern streets; jungles; plus bits of New England, New York and East Berlin. Candy–striped glamor trams take passengers through universal's wonderland. Most attractive, Prop Plaza, where props are stored. Some props may be used for visitor's entertainment. We have an autograph of Bob Hastings, a star of 'McHale's Navy', and a picture in a 1901 Rolls Royce. Our kids came upon a vacant circus cage, leapt inside, and Margaret 'fed' the hungry Musleah monkeys, despite the law. Passed Lana Turner's dressing room and rehearsal hall.

Waited for live stunts to begin. Stuntmen show how fights are done. 'Shooting' on a Western street. One of the most spectacular of all stunts — a man 'falls' off a 35–foot roof after being 'shot.' We went aboard the Psychedelic Love Wagon from 'Sweet Charity'. An exquisite picture of our group having refreshments on a height, with hills in the background, brought to a close a memorable day.

Friday, 7/5. Marineland of the Pacific. Located at the tip of beautiful Palos Verde Peninsula in Los Angeles County, is the world's largest oceanarium. It is a three–ring sea circus consisting of a Whale Stadium, where the first trained whales in the world cavort in regularly scheduled performances; a three thousand–seat Sea Arena, where porpoises and sea–lions go through their bag of tricks; and the world's largest Fishbowl, a four story tank containing 3000 fish of some hundred varieties.

Had a boat ride on the Pacific Ocean. Picnicked at Lake Arrowhead.

Observed Shabbath as if we were home.

Shabbath, 7/6. Attended Sephardi synagogue, Kahal Joseph, after walking forty–five minutes each way. They had a small turn–out, and a hodge–podge of melodies. Rabbi Elias Levi and Hazzan Sass Ezra try their best. I conducted part of the services. Lack of school facilities, main drawback.

Motsa–ei Shabbath. Visited the Sunset Strip on Hollywood Boulevard. Glamorous, exciting. Bumper to bumper traffic. One of the exotic places there:

Groman's Chinese Theater, L.A. Footprints and handprints of movie stars etched in cement for posterity. Aliza tried her hand at a spot she favored, but the cement wouldn't take. I assured her that when she returns with fame in a few years, the terra firma would readily soften up for her beautifully–shaped fingers.

Sunday, 7/7. Tour of Los Angeles City with Benny Judah, Margaret's distant relative: Pacific Ocean Park, Century Plaza Hotel, Forest Lawn (for history, religion and art), Union Station, and Olivera Street, where, nudged by 'reporter' Benny Judah, the Olivera Street News printed an Extra edition with an emblazoned front–page caption: LOS ANGELES WELCOMES RABBI E. MUSLEAH.

Took a picture outside the Golden Pagoda restaurant, but refrained from going in for cocktails.

Monday, 7/8. Beverly Hills and Bel Air and Trusdale Estates. Given a street map of the Stars' Residences. We marked all the stars we would like to meet and at least get their autographs if not get invited to tea. Milton Berle, Joey Bishop, Jimmy Durante, Zsa Zsa Gabor (for a first–hand rendition of Ma Ma Youcaro) (?), Danny Kaye, Gene Kelly, Raymond Massey (to find out if he was truly my double), Frank Sinatra, and Red Skelton. There were others on our list but we didn't think we would have time for them. We made a bee–line for Zsa Zsa Gabor at 938 Bel Air Road. When we got there, (at least we thought we got there), all we could find was a camouflaged mansion we imagined was her residence. We had to settle for Margaret's copyright rendition of Ma Ma Yuocaro! We tried Danny Kaye — it wasn't funny when we were told we had to have an appointment. And Raymond Massey had to be satisfied with reports that he

looked like me! Disappointed and disgruntled, we took a shot at Carol Burnette's residence, that is, just the white pillar of the entrance with the number 600 on it, standing for 600 Doheny Drive, and just a white pillar of Fred Astaire's home without a 'Top Hat,' 1155 San Ysidro Dr. We turned back with our street map, names and addresses for posterity, and much wiser in our star–gaze!

Despondent, we wandered along the Palos Verdes Estates and investigated what it would take to buy one of the less expensive properties on the beach should we wish to retire there. After all, we could have a small but comfortable synagogue and the neighborhood would, by that time, be full of retired friends who would like a place to worship in a delightful setting just twenty–five miles from Los Angeles. On the way back to our temporary residence, we did come across the world's shortest railway, traveling at 33% grade for 315 feet in downtown L.A. It made short shrift of our grandiose plans; we still live modestly in central Philadelphia! And we lost track of our would–be friends in Palos Verdes Estates!

Tuesday, 7/9. Busch Gardens. For Beer and Birds. 171/2 acres of exotic tropical plants, brightly hued flowers, free flying colorful birds, (witnessed a parrot display), a monorail, a leisurely boat ride make Busch Gardens an exciting experience. Roscoe Blvd. off the San Diego Fwy.

Had lunch at SRF Cafe — India Center, 4866 Sunset Blvd. Hollywood, CA. Luscious Indian dishes we all relished. The organizers subscribed to the teachings of a Guru, Paramahansa Yogananda, founder of Self–Realization Fellowship (SRF) in America. At night we were taken to the Griffith Observatory, Griffith Park. A breath–taking view of the galaxy of lights of LA at night.

Wednesday, 7/10. 9:00 a.m. Went to NBC Studios, 3000 West Alameda Ave, meaning to pick up tickets for the "Let's Make A Deal" show. Instead, we got tickets for "You Don't Say" for Thursday 7/11. Roamed around. Visited Margaret's cousin, Saul Levi and wife Helen. In the group picture: His mother, Masuda, brother, Ellis and wife, Gloria, sister, Molly, friends Maurice Morris and wife Anita, and Morton Einy.

Thursday, 7/11. The Children had a jazz session at home. In the evening, we went to "You Don't Say" show, which we watched in Philadelphia, August 14, 15, and 16.

Friday, 7/12. Knotts Berry Farm. Beach Blvd. (highway 39), off Santa Ana Fwy. Apart from its eats, including world–famous Boysenberry pie, in which we had no interest, the Farm offers an unusual kind of family entertainment: Ride an ore car through a mountain mine, pan for real gold, ride a stage coach, a mule caravan and a narrow gauge railroad, see trained barnyard animals at Old MacDonald's Farm, and wander through Ghost Town. For us Philadelphians, we were intrigued by a duplicated Independence Hall, brick by brick, together with an exact replica of Liberty Bell, complete with the crack. Margaret had her portrait done in pastels, which are a more ancient and honored medium than oils. They do not fade. The children had most fun with Indian headdresses, and posed for pictures at a Tepee and with Chief White Eagle Cherokee — Indians all!

Japanese Garden and Deer Park, in the same vicinity as Knotts. Walked through the historic Torrii Gate, a red carpet reception to the Gardens. Took a delightful picture under large Japanese Lanterns, a smaller variety decorated our Calcutta Sukka, thanks to Uncle Elias. Pet and fed scores of tame deer that roam freely. Shot pictures with delightful Japanese girls. (Rahel's scrap book remark: Ezekiel liked that!) Were enchanted by doves that alight on your hand and shoulders. We held them in our hands while the cameraman did his job. Another lovely picture of Margaret by the lagoon, adjoining the Japanese Tea House.

Movieland Wax Museum and Palace of Living Art, nearby. Authentically captured the glamour of Hollywood, stars in their greatest roles. Edward G. Robinson as "Little Caesar," Lucille Ball in "I Love Lucy," Marilyn Monroe in "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes," Kirk Douglas as "Spartacus,"and Sophia Loren in "Two Women." Towering in the courtyard of the Palace of Living Art is the 18–foot marble reproduction of Michelangelo's David, and indoors, recreations of famous sculptures and paintings like Mona Lisa, Pieta, Pinkie, Blue Boy and others.

Shabbath, 7/13. Spent another very relaxing day in a Shabbath atmosphere no different from home — a little Torah study, singing and rest. Attended Kahal Joseph again.

Sunday, 7/14. Afternoon at Hollywood Bowl. Kids Day.

Monday, 7/15. Enjoyed an afternoon with Margaret's cousin, Kim and Jay Horowitz.

Tuesday, 7/16. Disneyland, Anaheim, CA. One of the high points of our trip and a fitting finale to the Los Angeles visit. Left at 9 a.m. and returned at 11 p.m. Our children enjoyed Disney Land — Main Street, representing America, 1890–1910. Horse–drawn, as well as horseless, trolleys. Fire engines answer the alarm in a fire wagon. In Town Square is the depot for the Santa Fe and Disney Land Railroad where trains depart for a grand circle tour of the Magic Kingdom., climaxed by the grand Canyon and the Primeval world. On Adventureland's Jungle cruise, 'explore,' see Indian elephants in bathing pools, hippos in the Belgian Congo, and other safari animals. Exotic tropical regions exhibit a rain forest and a thundering waterfall. Tropical birds, Tikis and flowers in the Enchanted Tiki Room, a musical fantasy of the South Seas. We thoroughly enjoyed Fantasyland. Journeyed with Snow White through the dark forest to the diamond mine of the Seven Dwarfs, and rode through the streets of Old London Town. Journeyed through Storybook Land to see the homes of the Three Little Pigs, Pinocchio's Village, and Cinderella's Castle. The newest attraction in 1968, its stars are the children of the world. It features the songs and dances of youngsters from more than a hundred nations, each singing in his native language. For the grand finale, all children join in to sing, "It's a Small World After All."

Another striking feature is "Tomorrowland," depicting some of tomorrow's potential developments today. One of them, noiseless mass transportation, includes the Monorail System, that goes into and through a landmark of Disneyland, the Rock. The kids relished rides on water and land, and were enchanted by underwater life through submarine windows. After sundown, we watched open–mouthed a fireworks display, and an open–air stage show. Walt Disney's celebrated remark came alive in us: 'I don't want the public to see the real world they live in while they're in the park. I want them to feel they are in another world. It is a land that dreams are made of.

Wednesday, 7/17. To recuperate from Disneyland and muster strength for our homeward trip, we relaxed in Exposition Park at the Sunken Gardens. On the way back, we looked into the Music Center.

We drove 800 miles in the Los Angeles area and had lots of fun. Margaret and I took pleasure in reunions with erstwhile Calcutta friends and neighbors settled in California, enchanted by its temperate climate. Maurice Duke was an exemplary host. The tragic loss of his brother in London, England, saddened us. We packed our bags and prepared to leave the following morning.

Thursday, 7/18. Left Los Angeles at 8:45 a.m. In 100 minutes, arrived at Santa Barbara where we had ice–cream at the beach. Arrived Solvana, "The Little Denmark", three miles from the highway. Bought embroidery bits. A piece of Flora's handiwork, adorns our living room. Lunch at San Luis Obispo. Enjoyed Route 1, hugging the Pacific coastline.

Our return route included a trip north to San Francisco via the picturesque 17–Mile Drive, 'the finest meeting of land and water in existence.' A coastline of incomparable grandeur, snow–white sand dunes, mysterious pine forests, and an abundance of wild life, both on shore and at sea. Of the many points of interest, we stopped at Bird Rock, where chunks of rock jut out into the ocean, and birds nestle there. Good–looking pictures of our girls as rock meets water. Monterey Bay and Peninsula. Monterey Bay from Carmel doubtless derived its name from the famous Carmel at Haifa Bay, Israel. The Lone Cypress, one of California's most familiar landmarks. A footpath leads to the point. The Drive took from 6:00 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. As we approached San Francisco, the sun was setting, and its glow, though beautiful, made driving difficult. Arrived SF at 10.p.m. We stayed with the family of Raphael Isaac, former headmaster of the Elias Meyer School in Calcutta, three fun–packed days.

Friday, 7/19. Spent most time at Golden Gate Park, the largest man–made park in the world. In it, over 1000 acres: Japanese Gardens — pagodas, bamboo–fenced walks, tea served in Tea House. California Academy of sciences, housing the Steinhart Aquarium, very educational; Morrison Planetarium; Young Memorial Museum, art galleries; Arboretum, conservatory; Lake, boating.

Lombard Street, 'Crookedest street in the world.' Debated whether to undertake descent of 40 degrees of landscaped S–curves. Plucked dare–devil courage — and made it. Faultless brakes helped. Incidentally, in January 1978, we moved into 520–D Lombard Street in Philadelphia, where tenacity and resolution won our spurs. First–rate fortune and diligence helped.

Fisherman's Wharf. Take–off point for fishing in the Pacific Ocean. Seafood center, pungent smells, and pretty sailing boats.

Zoo. Spectacular Children's Zoo. Took a picture of the kids in a cart shaped like a tomato, drawn by six large mice.

Returned home at 6 p.m. Shabbath. Likeable Oneg Shabbath atmosphere. Delicious meal. Fraternized with hosts. In a picture before Kiddush: Ike Isaac, Raphael Isaac, Alan Gordon, Myrtle Schwartz, Baby Schwartz, Hilda Isaac, Baby Gordon, Mom Gordon, Mary Ann Isaac.

Shabbath, July 20. Walked forty minutes to a Sephardi synagogue attended by the Isaacs. Hodge–podge of melodies reflecting Sephardim from India, Syria, and other Far Eastern extraction. Minister, a butcher by occupation. Old Rabbi, of Baghdad nativity, died two years previously. I conducted a part of the services, relished by old–timers.

At night, visited exotic China Town, reputedly the largest and most representative in America. Also, Ghirardelli Square, complex of shops and international restaurants. Telegraph Hill at Coit Memorial Tower, pretty view. And then, over the Golden Gate Bridge.

Sunday, 7/21. Took a tour of San Francisco, many scenic views, Treasure Island, among them. Picnicked at Pacific Ocean Beach. Cecil Isaacson took a portrait–like picture of us — a treasured record of the family as we were then. Had fun on and off cable cars.

Drove only 31 miles in SF. The Isaacs, generous hosts, did the rest for us. Enjoyed a festive dinner. Conviviality until midnight. Got ready to leave on the morrow.

Monday, 7/22. Left San Francisco at 10:20 a.m. Arrived Yosemite National Park, 4:30 p.m. Slow driving. Entrance to Yosemite 22 miles from village center. Stayed overnight at Camp Curry, tents as abode. Beautiful temperate pine forests with snow–capped peaks in the distance. Took picture at Merced Canyon, Flora pointing to Elephant Rock. Had Dinner. Set out to MIRROR LAKE. True to its name, reflection of rock and sky in the water. YOSEMITE FALLS, pretty view, but falls greatly diminished. Full spate in May and June. Did some rough walking over rocks. CAMP CURRY event. Each night during the summer, the management of Camp Curry has established a gorgeous custom. A huge bonfire is built on Glacier Point, 3200 feet directly above the camp. At the conclusion of the campfire, the burning embers are pushed over from the point above. This cataract of fire falls nearly 900 feet on to the rocky ledge below.

Visited the stores, wide open to eager clientele. And then, to bed, expecting jackal sounds, and maybe a rat bite. But nothing untoward happened.

Tuesday, 7/23. Drove 30 miles to Glacier Point, elevation 7214 feet! Higher than Darjeeling! Picturesque. Tall peaks in the distance. Nevada and Vernal Falls visible. On way back, passed Washburn Point, elevation 7373 feet. Detoured to Sentinel Dome, 3/4 mile from Glacier Point. Margaret and children climbed to the top while I took pictures of them ascending; they rested at 10,000 feet, fed a squirrel with nuts, then reached the top. Beautiful views of other peaks and falls: Pinnacle of Sentinel Dome with lone Pine tree; Half Dome visible from Glacier Point; view of Three Brothers, three symmetrical rock formations; Bridal Veil Fall; Wawona or Tunnel tree in Mariposa Grove, cut in 1881 so that cars can pass through, has not impaired its life. 231 feet tall, 86 feet at its base. Drove through Tuolumne Grove, descending sharply for seven miles. Stopped for a picture at Pine Rest, pine trees with a rocky background. Aliza and Rahel got atop a tree, allowing Mummy to comb and braid their beautiful, long hair. Redwood giant sequoia made for eastern entrance. En route passed: Cathedral Peak and Lake. Not much further, dipped into Lake Tenaya, skirted by snow–capped hills. Light ripples of water gave the illusion of mobility. The concluding exhilaration came as we approached Tioga Pass, elevation 12,000 feet, a gradual slope on the inner side of a deep gorge. And Lake Tioga at eastern entrance, elevation almost 10,000 feet.

To appreciate Yosemite fully, one must set aside at least a week. We got a fairly good idea in a day and a half. Drove 160 miles, got out of the park and stayed overnight at a little town, Lee Vining, California, Lakeview Motel.

Wednesday, 7/24. Left Lee Vining at 8:15 a.m. Stopped at Reno, Nevada, "The Biggest Little City in The World." Miniature Vegas, gambling casinos, which we spurned. Instead, shopped for groceries. Lunched at Lovelock, Nevada. 1:45 p.m. 96 miles.

Spent the night at Elko, Nevada, Starlight Motel on Rt. 40. 439 miles.

Thursday, 7/25. Left 7:15 a.m. Pacific Time, 8:15 Mountain Time. At Silver Sands Beach, Salt Lake, enjoyed wading and floating in salt–saturated water, like Israel's Dead Sea. Got salt crystals. Amphibious 'Sea Monster,' a fun cruiser, visible.

Rained in Wyoming, the first rainfall in exactly one month. Overnight, Liberty Motel, Rock Springs, Wyoming. 436 miles. [California has 'Mediterranean' type climate — warm, dry summers, cool, wet winters.]

Friday, 7/26. Left 8:15 a.m. Drove 276 miles to Laramie. Little America restaurant. Lunch in car, then ice–cream. Bought pine pottery. Left 2 p.m. At Ogallala, Nebraska, by 5 p.m. after driving 462 miles. Spent Shabbath at Kates Ogallala Motel, with kitchenette. Wherever we went, we took 'Shabbath at Home' with us. Enjoyed Kiddush and Oneg Shabbath. Ran out of meat. Substituted canned fish. The Motel was on the other side of the street from an Indian Trading Post. We saw Indians from South Dakota dancing. Chief played the drum and children danced.

A neighbor brought in California peaches. It so happened she was born in New Delhi, India. Father, British; mother, Anglo–Indian.

Shabbath, 7/27. After indoor 'homey' service, walked to the park. Lay on the grass and sang Pizmoneem and Tehilleem until insects started to sting. Went into a museum and browsed. After Kiddush, spent a very pleasant afternoon sitting on the porch. Aliza made friends with Pamela Haines. After Havdalah, bought souvenirs from Indian store opposite.

Sunday, 7/28. Took pictures with Sioux Indians. How good it is again — Indians all! Rahel and Aliza had a swim in the pool. Left 7:30 a.m. Mountain Time, 8:30 Central Time. Stopped for lunch at Lincoln, Nebraska. Arrived at Newton, Ohio at 5:45 p.m. after driving 531 miles. Night there.

Monday, 7/29; 7:15 a.m. Central Time. 8:15 Eastern Time! Closer to home again!

1 p.m. Lunch at Markhan. Illinois. Indiana Toll Road. Ohio Turnpike, till Fremont. Overnight at Char Zel Motel on Rte. 20. 589 miles. Motel opposite corn lot. Bought very sweet and tender corn at 50 cents a dozen. We could have spent the night at Port Clinton on Lake Erie, but discovered it too late.

Tuesday, 7/30. Bought more corn, plucked some from the field. Bought eggs at 35 cents a dozen. Into Ohio Turnpike at 9 a.m., out of it 11:20 a.m. Replaced a leaking tire. Ice cream at Howard Johnson. The car had been behaving, but the driver was in a hurry to get home. So we added this experience. Held up for speeding on the Pennsylvania Turnpike at 75 miles an hour. I hadn't been on civilized roads for three weeks. I became too used to higher speeds in West and Mid–West. The officer let me off after showing him my clergy sign. He asked me to pray for him! Exit 24 to Valley Forge.

492 miles to the end of Penna Turnpike. Route 76 to Belmont Ave. Took Fairmont Park. Shopped at Penn Fruit, Lehigh Ave. HOME SWEET HOME at 6:30 p.m. Did exactly 8000 miles. תּוֹדָה לָאֵל יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ הַגָּדוֹל Thank God! Praise His Great Name!



Figure 153. Indians All!

Indians all! Knotts Berry Farm, Buena Park, California.



Figure 154. Feeding Musleah "Monkeys".

Despite the law — feeding Musleah monkeys in Tolliver's Circus.



Figure 155. Hands' Impression for Future Reference.

At Groman's Chinese Theater. Aliza: "If Robert Taylor could do it, so can I!"



Figure 156. Disappointed at Carol Burnett's.

"We thought we were invited. Isn't it tea time?" Disappointed watchers of Carol Burnett shows.

CHAPTER 19

CITIZENSHIP AND RELATED THOUGHTS

PIONEERING IN AN ENERVATING MINISTRY

In 1969, five years after arriving in the United States, we became eligible for citizenship. Prior to the ceremonious investiture, we understood, questions are asked of applicants. We hoped they would be simpler than those asked in the National Bible Contest! But we took no chances; we learned the Star Spangled Banner! That's how we spent at least part of the summer before the ceremonials.

There comes to mind the motivation for our leaving our native land. Few persons there are but who have unfulfilled longings. Few there are but who have striven for something unattained. This righteous discontent is the secret of progress. If there were limits to worthy desire, there would be limits to progress. If there would be limits to longing, there would be limits to moving.

What had been achieved personally and publicly in the previous few years? I asked myself. That which we had was not quite so important as that which we did, I reasoned. Pride of possession is never so great as joy of achievement. The labor that is in the doing is more to be cherished than work that is already finished. We were grateful for the past and expectantly sought the future.

But memories linger. It is probable that most of us cherish the thought that we would like to go back to enjoy once again the reality of some of our memories; back to places long unseen — to places and things that look large and great in remembrance. That favorite spot near the railroad tracks was more attractive than it now seems; the high fence of our school and the tree we climbed to look over it was much higher than we recall. That old house where we were born had unexplored possibilities. Surely they were important parts of the universe.

We remember those things and they were real. All those things we used to do and think and feel before life put its heavy hand upon us — where and how did we lose them? Perhaps some of the values we had in childhood were safer and better than some of the values we had acquired since then. The things we remember have not changed much. The change is in us. But we can't go back.

Certainly, we could take an airplane back, but what we would see would be as if in a different world. If we did, in fact, go back to the scenes of our childhood, we would find that they seemed to have shrunk somehow. Perhaps we would find that it was not just old and familiar scenes so much as it was childhood itself we were looking for, and that, I'm afraid, we can't have. And it's just as well. The things back there belong back there, and we cannot go back any more than the world we live in can go back.

Our efforts, rather, had better turn about to face the present and the future. The best thing we can do is to make sure we are traveling in the right direction. There is nothing back there for anyone; there is everything for those who seek to go forward. For them there are limitless possibilities ahead — citizenship and all that!

IN MY FOOTSTEPS: A PIONEER IN HIS OWN RIGHT

The fact that we aspire to things, which for the moment are out of reach is one of the factors that make progress possible. Ofttimes young people see someone playing a distinctive role in life, and they think they would like to play a similar role. They see his performance and are thrilled with his accomplishments, not forgetting the years of self–denial, creative effort and determination that had preceded achievement. My sister Ruby's and her husband, Elias

Mordecai's younger son, Isaac, is a prime example. I feel he took me as a role–model. Having finished high school in Sydney, Australia, he enrolled as a pre–rabbinical student at the Seminary in New York, sensing the requirements of preparation and the delays of time. Preliminaries and prerequisites could take as long as ten years. He realized that he had to begin to be what he would like to be — if that's what he wanted to be. And he wanted to be a rabbi, or, at least, to gain the knowledge of a rabbi. He stayed with us in Philadelphia over week–ends, and weekdays attended classes at the Seminary and Columbia University in New York. I began devoting lovingly and zealously a considerable amount of time to his Judaic studies because he exhibited so much enthusiasm and determination to succeed that I felt I would be betraying his aspirations as well as my memories of my groping in the field of basic Jewish knowledge if I did not do my utmost for him. He zealously undertook to travel the tortuous road he had in mind because that's where he wanted to go. And there he went — like his pioneering uncle — to be a Rabbi, Preacher and Teacher of Torah. But back home in Australia, there was no suitable pulpit to lift him to the high places of Torah he was trained for. He proved again to be a man who reared his head above the common level and increased his determination to raise himself even higher. He studied another five years to become a medical doctor! He retained the courage and the wisdom to choose that which was fundamentally sound, regardless of the immediate cost or consequences, and so ride high on that tide that leads on to fortune — the good fortune of a life well lived.

SPECIAL SERVICES AT MIKVEH ISRAEL

Observing the Termination of Two Wars
Vietnam

To revert to Congregation Mikveh Israel: In February 1973, I organized a service, a ritual of remembrance, consecration and thanksgiving at the formal end of American involvement in the Vietnam war, held during a Shabbat service. Following the colorful return of the Sifrei Torah to the Ark, I ascended the steps of the Ark and stood at the lectern, while those invited to assist me took up position, one by one, on the Tebah.

Leonard Leventhal read "The Young Dead Soldiers" by Archibald MacLeish, recalling the challenge of the loss of 50,000 dead Americans: 'We leave you our deaths; give them their meaning.'

A declaration of faith in the "American Way" from the writings of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was read by Henry Cohen. 'The value of a belief in humanity and justice is always stronger than the value of belief in force ... We pledge ourselves in consecration to uphold these principles ...'

Mark Alsher read Psalm 100, a hymn of thanksgiving.

'A steadfast concert for peace can never be maintained except by partnership of nations.' These words, spoken by Woodrow Wilson, were included in a piece read by Dr. Joseph B. Sarner.

I then led the congregation in responsive praying and concluded with these remarks: "I dwelt on the difficulties to maintain peace by the international community, and the opposed methods used throughout history to bring about the messianic era, the militant and the utopian. Both were defective because they ignored the reality of the present and the demands of history. Rather, the nations of the world should embark on a program of restoration, retracing its paths to the root cause that led to the present difficulties, uncover the source of errors, and original harmony will ensue. The end of that process will culminate in messianic living."

Yom Kippur

Twice before in Jewish history, an enemy initiated a surprise attack on a Jewish holy day. In the days of the Maccabees, the Syrian hordes struck on Shabbat. A generation ago, the Nazis swooped down on the Warsaw Ghetto on the eve of Pesah. The start of the Kippur War was in notorious tradition. In each case, the Jews fought back, mindful of religious scruples concerning setting aside the sanctity of the day in favor of self–defense. I organized a service of commemoration and thanksgiving at cessation of hostilities of the Kippur War, October 6–23, 1973. The first reading was authored by Rabbi H. Bloom.

The enemy struck on Shabbat.
It was no coincidence
for the Syrians knew full well
what Shabbat meant to their Jewish foes.
'Zakhor et Yom Hashabbat l'Kaddesho …'
'Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.'
The pious rebels, the Hasidim of old,
fought valiantly against their Syrian overlord,
Antiochus Epiphanes.
Six days of the week they did battle, and fought all their wars,
but the seventh day is the Shabbat
unto Adonai, our God.
On it none may do forbidden work,
even the wielding of weapons in defense of life.
So believed the Hasidim.
So the Syrians truck on Shabbat, without warning, without mercy.
They died Al Kiddush Hashem, Al Kiddush Hashabbat,
sanctifying God's holy name, and His holy Sabbath,
disdaining to save themselves through warfare
and profane the day of peace.
****

The enemy struck on Passover eve,
just before Seder night.
It was no coincidence
for the Nazis knew full well
what Pesah meant to their Jewish foes.
'Avadim Hayinu L'Far'o B'mitzra–im
Vayotsi–anu Adonai Eloheinu Misham …'
'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt,
but Adonai, our God, brought us forth from there …'
The Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto,
the ragged remnant of a great Kehillah,
Hitler's slaves took new courage and hope
for the coming of the yearly Freedom Festival.
They said 'Pharaoh' but they meant 'Hitler.'
They said 'Egypt' but they meant 'Poland.'
So the Nazis struck on Pesah,
without warning, without mercy.
They fought Al Kiddush Hashem, Al Kiddush Ha'am,

Sanctifying God's holy name and His holy people.
Outnumbered they fought,
without weapons they fought.
For forty flaming days, without hope of victory they fought,
disdaining to submit to the murderers
and profane the name of Israel.
****
The enemy struck on Yom Kippur.
It was no coincidence
for the Arabs knew full well what the Day of Atonement means to every Jew.
'Ki Bayom Hazeh Y'khaper Aleicheim
L'Taher Etchem Mikol Hatoteicheim ...'
'For on this day shall atonement be made for you,
to purify you of all your sins ...'
Yom Kippur, the Sabbath of Sabbaths,
when all Israel puts aside the material world
to devote itself to the cleansing of the spirit.
So they struck on Kippur,
the Syrians on the Golan, the Egyptians at Suez,
playing God with demonic toys
to snuff out lives without warning, without mercy,
as lavish with Arab as with Jewish blood.
The Jews — waging war with honor.
****
They were summoned from synagogue
to speed to the fighting front.
They removed Tallit and Kittel
to don uniform and helmet.
The petitions forbidden on Shabbat
were silently pronounced:
'Avinu Malkeinu, Hafer Atsat Oyveinu ...'
'Our Father, our King, frustrate the counsel of our enemies ...'
'Our Father our King, pity us, our infants and our children ...'
Tonight the children sleep again
in underground shelters.
Tonight the fathers again defend their homes
with weapons in their hands.
Tonight the mothers again wait the morrow
with anxiety and fear,
Hoping against hope not to receive the fatal phone call.
And today we gather to complete the unfinished Kippur litany:
'Our Father, our King, annul the designs of those who hate us ...'
'Our Father, our King, swiftly cause deliverance to spring forth for us ...'
'Our Father, our King, act for the sake of those
who were slain for Your holy name's sake.'
On those far off Sabbaths,

On Pesah of 1943,
And on Kippur 1973."

Officially, Mikveh Israel had no *choir* during my tenure. But a few voices stood out in congregational responses and singing. Our daughters, Flora, Rahel and Aliza, have lively voices that blended nicely. A visitor from Har Zion Temple was impressed. He invited the girls to display their talent at the Temple's annual Israel Concert evening, and they obliged. As a result someone suggested that they should do some recording. They preferred singing as amateurs.

Our girls also liked to *folk–dance*. Aliza wrote (January 1972) about how a group of teenagers was formed:

"It was on the afternoon of Simhat Torah that my sisters and I were practising the Israeli songs and dances which we were going to teach everyone that night. The idea then occurred to us that we should form a group where we could teach and learn songs and dances. In synagogue we made our suggestion, which was welcomed. All of us thought that we would enjoy it very much.

"And so, two weeks later, we had our first group meeting. It was very successful because we learned many songs and a dance. Parents have been very cooperative, and the meetings have been held in one of their houses every other week.

"We decided on a name for the group — Nashira Ve–Naron — [We will sing and enjoy]. Everyone thought it was an appropriate name because it suited the group very well."

[Aliza remained attracted to dancing. She joined an adult dance group, meeting at regular intervals.]

"For Hanukka, we had a special program of songs, dances and games. Just before it was time to leave, we lit our big brass Hanukkiah which burns with oil wicks. It was made in India [in 1919] and belonged to my father's parents. It was a beautiful sight when we put the electric lights out and could see only the lights of the Hanukkia. Everyone was in the happy spirit and sang Maoz Tsur. Later, each of us received presents.

"As a group we visited a beautiful place called Winterthur. We saw Dupont's house and the Winterthur museum. Both were very interesting but we decided that we would like to go again in the Spring to see the gardens.

"We invite all children twelve to sixteen years of age to join us and enjoy pleasant afternoons with us.

Aliza Musleah (12)"

MEMORIALS

Rev. Isaac Leeser on the centennial of his death, February 1968

In the drama of Jewish life, the beliefs of Judaism and the aspirations voiced by many generations of prophets and sages form the backcloth. During the acts, they seem to recede before the objects on the stage that engross our attention. Those objects represent the doings of our community, its synagogue, its rabbis and its office–holders. At the conclusion of the 'show', and in the quiet of memory, the actors and backdrop merge into an impressive panorama.

At a Sabbath service that differed little from those conducted by Isaac Leeser at Mikveh Israel more than a century ago, the Congregation recalled the greatness of that functionary in the context of Jewish life of his time. The recollection was refreshing.

I was attracted to his pioneering abilities.

My D'var Torah characterized Leeser as the Halutz of nineteenth century America. Education and organized charity, the training of rabbis and Jewish publication — these were all a part of his 'firsts.' Using the text of Parashath Beshallah, I said he could be compared to the Israelites who, at God's behest, leaped into Yam Suf and were almost completely submerged before the waters parted. Their undaunted faith brought about the redemption of Israel. Those who followed walked on dry ground.

His independent spirit spearheaded Leeser's pioneering. He refused to be meek and submissive in the face of what he thought was meddlesomeness. He determinedly resented it and showed his resentment. Thus, in the early days with the Congregation, he declined an invitation (or was it a summons?) to meet with the Board of Adjunta on an issue, he felt, had moral overtones. Basically, Leeser's tenacity of his own point of view had direction. If Judaism, he believed, was something worth having and perpetuating, then the purer and more upright its exponents, the greater its power for good and the more certain its prospect for survival.

All too often in the affairs of a community, when we are put to the supreme test of a clash between vested interest and the welfare of the wider public, our thinking becomes hopelessly confused or even blatantly partisan. To Leeser, there was one criterion to resolve this dilemma — an unbiased and sensitive conscience. To such as serve without thought of reward or honor, said a Hassidic teacher, the vehicle chosen for the project is quite immaterial, so long as the destination is right. If we apply this simple test to Leeser's multi–faceted life one hundred years after his death, we are bound to conclude that, though the vehicles he chose were sometimes subject to question, his destination has been proven correct because his was selfless and fearless and far–sighted pioneering service.

Sabato Morais — In Commemoration

Leeser's successor in Mikveh Israel's pulpit was another giant of the spirit, a pioneer, whose steadfast dedication to truth and justice were the hallmarks of a great career. One of the first special services I organized was to commemorate the life of Sabato Morais, Rabbi from 1851 to his death in 1897.

More that ten years later, to mark another anniversary of his death, I wrote an article for the Seminary "Bulletin," here reproduced.

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA

"A young Italian rabbi was in London, England in the 1840's in hopes of receiving an appointment as assistant Hazzan at the Bevis Marks Synagogue. Though ordained by Haham Piperno, head of the rabbinical school in Leghorn, Sabato Morais' command of the English language was not considered adequate for the post. A firm believer in providential guidance, he later saw in that youthful disappointment evidence of a call to farther and wider horizons to which there were no short cuts. For it may be deemed an indirect cause of his coming to America.

"His arrival in America in 1851 was twice blessed. It was a boon for Mikveh Israel which he served as Rabbi for almost half a century, and advantageous to the development of Jewish life and learning throughout the land by the creation of the Seminary in New York, which he called the child of his old age, his "Benjamin." The stone rejected in Britain became in America the chief cornerstone.

"Within a few years of the start of Morais's ministry, the famed synagogue at Third and Cherry Streets, built on the same site as the first synagogue where Haym Salomon worshiped, became inadequate for a fast expanding Congregation. This was triggered in no small measure by the attractiveness of Morais as preacher and teacher. The move in 1860 was to a larger and better edifice at Seventh and Arch Streets.

"Morais laid great stress on the study of Bible. He was wont to say that he inherited discipline from his father, and imbibed love of study from his mother. Saturated with its spirit, biblical text was at his instant command. No wonder his exposition of Scripture as a guide to life deeply impressed his students at Congregation and Seminary, where a Chair in Bible is named for him.

"Morais had to reckon with tensions between Sephardi and Ashkenazi factions in the American Jewish Community as well as the social question of the age — he favored President Abraham Lincoln's efforts on behalf of liberating slaves against the opposition represented on the synagogue's Board. He was finally recognized in every sphere of endeavor in the Jewish and civic community when, in 1887, the University of Pennsylvania conferred upon him an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws, the first Jew to receive that distinction.

"Though congregational activities and instruction to small groups occupied much of his time, Morais ever sought opportunities for organized higher Jewish learning. He had aided his immediate predecessor in Mikveh Israel, Isaac Leeser, and others in setting up the **first** Jewish college in America, the short–lived Maimonides College in Philadelphia. For a number of reasons, it was not until 1886 that Morais urged the formation of an alternative institution. He looked to Mikveh Israel's sister Sephardi Congregation, Shearith Israel in New York City, to partner the effort. In the vestry room of that synagogue, the first class sessions were held. Morais labored with tremendous energy at a time of life when most others would have thought of lessening their burdens. He lay the foundations for the Seminary as a permanent source of traditional Judaism in America, which indeed it is today.

"Mikveh Israel has had the services of four Seminary graduates. The first, Leon H. Elmaleh, sat at the feet of Morais himself. Elmaleh was fond of relating how he was examined in Talmud by Morais, recounting instances of the Master's skill and patience as a teacher and of his love for Sephardi liturgy. Elmaleh, in turn, was mentor of two generations of Mikveh Israel's members as active and emeritus minister.

Julius H. Greenstone, an early alumnus, preached regularly at Mikveh Israel in 1902.

Abraham A. Neuman confirmed what German–born Isaac Leeser proved a century before — that with devotion, the distinctiveness of Sephardi liturgy can be mastered. Ordained in 1912, Neuman came to Mikveh Israel in 1927, and retired from the pulpit three years after becoming president of Dropsie College in 1943. It was perhaps his early fascination with Spanish–Portuguese Mikveh Israel, a neighbor of Dropsie's, that influenced his study of the Spanish period, and produced his magnum opus, "The Jews of Spain." At Dropsie, Neuman assumed the mantle of Cyrus Adler, the third Seminary president and one–time president and life member of Mikveh Israel.

"Meanwhile, the Seminary under Dr. Louis Finkelstein was gaining international repute. When, in far away Calcutta, India, the need for a Western–oriented rabbi was being felt, the Seminary was called upon to train me for the rabbinate. Upon ordination, as narrated earlier, I went back to India to provide religious leadership for my native Jewish community. Dwindling numbers in that community generated by economic exigencies, and a vacancy in Mikveh Israel's pulpit in 1963, brought me back the following year. With this appointment, Seminary graduates occupied, at the time, the two oldest Jewish Congregations in the United States, Rabbi Louis C. Gerstein being at New York's Shearith Israel, where the Seminary began.

"In 220 years since Mikveh Israel had its first rabbi, the founder of the Seminary and its graduates had served the Congregation for a little less than half the time. And the two previous synagogue buildings of Mikveh Israel were dedicated with Seminary men occupying its pulpit — Morais in 1860 and Elmaleh in 1909. As we shall see, I made it three in a row!"

More Comments on Morais

Here are the main thoughts I expressed at one of the services I held in his memory:

"Morais was ever guided by a search for an absolute moral authority. It would not be found in custom, because customs change and the customs of different times and of different peoples are in conflict with each other. It would not even be found in conscience, because conscience can become calloused and so loses its sharpness. Morais was inspired by the fundamentals of all time, the laws of the Torah, producing an underlying purpose in life, yielding eternal verities. It was these fundamentals that made Morais 'like a tree planted beside streams of water, that yields its fruit in season, whose foliage never fades, and whatever he produces thrives.'(Psalms 1:3) All his work was generated by a character of highest personal integrity. To him truth was sacred; justice essential to the fabric of society. Just as a polished diamond, when turned from side to side gives a colorful brightness from every angle; the theme of Morais's life is one of great brilliance, from whatever aspect we examine it. Looked as a whole, it is a

> fascinating record of a man who gathered together all the many natural gifts with which God had endowed him, and trained them, disciplined them and ordered them into the service of his fellows and to the glory of his Heavenly Maker."

I take pride in the fact that, on one of my visits to his grave in one of Mikveh Israel's cemeteries, I noticed the dilapidation of the tomb, and reported it to Dr. Louis Finkelstein, Chancellor of the Seminary. I recommended that repairs be made at the Seminary's expense. Dr. Finkelstein sanctioned the restoration. I sent a copy of the finished product to New York for the Seminary's files.

INSTRUCTIVE OBSERVATIONS

Pre–eminence of the Levi in the Synagogue

The pattern of Jewish religious society, which ultimately assumed permanent form is based on the pre–eminence of the ancient tribe of Levi. In Temple days, the descendants of Aaron were privileged to be the priests (Hebrew: Kohen, Kohaneem) officiating at the altar, while the rest of the tribe were their assistants sharing unequally in the proceeds of the sacrifices and produce of the land. Later, the distinction of the priests was underscored in regulations regarding pedigree and ritual hygiene.

Their primacy ultimately extended to the synagogue. They were entrusted with the honorific duty of blessing the congregation, while the Levites continued to aid them attain ritual purity by washing their hands prior to the benediction. Added dignity accrued to them by being called first to the Torah, followed by the Levites, and then the lay Israelites.

The latter regulation is based on a Talmudic discussion,[1] which includes a series of contingencies. Should a Kohen or a Levi not be present in the synagogue, who was to be called in his place? Joseph Karo summarizes[2] the legal opinions till the sixteenth century.

A part of sub–section 6 says: 'If there is no Kohen in the synagogue, a lay Israelite is called in his place, and a Levi may not be called subsequently.' Karo's contemporary, Moses Isserles, Polish rabbi and legal annotator, who supplies the Ashkenazi Minhagim in his glosses to the Shulhan Arukh, adds, 'but *first* he may be called.'

The popular Sephardi prayer manual of Leghorn, Italy, birth–place of Mikveh Israel's rabbi and co–founder of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York,[3] agrees with Karo but adds, there are some written opinions, however, permitting a Levi to be called, provided the Reader specifies, אַף עַל פִּי שֶׁהוּא לֵוִי 'though he is a Levi.' This is even more radical than the opinion of Isserles. Here, the Levi is treated like a lay Israelite if a Kohen were not in attendance.

Karo's is the accepted Sephardi custom … On occasion there may not be a Kohen in synagogue but a Levi there is. If the Levi does not wish to be called, there is no problem. But what if the Levi is observing a Yartseit and asks for an Aliyah? Or there is a Bar Mitsva and the same circumstances obtain?

For relief from this dilemma, I had recommended to the Board of Mikveh Israel, which concurred, that we continue refraining from calling a Levi in the absence of a Kohen except in an emergency — when the Levi observes a Yartseit or in the event of a 'Simha'. He may then be called *first only* and has to be sure he is on time!

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1. B Gittin 59a-b
2. Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayeem, Ch.135 sub-section 3-13
3. 'Beth Menuha' printed in 1843

WITH OUR SONS AND WITH OUR DAUGHTERS

A Local Haggadah

Introduction

This ritual, intended to provide an alternative reading for the family or for use in synagogue on the second evening/day of Pesah, was created in response to those who feel an innovative project indigenous to Mikveh Israel could be tried. While my composition is patterned after the traditional Haggadah, the events it recounts, of course, are taken from the history of the Congregation and a few antecedent happenings.

The need of contemporary Judaism is not only to tell a vivid story of the past, but also to provide a vital message for the present. This applies particularly to festival rituals and observances, and more specifically to the efforts to 'save' the Second Day of Pesah for family and/or synagogue. Some of the difficulties encountered are created by misdirected conservatism. To exemplify, consider this: despite the fact that we have lived through the most epoch–making period in Jewish history since the destruction of the Temple, not a single ritual relating to it has been accepted into the official canon of Jewish religious observances in twenty–five [now, fifty] years.

Such conservatism is not a symptom of orthodoxy so much as a sign of an unrealistic approach, wedded to an unhealthy fear that any attempt to make Jewish ritual vital may arouse extremists to shrieking accusations of Reform! Seldom do we remember that many of the old liturgical poems and prayers we so religiously recite on holy days are in fact the creation of zealous poets of earlier days, whose religious enthusiasm inspired them to write additions to the prayers, commemorating events of their own day. In this way, the prayer book was kept afresh and Minhag (customary practice) developed with the historical climate of the age.

Of all the festivals which have a vital application for modern Jewry, none can claim so much attention as Pesah. The comparison between the Exodus from Egypt and Jewish departures from other countries, as well as settlement in the Land of Israel under Joshua and settlement in other lands of freedom, provides adequate themes for religious service. For the traditional Haggada was compiled with imagination and was clearly intended to appeal to the popular mind. There is ample opportunity in the narrative to draw parallels in order to bring out more clearly the meaning of Pesah for individual communities in our own day. With how much greater justification may this be done if it is for the purpose of supplying an occasion for Jews to convene for a religious reason on the Second Day of the Festival?

In Temple times, it was forbidden to eat new corn until the "waving" of the Omer on the second day of Pesah. Such corn, known as Hadash, that which is new, was brought to the Temple for a special ceremony acknowledging God's creatorship. This tends to intimate that new things are forbidden until they have received God's blessings. Humans are permitted their use only after recognizing them as gifts of God.

Apart from our natural inertia rendering us inhospitable to new things, there is a strong element of conservatism in our approach to religion. In the Jewish realm it is argued that had Judaism surrendered its unique insights to the particular insights of any age, it would not have been a living faith today.

Hostility to new ideas or a fresh approach is still maintained in some circles. Perhaps that is as it should be. Everyone develops either a little liberal or a little conservative. The world needs both. Tension is bound to exist between the rival claims of tradition and progress. Like other tensions,

this one can become creative. In the Middle Ages, scholars like Rashi were content to perpetuate the old ways unchanged, while teachers like Maimonides sought to reinterpret the content of Judaism afresh.

You do right, the Bible tells the Jew today, to be apprehensive of the new. Remember all the values built so laboriously and constructed so well by generations of faithful believers. But you reject the new at your own peril. Bring it, rather, to God. Let His blessing rest upon it. Then you will find it creative, not destructive. For the God Israel worships is eternal and all truth is His blessed seal.

Prelude

The Synagogue is a sanctuary — a meetinghouse for prayer, a house of assembly for instruction. In affliction as in prosperity, it has imparted inspiration and knowledge to young and old.

With enlightened spirit, our families invest in beauty the things that are dear to us. We take pride in the cultivation of our past blessings. Our spiritual sustenance is derived also from the creative and positive values of learning and worship. We belong to a tradition which obligates us to clarify our own selfhood as a family and as a Congregation. We invite those who are hungry for time–honored usages to come and participate with us. Let those imbued with our aspirations and aims assist us repossess ourselves of a faith adequate to our times. This year, as in previous ones, we are hard put in the knowledge that there is much to do and learn; next year we shall be free in the thought that we had added to our fund of dignity and worth in gathering in and living a greater tradition.

The Four Questions

How does Congregation Mikveh Israel differ from all other Congregations?

The history of other Congregations deals with the beginnings of a particular synagogue. The history of Mikveh Israel reflected in our archives brings into focus the origin of all of American Jewry.

In other synagogues, the traditions of Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Hassidic, Conservative or Reform may be used; at Mikveh Israel, we use only the Spanish and Portuguese Minhag.

In other synagogues, children are relegated to their own services; at Mikveh Israel, they conduct and participate in the regular services.

In other synagogues, the Ark contains three or four Torahs; the Mikveh Israel Ark has fifteen Torahs, two of which were donated by the colonial–time financier, Haym Salomon, and bells created by the famed silversmith, Myer Myers.

Origins

Our ancestors were early settlers on this American continent. Destiny brought the English Jew, Nathan Levy, to Philadelphia. He instituted the Sephardi mode of worship in a house in the vicinity of Fourth and Cherry Streets sometime in the early 1740's; he gifted the Fourth Street cemetery to the Congregation. We are blessed in the knowledge that our origins were forged with wisdom and loyalty to Torah.

Legend has it that his ship "Myrtiilla" brought the famed Liberty Bell from across the Atlantic. But it is no legend that later leaders, Bernard and Michael Graetz, Manuel Josephson, David Franks and Mathias Bush, among others, in 1771 named the Congregation, "Mikveh Israel." It was time to move to larger quarters in the same vicinity.

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA

It was the patriotic Haym Salomon who packed about seventy years of life into his destined forty–five. Imprisoned by the British in New York, he managed to escape to Philadelphia where he aided Robert Morris finance the fledgling American government in a period of impoverishment and war. He will live on in the hearts of an eternally grateful nation, which has designated his burial place a national shrine.

Praised be God who gave this Congregation its first synagogue building in 1782 and its subsequent buildings where its varied membership, men, women and children, worshiped.

The Four "Sons"

1. The wise patriots and professing Jews examined the statutes of the new national code and found it contained great promise, but were disappointed in parts, especially a disabling clause preventing them from holding office. The delegates of the thirteen Colonies, in fitting response, repealed the offensive clause by article six of the Bill of Rights.
2. Mikveh Israel having been the only synagogue in Philadelphia till 1825, the growing Jewish population brought together in worship newcomers of Dutch, German and Polish nativity. Some of these felt that the Sephardi liturgy was strange to them, and on occasion even conducted their own services. They "rebelled." In the same year as Mikveh Israel consecrated its second synagogue building in 1825, the first Ashkenazi synagogue, Rodeph Shalom, opened its doors.
3. All glory to the women of the Congregation, who had done their work well. The Jewish home is their sanctuary. They counseled with wise and understanding hearts. Ours has been a group where the family is the measure of strength. And the women of the Gratzes, Philipses, Levys, Markes and Solises, among so many others, have increased our devotion to the faith in which they lived.
4. The education of our children has always been our paramount duty. We are grateful that our children get a good Jewish education. Much gratitude is due to the parents who keep their faith with their children, while the young are the primary influence in their lives. Much gratitude is also due the teachers of every generation who instill Jewish knowledge and the Jewish way of life in the young. We pledge to continue to do so.

Dayenu

How abundant are God's blessings upon us!
If He would have redeemed us from Spain and Portugal
But had not brought judgment upon our oppressors, DAYENU, it would have been enough!
Had He brought judgment upon our oppressors
But had not brought us to this land of liberty, DAYENU!
Had He brought us to this land of liberty
But not granted us freedom of religion, DAYENU!
Had He granted us freedom of religion
But had not prospered the work of our hands, DAYENU!
Had He prospered the work of our hands
But would not have had Haym Salomon play a vital role in the Revolutionary War, DAYENU!
Had Haym Salomon played his role in the Revolutionary War
But our first synagogue would not have been built, DAYENU!
Had our first synagogue been built
But Isaac Leeser would not have been inspired to pioneer the Jewish community structure, DAYENU!

Had Isaac Leeser been so inspired
But Sabato Morais would not have championed Abraham Lincoln in justice and equality, DAYENU!
Had Morais championed Lincoln's cause on behalf of slaves
But God would not have fashioned us into a united people, DAYENU!
Had we been fashioned into a united people
But our subsequent leadership was not endowed with wisdom, and our membership with loyalty, DAYENU!
Had He provided our leadership with wisdom and our membership with loyalty
But had not preserved our Sephardi heritage, DAYENU!
Had He preserved our Sephardi heritage
But we had not developed good relations with other faiths, DAYENU!
Had we developed good relations with other faiths
But would not have built our synagogue on Independence Mall, DAYENU!

In the Spirit of Purim

In odd years, I ventured an excursus in the spirit of Purim. Here is one:

(Words in CAPITALS are explained in the commentary below.)

Rabbi PROSPERO's BLOTT (Megilla **1a**)

This section of the Purim Talmud can only be understood with the help of the accompanying, enlightening, PARSHAN DATA, BEN RASH RASH.

WHEN is a Jew considered DRUNK? Rav GEHFEN (Some say, GAHFEN) said:

When he sanctifies WINE or a WOMAN. Rav BINAH said: He better not be!

Rav ARBUV said: He who mixes may become intoxicated. Rav BINAH replied: He surely will!

Everybody agrees (a rare circumstance) that he who conducts himself sheepishly could not have had more than ONE CUP.

Rav Aryeh of the inhabitants of YA–AR said: One who imbibes the COURAGE of a lion, his zeal is PRAISEWORTHY, but one who laps an overdose of power is drunk.

Rav KOF said in the name of Rav HASKEL: There is strong SUSPICION about one who monkeys around, that he be watched for drunkenness.

EVERYBODY AGREES, however, that behavior that smacks of the pig, warrants the appellative, "SHIKKOR."

The residents of the town of MIKVEH received the TRADITION that he who drinks deep of the cup of hope remains sober, though he may be called a visionary. But he who thinks he is sinking has lost all control and is declared tipsy.

The Men of the Great Police Academy insisted: When more than three percent of one's blood turns blue LITMUS red, he is out of his mind, and drives others out of this world.

Rav MAVDIL said: He who cannot tell the difference between "Cursed be Haman" and "Blessed be Mordecai" is drunk. The Wise Men of PUR who were governed by the beautiful Susan, had their wits about them as they declared: "Except on PURIM, when the differentiation does not hold water.

Super–Commentary of Ben Rash Rash

PROSPERO — Shakespearean dialect for MUSLEAH, whose family has handed down from generation to generation, in unbroken fashion, discussions that took place in the Babylonian study centers of Sura, Pumbedita and Nehardea, hundreds of years ago. The plan is to continue the hoary tradition for the next one hundred years. Then, true to his name, Rabbi Prospero, also called Musleah, cannot conceive of the chain being broken — ever!

BLOTT — pronounced Blatt in the village of Ashk, followed by the term Gemoro, meaning a page of the Talmud. Never before, anywhere, was the first page of the Talmud ever discovered.

PARSHAN DATA — the nomen of Haman's first born and wisest son who, before being involved in his father's plot, did some Talmudic dabbling. All like–named commentators are considered 'Super.'

BEN RASH RASH — each of his comments was loudly acclaimed by greggers. In other words, they were received with a bang.

DRUNK — for it is written, "Wine that gladdens the heart of man." Women objected. To what extent is gladness permitted? Men said: After four. Women said: After two. TIKU — the question was never resolved nor will ever be — until the Messianic era, when women will be fully accepted in **all** Batei Din.

GEHFEN or **GAHFEN** — depending on whether the Rav is invited to say the invocation or the benediction. The word means Vine, and is so pronounced even though the Rav wanted you to hear Wine.

DAY — when he makes Kiddush on the fruit of the Vine, to declare holy the day on which his colleagues are free of his annoyances.

WOMAN — the drinking of wine at Kiddushin, the wedding ceremony. It is desirable that, in the absence of extenuating circumstances, the bridegroom should be male and the bride female. Moreover, to prevent the casting of the contrary eye, the parties should be single, and their parents married, and their faith Jewish, and their disposition Orthodox or Reform, as it is written, "Let your right be right and your left, left." What if either party is Conservative? Another nerve–racking one. Await the Messiah, when all will follow the middle of the road.

BINAH — the discerning Rav.

ARBUV — one who mixes up and so is mixed up. Mixtures are abominations. Purim spiels must not be held on Pesah, and Hanukkah Manoth must not be sent on Xmas, in good faith or bad, for it shall be written, 'Render unto Caesar …' In addition, the custom of giving gifts on Purim suffers because it's too close to Chrisnukka. Some say that Purim should be reinforced by mixing it with Hanukka. If pagans object, then at least shake it up with Valentine's Day. However, this and that are the words of the ever–present Belial and should be exorcised.

ONE CUP — the anonymous opinion, attributed to Rav Hass Id, advises drinking in moderation. 'A little wine is the greatest of all medicines,' comes from the same source. Where wine is lacking, drugs are necessary.

COURAGE — when a Shadkhan puts a premium on poor merchandise. Or, in an effort to keeping the sexes apart, an L–shaped sanctuary is built without a ladies gallery; or, turning a Hamantash into a minitash and disposing of it at the same price. That is deflated inflation.

YA–AR — a city effervescent with uproar.

PRAISEWORTHY — liquor taken in large mouthfuls are more nourishing.

KOF — the fourth last letter of the Hebrew alphabeth. One tends to feel it is a pseudonym.

HASKEL — the wise one.

SUSPICION — one is not sure, because many humans behave likewise without having imbibed a drop of schnops.

EVERYBODY AGREES — somehow Purim is conducive to unanimity. Purim everyday? Anybody?

SHIKKOR — euphemism for Hazir. The numerical value for the Hebrew word for wine – יין is 70, the same as that of the word סוד, secret. So an old belief has it: When wine goes in, secrets go out.

MIKVEH — its origins are obscure. The School of Emeth said: It is so–called because, most prominent there, was the hope for a new synagogue. The School of Sham washed off that impression (in a Mikvah?). The law, however, is in accordance with the School of Emeth.

TRADITION — Torah of Nathan the Levite from (the Sinai of) Society Hill.

LITMUS — to ensure his and others' celebrating future festivals. It is not unusual to find a merrymaker and his car meandering their way home.

MAVDIL — expert in heterogeneity.

PUR — This group is now extinct. A young man, a little out of touch with trends in that part of the world, visited there some years ago. 'There is nothing there,' he reported. 'The only sound of life was the old men coughing.

PURIM — a lottery, licensed for twenty–four hours, and if you can prove you live in a town that had walls around it in the days of Joshua of old, the license may be extended another twenty–four hours. It is the only festival where unmitigated joy is permitted. Carry and travel, spend money and make it. In this quarter, Purim is better than Hanukka, for brevity is the soul of pleasure. A good Purim, and well over the repast.

Tisha b'Av July 23rd, 1969

Mourning and sadness are a part of human experience. When we lose a loved one, we mourn; in the face of adversity, we become sad. We also have soothing balm — humans are capable of hope in the midst of sadness, of consolation in the midst of mourning.

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA

For nineteen centuries, the Jewish people mourned for Jerusalem, its religious capital, that lay in ruins and in the hands of conquerors. There was no respite from mourning. One tragedy followed another. For these we still mourn. But God, in His infinite mercy, has shown our generation great favor. Jerusalem has once again after centuries achieved Jewish sovereignty. We are still trying to get the full impact of this historic happening.

The famed biblical commentator, Baal ha–Turim, counts 656 mentions of Jerusalem in the Bible, and no less than seventy appellations used to describe the holy city. Everything about the eternal city proclaims holiness, signifies something extra.

Today we feel a break in the intensity of mourning. This and much more was foretold by the prophet Zechariah 8:19, כֹּה אָמַר ד' צְבָאוֹת, צוֹם הָרְבִיעִי וְצוֹם הַחֲמִישִׁי וְצוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְצוֹם הָעֲשִׂירִי יִהְיֶה לְבֵית יְהוּדָה לְשָׂשׂוֹן וּלְשִׂמְחָה וּלְמוֹעֲדִים טוֹבִים

"Thus says the Lord: There will come a time when these fast days commemorating the destruction of Jerusalem will be turned into joy and gladness and cheerful seasons."

We are surely not at a stage in human history when humankind can afford to drop all mourning. The human spirit still requires moments of sadness to sober it down. The sad moments that Tisha b'Av commemorates are a reminder of times and events of pain and distress which forever haunt the Jewish people.

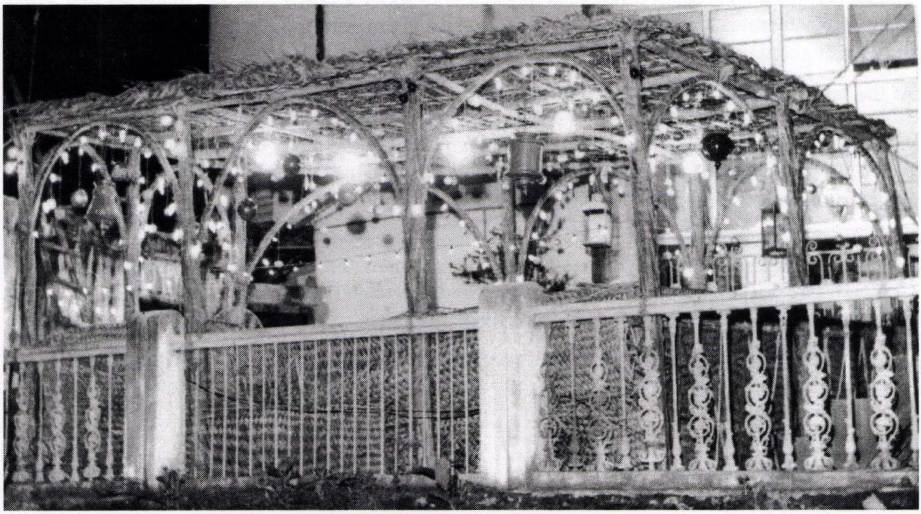
At the same time, we should recognize that no greater felicitous and religious event could have affected for good a larger segment of Jewry than the unification of Jerusalem. And as an expression and a symbol of our gratitude to Almighty God, we have, in this synagogue added a light of joy and hope — joy in our people's present achievement, and hope in what is yet to be achieved, peace and tranquility in the Middle East and among all nations.

We have, in the earlier part of this service, done what our tradition has handed down to us — we had mentioned the number of years since the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 68 of the Common Era. We have now established a new and heartening enumeration — we will henceforth count the number of years since the freedom and unification of Jerusalem.

אָחֵינוּ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּחֶסֶד ד' הַגָּדוֹל וּבְרַחֲמָיו הָרַבִּים אָנוּ מוֹנִים הַיּוֹם שְׁתֵּי שָׁנִים לִגְאֻלַּת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם
עִיר הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּלְשִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן מַה טּוֹב חֶלְקֵנוּ וּמַה נָּעִים גּוֹרָלֵנוּ

Figure 157. Things We Remember Have Not Changed Much.

I wrote earlier in this chapter: "The things we remember have not changed much," like the memory of the Sukka we constructed in the balcony of 81/8 Bentinck Street, Calcutta, where we lived after Margaret's parents left for London, England in 1960, a fine replica of the one in 11 Bowbazar Street. "We were grateful for the past and expectantly sought the future."



NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA
CHAPTER 20

ONE STEP TO THE AMERICAN BICENTENNIAL

CONGRATULATIONS TO PRESIDENT GERALD R. FORD

The leadership of Mikveh Israel had, over the years, felicitated George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt on assuming the Presidency of the United States. I drafted the letter, signed by me and Meyer Klein, President of Mikveh Israel, and sent to Gerald R. Ford on becoming President in 1974.

"Dear Mr. President,

The Congregation Mikveh Israel in the City of Philadelphia, whose roots go back to the Founding Fathers of this nation and earlier, to 1740, wants to felicitate you on assuming the presidency of our great country.

"We give voice to this our pleasure as carriers of Jewish tradition represented in previous generations by patriots and philanthropists, by men in the field of government and public affairs, men of genius in art, music and science. These have made a major impact on every section of American life, and numbers of Jewish men and women have played creditable roles.

"We laud your initial messages to the American people as president. We are encouraged by your interest in, and preparedness to listen to, its individual segments. We pledge our support of every reasonable effort for the weal of the United States and for peace everywhere.

"We believe you have attained to the highest executive office in the land not because you have been spared the hardships of life but because you have overcome them, because Providence has given you courage, not protection; faith, not favored lot; integrity, not freedom from temptation. Nor is your high office bestowed without price. God so rules that the eternal principle of self–effort and wholesome living must be dominant even in a day of pampering, if life is to be worthwhile to you who cherishes it and all its problems.

"You may have become president without the ballot; most certainly, you begin your presidency with our vote of confidence.

"We wish you well in your awesome burdens. We pray that you may be blessed, in the words of the prophet Isaiah, with 'a spirit of wisdom and insight, a spirit of counsel and valor, a spirit of devotion and reverence for the Lord.'

Respectfully yours,

Meyer Klein
President

Dr. Ezekiel N. Musleah
Rabbi

President Ford's response to our congratulatory letter:

"Dear Dr. Musleah and Mr Klein:

It was kind of you to express your good wishes as I begin my duties as President.

While I did not seek this great responsibility, I will not shirk it. Having the support and prayers of fine people like you is a source of strength and encouragement to me.

With kind regards and appreciation for your thoughtfulness,

Sincerely,

Gerald R. Ford"

GROUNDBREAKING ON INDEPENDENCE MALL

As the United States came closer to celebrate its bicentennial year of the Declaration of Independence, the Congregation Mikveh Israel edged slowly closer to its goal of being in the Independence Hall area for that auspicious occasion. The exile was gradually coming to an end. Finally, on August 19, 1975 — 12th Elul 5735, groundbreaking ceremonies took place at its new site on Independence Mall East. Our synagogue's reporter, Robert Goldstein, rendered this account of the historic occasion:

"Approximately two hundred people sat on small makeshift seats in a corner of the parking lot which had occupied the future site of Congregation Mikveh Israel. They faced the East and the speaker's rostrum. The setting was devoid of any decoration other than the red, white and blue banner which draped the front of the rostrum. At 4:30 p.m. on a sunny August 19, the Chairman of the event, Isadore M. Scott, introduced the Reverend James Shannon of Christ Church, who gave the invocation, and Miss Nina Kaleska, who led in the singing of The Star Spangled Banner. The Rabbi of Mikveh Israel, Ezekiel N. Musleah, Congregational officials — Meyer Klein, Mrs. Ruth B. Sarner, Mervyn M. Wilf, the latter as chairman of the board of the Museum of American Jewish History — all made thought–provoking remarks. Rabbi Musleah concluded his remarks with the traditional Shehechyanu.

"Other fine addresses were delivered by prominent local officials ... a representative of the Governor's office ... A fine expression of brotherhood was offered by the Rev. Fr. Robert S. Curry of Old St. Joseph's Church. The crowd then gathered around a small area from which the black top surface of the lot had been removed, and with the assistance of the members on the rostrum, Mrs Ruth Sarner lifted the first spade full of earth.

"Collectively, the speakers declared that this physical groundbreaking, this return to the area of origin, was the direct heir to a spiritual groundbreaking which had taken place through more than two hundred years of Philadelphia history, with the congregants of Mikveh Israel consistently among the leadership of those Jews who had strived to 'break ground' in Jewish and secular pursuits in this city. Thus a ceremony which normally symbolizes so precisely the things to come became so poignantly symbolic of a dignified past. It was as though we were placing a commemorative plaque on our first synagogue instead of breaking ground for our newest. To make that necessary and symbolic retrogression, we allowed ourselves to deviate from the norm. Now may we look forward to the construction of tangible evidence of the future of Mikveh Israel.

The reception took place at Carpenters' Hall."

Excerpts of Ruth B. Sarner's remarks:

"For almost a decade and a half, we have yearned for this day.

"In the early 60's, during the administration of David Arons, members of the community proposed that the venerable and historic synagogue return to the area of its origin ... I have encapsulated in a few sentences what took fourteen years to achieve. [We stand here today because of the efforts of several individuals.] Above all, we are here today ... because it was so ordained by the Almighty, Prime Mover of all earthly beings.

We stand on ground hallowed by history. The presence of our forbears seems to hover over us and bless this undertaking ... The generations of Jews who preceded us and established a positive presence on American soil in 1654 cry out for recognition. Their call will be answered, for we are determined to demonstrate ... the role of the Jew in America's development over the course of three centuries.

"The presence of the Museum of American Jewish History and the Synagogue of the American Revolution on this site will pay tribute to the proprietor William Penn who established the City of Brotherly Love to assure religious freedom for men of all faiths ... and bring honor to the constitution of the United States which recognizes the equality of all men and guarantees their freedom of conscience.

"Here in the shadow of Independence Hall, may the clarion call of liberty be forever proclaimed throughout the land and to all the inhabitants thereof."

My remarks: "Gathered here today, we recall a strip of barren ground where the biblical Jacob slept one night with a rock for a pillow. He dreamed of a ladder which linked heaven and earth. And the Lord God promised him: 'Remember I am with you, and I will protect you wherever you go.' This dream and this promise added a new dimension to Jacob's life. Awakening, he said, 'Surely the Lord is present in this place. This is none other than the abode of God.'

"In the spirit of Jacob's dream of a link between heaven and earth, on another precious strip of ground and in another blessed land, we are about to begin the construction of a building, glorifying God Who had watched over our destinies and Who will, we pray, guide our future. Through our lives as individuals, as a Congregation, and as a community, may we make this site sacred soil.

"Let us affirm that here we shall pursue the service of God and man; here we shall renew our faith; here we shall learn who we are and whence we come; here we shall find ways to realize our highest goals.

"We praise the good and generous men and women who have gone before us, as well as those in our midst who labor on behalf of the community. We are grateful to God for the blessing of their lives. May He always bless us with such people, to lead us from strength to strength.

"Lord, help us remember the words of Your Psalmist, that unless You build the house, those who build it labor in vain.

"Praised are You, O Lord, our God, Ruler of the universe, Who has granted us the precious gift of life, sustained us and enabled us to reach this auspicious day."

The Benediction — Rev. Fr. Robert S. Curry

"God our Lord,
Source of life, goodness and possibility,
We bless You for the people of the Book:
for the vibrancy of their history,
for the grace of their presence.
In the life of the spirit,
their history is the history of us all.
In the life of our country,
their share has been both
Your gift and Your reminder
that You are always faithful to Your promises.
We ask You to bless the rising of this building,
home for a heritage without peer
and house of worship,
that it may stand for uncounted time
as a sign of Your glory,
as a medallion of the honor
and the warrant of the freedom of Your people Israel.
Amen."



Figure 158. Moving the Liberty Bell.

Participating in moving the famed Liberty Bell from Independence Hall, where it had been for many years, to a cabin in Independence Mall, January 1, 1976. By my side is the rector of Christ Church, Dr. Ernest Harding.



Figure 159. President Gerald R. Ford Receiving in the Oval Office.

President Gerald R. Ford receiving six rabbis of Colonial-time congregations in the Oval Office, July 12,1976.



Figure 160. President Ford Receiving Family Musleah.

In Honor of the Bicentennial of the United States, 1976. President Gerald R. Ford receiving Family Musleah at the Oval Office. (From left) David Lissy, adviser to the President for Jewish Affairs, Aliza, Margaret, Flora, Rahel, and ENM.



Associated Press

A BIRTHDAY GIFT for President Ford, who will turn 63 tomorrow, is demonstrated by Rabbi Louis Gernterstein of New York, playing the shofar, or ceremonial ram's horn. The gift came with a letter pledging the "steadfast loyalty of the American Jewish Community to the American Dream," which Gernterstein said was similar to a pledge made George Washington's inauguration. The shofar was presented yesterday.

Figure 161. President Ford's Birthday Gift of a Shofar.

Birthday gift Shofar being blown in the Oval Office

The six rabbis invited to the White House: (the order in the picture above, l to r) ENM. Theodore Lewis, Louis C. Gerstein, Edward L. Cohn, Saul J. Rubin, Jack D. Spiro.

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA
CHAPTER 21

UNITED STATES' BICENTENNIAL

The City of Philadelphia prepared extensively and enthusiastically for the Bicentennial of the United States in 1976. Two events stand out. To focus national attention on Philadelphia celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Continental Congress, September 22, 1974 was declared "Olde City Sunday," creating an atmosphere reminiscent of the 18th century. People in costumes of the period promenaded the closed streets and horses and carriages added to the parade.

MOVING THE LIBERTY BELL

On July 20, 1975, an ecumenical service was held in Judge Lewis Quadrangle, Independence Mall, in observance of the 200th anniversary of the Day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer to encourage the people of the Colonies to stand shoulder to shoulder in their bid for religious liberty and political freedom, just as the Founding Fathers were united in their struggle for independence from British authoritarian rule. The day's event, entitled 'With United Hearts,' began with the sounding of the Shofar, the ram's horn, by Gabriel Schaff, a member of Mikveh Israel, whom I taught to use that instrument for the High Holyday ritual at the synagogue. The horn is an ancient symbol of celebration calling attention to freedom.

Two biblical passages were read: Isaiah 61:1–4. 'The spirit of the Lord God is upon me … He has sent me as a herald of joy to the humble, to bind up the wounded of heart, to proclaim release to the captives … to proclaim a year of the Lord's favor and a day of vindication of our God …'

Psalm 86:1–4, 16–17. 'Incline Your ear, O Lord, answer me, for I am poor and needy. Preserve my life, for I am steadfast; O You, my God, deliver Your servant who trusts in You. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I call to You all day long; bring joy to Your servant's life, for on You, Lord, I set my hope … Turn to me and have mercy on me; grant your strength to Your servant … show me a sign of Your favor … because You, Lord, have given me aid and comfort.'

The start of the Bicentennial in Philadelphia was an eagerly anticipated event. The moving of the Liberty Bell to its new abode on Independence Mall from Independence Hall was first on the community's agenda — soon after midnight on January 1st. It was a wet and windy night. The few thousand exuberant people present suffered through cold, winds and rain for the privilege.

Braving the inclement weather were about sixty worshipers at Society Hill Synagogue, 418 Spruce Street, where a service in honor of the historic occasion was held. Arranged jointly with Mikveh Israel, it began at 9:45 p.m. with Arbith (the traditional daily evening service). Congregational reading was appropriately Leviticus 25:1–10, which included the inscription found on the Bell: 'Proclaim liberty in the land unto all the inhabitants thereof.' In the spirit of proclamations in days of yore such as those that would promulgate the jubilee every fifty years, I sounded the Shofar ushering the Bicentennial year. Rabbi Ivan Caine, of Society Hill Synagogue, gave a discourse on the biblical origins of the jubilee, the original proclamation of liberty from debt and slavery in Hebrew society.

Each Synagogue enjoyed an exclusive part of the service. Society Hill led a reading entitled, 'America — Founded on Biblical Precepts,' and Mikveh Israel chanted a part of the Hallel [Psalms 118:21–29].

I then spoke on "The Bell — Jewish Connections."

"We are happy that this service is being held under the auspices of The Old Philadelphia Churches Historical Association, a group of houses of worship in existence since Colonial times. And Mikveh Israel is proud to represent the Jewish community on that august body. We are on it because at the time the Bell was brought across the Atlantic in 1752, Mikveh Israel was the only synagogue in Philadelphia, and was to continue to be so for the following half century.

"As you are aware, the Bell was imported from England for the Pennsylvania State House in observance of the fiftieth anniversary of Penn's Charter of Liberties for Pennsylvania. Most interesting for us is a tradition that the Bell made the trip on a ship called "The Myrtilla," jointly owned by two members of Mikveh Israel, Nathan Levy, its founder, and David Franks.

"And today, after the Bell's 223–year existence, through which was witnessed the founding, travails and ascent to greatness of the American nation, Mikveh Israel is to be the house of worship in closest proximity to the new site of the Bell.

'There were not too many Jews in America in the years before the Revolution, though those who were here made a remarkable record as citizens and as soldiers. It was not the influence of individual Jews that helped shape American life, as the influence of Judaism, through the Bible. The authentic genius of the Bible is evident most of all in the fact that the incidents it relates have universal significance. In their message and meaning, there was something challenging and relevant to the American colonists as there is for us today.

"The colonists drew many parallels between the events of Scripture and their own experiences. They studied Hebrew. The Mayflower Compact and the first Thanksgiving were biblically inspired. They found in the Books of Moses an example and a warrant for every aspect of their lives — for establishing a tabernacle, a school, a meeting house; for setting bounds to a town, for naming towns, and for electing officials. Their first settlement, Salem, named for Jerusalem, was taken from Psalm 76, as if a prediction of the year, much later, when they would take a large step for freedom and democracy.

When the time did come and the Declaration of Independence was adopted on July 4, 1776, Congress appointed a committee of three to devise a seal for the thirteen newly independent states of America. The three men were Ben Franklin of Pennsylvania, Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, and John Adams of Massachusetts.

"Both Franklin and Jefferson turned to the Book of Exodus. Franklin depicted the crossing of the Red Sea, and the motto of his design was: Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God. Pharoah represented King George III; the Red Sea, the Atlantic; the Israelites, the revolutionary Americans.

"Jefferson's design showed the Children of Israel marching through the wilderness of Sinai, led by a cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night. Congress chose neither Franklin's nor Jefferson's. The design finally chosen was, of course, the American bald eagle with the olive branch of peace in its right claw and thirteen arrows of war in its left claw. The olive branch is partially taken from the biblical story of Noah, and symbolizes the bright future of peace envisaged by the first legislators of this nation.

"In Colonial Pennsylvania, James Logan, friend and agent of William Penn, was one of the foremost Hebraists and biblical scholars of his time. He even taught his daughter to read the Psalms in Hebrew because the Psalms were the only hymns the Pilgrims sang. And one might say that, as if in recognition of Logan's expert Hebraic knowledge, Jews made the Logan area in Philadelphia a miniature Jerusalem for at least two decades of the twentieth century.

"It was Logan's son–in–law, Isaac Norris, Jr, a biblical enthusiast in his own right, who chose the inscription for the Bell — 'Proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all the inhabitants thereof' — taken from the Book of Leviticus. The Liberty Bell draws its name from that inscription. It is entirely fitting that Christians and Jews and others who hold the Bible in high esteem, gather together on Independence Mall in honor of the Bell that has come to symbolize in this great land the biblical traditions of freedom, justice and truth, which remain the heritage of all the inhabitants thereof."

The program in Society Hill Synagogue concluded with the singing of 'America the Beautiful.'

The attendees went away pleased and enlightened, some ringing into the raw elements for a presence at the Mall during the Bell's short, ceremonious trip.

The first hours of the Bell in new quarters were greeted by a snowfall. Some had planned to witness the first official action at the Pavilion — a Freedom Sunrise Service. A half inch of cold white powder on the ground put a damper on the well–intentioned persons for whom that hour on the day after the night before might have been enough of a deterrent. As it was, almost three mixed, ecumenical ministers confidently stood through a thirty–minute rite. With a lectern alongside the Bell, I was among three clergymen who recited a prayer each — mine was the Shabbat/Festival morning Nishmat — and then each spoke briefly on Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.

Rev. Ernest A. Harding of Christ Church, Protestant, took the subject of Life. "The first recorded conversation between God with man is in the third chapter in the Book of Genesis when God says to Adam: 'Where are You?' This question is continually asked down through the ages and is appropriately asked at the start of our Bicentennial year. Where are we after two hundred years? What is our answer to our Creator? Our forefathers left the old world and braved an unfriendly ocean, to begin life afresh in the new world. They started a new life where it might be lived in all its freshness. And the question rings in our ears: 'Where are we?'"

My assignment was Liberty. "Perhaps more than anything else, the uniting force of freedom has, by Divine Providence, preserved us as a nation. All manner of substitutes have been proposed. Peoples and individuals have been known to exchange freedom for peace, for plenty, for the promise of security, and they have all made bad bargains, no matter what they got or how long they kept it — for freedom once yielded is brought back in costly ways. Our heritage of freedom comes to us beyond price, but it will not remain with us except as we pay for it with an increasing vigilance in our united nationhood."

The concept of Pursuit of Happiness was dwelt upon by Monsignor Leon Darkowski, Chaplains Corp, US Navy, Catholic. "In pursuit of the God–given right to happiness, our forefathers sought to insure spiritual and material contentment. Their concern for people resounded with a firm resolve to preserve the right to joy and dignity. Indeed true happiness is found where peace through justice prevails and the hand of God directs."

If only for their nerve, each person present was awarded a handsomely–contrived parchment bearing the program and the clergymen's remarks. For those who were there, a lifetime of delightful memories was worth an exciting experience had at a small sacrifice.

The first overseas head of state to visit the Bell was Israel's Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, on January 26, 1976. Following a formal welcome by Mayor Frank Rizzo at the Bell, Rabin addressed a Community Assembly at the Academy of Music.

The nation's most hallowed symbol, a twin of the Liberty Bell in historic perspective, is Independence Hall, originally the Pennsylvania State House. At a meeting of the Assembly Room on October 26, 1765, Mathias Bush, the President of Mikveh Israel Congregation, was the first merchant to sign the Non–Importation Agreement, protesting the importation of British goods, until the notorious Stamp Act was repealed. Among other merchants who signed were his co–religionists, David Franks, Bernard and Michael Gratz, Joseph Jacobs, Benjamin and Sampson Levy, and Moses Mordecai. They attended the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.

Rabbi Gershon Mendes Seixas, the first native–born Spiritual Leader (1745), protested in 1783 in the same Assembly Hall, against Pennsylvania adopting a religious oath before assuming office. This led to the Bill of Rights, which declared that Congress shall make no law respecting established religion. President George Washington requested Rabbi Seixas to offer a prayer invoking God's blessing at his inauguration, 1789.

Another landmark of Colonial Philadelphia is Elfreth's Alley, situated between Front and Second, north of Arch Street. A quaint cobblestoned street in continuous use for over two hundred years was connected with the development of the Jewish community. Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews, including founding members of Mikveh Israel, occupied many of the thirty original red brick houses with arched doorways. According to MacPherson's Directory of 1785, the first street census of Philadelphia, Rev. Jacob Raphael Cohen lived at #13, Jacob I. Cohen, a German–born colonial patriot and Indian trader, resided at #124, He organized the Hebrew Voluntary Corps for the Revolutionary War. Eliezor Levy occupied a double house, #112 and #114. Moses Mordecai lived at #118.

HAYM SALOMON DAY

The Bicentennial of the United States and the moving of Mikveh Israel's synagogue to Independence Mall would have been incomplete without commemorating the contributions of a great American and a noble member to the founding of both the republic and the synagogue. I planned and executed a program on the weekend of January 3–4, 1976 to which I dedicated a commemorative issue of the Mikveh Israel Record. It turned out to be a major event. Pennsylvania senior Senator Scott declared January 4th ***Haym Salomon Day***. The Torah scroll for the Sabbath lectionary featured the bells created by the famous eighteenth century silversmith, Myer Myers which originally topped Salomon's two scrolls presented to the Congregation at the dedication of Mikveh Israel's first synagogue building in 1782. On Sunday, 4th, a memorial service was held at Philadelphia's oldest Jewish cemetery on Spruce Street between 8th and 9th Streets, where Salomon was buried. Later that day, the famed Philadelphia historian, Maxwell Whiteman, delivered a lecture entitled, "The Impact on the Revolution — Haym Salomon and His Associates."

As if the destinies of Salomon and Philadelphia's Mikveh Israel were somehow tied together, he was born in Poland in 1740, the year of Mikveh Israel's founding. Fleeing from his homeland that had lost its independence, he arrived in New York at the age of 32, and allied himself with the freedom–loving movement, The Sons of Liberty. He escaped to Philadelphia from British captivity and came to the financial assistance of the Revolutionary cause. Here is the inscription on a plaque at the cemetery: 'To the memory of Haym Salomon, a native of Lissa, Poland, known as a patriot in the cause of the American Revolution. He died in January 1785 aged forty–five years, and was interred in this cemetery. The location of his grave, being now unknown, this tablet has been erected by his great–grandson, William Salomon of New York. September 1917.'

On East Wacker Drive in Chicago is a majestic statue honoring three American patriots: George Washington, Haym Salomon and Robert Morris. On the pedestal are words from a letter addressed by Washington in 1790 to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island: 'The Government of the United States, which gives bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should conduct themselves as good citizens.'

The monument was dedicated December 15, 1941, the 150th anniversary of the ratification of the Bill of Rights. Funds had been raised by an organization of Jews and non–Jews called the Patriotic Foundation of Chicago.

THE BICENTENNIAL CONFERENCE ON RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

The conference, a national six–day meeting, was held in Philadelphia April 25–30, under the auspices of the city's Christian and Jewish communities. Its two–fold purpose: 1.To commemorate the American heritage and constitutional guarantees of religious liberty and freedom of conscience. 2. To provide a study forum for the re–examination and re–assessment of the foundations, history, contemporary situation, and future prospects of these rights. As an interfaith conference, the program was an embodiment of the spirit of American pluralism. Saturday, April 24, and Sunday, April 25, 1976 were observed as Religious Liberty Weekend in synagogues and churches of the Greater Philadelphia area.

I was named official representative of the Jewish Theological Seminary at the Conference.

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA

Three prominent Jewish speakers were featured on the program: Professor Robert Gordis, of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Rabbi Marc H. Tannenbaum, of the American Jewish Committee, and Elie Wiesel, who spoke on the 'Freedom of Conscience — A Jewish Commentary.'

SERVICE OF RE–DEDICATION

Two most impressive programs were put together by the ***Philadelphia Board of Rabbis***, comprising the religious leaders of Judaism's major groupings: Orthodoxy, Conservatism, Reform and Reconstructionism. The first, on Sunday, May 16, 1976, highlighted by a service of thanksgiving and re–dedication, and was one of the last functions held at the synagogue at Broad and York Streets, with me officiating. I served on the Bicentennial Committee together with Rabbi David H. Wice, chairman, and Rabbis Lewis E. Bogage, Ivan Caine, Bertram W. Korn, Charles Lacks, Nathan H. Reisner, and Efry Spectre.

All evidences pointed to a moving Congregation. The Tebah was literally in pieces. Hundreds of its precious marble parts were strewn in the lobby. The wooden framework held precariously together. The steps tottered, but by some miracle, did not give way.

A grand six–page booklet whose cover page bore the likeness of Mikveh Israel's Cherry Street (Strickland) Synagogue (1825–1860) depicting the procession of returning the Torah scrolls to the Ark, served as the textbook. Following Minha, MeChayil El Chayil (=From Strength To Strength) citations were presented to five Philadelphia Congregations dating prior to the Centennial of the United States:

CONGREGATION MIKVEH ISRAEL — 1740
Rabbi Ezekiel N. Musleah — Meyer Klein, President

CONGREGATION RODEPH SHALOM — 1795
Rabbi David H. Wice — Robert P. Frankel, Esq., President

TEMPLE BETH ZION — BETH ISRAEL — 1840
Rabbi Reuben J. Magil — Jerome Lipman, Esq., President

REFORM CONGREGATION KENESETH ISRAEL — 1847
Rabbi Bertram W. Korn — Paul L. Jaffe, Esq., President

CONGREGATION ADATH JESHURUN — 1858
Rabbi Yaakov G. Rosenberg — Robert E. Lipschutz, President

I recited the שֶׁהֶחֱיָנוּ

> Blessed are You, O Lord, Ruler of the universe, Who has given us life and sustained us and brought us to this happy occasion.

Five Torah scrolls, each representing one of the participating Congregations, were taken from the Ark and carried in circuit around the Tebah (Bimah) as Gratz College Community Choir sang Psalm 67:

> May God be gracious unto us and bless us;
> may He show us favor
> that Your way be known on earth,
> Your deliverance among all nations.
> Peoples all praise You, O God;
> all peoples will praise You.
> Nations will exult and shout for joy,

for You rule the peoples with equity,
You guide the nations of the earth.
The peoples will praise You, O God,
all peoples will praise You.
May the earth yield its produce;
may God, our God, bless us.
May God bless us,
and be revered to the ends of the earth.

With the Torah scrolls still on the Teach, the following prayers were recited:

Prayer for the Government of the United States — Rabbi Bertram W. Korn
Prayer For All Congregations — Rabbi Reuben J. Magil
Prayer For Israel — Rabbi Yaakov G. Rosenberg
The Memorial Prayer — Rabbi Ezekiel N. Musleah

טוֹב שֵׁם מִשֶּׁמֶן טוֹב וְיוֹם הַמָּוֶת מִיּוֹם הִוָּלְדוֹ סוֹף דָּבָר הַכֹּל נִשְׁמַע אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים יְרָא וְאֶת מִצְוֹתָיו
שְׁמוֹר כִּי זֶה כָּל הָאָדָם יַעֲלֶזוּ חֲסִידִים כְּכָבוֹד יְרַנְּנוּ עַל מִשְׁכְּבוֹתָם
תִּהְיוּ מְנוּחָתָם בְּגַן עֵדֶן תְּעוֹלָם תַּבָּא לְנֶפֶשׁ כָּל אֵלֶּה הַנִּפְטָרִים אֲנָשִׁים וְנָשִׁים וְטַף אֲשֶׁר יָסְדוּ
אֶת הַקְּהִלּוֹת הַקְּדוֹשׁוֹת
מִקְוֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל
רוֹדֵף שָׁלוֹם
בֵּית צִיּוֹן-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל
כְּנֶסֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל
עֲדַת יְשוּרוּן
וַאֲשֶׁר הֵקִימוּ אֶת הַמּוֹסָדוֹת לְהִתְיַשְּׁבוּת הַיְּהוּדִים בָּאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת וְלָאֻמָּה שֶׁבָּנוּ קְהִלּוֹת קְדוֹשׁוֹת בָּאָרֶץ
בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר
רְוֹחַ יי תְּנִיחֵם בְּגַן עֵדֶן וְיִלָּחֵם עֲלֵיהֶם הַשָּׁלוֹם כַּכָּתוּב יָבוֹא שָׁלוֹם יָנוּחוּ עַל מִשְׁכְּבוֹתָם הוֹלֵךְ נְכוֹחוֹ
וְכֵן יְהִי רָצוֹן וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן

Better is a good name than precious ointment,
making the day of death better than the day of birth.
The last word after all has been heard —
revere God and keep His commandments,
for this is the whole duty of man.
May the pious be joyful in glory,
and rejoice in their repose.
May the spirit of the Lord grant rest in the happiness of the Beyond
to those men, women, and children, founders of this religious community
and the Jewish settlement in this land, and to all those in each generation
who maintain these and other Congregations and Jewish life in this land,
and who have now departed from this world according to the will of God,
Lord of heaven and earth. May they rest in peace, as it is written, 'They shall
enter into peace; they who walk in their uprightness shall have repose in their
resting places.'
May this be the Divine will, and let us say, Amen.
The congregation recites the KADDISH.

Bicentennial Prayer — Responsive Reading. Rabbi David H. Wice

Our God and God of our Fathers! Author of all blessings! In the spirit of gladness and gratitude are we here today to celebrate a cherished milestone in the annals of our American nation.

> Two hundred years ago, our Fathers forged a political instrument described as 'the most wonderful work struck off at a given time by the brain and purpose of man.'

Beneath it, in the citizens, You had endowed enough ethical and spiritual basis, enough intelligence, conscience and loyalty to sustain it. You have imbued generations of this nation to continue to tend and develop it.

> Let the flame of selfless devotion to liberty, justice and equality burn as brightly in our day as when our nation was founded. We lift up our eyes to You for inspiration and guidance.

You, O God, have granted Jewish communities an honored place in this county's historical processes. You have bound us together in ties of conscious unity with fellow Americans.

> Teach us to respect the rights of others and to assert our own rights in accordance with Your will. Let us forever cherish our nation's independence and the freedom of its institutions.

We thank You, O God, for this means of strengthening the hands and voices of those engaged in the sacred task of conveying the religious way of life.

> We thank You for our houses of prayer where we and those whose memories are dear to us have worshiped You in sincerity and truth.

You have called the synagogue the abode of Your spirit. We pray You to inspire us with zeal and enthusiasm to seek You at all times. Give us the understanding to lead the destinies of our Congregations in the ways that bring us most spiritual satisfaction.

> As we enter our nation's third century, may we rededicate ourselves in Your service.

May Your spirit rest upon us, 'the spirit of wisdom and insight, the spirit of counsel and valor, the spirit of devotion and reverence.'

The Torah scrolls are returned to the Ark.

Address — Rabbi Bertram W. Korn
"A Bicentennial Salute to the Congregations and Rabbis of Philadelphia"

Alenu
Adon Olam

Benediction — Rabbi Ezekiel N. Musleah

THE JEWISH CONTRIBUTION TO JUSTICE AND LAW

The second Board of Rabbis function included a Bicentennial convocation on Monday, June 7, 1976 preceded by a dinner at Congregation Rodeph Shalom. The theme focused on the Jewish contribution to justice and law, and was addressed by the speaker, Rabbi Emanuel Rackman, religious leader of New York's Fifth Avenue Synagogue and former provost of Yeshiva University. His topic: "Justice — The Jewish Dream; Justice — The American Dream."

Earlier that day, **the Philadelphia Chapter of the Federal Bar Association**, of which Mikveh Israel member, Leonard Leventhal was president, held a reception and luncheon at the Downtown Club on Independence Square, Philadelphia to commemorate the the anniversary of the Resolution of Independence introduced by Richard Henry Lee of Virginia on June 7, 1776, which was adopted on July 2, and declared on July 4, 1776, by the first Congress in this first capital of the United States of America; and to honor members of the the Congress who were present in Philadelphia to participate in a ceremony at Congress Hall in celebration of this historic occasion. Mayor Frank L. Rizzo proclaimed the day "Lee Resolution Day."

The Lee Resolution: "That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved,"

My benediction:

> "Eternal Father! We thank You for the bounties of food and comradeship.
>
> "We are grateful for the vision and courage of our ancestors. Bless our leaders and our people as we commemorate a sacred milestone of two centuries as a free nation.
>
> "Hasten the day when the hope of universal peace will prevail throughout the world, with justice and freedom for all peoples. Amen."

On June 15, 1976, **The National Park Service** organized a program in honor of the the anniversary of the appointment of George Washington as Commander–in–Chief of the army of the united Colonies: Parade and muster by reactivated Eighteenth century militia units. Ceremony commemorating George Washington. Concert by the United States Armed Forces Bicentennial Band.

A function that had nothing to do with the U. S. Bicentennial, but which had profound implications for its relations with Israel and Italy, the City of Philadelphia dedicated the **Sister Cities Plaza** named in honor of the **Cities of Florence, Italy and Tel Aviv, Israel**, on June 27, 1976, thus symbolically uniting the City of Brotherly Love with two other cities dedicated to fraternal affinity.

Philadelphia's Official Bicentennial Celebration

Invitation

Mayor Frank L. Rizzo
cordially invites you to attend the
200th Celebration
of
Independence Day
at which
The President of the United States
Gerald R. Ford
will be the principal speaker
on
Sunday, the Fourth of July
Nineteen Hundred and seventy–six
at ten a.m.
Independence Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Independence Mall teemed with patiently awaiting Philadelphia's official Independence Day observance to begin outside Independence Hall, on July 4th. A Tri–Faith service, held earlier at Judge Lewis Quadrangle was over and the large congregation flowed into the Mall. [Incidentally, the clergymen who participated at the service used Mikveh Israel's building to robe.] People streamed into Fifth and Sixth Streets, along the Mall.

The podium was packed with national and local dignitaries. The master of ceremonies, Charlton Heston, who played "Moses" in the masterpiece, "The Ten Commandments," opened with words of welcome. "It is a privilege and honor to participate today in this historic program ... a solemn event shared by some 215 Americans, and untold millions throughout the world. The Freedoms that we enjoy today stem from a document written and adopted at this historic national shrine in a solemn ceremony two hundred years ago.

On that historic day, the fateful bell in the tower of this red brick building rang, signaling that the 56 members of the Second Continental Congress had reached a momentous decision.

> "A man carrying a sheet of parchment mounted a platform in front of this building and, in a powerful voice, read the climactic words that altered the course of history and changed the lives of freedom–loving men and women everywhere for all time. The Declaration of Independence was history.
>
> "Since then, that fragile union of thirteen states grew to the greatness of the fifty United States Of America. But along the way, there was heartbreak, trauma and tears of happiness and sorrow."

The program continued in the following sequence:

National Anthem	U.S. Armed Forces Bicentennial Band Chorus
Invocation	John Cardinal Krol, Archbishop of Philadelphia
Pageant of Flags	Larry Kane, News Commentator, Representatives of Fifty States

"The story of our nation was best told by calling the roll of the flags which had served as our early banners of liberty, and the emblems of our 50 states. The flags were carried by the Girl Scouts of America from every State in the Union and Puerto Rico, each senior scout displaying the flag of her home State.

"In 1777, one year after the Declaration of Independence was proclaimed, the Continental Congress resolved: 'That the flag of the Thirteen United States should be thirteen stripes alternate red and white ... that the Union be thirteen stars, white in a field of blue, representing a new constellation.'

"The first State to ratify the Constitution was Delaware, on December 7, 1787. Then approving in quick order were: Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Georgia, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, South Carolina, New Hampshire, Virginia, New York, North Carolina, and then, in 1790, Rhode Island. And the thirteen separate States were one land, one nation, and one people. Then, as pioneers shared unexplored frontiers, new States joined the fledgling Union: Vermont, in 1791, Kentucky 1792, Tennessee 1796, Ohio 1803 ... Finally, America reached the golden shores of the Pacific when California ratified the Constitution in 1850 ... 1876 was a very special year in our nation's history, the United States was 100 years old. The State of Colorado added its star — the 38th — to our flag ... New Mexico and Arizona in 1912. Thus we remained with 48 States indivisible from the Atlantic to the Pacific, until 1959, when we stretched to Alaska in the Far North, and we spanned the Pacific to Hawaii.

"For two hundred years, Americans have carried our flag high in mind and heart ... It is extraordinarily fitting that with us today is a man who never forgot the powerful symbol of 'Old Glory,' for while he was prisoner of war in Hanoi, North Viet Nam, for six years, he stealthily and laboriously pieced together a tiny American flag. He shredded a handkerchief for the white stripes, and a nylon shirt provided the red stripes. A scrap from a sweater formed the blue field, and he embroidered the stars from threads pulled from a white towel. A piece of copper wire formed his needle and, for a fillip, he added gold braid from an old blanket. That tiny flag, one of history's most priceless relics, was smuggled out of North Viet Nam hidden between two brightly colored handkerchiefs.

That man was Air Force Lt. John Dramesi, formerly of South Philadelphia ..."

[Led in the]

Pledge of Allegiance	
Greetings	Honorable Frank Rizzo, Mayor of Philadelphia
Remarks	Honorable Milton J. Shapp, Governor of Pennsylvania
Excerpts from Declaration of Independence	Marian Anderson

[Arturo Toscannini described her voice as a 'sound that is heard but once in a hundred years.']

Charlton Heston: "Let us now offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the events that made this free country and for the continued greatness of our nation. **The Thanksgiving Prayer will be offered by Rabbi Ezekiel N. Musleah of the Congregation Mikveh Israel, founded in 1740."**

I was seated between Marion Anderson and Susan Ford, the President's daughter. My prayer offered thanksgiving for the favored destiny of Americans beginning with the Declaration of Independence: 'O Lord our God, Source and Giver of all blessings! Filled with gratitude for "our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor,"we pray for Your continued favor and blessings.

We thank You for Your gift of life, distinguished by growth and prosperity.

We thank You for liberty, inspired by freedom to worship, to work, to learn.

We thank You for happiness of home and community, for the love of dear ones, for the beauty of family and friends. We know that whatever joys we have are the fruits not of our own unaided efforts but of Your goodness that has blessed those efforts and brought them to fulfillment.

We thank You for the founders and builders of this, our beloved country.

We thank You for the spirit of self–sacrifice, the sense of solidarity in danger, and the sense of restraint in competitiveness.

We thank You for our leaders. Bless our President, Gerald R. Ford, and the other leaders of our country, our state and our city. Endow them with the spirit of wisdom and understanding to advance the welfare of our nation and the happiness of all humankind.

We thank You for Your covenant of peace.

We are thankful, Merciful Father, for all Your gracious gifts and precious boons You have granted us.

You made America beautiful, O God. May we keep it beautiful, fulfilling the words of the hymn,

'And crown Thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea.'
Amen."

"What America Means To Me"John Willard Marriott, Chairman of the Board, Marriott Corporation
General Daniel James, Jr., USAF Commander–in–Chief, North American Air Defence Command
Miss Lenne Jo Hallgren, America's Junior Miss, 1976

Charlton Heston: "Beginning with George Washington, every American President has felt the power and majesty of this place. They have come to Philadelphia to pay their respects to that great symbol of liberty for freedom–loving people throughout the world — the Liberty Bell. One hundred years ago, President Ulysses S. Grant journeyed to Philadelphia to personally take part in the opening of the 1876 centennial exhibition. Today, another President has made the journey to Philadelphia — this time to mark the two hundredth year of liberty in America. Ladies and Gentlemen, the President of the United States, Gerald R. Ford."

The President, who arrived a half hour late, made significant references to Jewish tradition. "Before me is the great bronze bell that joyously rang out at the news of the birth of our nation from the steeple of the State House. It was never intended to be a church bell. Yet, a generation before the great events of 1776, the elected Assembly of

Pennsylvania ordered it to be inscribed with this Biblical verse: 'Proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof.'

"The American settlers had many, many hardships, but they had more liberty than any other people on earth. That was what they came for and what they meant to keep. The verse from Leviticus on the Liberty Bell refers to the ancient Jewish year of Jubilee. In every fiftieth year, the Jubilee restored the land and the equality of persons when the Children of Israel lived in the Land of Promise, and both gifts came from God, as the Jubilee regularly reminded them.

"The American adventure began here with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence. It continues with the common conviction that the source of our blessings is a loving God, in whom we trust. Therefore, I ask all the members of the American family, our guests and friends, to join me now in a moment of silent prayer and meditation in gratitude for all we have received and to ask continued safety and happiness for each of us and for the United States of America."

Benediction — Reverend Leon Sullivan, Pastor, Zion Baptist Church
"The Liberty Bell" — All–Philadelphia Boys Choir
Conclusion: — Charlton Heston

"Ladies and Gentlemen, boys and girls, we have met today on the Fourth of July to re–affirm the words of the Declaration of Independence, and to recommit ourselves to the promise of America. All across America, the same re–affirmation and recommitment are taking place in cities large and small. But this is a very special place because this is Philadelphia, and Philadelphia, by circumstance and great fortune, is that unique place in American history where the hope for human dignity was reborn. It was Philadelphia where John Adams wrote to his wife, Abigail, that this day of July, 1776, will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America. 'I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated

as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to another, from this time forward, for evermore ...'

"Well, we do, John Adams, we do. We will make joyful noise throughout this day and end with a full celebration of fireworks — whizzers, and spinners, and rockets, and sparklers, and bright exploding light!

"On this Fourth of July, 1976, let us wish our friends and neighbors, our husbands and wives, our parents and our children, and everyone who lives in this great wonderful country of ours: HAPPY BIRTHDAY, AMERICA! Let me hear everybody say it: HAPPY BIRTHDAY, AMERICA! AND MANY, MANY MORE TO COME!"

MIKVEH ISRAEL'S FIRST SERVICE AT INDEPENDENCE MALL

Over at the synagogue, about a hundred persons had concluded the first service to be held in the new building. Conducted by Rev. Isaac C. Edrehi, it began at 10 in the morning and included the chanting of the Hallel. Worshipers were awaiting my arrival from the official City celebration. They were unaware of the President Ford's lateness and had become a little fidgety. I arrived at 11:50, went straight to the lectern, and, without robing, delivered my message, which I here append.

"This is a momentous occasion for all of us here present, for we are the first group of persons to worship in this beautiful synagogue. As history is being made today, we are a proud part of it. It is a worthy tradition to hand down to posterity. On the two hundredth birthday of our country, which coincides with the holding of the first service ever in this synagogue, you and I are blessed to be present. In token of this auspicious occasion, you will receive a coin prepared by the City of Philadelphia in honor of the Bicentennial; on one side of the coin is depicted the Liberty Bell and the inscription: 'Philadelphia's Bicentennial, July 4, 1976,' and the obverse side the emblem of the City and the name of the Mayor. This is a fitting memento of the American and Jewish traditions of liberty that converge and are unified on this special day in this unique synagogue.

"Now a word about the significance of this day for us as Jews. Both as Americans and Jews, we are two people whose histories began with revolutions. Yet there have been revolutions, which could not be justified. How can we tell when a revolution is justified?

How can we tell if it is led by freedom–loving people or by demagogues?

"In the reading of the Torah section yesterday, mention was made of a revolution against Moses and Aaron that was led by a man named Korah. The Bible condemns this revolution and calls it wicked.

"Today we join with all Americans in celebrating a happy birthday, the anniversary of another revolution against George III and Britain, which we praise and call good.

There is a vast difference between the two revolutions. The first is in the character of the leaders. Korah is a man who remains in the background at every sign of danger, and only after the danger has passed, comes forward and demands a position of power and honor. When Moses and Aaron stood before Pharaoh, Korah was nowhere to be seen. When the Israelites stood at the Red Sea, he was most inconspicuous. When war was being waged against the Amalekites, there was no sign of him. Then when the time for honor came, he wanted to be up front, and he said to Moses and Aaron: 'Who made you our leaders? Let me have power instead.'

"The men who wrote the Declaration of Independence were different. They were people who put their lives where their signatures were. They were men who served in the front lines in the struggle for freedom. They were demonstrating with their lives that it was not glory and honor but freedom, which they sought. They meant what they said when they ended the Declaration with the words: 'For the support of this Declaration, we hereby pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor.' Samuel Adams, John Hancock, Thomas Jefferson and the others risked their lives and gave their fortunes and proved their honor to back up the words, which they signed. So their words had meaning and their Declaration was respected.

"The second difference between the two revolutions is in the direction of their vision. The rebellion of Korah was a call for a return to the past. He advocated a return to Egypt. He even had the gall to call Egypt, the land of their suffering and slavery, 'the land of milk and honey,' which is the very phrase used frequently in the Bible to describe the Promised Land of Israel. The vision of Korah was a reactionary vision, of a return to a distorted and idealized past.

"The vision of the men who wrote the Declaration of Independence was a vision of the future. They saw their cause as the beginning of a new era, as a time of new hope. They called for the establishment of a new kind of society that would be different from the empires of the past.

"Perhaps the chief difference between the rebellion of Korah and the revolution of 1776 is the different conceptions of the nature of the state and the source of authority. Korah believed in the divine right of his tribe and his family to rule over Israel. He considered his tribe, the tribe of Levi, to be appointed by God to govern; and his quarrel with Moses was merely over which members of this tribe were entitled to which office.

"The men who made the American Revolution had a radically different conception of the state and or the source of power. They looked upon the state not as a source of power but as a servant of the people. The considered the concept of Divine right of any family or tribe to rule as blasphemy, for all men are equal under God, and sovereignty belongs to the people. They began their Declaration with the assertion that 'the state exists to serve the people, and derives its power from the consent of the governed,' and so wherever any government becomes destructive of these ends, the people have the right to abolish the government and replace it with a new one.

"The revolution which we celebrate on the Fourth of July drew its inspiration not from Korah but from another biblical personality, Samuel the Prophet, whose words are very subtly included as the Haftarah when the story of Korah is the Torah reading. The Bible tells us that when the first king of Israel was crowned, Samuel gathered the people and delivered a fiery speech condemning the institution of monarchy. He prophesied that a king would take their sons for his army, and their daughters for his harem, and that he would tax them for his own luxuries, and that they would some day regret having chosen a king. He concluded his prophecy with this fateful warning: 'If you will revere the Lord and serve Him and … *if both you and your king will be under God*, then you will live, but if not, then both you and your king will be destroyed.'

"Samuel's prophecy was written down and placed in the national archives. It is to the everlasting credit of the kings of Israel that not one of them ever dared to remove it from there. It remained all through the years of the monarchy as a reminder to the people and to the kings that they were both to be *under God.*

"Samuel's speech remained in the Bible as a legacy to all generations. It was political dynamite in every land in which the king tried to set himself up as above the law. It served as an inspiration to those who forced King John of England to sign the Magna Carta; it served as impulse to Oliver Cromwell in his war against the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings; it served as stimulus to Thomas Jefferson and his co–authors in the writing of the Declaration of Independence. It serves as inspiration to us today, reminding us that governments are means and not and end, that governments are servants of the people, and not the source of power, that nation and their rulers are both under God.

"In Temple times, it was forbidden to eat new corn until the 'waving' of the Omer had taken place on the second day of Pesah. Such corn, known as 'Hadash,' [that which is new,] was strictly forbidden. The reason behind the regulation is clear. New things are forbidden until they have received God's blessing. Human use is permitted only after God's blessing has been obtained, only after we have acknowledged them as the gift of God.

"In America on this milestone Fourth of July or in this new synagogue, new ideas or a fresh approach is suspect in many circles. Perhaps this is as it should be. Everyone develops either a little liberal or a little conservative and the world needs both — the liberal to state the claims of the new and the conservative to preserve the values of the old. Tension has always existed, among the States that gave rise to the American Civil War, for example, as well as within the ranks of this Congregation in the Isaac Leeser controversy between the rival claims of tradition and progress. Like other tensions, these became creative and not destructive because the teaching of the Omer was taken to heart.

"God is neither the Lord of the old alone nor of the new alone. Both old and new belong to His creation. Harmony between them can be found in the light of His all–embracing truth. 'Hadash' reminds us that the new not be feared if it is brought as an offering to God.

"We who are on the threshold of the third century as a nation and a new synagogue building as a Congregation, will be tempted by new approaches to novel situations. We do right, Scripture advises, to be apprehensive of the new. It may call into question all the values built so laboriously and constructed so well by generations of the faithful. However, the new is rejected out of hand at peril. Bring it rather to God. Give it the long look over and over. Let God's blessing rest upon it. There must be an unending mission of quest for what is good in the long run. We should walk with the new in hope because we come out of the past with reverence and gratitude.

"Let us celebrate our nation's 200th birthday on this Fourth of July reaffirming the biblical and religious ideas that are at the heart of the Declaration of Independence that 'all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these rights are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.' Let us announce to those within our land and to those around the world who yearn for freedom that the concepts of the original Declaration are worth living for, and if necessary, fighting for. Let us declare to those who look to us for moral leadership that we still stand for these convictions, and the achievement of these goals as proclaimed in the closing words of the Declaration: 'With a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, (we) mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor.'

May it be the will of Almighty God that we be worthy of this, our pledge, Amen."

On my official program, I obtained valuable autographs of a memorable day:

Gerald R. Ford — Marion Anderson
Charlton Heston — Leon Sullivan
Happy Birthday USA — With pleasure having been a part of it with you.
John A. Dramesi, Lt. Col. USAF — Love, Lenne Jo Hallgren
Larry Kane — America's Jr. Miss '76
Daniel James, General, USAF. **Peace!!** — Jr Happy Birthday America

Official City acknowledgment of my part in the celebrations:

"Rabbi Ezekiel Musleah

Congregation Mikveh Israel
2803 North Broad Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19132

Dear Rabbi Musleah,

I want to thank you for helping make the Freedom Week Observance in Philadelphia a memorable climax to the nation's Bicentennial activities.

Your participation afforded you a unique role in this historic event, which will be recalled for years to come.

As Mayor and on behalf of the people of Philadelphia, I am most grateful for your efforts.

Sincerely,

Frank L. Rizzo"

The letter came with a six–inch brass replica of the Liberty Bell mounted on a wooden platform, on the facade of which is the insignia of the City of Philadelphia and an inscription on a brass plaque:

"Presented to Rabbi Ezekiel N. Musleah
by the Honorable Frank L. Rizzo
Mayor of Philadelphia
July 4, 1976"

HISTORIC VISIT TO THE WHITE HOUSE

In December 1790, Manuel Josephson, erudite president of Congregation Mikveh Israel, largely composed and presented to George Washington a letter of congratulations on his inauguration as president of the United States. The city having replaced New York as capital of the nation, it was Washington's first visit there. The felicitation was offered on behalf of four 'Hebrew Congregations of Philadelphia, New York, Charleston [South Carolina] and Richmond [Virginia].' Two other synagogues, those of Newport, Rhode Island [the Touro Synagogue] and Savannah, Georgia, by that time, already had sent their good wishes. These communications are treasured possessions of the American Jewish community.

In fitting observance of the Bicentennial of the United States, the six Colonial Congregations formulated a letter signed by each of their Rabbis, which they delivered in person to President Ford at the White House on July 12, 1976 at the invitation of the President. The letter read:

"Dear Mr. President,

We, the spiritual leaders of the six Colonial Jewish Congregations, commend to you and our nation congratulations and divine benediction as the Bicentennial climaxes.

As our forefathers tendered President Washington felicitations on the occasion of his inauguration, expressing in those documents love of America, and dedication on the part of its Jewish citizens to the majestic precepts and freedoms for which it was established, we, in this generation, would affirm our sentiments. May the blessings of liberty, justice and compassion be forthcoming unto our 200 million citizens, to them and their progeny after them. May Washington's promise 'to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance,' continue to be the bedrock of public policy.

"As the Founding Fathers so clearly understood, love and loyalty to country increase in proportion to the freedoms secured, the privileges extended, and the egalitarian principles

promoted. The commitment of the stock of Abraham is ever to vouchsafe these American values for all people, whether descendants of the first settlers, or more recently removed to these shores.

"Be assured, Sir, of the steadfast loyalty of the American Jewish community to the American dream and the American territory. We will defend it against its enemies, foreign and domestic. We will give of our energies, wisdom and skill for the common weal. We will promote the cause of other democracies in this world, including the land of Israel, sacred to all generations of our people. We do so on the conviction that democratic governments need the unique strength which sister democracies can provide, especially in a world where many nations are hostile to elemental human freedoms.

May the wonder–working Deity Who has revealed to His children their common origin and destiny and has commanded them to be brethren one to the other, excite the will of all American races and stocks to observe this 200th birthday in benevolent spirit. May we remember the conviction of Presidents Washington, Jefferson and Madison that in this nation men will forever govern themselves.

"Your humble and obedient servants,

Edward L. Cohn, Congregation Beth Elohim, Charleston South Carolina
Louis C. Gerstein, Congregation Shearith Israel, New York City, New York
Theodore Lewis, Congregation Jeshuat Israel, Newport, Rhode Island
Ezekiel N. Musleah, Congregation Mikveh Israel, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Saul J. Rubin, Congregation Mickve Israel, Savannah, Georgia
Jack D. Spiro, Congregation Beth Ahabah – Beth Shalome, Richmond, Virginia"

President Ford warmly received us into the Oval Office and the ceremonies began. Rabbi Spiro rendered the traditional blessing on setting eyes upon a head of state. Rabbi Lewis recited the 'Sheheyanu' for the gift of life and for experiencing a unique occasion. Rabbi Rubin then read the exquisitely framed letter.

We took the opportunity to greet the President for his birthday by presenting him with a Shofar. We thought that the Shofar was appropriate as a common denominator of both the American and Jewish heritage of freedom. **Our daughters Flora, Rahel and Aliza wrapped the gift at the Musleah home in Philadelphia. I read the following words, artistically inscribed by Rahel:**

"We, the Rabbis of six Colonial Synagogues, are privileged to present you with this Shofar (Ram's Horn). This was the instrument used in biblical days to 'proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof.' It is also a token of American and Jewish devotion to liberty and of your own support of it at home and abroad as president of our great country.

Many happy returns!"

Rabbi Gerstein and I took turns to sound the shofar.

As the President invited the religious leaders to sit down with him, he inquired as to the historical background of each of the representative Congregations. Rabbi Lewis took the opportunity to mention that Washington's famous words in his reply to the Newport synagogue: 'To bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance,' was taken from the letter written by Moses Seixas of Newport to Washington, which the President, obviously impressed, mentioned them in his response.

I drew President Ford's attention to Mikveh Israel's nomen as 'The Synagogue of the American Revolution,' derived from the fact that it was the only functioning Jewish house of worship in the Colonies during the struggle for independence. The British had occupied the other cities where Jews lived, and members of Philadelphia's Mikveh Israel hosted their co–religionists during their sojourn in the City of Brotherly Love.

Asked by the President where the first Jews came from, Rabbi Gerstein told the story of the first twenty–three Sephardic Jews from Brazil who settled in New York in 1654. The Rabbi went on to point out that when New York's Jews were forced to leave their city, they were led by their patriotic spiritual leader, the Rev. Gershom Mendes Seixas, who, in Philadelphia, provided the assembled Jewish communities with religious and cultural sustenance. The expanded community found it easier to build its first synagogue edifice in 1782, a quarter of the finances coming from Philadelphia's own Haym Salomon.

President Ford then graciously invited the rabbis' families to join him and them in his office, was introduced to each one of the ten or twelve of them and posed for photographs. We have a much–cherished copy with the President's signature.

Points of interest at the White House: Each president introduces his own specially–designed china used at state dinners. A specimen of each adorns display cases. Each president, during his term of office, planted a sapling in the White House grounds. Some have grown to be imposing trees, which does not necessarily correspond to the president's achievements in office.

President Ford, through an assistant, acknowledged our visit to the White House.

The White House
Washington

July 22, 1976

Dear Rabbi Musleah,

On behalf of the President, thank you for taking time to visit the White House on July 12, 1976. The President greatly enjoyed the opportunity to spend some time with you and the Rabbis of other Colonial Congregations and your families.

President Ford fully appreciated the presentation of the letter signed by all all you, and the Shofar, which you helped to blow in the Oval Office. He also appreciated the expression of faith in our nation reflected in the letter.

Enclosed are copies of the photographs taken when you visited with the President, which he would like you to have with his best wishes for a happy and memorable Bicentennial year.

Sincerely,

Milton E. Mitler
Deputy Special Assistant

Rabbi E. N. Musleah
319 S. Laurence Court
Philadelphia, Pa, 19106

Enclosure

FAREWELL TO SYNAGOGUE BUILDING AT BROAD AND YORK

The final Shabbat services at the synagogue building that housed Congregation Mikveh Israel since 1909 were held on July 31st (Shabbat Hazone). To mark the occasion, Parnas Meyer Klein called every man and boy to the Torah. Services were conducted by Rev. Isaac C. Edrehi and me. I also chanted the Haftarah in commemoration of my father's Nahala (Yarsteit).

Tisha b'Ab marked the very last time the old edifice was used as a place of worship. For the evening service by candlelight, an estimated 250 persons came to bid farewell to the building that served well three generations of Congregation and community for almost 67 years. Nostalgia filled the air, as thoughts of bygone days came strikingly to mind. The spirit of one man towered over the rest for sheer longevity and tenacity — that of Rev. Leon H. Elmaleh. For it was he who made the move from 7th and Arch Streets, presided over the dedication of the new building, and stayed with it as active and emeritus minister for all but four years while living across the street and crossing it, even as a ninety–year old, sometimes against the street lights. The content of the elegies was, of course, depressing, but the spirited melodies to which some Tisha b'Ab elegies are put reflected more accurately the mood of the Congregation.

The heart was sad at leaving, though the mind looked forward to brighter days in the new synagogue. And that was the mood we came away with. For in keeping with my practise since 1967, I introduced a note of hope following the traditional service dominated by the theme of lamentation. In honor of the theme of a united Jerusalem, additional light was turned on, an encouraging message delivered and the practice continued of counting the years since the redemption of the holy city, to supplement the reckoning of time since the Destruction.

For the final service the following morning, there were just eleven persons in synagogue. The autograph of each attendee was taken and placed in the Congregation's archives.

First Shabbat Service at the Independence Mall Synagogue

The first Shabbat service took place on August 6th and 7th (Shabbat Nahamu) in the presence of a large assemblage from all parts of the city and suburbs.

The Friday evening service drew forty persons. I gave a brief introduction to the Sephardi mode of service, and Rev. Edrehi read the service. I spoke on: "I Can; Therefore I Shall." The Kiddush breathed a festive atmosphere. After the afternoon service, I led a study session on rabbinic literature. The Arbith and Habdalah ushering out the Sabbath concluded a memorable weekend.

A priceless necklace made headlines in 1777 when the British seized Philadelphia. The fascinating story behind this superb emerald and diamond necklace closely entwines it with our Bicentennial, with Philadelphia and with Thaddeus Kosciuszko, the gallant Pole, who like Lafayette and Haym Salomon, had rushed from Europe to America to aid the cause of liberty.

Kosciusko had been a romantic favorite at the court of French King Louis XVI, and several women had lost their hearts to him. Among them was a lovely countess of his native country.

One night, on hearing the news of Philadelphia's capture, she rushed to Ben Franklin, then ambassador to France, for news of Kosciusko. Franklin told her that Kosciusko was in no danger. Relieved, and wanting to help the American cause, she removed her necklace and gave it to Franklin in the name of liberty. It came to be called "The Liberty Necklace." It was displayed on Tuesday, August 10, 1976 in the lobby of the Thaddeus Kosciusko theater at Americana Jubilee in the Bourse Building, 21 South Fifth Street, in Philadelphia.

CHAPTER 22

DEDICATION OF MIKVEH ISRAEL'S INDEPENDENCE MALL SYNAGOGUE

17TH ELUL 5736 — SEPTEMBER 12, 1976

Amid song, solemn ceremony and the presence of devoted members and devoted friends, the synagogue was dedicated — the Congregation's fifth structure, situated only a few blocks from Third and Cherry Streets where the first building was erected in 1782 and where the Strickland building was erected in 1825.

Sunday, September 12th dawned exceptionally bright and clear — optimistic portents of the events that were to follow that day. The day's ceremonies began, significantly enough, at the Liberty Bell Pavilion at 1:30 p.m. Honored members carried the Congregation's seventeen Sifrei Torah in public procession to the new synagogue, after a brief ceremony at the Bell which included the Mikveh Israel choir's renditions of Bloch's "America" and Shalom Altman's vocal setting of "Ukratem D'ror" (You Shall Proclaim Liberty), the text from the biblical Book of Leviticus, inscribed on the Liberty Bell.

The Sepharim were carried from the Liberty Bell to the synagogue. The congregation was seated and the service began at shortly after 2 pmt. An honor guard of adults and children in double row formed in aisles on both sides of the Teach. The doors of the synagogue were closed with the Seraphim still outside.

The choir sang the invocation — Psalm 24.

שְׂאוּ שְׁעָרִים רָאשֵׁיכֶם וְהִנָּשְׂאוּ פִּתְחֵי עוֹלָם וְיָבוֹא מֶלֶךְ הַכָּבוֹד׃
מִי זֶה מֶלֶךְ הַכָּבוֹד יְיָ עִזּוּז וְגִבּוֹר
יְיָ גִּבּוֹר מִלְחָמָה׃
שְׂאוּ שְׁעָרִים רָאשֵׁיכֶם וּשְׂאוּ פִּתְחֵי עוֹלָם וְיָבוֹא מֶלֶךְ הַכָּבוֹד׃
מִי הוּא זֶה מֶלֶךְ הַכָּבוֹד יְיָ צְבָאוֹת הוּא מֶלֶךְ הַכָּבוֹד סֶלָה׃

O Gates, lift up your heads!
Up high, you everlasting doors,
so the King of Glory may come in!

Who is the King of glory? —
the Lord, mighty and valiant,
the Lord, valiant in battle.

O gates, lift up your heads!
Lift them up, you everlasting doors,
so the King of Glory may come in!

Who is the King of Glory?
the Lord of hosts,
He is the King of Glory!

With turn of the key, the doors were opened.

Reader: פִּתְחוּ לִי שַׁעֲרֵי צֶדֶק אָבוֹא בָם אוֹדֶה יָהּ

Choir: זֶה הַשַּׁעַר לַה׳ צַדִּיקִים יָבֹאוּ בוֹ

Open the gates of victory for me
that I may enter them and praise the Lord.

This is the gateway to the Lord —
the victorious shall enter through it.

The Sepharim were carried through the honor guard where they were adorned with bells, as the choir sang Psalm 118:26–29

בָּרוּךְ הַבָּא בְּשֵׁם יי בֵּרַכְנוּכֶם מִבֵּית יי
אֵל יי וַיָּאֶר לָנוּ אִסְרוּ חַג בַּעֲבֹתִים עַד קַרְנוֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ
אֵלִי אַתָּה וְאוֹדֶךָּ אֱלֹהַי אֲרוֹמְמֶךָּ
הוֹדוּ לַיי כִּי טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ

Blessed is he who enters by the name of the Lord; we bless you from the house of the Lord.
The Lord is God; He has given us light.
Bind the festal offering to the horns of the altar with cords.
You are my God and I will praise You;
You are my God and I will extol You.
Praise the Lord for He is good,
His steadfast love is eternal.

The Sepharim were placed in the Hechal to the accompaniment of instrumental music.

The Eternal Light was lit.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהֶחֱיָנוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לַזְּמַן הַזֶּה

Praised are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Who has given us life and sustained us and brought us to this happy occasion.
[True to Sephardi tradition, the motif of the service consisted of seven Hakafoth around the Tebah with seven Sifrei Torah. This was the custom in dedications of synagogues in the past.]

The First Circuit

Psalm 100

A Psalm of Praise.
Raise a shout for the Lord, all the earth;
worship the Lord in gladness;
come into His presence with shouts of joy.
Acknowledge that the Lord is God;
He made us and we are His,
His people, the flock He tends.
Enter His gates with praise,
His courts with acclamation.

Praise Him! Bless His name!
For the Lord is good;
His steadfast love is eternal;
His faithfulness is to all generations.

In front of the Hechal: Prayer for the Government of the United States read by Rabbi Louis C. Gerstein of New York's Shearith Israel.

He who grants deliverance unto nations and understanding unto their leaders, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, who delivered his servant David from the destructive sword, who makes a way in the sea and a path in the mighty waters, may He bless, preserve, guard and assist the President and Vice–President of the United States, the Senate and House of Representatives, the Governor of this Commonwealth, the members of the Legislature, the Mayor and other constituted authorities of this city.

May the Supreme King of Kings in His infinite mercy preserve them, grant them life, and deliver them from all manner of trouble and injury. May the Supreme King of Kings in His infinite mercy inspire them and all their counselors and officers with goodwill towards us and all Israel our brethren. In their days and in ours may Judah be saved and Israel dwell securely, and speedily may the redeemer come to Zion.

May this be the will of God and let us say, Amen.

The Second Circuit

Psalm 122

A Song of Ascents.
A Psalm of David.

I rejoiced when the said to me.
"We are going to the house of the Lord."
Our feet stood inside your gates, O Jerusalem,
Jerusalem built up, a city knit together,
to which tribes would make pilgrimage,
the tribes of the Lord,
— as was enjoined upon Israel —
to praise the name of the Lord.
Then the thrones of judgment stood,
thrones of the house of David.
Pray for the well–being of Jerusalem;
may those who love you be at peace.
May there be well–being within your ramparts,
peace in your palaces.
For the sake of my kin and friends,
I pray for your well–being;
for the sake of the house of the Lord our God,
I seek your good.

In front of the Hechal. Prayer for the State of Israel read by Rabbi Mitchell Serels, Associate Director of Yeshiva University's Sephardic Studies Program.

מִי שֶׁבֵּרַךְ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן דָּוִד וּשְׁלֹמֹה הוּא יְבָרֵךְ אֶת מְדִינַת יִשְׂרָאֵל
אֶת שָׂרֶיהָ אֶת יוֹעֲצֶיהָ וְאֶת יושְׁבֶיהָ מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמְּלָכִים בְּרַחֲמָיו יִתְּנֵם בְּעֵצָה טוֹבָה מִלְּפָנָיו וְיִשְׁרֶה
עַל שׁוֹכְנֵי אַדְמַת הַקֹּדֶשׁ רוּחַ דַּעַת וְיִרְאַת יי שָׁם חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת יִפְגְּשׁוּ לְכָל בְּנֵי אָדָם כִּי אָדָם
הָאָרֶץ דֵּעָה אֶת יי וְיִקַּיֵם בָּנוּ מִקְרָא שֶׁכָּתוּב כִּי מִצִּיּוֹן תֵּצֵא תּוֹרָה וּדְבַר יי מִירוּשָׁלָיִם וְכֵן יְהִי רָצוֹן
וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן

He who blessed our fathers Abraham Isaac and Jacob, Moses, Aaron, David and Solomon, may He bless the State of Israel, its leaders, its counsellors and all its inhabitants. May the Supreme King of kings direct them with His good counsel and may He pour forth upon the dwellers of the holy land the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. May mercy and truth meet together there for the good of all mankind so that the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, and may God's promise be fulfilled that out of Zion shall go forth the Law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. May this be the will of God, and let us say, Amen.

The Third Circuit

Psalm 111

In front of the Hechal — Blessing of the congregation by Rabbi Dr. Solomon Gaon, chief rabbi of the Sephardic Communities of the British Commonwealth, and Minister of London's Bevis Marks synagogue.

May He who blessed our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses and Aaron, David and Solomon, and who has blessed all holy and pious congregations of the people Israel, may He bless also you of this holy congregation, old and young, you with your wives and children, students and all who are yours.

May the Ruler of the universe bless you, grant you merit, and hearken to your voice of prayer. May you be saved and delivered from all distress and trouble. May the Lord be your shield and support. May He spread the tabernacle of His peace over you and plant among you brotherly love, peace and amity. May He remove all prejudice from among you, and break the yoke of the nations from your neck. May He fulfill for you the biblical word, 'The Lord God of your fathers make you thousand times as many as you are and bless you as He promised you.' May this be the will of God, and let us say, Amen.

At this stage, I introduced a new feature of special interest which I authored, entitled: "A Tribute To the Ladies," in which designated women of the Congregation, carrying the biblical Books of Esther and Ruth and the Apocryphal Book of Judith, walked toward the Hechal, reading selections from Proverbs 31, which evoked memories of the countless contributions made to our people by Jewish women, past and present.

A good wife, who can find?
Her worth is far above that of rubies.
The heart of her husband trusts in her
and nothing does he lack.

She renders him good and not evil
all the days of her life.
She opens her hand to the needy
and extends her hand to the poor.

She is robed in strength and dignity
and cheerfully faces whatever may come.
She opens her mouth with wisdom;
Her tongue is guided by kindness.

She tends to the affairs of her household
and eats not the bread of idleness.
Her children come forward and bless her;
her husband, too, and he praises her:

'Many women have done superbly,
but you surpass them all.'
Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain.
but a God–revering person is much to be praised.

Place before her the fruit of her hands;
Wherever people gather, her deeds speak her praise.

Before the Hechal, the ladies continue:

Eternal God! With hearts overflowing with gratitude we approach You this day to render to You the offerings of our hearts. We thank You for all Your kindness to us; for preserving us in health and strength; for blessing us with home, love and friendship.

We pause to pay tribute to the noble record of the Mothers in Israel, handed down to us by Jewish tradition.

We recall the pioneering spirit of the wives of the Patriarchs, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.

We recall the devotion of Hannah, who pledged her son Samuel to Your service.

We recall the brave judge, Deborah, who guided the destinies of her people against the odds of a devastating enemy.

We recall the self–sacrifice of Esther, who risked her life to rescue her people from almost certain destruction.

We recall the loyalty of Ruth to family and community.

We recall the wisdom of Beruriah, the wife of Rabbi Meir, for her key contributions to Jewish learning.

We recall the perseverance and prudence of Donna Gracia, of the 16th century Levant, for her charity to the poor and solicitous care for scholars and teachers.

We recall the daring of Judith, whose dauntless courage brought victory over a ruthless foe.

We recall the leadership of Rebecca Gratz in perpetuating Jewish education in America.

We recall the penmanship of Emma Lazarus whose signal poem is now synonymous with liberty everywhere.

May the heritage of our Mothers be transmitted untarnished to our children.

Bless us and our families with good health and with fullness of years in which to find joy and happiness with all whom we love.

May the women of this synagogue aid in the training of a new generation of Jews who will know and appreciate their heritage.

We pray that Your love never be taken from us, that Your covenant of peace never be broken.

Ladies leave, while choir sings Psalm 146

The Fourth Circuit

Psalm 30

Prayer for Jewish Communities read in front of the Hechal by Dr. Abraham I. Katsch, President–Emeritus of Dropsie University.

Guardian of Israel! Preserve the remnant of Your people Israel wherever they be. Sustain them with Your love and Your providence. Cheer their hearts and give them courage to persist in their faith in You. Grant them the wisdom to seek You through the silent meditations of their hearts, and in the fellowship of their brethren in faith.

Hear our voice on their behalf. Where they are in bondage of body and spirit, may the hope of ultimate liberation give them strength never to surrender. Where they are frightened by their loneliness, may they be reassured that You, Eternal God, are their dwelling place, and that we, their brethren, are eager to help them.

Receive our petitions, O our Father, in Your abundant grace, and answer us in Your loving kindness, for You are the strength and fortress and refuge of Your trusting children. Amen.

The Fifth Circuit

Psalm 96

Prayer For Peace Read in front of the Hechal

O God, Author of peace and harmony in the heavenly spheres! You have implanted in us the yearning for justice, for love and for peace. Fill our minds with wisdom and our hearts with love, that we may learn to reconcile our wants with those of our neighbors.

May we have the will and the ability to make this world a better place in which to live, a world of peace instead of strife, of loving one's neighbor instead of hate, a world in which all created in Your image will acknowledge their common brotherhood.

Grant us of Your spirit, O our Father, so that we may continue to exercise zeal and determination to hasten the day when 'nation shall not lift up sword against nation,' when men shall no longer train for war, when the world shall be so full of the knowledge of You that its peoples will live in harmony and love. May Your light of understanding lead all peoples toward the establishment of Your kingdom on earth. Amen.

The Sixth Circuit

Psalm 150 Bicentennial Prayer responsively read

In the spirit of gladness and thanksgiving do we observe this auspicious day in the life of Congregation and nation.

We are thankful that there came to these shores those who loved freedom enough to seek life anew.

We are thankful for significant Jewish contributions to the forging of our national beginnings and the making of our institutions.

We are thankful that, in the generations that followed, the heroic achievements of this nation have justified the sacrifices of the Founding Fathers.

We are thankful that we have had freedom of worship, free enterprise, and a government dependent upon the consent of the governed.

We are thankful that dedicated men and women have reared a nation mighty and respected throughout the world — a land with an abundance of things material as well as spiritual.

As we enter our nation's third century, may we rededicate ourselves in Your service.

Teach us, O God, to appreciate our priceless heritage; to guard and preserve it through trials and difficulties. Help us to be worthy of the lofty ideals for which courageous men and women sacrificed so much. Grant us steadfast spirit to defend our inheritance for the generations yet unborn.

O God, we are grateful for Your watchful care of Congregation Mikveh Israel in the performance of its vital role in the community and nation. Strengthen us in the sacred task of preserving and conveying our distinctive religious way of life.

Imbibe us with the awareness that none of the things we take for granted are going to stay with us unless we earn the right to have them, by observing the same principles by which they were secured in the past.

Give us faith. Give us faith in You, faith in our children, faith in each other. Let not the keenness of our spirit ever be dulled. Let not the impact of temporary events deter us from our noble purpose.

Looking forward from this milestone of two centuries as a free nation, we pray for our self–renewal in the vision, which has inspired the New World.

Grant that men and women everywhere under Your guidance may build a new world of peace where the light of truth and justice shall shine brightly for all.

יִמְלֹךְ יי לְעוֹלָם אֱלֹהַיִךְ צִיּוֹן לְדוֹר וָדוֹר הַלְלוּיָהּ
The Lord shall reign forever,
your God , O Zion, for all generations.
Halleluyah.

As the Sepher from the Tebah leads the procession back to the Hechal, congregation and choir sing Psalm 29 for:

The Seventh Circuit.
Dedication Prayer Rabbi Ezekiel N. Musleah in front of the Hechal

Our God, and the God of our Fathers! Yours is the earth and all that it holds.

Yet You have ordained that we build You a sanctuary where we may feel ourselves nearer to You, where we may pour out our sorrows, and thank You for Your many acts of goodness and mercy.

To You we consecrate this house, to Your service and to Your glory. To You we consecrate the Hechal, the Holy Ark, and the scrolls of the Torah enshrined therein. May this house become dear and holy to those who worship within its walls, as earlier houses have been. Grant that the words of Torah here read and expounded may touch the lives of the worshipers.

To You we consecrate our future activities. We invoke Your blessings upon our children who may grow up in the love and reverence of You.

Send your light and Your spirit to lead and guide the Rabbi and other leaders of the Congregation, who bring to its maintenance loving service and thoughtful aid. Bestow upon us the tabernacle of Your peace in a life ennobled by the dedicated grace of this house built in Your honor upon historic, hallowed ground.

May the words of our mouths and the prayers of our hearts be acceptable to You, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer.

The Hechal is closed.

I then conducted the Minha service, and delivered one of the principal addresses. My basic idea: "We of Mikveh Israel, living up to our distinctive past, shall not only be guardians of the gate but expanders of the horizon; not only protectors of the past but progenitors of the future; not only custodians of the heritage but creators of a brilliant tomorrow." *[On this adopted land of mine I had relived my watch–word: No short–cuts to far horizons. This ceremonial was the crowning achievement of my Philadelphia rabbinate.]*

Other featured speakers were Haham Gaon and Rabbi Gerson D. Cohen, Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, each qualifying his remarks to denote the activity of the institution he represented. Rabbi Cohen reminded those present of the role played by Mikveh

Israel in founding the Seminary, especially through the efforts of its minister, Dr. Sabato Morais. The Haham spoke of the importance of the role of Sephardi communities in America, with particular reference to Mikveh Israel, and the impetus to the development of Sephardi traditions by the Sephardic Studies Program at New York's Yeshiva University.

The highlight of the day was a formal message of congratulations from President Gerald R. Ford in response to an invitation by me for him to participate by letter in the day's proceedings. The letter was read by David Lissy, associate director of the White House Domestic Council, whose family's roots were deep in the Congregation. The letter was printed in the Dedication booklet:

> The White House
> Washington
>
> August 25, 1976
>
> The dedication of the new sanctuary of Congregation Mikveh Israel is a milestone of great significance for the Jewish community in Philadelphia. But more than this, it marks a continuing commitment to a tradition that has enriched that community and our nation for over two hundred years.
>
> The history of Congregation Mikveh Israel has been linked to the history of this nation. The Congregation has contributed, not only to the leadership of the Jewish community, but to the leadership of our land. It has been a beacon light of spiritual and moral principle.
>
> I am pleased to extend my greetings to Congregation Mikveh Israel on the occasion of the dedication of its new sanctuary on Independence Mall. I join in wishing that the Congregation may prosper and flourish in its new location.
>
> May you truly go from strength to strength.
>
> Gerald R. Ford

David Lissy also had a surprise from the President — a second letter of good wishes, written in longhand. It is now a Congregational archival treasure, along with similar letters from Presidents Washington and Lincoln.

At the conclusion of the program, the Hon. George X. Schwartz, President of Philadelphia's City Council, presented me with an official City plaque in recognition of the active role played by Mikveh Israel in the City's Bicentennial celebration. An American flag was presented to the Congregation as a gift of the Lt. Milton Kelkey Post of the Jewish War Veterans.

Directing the Mikveh Israel choir, made up entirely of its own members, was Dr. Irving H. Cohen, of the Tyson Music Department of Gratz College, an acknowledged authority on music of the Spanish and Portuguese conventions. Among the musical settings chanted by the choir were those of the Italian Sephardi Salomone Rossi, an influential composer of the Renaissance; and those of John Moss, eighteenth century composer for the London Bevis Marks Synagogue.

Other melodies came from Sephardi sources in many lands, as well as from Mikveh Israel's own archives. One distinctive setting is believed to have come from Spain. The Chamber Brass Ensemble provided spirited instrumental music, which included compositions by Rossi and original work by Dr. Cohen.

The impressive, beautifully executed service was followed by a champagne reception held in the Board Room and the Museum gallery, capping a memorable day.

Following the practice of previous dedications, a handsome booklet, printed by Philadelphia printer, Baruch Bricklin, was distributed to every guest. It featured the full text of the dedications psalms and prayers, as well as reproductions of historic Mikveh Israel documents and artifacts. The English front cover bore a facsimile of the minutes of the 24th March 1782 Congregational meeting when the decision to build the first synagogue was made. Among other signatories were: Isaac Da Costa, Manuel Josephson, Haym Salomon, Gerson Seixas, Bernard and Michael Gratz, Benjamin Nones, and thirty others. The Hebrew front cover is a picture of the Hechal at the Broad and York Streets Synagogue accommodating fifteen scrolls of Torah.

סֵדֶר הַמְזַמְּרִים וְהַתְּפִלּוֹת
לַחֲנוּכַּת בֵּית הַכְּנֶסֶת
ק"ק מִקְוֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל
פֹּה פִילַאדֶלְפִיָא יע"א
י"ז אֱלוּל
שְׁנַת וּבְרִית של"וִמ לֹא תָּמוּט לפ"ק

On page 21 is a replica of a certificate indicating the assigned seat of Rebecca Gratz at the synagogue dedicated in 1860.

Title pages, in Hebrew and in English, of the 1825 synagogue dedication booklet.

Sepher Torah bells by eighteenth century Jewish silversmith, Myer Myers.

Building account, 1782, showing the donation of Haym Salomon, adding up to a quarter of the total expenditure.

An in–depth article by Robert A. Goldstein and Eric C. Levin on Philadelphia's first synagogue as pivot of the community, completed the historical perspective of the booklet

[Notes: The dedication service and special prayers were authored and arranged by Rabbi Ezekiel N. Musleah.]

The silhouette on each page was reproduced from the photograph of the Tebah on page 2. The Tebah, originally in the synagogue at 7th and Arch Streets, dedicated in 1860. It was dismantled and reassembled at Broad and York Streets in 1909, and again for the Independence Mall synagogue.

The choir was rehearsed by the Division of Music of Gratz College, Prof. Shalom Altman, director. Leader: Prof. Irving H. Cohen, to whom the musical program is a fitting tribute.

The booklet was printed at Bricklin Press in Philadelphia, under the supervision, beyond professional obligations, of its proprietor, Baruch Bricklin.

Full media attention was devoted to the day's ceremonies, showing an understanding of the significance of the event. Reaction to the service from visiting dignitaries and guests was uniformly excellent. Special articles on the dedication appeared in issues of The American Sephardi and the London Jewish Chronicle.

Prayer I delivered before **City Council**, Philadelphia, September 23, 1976:

> "Our God and God of our ancestors! As we gather to perform the sacred tasks of government, we ask for Your blessing and Your guidance.
>
> "Grant unto Mr. Coleman, its illustrious president and the other hard–working members of this Council the wisdom to recognize truth and justice and the courage to be guided by them in all their deliberations. Give them of Your light to anticipate accurately the consequences of their decisions.
>
> In tribute to our forebears who worked with distinction in this city, may ours be a community where people strive to give of their best, where bigotry and violence are not tolerated, where concern for our children is paramount, where standard of living is constantly being improved, and all peoples live amicably as brothers.
>
> "Endow us, our Father, with wisdom equal to our strength and courage equal to our responsibilities, so that our community may lead the entire nation in the advancement and fulfillment of human welfare. Amen."

THE NEEDLEPOINT WORK OF ART

More than a year before the building was completed, almost everyone was talking about the needlepoint project for the new building commissioned by Gladys Arons in memory of her husband, David. The tapestry depicts illustrations of each of the Congregations's houses of worship except the first which is not available even in sketch. Each building is represented by an exterior and an interior view made composite by a likeness of the most colorful and moving ceremony common to all — the return in solemn and stately manner of the Sefer Torah to the Hechal, as Psalm 29 is sung. *The procession is led by the Sepher carrier followed by the Rabbi, a tall gentleman who looks like me with my distinctive rabbinical hat and gown*, and in turn, by the Parnas or President and a fourth man, given the honor of accompanying.

The art work, five feet long and ten feet wide, was professionally produced in New England of eighteen, twenty–by–twenty inch squares, with a total of 1,300,000 stitches, but depended for the needlepointing on a squad of at least eighteen dedicated, experienced members of the Congregation and others. The title, "Gateway to Heaven," was taken from the vision of the Patriarch Jacob in the Book of Genesis 28:17. When he awoke from the dream of a ladder connecting heaven and earth, he exclaimed: "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the abode of God, and that is the gateway to Heaven." Jacob vowed to build a house of God there.

David Arons was intimately connected with the affairs of the Congregation, which he loved, for over twenty years — seven of them as Parnas. I was Gladys Arons' consultant on the project.

The tapestry is on permanent display in the lobby of the synagogue, reminding all who see it of the legacy of the man whose life inspired it.

Shabbat morning, January 8, 1977, was very cold, but dry. After services, the Congregation assembled in the foyer for a impressive dedication ceremony I programmed. We began with two sets of readings, first from what David Arons wrote on two previous occasions, outlining his vision for Mikveh Israel.

> "The accidents of time and the forces of our lives have so contrived that a small group of rather plain people — storekeepers, doctors, lawyers, business people, housewives, teachers — have become, at this moment, the last link in a chain which began more than 200 years ago … We can, of course, let this chain end here, or let it drag on the ground and tarnish. Or we and our children can more and brighter links of religious devotion and communal service to those we have inherited. I believe we can do this if we press hard on the best that is within us." – From his report as president of Mikveh Israel, 1958.

> "It is not just for practical reasons that we plan to move back to the general area of our origins, nor for a sentimental journey back to nostalgia. In our view, Mikveh Israel in the Independence Mall area symbolizes the most unique experience of the Hebrew tradition in its 2000 years of Dispersion. Not since Titus and Vespasian has the Jewish expression of the human spirit developed in a nation devoid or an official state religion … The American idea of providing ample room for the full development of varied self–identities in harmonious relations one with the other is America's unique contribution to the spiritual evolution of mankind … Christ Church, Friends Meeting House, the Church of St. Joseph, for example.

> "Unlike other historic houses of worship, the loyalty of Mikveh Israel's membership rests not upon an historic building or location, but on a specific and religious expression … In the Society Hill area, deep historic and philosophical motives will be satisfied, and here, too, its very day to day life will best be continued.

> "Because we have both a religious and historic purpose, we propose to build a synagogue building as well as a library–museum, using as a nucleus the archives of Mikveh Israel, probably the largest extant collection of American colonial Judaica."

> – From a letter to the Redevelopment Authority, March 27, 1961

The second reading was from Psalm 116:12–19 I entitled: 'David Arons might have said'. "How can I repay the Lord for all his bounties to me?

> I raise a cup of deliverance and invoke the name of the Lord.
> I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people/
> The death of His faithful ones is grievous in the Lord's sight.
> O Lord, I am Your servant, Your servant, the son of Your maidservant
> You have undone the chords that bound me. I will sacrifice a thank–offering to You; I invoke the name of the Lord
> I will pay my vows to the Lord, in the courts of the house of the Lord
> In the midst of Jerusalem. Halleluyah."

Then members of David Arons' family, including his sister, Adele Aronowitz, son Daniel and nephew, Nat Handler, paid tribute to the artists and designers of the tapestry:

"Moses, according to the Torah, was the first to encourage art in every way and in every form. The original Israelite sanctuary comes into being through the work of the artists: they are not called simply to adorn it, they truly make it.

"The Lord spoke to Moses saying: See, I have singled out by name Bezalel … I have endowed him with a Divine spirit of skill, ability, and knowledge in every kind of craft: to make designs for work in gold, silver and copper. To cut stones for settings and to carve wood – to work in every kind of craft … I have also granted skill to all who are skillful that they may make everything that I have commanded you … at his side was Oholiav, carver and designer, and embroiderer in blue, purple and crimson yarns, and fine linen … Just as the Lord had commanded Moses, so the Israelites had done all the work. And when Moses saw that they had performed all the tasks, Moses blessed them."

Selected from Exodus 32, 38, 39:

"Yet there is no Hebrew word in this context for artists. The men and women who are called to work on the sanctuary are signified by the name "Hakham–Lev," wise–hearted. And if there be any doubt as to the source of their wisdom, their talent, the Torah adds: In whose hearted *the Lord* had laid wisdom. God reveals Himself in the work of those who serve, "whose heart so moves them."

Flora, Rahel and Aliza Musleah rendered a musical setting of Saul Tchernichovsky's "I Believe," as the congregation joined in singing the English translation.

Laugh, oh laugh at all my visions,
I, the dreamer tell you true,
Laugh, for I still believe in man,
And I still believe in you.

For my soul still yearns for freedom,
Unbartered to the calf of gold,
For I still believe in mankind,
In his spirit, strong and bold.

Man shall rise to heights of glory,
Vanity's fetters from him shed.
The worker then will starve no longer,
Spirit–freed, and hunger–fed.

Laugh, in friendship too my faith is,
Somewhere yet I'll find a heart,
One to share my every hope with,
Feeling fortune, knowing smart.

I believe, too, in the future,
Though the day's not close at hand,
It will come — then peace and blessing,
will be borne from land to land.

My people. too, again will flower,
On the land a breed will rise,
That will cast their chains from off them,
See the light before their eyes.

The tapestry was then formally dedicated, as the curtain was removed to show the remarkable piece of work. It was an emotional moment when Gladys Arons said:

"Many months ago, when the project was first described to me, I recognized at once that this would be a beautifully fitting memorial for my beloved David. But without your wholehearted response, and unusually sensitive approach and devotion, this exquisite product would not have been possible. There were eighteen of you who gave many hours of your precious time to do the stitching. The number in Jewish tradition is symbolic of life — you have helped turn the experience into a life force; you have helped concretize the attributes of excellence in my husband's life, as well as to perpetuate his esteem for the synagogue and deep regard for the facet of history in our corporate life."

"It is a personal privilege and pleasure to present formally to Congregation Mikveh Israel this tapestry in perpetuity to memorialize David Arons for whom the synagogue meant so much.

"Please join me in this prayer of dedication.

'Father of us all! We thank You for opening for us the gate of beauty by which we may enter nearer to You. In looking at this handiwork of those who revere You, we see You revealed in perfection of form. Give us harmony and peace. Let our eyes rejoice in the beauty of creation, even as we recognize it in our fellow beings.

'May this tapestry stand as a beacon in all the affairs of our Congregation. May sharing give width to our vision and deepen faith in our potential.

'Bless us, Lord, and help us go forward in Your name. Amen.'"

In my appreciation, I noted:

"One of the great Jewish preachers, The Dubnow Maggid, told the story of a king who owned a large, beautiful diamond of which he was justly proud. One day the diamond was accidentally scratched. The king called in the most skilled diamond cutters and offered a substantial reward to remove the imperfection from his treasured jewel. But none could repair the blemish. The king was distressed.

After some time, a gifted craftsman appeared and promised to work on the diamond. With superb artistry, the craftsman engraved a lovely rosebud around the imperfection, and used the scratch to form the stem.

"The diamond was David Arons of whom his family and friends were justly proud. His death had made a scratch in our lives, had created a void. His family and friends had to do something about repairing the void. We used our skill and other resources to create imagery of beauty and happiness. This tapestry is our way of weaving a lovely flower around the imperfection of David Arons' absence. This is how we have met our disability — we have made of it a pedestal for the growth of public service. And public service was synonymous with David Arons. This is a way we try to give eternity to his life.

"Gladys having been the unusual person she was, knew a flower when she saw one. Many years ago she recognized the beauty and excellence of the man who was to become her husband. And when he was gone, she recognized the worth of this art work as a fitting memorial to the original diadem.

"It was because of Gladys' breadth of outlook, largeheartedness and keenness for things beautiful, that this tapestry was done at all. The many visitors who will set eyes on this work, as well as those who will come after us, will evaluate and get some idea as to how deep and how intense was the Arons' attachment and loyalty to the synagogue and their dedication to Judaism."

A handsome booklet for the dedication was distributed to every guest.

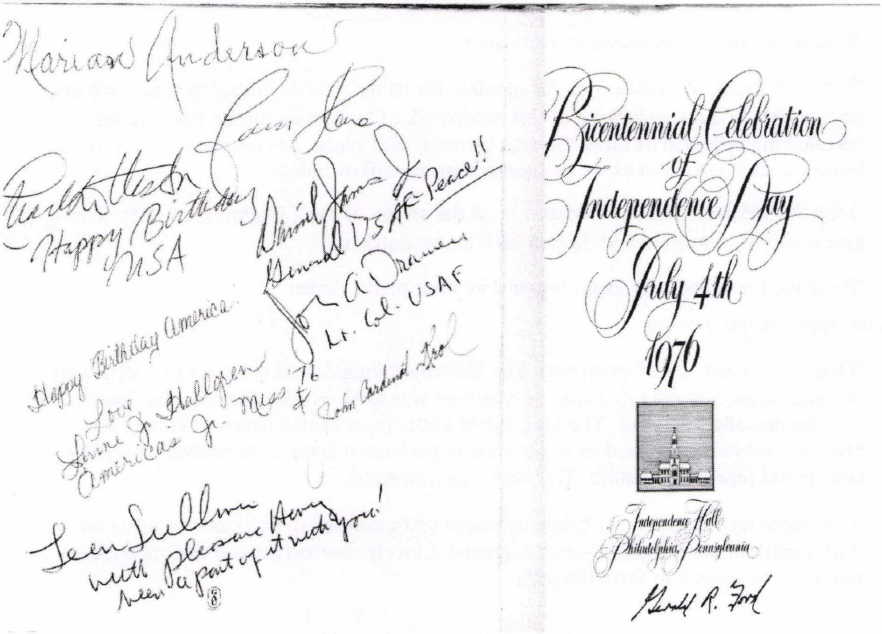


Figure 162. Bicentennial Celebration in Philadelphia.

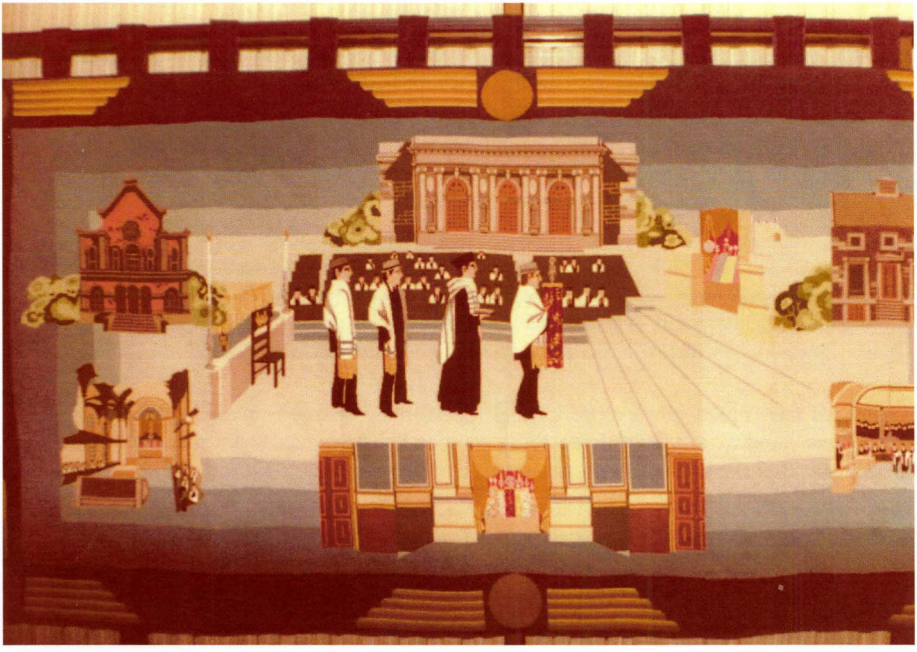


Figure 163. Mikveh Israel Tapestry.

The Mikveh Israel Tapestry in memory of David Arons.

LEVANTINE SEPHARDI COMMUNITY RE–ESTABLISHES ITSELF

Later in January, 1977, another "first" took place. Over sixty representatives of Philadelphia's widely–dispersed so–called Levantine Sephardi community and their families met together under my auspices for the first time in many years. This group was welded together by the late Rev. Leon H. Elmaleh, himself a Spanish–speaking native of Gibraltar, who, even in retirement, served as their spiritual adviser. His death, a few years previously, scattered them throughout the area. I thought that the synagogue's new locale would create an impetus for reunion.

In welcoming the group, I noted the historic character of Mikveh Israel's Spanish–Portuguese liturgy, and the natural affinity of the Levantine group to the only Sephardi synagogue in Philadelphia, an affinity demonstrated by those in the group who had been members through the years. I told them nostalgically: 'You have come home!'

I went on to describe the distinctive history of the Levantine Sephardim in America, who began arriving in Philadelphia in the years immediately before and after World War I, and who brought with them Sephardi traditions from Turkey, Greece, and the Balkans, faithfully preserved. Among these traditions and folkways were distinctive foods, music, and a language — Ladino (Judeo–Spanish) — which several, including my good friends, David Ackrich and family — still spoke.

I reminded them of the efforts of Rev. Elmaleh in working with and counseling the Levantine newcomers. 'And we at Mikveh Israel today were no less concerned about preserving and maintaining your Sephardi tradition as a group.'

Esther Crespy Levy, chairperson for the gathering, reminded the group of the purpose of their meeting. 'I hope we can take advantage of this fresh opportunity to preserve our rich and wonderful heritage,' she began. 'For unless we take positive steps now with Rabbi Musleah and the new synagogue, our Sephardic culture is in real danger of being forgotten.'

Among the steps she outlined was the formation of a social organization of area Levantines, working in conjunction with Mikveh Israel 'to breathe fresh life into our heritage, and make us more aware of who we are as Sephardic Jews.'

Following the lively meeting, refreshments — including home–made Sephardi favorites — were served, as the group enjoyed the accompaniment of Sephardi folk melodies.

A steering committee later met to chart the course of the group, to be called 'Mikveh Israel Levantines,' and scheduled to meet periodically.

At its following meeting, on March 13, the group looked solidly established and reached new heights of success. More than 100 people, representing Levantine families from the tri–state area, and including old and new members and friends, gathered in the foyer to enjoy an evening of home–cooked Sephardi favorites, Old World–styled music and dancing, reunions with relatives and friends.

I traced the highlights of Sephardi history, including the varied migrations of Jews from Inquisitional Spain and Portugal, noting their travels and settlements in North Africa, Italy, Central Europe, Turkey, Greece and the Balkans.

Referring to the proud traditions of Sephardi Jewry, I noted that 'we remain conscious of our minority within a minority status, determined to safeguard our heritage.' I went on to note specific differences in Ashkenazi and Sephardi custom, tradition and outlook.

For example, I pointed out that to Ashkenazim, naming children after those still living is to be studiously avoided. But in the Sephardi tradition, a grandfather lives for the day when he has a namesake grandson.

Through meetings like this, by enjoying each other's company, making new friends and rekindling old friendships, in studying Sephardi language and customs, we can help preserve this ancient and wonderful heritage.

Chairperson Esther Crespy Levy welcomed those in attendance, expressing delight at the enthusiastic response of the group and the hard–working efforts of many people toward making the evening a success. She also taught a lesson in introductory Ladino, the Judeo–Spanish language spoken by generations of Levantines. Several of those present had grown up in Ladino–speaking households.

Community singing was led by Nancy Ackrich Rosenbaum, with the capable aid of Senor David Ackrich, and included favorites such as "Enso Piensey Entendiense" and "Viva Palestina."

THE CENTENARY OF MAGHEN DAVID SYNAGOGUE, CALCUTTA.

The 1880's were years of institution–building in Calcutta. In 1881, the first Jewish school was established, and three years later, the Maghen David Synagogue opened its doors. As the 1980's set in, no local Jewish cleric was available to commemorate the inauguration of the school. I had my mind set for the next red–letter day in 1984. Inspired and moved by Rev. E. M. D. Cohen's example, I happened to be the prime–mover from a distance. September 1984 passed, but the arrangements were being made for a centenary celebration to be held on January 19–20 1985 with my official guidance.

I planned the program and had it printed in a 16–page booklet, copies of which I transported with me from Philadelphia. I had prepared an address for my uncle Elias, then the Synagogue's Honorary Secretary, to be read by him at the service. Unfortunately, he died suddenly a few days before the start of the proceedings, and I read the speech on his behalf.

The commemoration began with services on Shabbat Va–era, at which I read the Torah at the synagogue where I grew up, after a lapse of more than twenty years. The following day was earmarked for visits to the cemetery to pay homage to erstwhile leaders and relatives and friends.

Later that day, the centenary service was ushered in with nostalgia and rededication, highlighted by seven circuits of Sifrei Torah carried around the Tebah. Entitled Memorial Galaxy, each participant in Circuit One lit memorial wicks for past generations, and recited the formula: "I am about to kindle this light for the blissful repose of my dear — , may his (her) soul be bound up in the bond of eternal life with the souls of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the

matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, and the other men and women of piety who had been united with the spirit of God. As the wicks were lit, the Hazzan chanted אוֹדֶה לְאֵל and אֲגַדֵּלְךָ[1] and memorial prayers for past generations. Concluding the First Circuit: Meditation from my translation of Simhath Torah Circuits, "The Voice of Gladness," page 3: Divine Love Inspires Human Compassion, example, Abraham.

Second Circuit Recalling Rosh Hashanah Dedicated to past synagogue presidents.

Chants from Rosh Hashanh liturgy: אֱמֹר לְאַבְרָהָם and ה' בְּקוֹל שׁוֹפָר

Pizmoneem: מִפִּי אֵל and בְּיִת אֵלֹקַּ[2]

Prayers for the Republic of India and the State of Israel

Memorial prayer for late synagogue presidents

David Joseph Ezra Elia David Joseph Ezra Joseph Elia D. J. Ezra
David Elia D. J. Ezra Rachel Sassoon Ezra Aaron Curlender
Nissim Benjamin Elias

Concluding meditation: Divine Power Inspires Human Self–Sacrifice.
Example: Isaac

Third Circuit In Tune With Kippur Commemorating late Hazzaneem

From Kippur liturgy אֵל רַחוּם שִׁמְךָ and לְךָ אֵלִי

Pizmoneem צוּרִי גּוֹאֲלִי יָהּ and קְנִנְאוֹג[3]

Memorial prayer for late Hazzaneem

Elias Moses Dwek Cohen Elias Rahameem Joshua Levi
Joshua Elias Rahameem Joshua Levi Ezra Meir E. R. Joshua Levi
Albert F. Morris David Jacob Cohen

Concluding meditation: Divine Glory Inspires Human Pursuit of Truth
Example: Jacob

Fourth Circuit Reviving The Spirit of Hanukka Honoring Maftir and Marital Celebrants

Hazzan sings as Hanukka Menorah is lit:

שׁוֹכֵן עַד תֵּשֵׁב יִתְרוֹעֲעוּ עֵת דּוֹדִים כַּלָּה[4]

Concluding meditation: Divine Eternity Inspires Human Study and Observance of Torah — Example: Moses

Fifth Circuit The Joys of Purim Honoring Women of the Community

Pizmon: שִׂימֵנִי

Women, each carrying a Megillah, make a circuit of the Tebah as the men recite Proverbs 31: What a rare find is a capable woman! Her worth is far above rubies.

The ladies respond: Eternal God! With hearts overflowing with gratitude we approach You today to render to You the offering of our hearts. We thank You for all Your kindness to us; for preserving us in health and strength; for blessing us with home, love and friendship.

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1. Kol Zimra, pages 12 and 14
2. ibid, 158
3. ibid, 144 & 164
4. ibid. 68, 100, 124

We pause to pay tribute to the noble record of the Mothers in Israel, handed down to us in Jewish tradition.

We recall the pioneering spirit of the wives of the Patriarchs, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.

We recall the devotion of Hannah who pledged her son Samuel to Your service.

We recall the brave Judge Deborah who guided the destinies of her people against the odds of a devastating enemy.

We recall the self–sacrifice of Esther who risked her life to rescue her people from almost certain destruction.

We recall the loyalty of Ruth to family and community.

We recall the wisdom of Beruriah, the wife of Rabbi Meir, for her key contributions to Jewish learning.

We recall the unusual generosity of Mozelle Ezra, the wife of Elia David Joseph Ezra, for endowing a Yeshiba in the Holy Land and for most of the silver artifacts that decorate this synagogue.

We recall the erudition and public spirit of Lady Rachel Ezra of the renowned Sassoon family and the wife of Sir David Ezra, for her hospitality to the Jewish men and women in the Armed Forces during the second World War.

We recall the prudence of Sara Curlender, scion of the first Jewish settler in Calcutta and the wife of Aaron Curlender, for dauntless courage and perseverance in leadership.

We recall those who guided the destinies of the Jewish Women's League wisely and caringly for two generations: (Miss) Alton, Minnie Curlender, Rahma B.N. Elias, Hannah and Miriam Ephraim, Mrs. S.J. Ezekiel, Sally Gubbay, Lily Jacob, Kitty Judah, Seemah Luddy, Kate and Violet Mashiah, Hannah Meyer, Mrs. Minnie, Marie Mordecai.

May the heritage of our Mothers be transmitted untarnished to our children, wherever they be.

Bless us and our families with good health and with fullness of years in which to find joy and happiness with all whom we love.

May the women whose heritage is drawn from this community aid in the training of a new generation of Jews, who will know and appreciate their heritage.

We pray that Your love never be taken from us, that Your covenant of peace never be broken.

Pizmoneem: יוֹם שַׁמְחָה and שִׁירָה נַרְנְנָה[5]

Concluding Meditation: Divine Majesty Inspires Human Indulgence in Peace
Example – Aaron

Sixth Circuit Celebrating the Major Festivals Recognizing the Blessing of Teachers.

Pesah, Psalm 107. Shabuoth, Azharoth. Sukkoth, Hoshanoth. Shemini Asereth, Prayer for Rain.

Pizmon: צָמְאָה נַפְשִׁי

5. ibid 178 and 180

Education is the means by which each generation transmits its heritage to the next generation. A teacher is the transmitter – not only a storehouse of information, but also a model person. We are urged to mould our entire lives after those of our teachers. Rightly has it been said: "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." We lovingly bring to mind the teachers of Jewish culture and Jewish teachers who taught secular subjects.

Biblical Verses using MAGHEN – SHIELD, read responsively:

O Lord, my rock, my fortress, my rescuer, my God, my shelter in whom I seek refuge, my SHIELD, my mighty champion, my haven. [Psalm 18:3]

My faithful one, my fortress, my haven and my deliverer, my SHIELD, in whom I take shelter. (Ps.144:2)

The word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying,
Fear not, Abram,
I am a SHIELD to you,
Your reward shall be very great."
(Gen.15:1)

O happy Israel! Who is like you,
A people delivered by the Lord,
Your protecting SHIELD, your Sword triumphant.
(Deut. 33:29)

You, O Lord, are a SHIELD about me, my glory,
He who holds my head high. (Ps.3:4)
I look to God to SHIELD me,
the deliverer of the upright. (Ps.7:11)
The Lord is my strength and my SHIELD,
my heart trusts in Him. (Ps.28:7)
The way of God is perfect;
The word of the Lord is pure;
He is a SHIELD to all who seek refuge in Him. (Ps.18:31)
You have given me the SHIELD of Your protection;
Your right hand has sustained me,
Your care has made me great. (Ps.18:36)
We set our hope on the Lord,
He is our help and SHIELD:
In Him our hearts rejoice,
For in His holy name we trust. (Ps.33:20)
Truly the Lord is our SHIELD
The Holy One of Israel our king. (Ps.89:19)
O Israel, trust in the Lord!
He is their help and SHIELD.
O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord!
He is their help and SHIELD.
O you who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord!
He is their help and SHIELD. (Ps.115:9–11)
You are my protection and my SHIELD,
I hope for Your word. (Ps.119–114)

He reserves ability for the upright,
And is a SHIELD for those who live blamelessly. (Prov.2:7)
Pizmoneem: הַלְלִי הַלְלִי and אֵלִי אֵלִי לָמָּה[6]

Concluding meditation: Divine Creatorship Inspires Human Purity.
Example: Joseph

Seventh Circuit Revelling in Simhath Torah

Celebrating The Jewish Community Of Calcutta And Its Dispersion
Prayer For The Congregation – Here and Elsewhere
Pizmoneem: הַלְלוּיָהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל עַם אֵל שִׁבְחוּ נָא[7]

Concluding Meditation: Divine Kingship Inspires Aspiration For Its Universal Recognition – David

תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת נָתַן Return Sifrei Torah To The Ark

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד יִמְלוֹךְ

Prayer Extracts of prayers of dedication recited by Elia David Joseph Ezra and Rev E. M. D. Cohen on September 11, 1884:

Our Ruler who dwells on high, Source of compassion and Fountain of salvation, Creator of all, wrapped in a robe of light, You spread the heavens like a tent cloth. King of kings, Sovereign from the beginning of time, You have caused everything to be; in You is supreme power, incomparable strength and might.

Turn, Lord our God, to our prayer and supplication. May Your eyes be open day and night toward this House and let Your presence abide here and extend Your care over it. Heed all prayers and supplications of Your people, the House of Israel, they utter in this House, together with the prayers of other Jewish communities the world over.

Merciful and gracious God! Give us a human heart to serve You with reverence and constancy. Bring us back unto You with complete repentance. Open our hearts to Your Torah. With great compassion grant a happy destiny to all of us, men, women and children, our families and loved ones, and the Jewish people everywhere. Banish from us every occurrence of adverse fortune and hard luck and let us not fall into the power of reproach and humiliation. Deliver us from the pressure of the times. Guide us away from failure to do our duty. Favorably enable us, Your people, to share in our triumphs, and seek Your presence in behalf of sacred causes at this time and in the future. Amen.

Lord hearken, Lord give ear, Lord forgive. Grant our prayer, delay not, for Your sake, for we Your people bear Your name. Answer us, O Lord, answer us at this favored and auspicious time.

Pray, Lord, bless Your people with the three–fold blessing written in the Torah: The Lord bless you and keep you! The Lord deal kindly and graciously with you! The Lord bestow His favor upon you and grant you peace! Thus they shall link My name with the people of Israel and I will bless them – they and all of this holy congregation.

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6. ibid 184 & 186
7. ibid 152, 112 & 190

May the words of my mouth and the prayer of my heart be acceptable to You, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Close Ark

Remarks Elias Hyam Musleah [read by his nephew, Rabbi Ezekiel N Musleah]

Responsive Reading Biblical Verses Glorifying D A V I D

I have found DAVID, My servant
And My arm shall strengthen him.
My hand shall be constantly with him,
And My arm shall strengthen him.
No enemy shall oppress him,
No vile man afflict him.
I will crush his adversaries before him;
I will strike down those who hate him.
My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him;
His horn shall be exalted through My name.
I will set his hand upon the sea,
His right hand upon the rivers.
He shall say to Me:
"You are my father, my God, the rock of my deliverance."
I will appoint him firstborn,
Highest of the kings of the earth.
I will maintain my steadfast love for him always;
My covenant with him shall endure.
I will establish his line forever,
His throne, as long as the heavens last.
I will not take away My steadfast love from him;
I will not betray My faithfulness.
I will not violate My covenant,
Or change what I have uttered.
I have sworn by My holiness, once and for all;
I will not be false to David.
His line shall continue forever,
His throne, as the sun before Me.
As the moon, established forever,
An enduring witness in the sky.

[Psalms 89:21–30. 34–38]

Sermon Rabbi Ezekiel N. Musleah

Arbeeth

A plaque commemorating my arrangement and conduct of the celebration appears alongside that of my uncle, Elias Hyam Musleah, "Pious, Devoted, Loyal," at the entrance of Maghen David Synagogue.



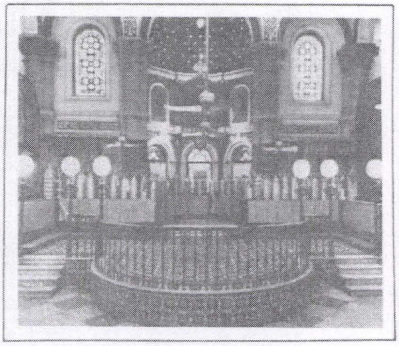
Figure 164. Plaques at MD Entrance, Calcutta.

Plaques at the entrance of the synagogue for services rendered to the synagogue and community by individual functionaries and members.

Maghen David Synagogue
Calcutta, India

CENTENARY CELEBRATION

1884-1985



January 19-20, 1985

Figure 165. Maghen David Synagogue's Centenary Programme.

January 19 6:30 — 9:30 Shabbath Services

Jan. 20 10:00 — 12 noon Cemetery Visitations and Memorials
3:30 p.m. Centenary Services Nostalgia and Rededication
6:00 p.m. Refreshments

Exhibit: Hebrew Manuscripts and Printing produced in India

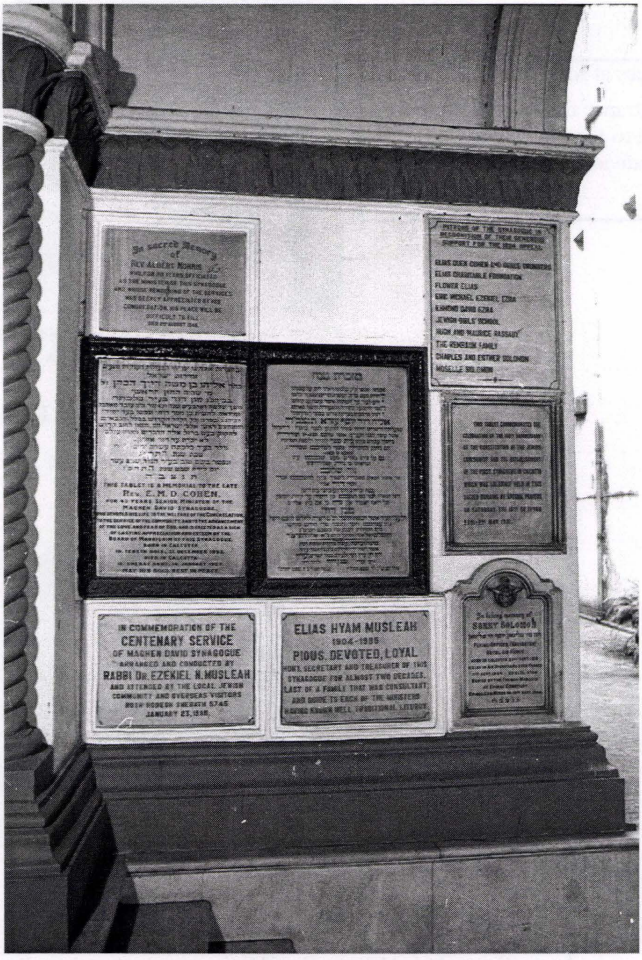
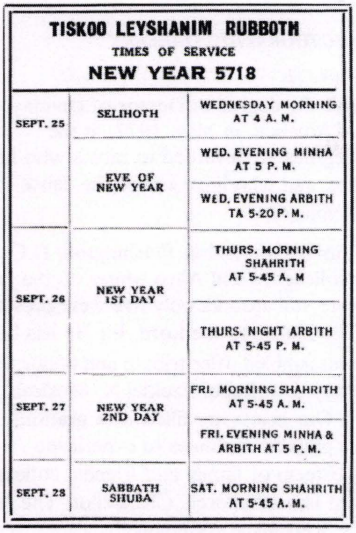


Figure 166. Donors of Synagogues' Restoration Project.

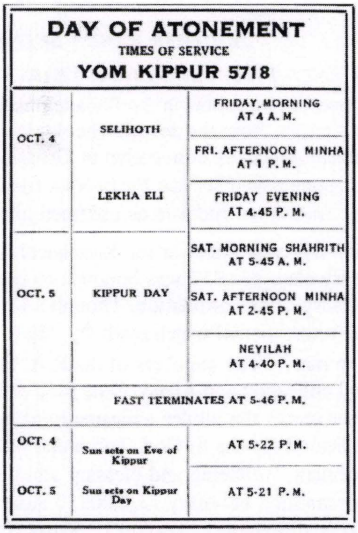
Both Maghen David and Bethel synagogues have been repainted and restored, and an additional plaque now stands at Maghen David entrance in testimony of the contributors to that vital project:

> Elias Dwek Cohen and Grace, Elias Charitable Foundation, Flower Elias, Eric Michael Ezekiel Ezra, Esmond David Ezra, Jewish Girls' School, (Calcutta), Hugh and Maurice Rassaby, The Rembaum Family, Charles and Esther Solomon, Mozelle Solomon.



TISKOO LEYSHANIM RUBBOTH
TIMES OF SERVICE
NEW YEAR 5718

SEPT. 25	SELIHOTH	WEDNESDAY MORNING AT 4 A. M.
	EVE OF NEW YEAR	WED. EVENING MINHA AT 5 P. M.
		WED. EVENING ARBITH TA 5-20 P. M.
SEPT. 26	NEW YEAR 1ST DAY	THURS. MORNING SHAHRITH AT 5-45 A. M
		THURS. NIGHT ARBITH AT 5-45 P. M.
SEPT. 27	NEW YEAR 2ND DAY	FRI. MORNING SHAHRITH AT 5-45 A. M.
		FRI. EVENING MINHA & ARBITH AT 5 P. M.
SEPT. 28	SABBATH SHUBA	SAT. MORNING SHAHRITH AT 5-45 A. M.

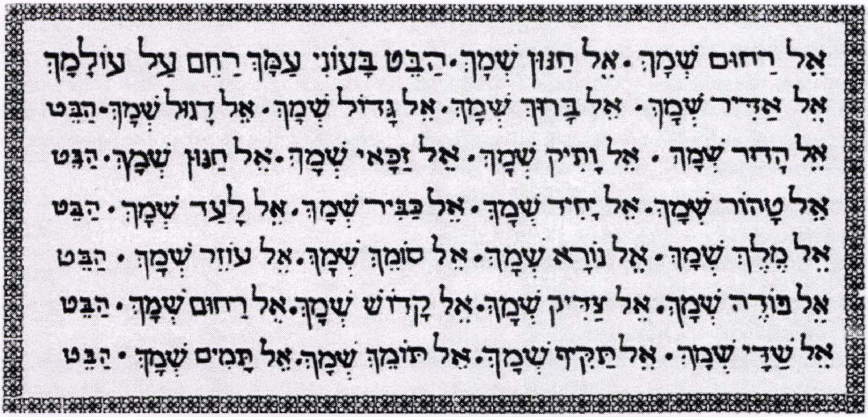


DAY OF ATONEMENT
TIMES OF SERVICE
YOM KIPPUR 5718

OCT. 4	SELIHOTH	FRIDAY MORNING AT 4 A. M.
		FRI. AFTERNOON MINHA AT 1 P. M.
	LEKHA ELI	FRIDAY EVENING AT 4-45 P. M.
OCT. 5	KIPPUR DAY	SAT. MORNING SHAHRITH AT 5-45 A. M.
		SAT. AFTERNOON MINHA AT 2-45 P. M.
		NEYILAH AT 4-40 P. M.
	FAST TERMINATES AT 5-46 P. M.	
OCT. 4	Sun sets on Eve of Kippur	AT 5-22 P. M.
OCT. 5	Sun sets on Kippur Day	AT 5-21 P. M.

Figure 167. MDS' High Holyday Services' Schedule.

Schedule of services at Maghen David Synagogue, Calcutta, for the High Holydays, September/October 1957. Sukkoth schedule is overleaf. Prepared for decades by Elias Hyam/Meyer Ezra Musleah.



אֵל רַחוּם שְׁמָךְ · אֵל חַנּוּן שְׁמָךְ · הַבֵּט בַּעֲנִי עַמְּךָ רַחֵם עַל עוֹלָמֶךָ
אֵל אַדִּיר שְׁמָךְ · אֵל בָּרוּךְ שְׁמָךְ · אֵל גָּדוֹל שְׁמָךְ · אֵל דָּגוּל שְׁמָךְ · הַבֵּט
אֵל הָדוּר שְׁמָךְ · אֵל וָתִיק שְׁמָךְ · אֵל זַכַּאי שְׁמָךְ · אֵל חַנּוּן שְׁמָךְ · הַבֵּט
אֵל טָהוֹר שְׁמָךְ · אֵל יָחִיד שְׁמָךְ · אֵל כַּבִּיר שְׁמָךְ · אֵל לָעַד שְׁמָךְ · הַבֵּט
אֵל מֶלֶךְ שְׁמָךְ · אֵל נוֹרָא שְׁמָךְ · אֵל סַגִּיב שְׁמָךְ · אֵל עָזּוּז שְׁמָךְ · הַבֵּט
אֵל פּוֹדֶה שְׁמָךְ · אֵל צַדִּיק שְׁמָךְ · אֵל קָדוֹשׁ שְׁמָךְ · אֵל רַחוּם שְׁמָךְ · הַבֵּט
אֵל שַׁדַּי שְׁמָךְ · אֵל תַּקִּיף שְׁמָךְ · אֵל תָּמִים שְׁמָךְ · אֵל תּוֹמֵךְ שְׁמָךְ · הַבֵּט

Figure 168. Kippur Piyyut - El Rahume Shemakh.

The ever popular piyyut, El Rahume Shemakh, chanted spiritedly during Kippur services.

CHAPTER 23

ANOTHER FAMILY SCENARIO & A PHOTOGRAPHIC GALLERY

TWENTY–FIVE, THEN FIFTY, YEARS IN THE RABBINATE

I was one of two rabbis in the Philadelphia area to receive the degree of Doctor of Divinity, honoris causa, from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, in May, 1977, at the Rabbinical Assembly convention at Grossinger's. The degrees are awarded to rabbis who have given distinguished service for twenty–five years or more, and who have served the cause of historic traditional Judaism as ordained alumni of the Seminary.

Twenty–five years later at the Rabbinical Assembly's convention held in Washington, D.C., my Seminary class of 1952 was honored by our rabbinical colleagues and Alma Mater on the jubilee anniversary of our ordination. Though 14 of 23 of us were still around, only five were present to receive a testimonial which read: אֲשִׁירָה לַה' כִּי גָמַל עָלָי "I will sing to the Lord, for He has been good to me."[1] "The members of the R.A. in Convention assembled offer tribute and honor to our revered colleague and friend הָרַב יְחֶזְקֵאל נִסִּים בֶּן יִצְחָק שָׁשׁוֹן מַצְלִיחַ Rabbi Ezekiel N. Musleah, who this year marks the jubilee anniversary of his ordination. Our hearts are filled with gratitude for his dedicated service to God, Torah and our People. We pray he continues to experience contentment, wellbeing and blessing amid the love and esteem of family and friends, colleagues and community. February 13, 2002, 2 Adar 5762. Signed Ismar Schorch, Chancellor, The Jewish Theological Seminary, Vernon H. Kurtz, President, The Rabbinical Assembly."

Every child has the right to be taught wisely, to be nurtured and sustained, loved and cherished, and provided for until she, herself, is able to assume her own obligations and support. She then has the obligation to rear children of her own, to make a good home for them, to nurture and counsel and instruct, until they too grow in wisdom and arrive at the age and ability to do for themselves the needful things in life. The obligations of parents to children are socially, economically and spiritually sound, and morally irrevocable, and any family which is not the measure of strength has demonstrated an inherent weakness.

BIRTHS AND MILESTONE BIRTHDAYS

In the spirit of my father's tradition of introducing his children and grandchildren with words from Proverbs 17:6, עֲטֶרֶת זְקֵנִים בְּנֵי בָנִים וְתִפְאֶרֶת בָּנִים אֲבוֹתָם 'Grandchildren are the crown of their elders, and the glory of their parents is their parents.' Proudly and with great joy, Margaret and I mention our grandchildren in the order of their births.

אַהֲרֹן מַצְלִיחַ AARON MUSLEAH YAVELBERG
10th Sivan 5743 May 22nd, 1983
named for his paternal grandfather and Family Musleah

אֵלִיָּהוּ אַהֲרֹן ELI AARON CASE
29th Sivan 5745 June 19th, 1985
named for my uncle Elias Hyam Musleah and an uncle on his paternal grandmother's side.

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1. Psalms 13:6

יוֹאֵל נִסִּים JOEL NISSIM YAVELBERG
9th Av 5746 August 14, 1986
named partially for me

שִׁירָה זְהָבָה מַצְלִיחַ SHIRA ZEHAVA MUSLEAH KLAYMAN
9th Tevet 5747 January 10, 1987
named for Shabbat Shira, her paternal grandfather and Family Musleah

פְּנִינָה רוּת PENINA RUTH CASE
7th Tammuz 5748 June 22, 1988
named for her paternal grandmother

בִּנְיָמִין מַצְלִיחַ BENJAMIN MUSLEAH YAVELBERG
10th Elul 5751 August 20, 1991

named for his great–aunt Sylvia's husband, Ben Edell
and for Family Musleah

מִרְיָם יְהוּדִית MIRIAM YEHUDIT CASE
30th Iyar 5792 June 1, 1992
named for her maternal grandmother Margaret Judah.

שׁוֹשַׁנָּה מִיכַל SHOSHANA MICHAL KLAYMAN
29th Tishri 5753 October 26, 1992
named for my mother Flora Moses

In the photograph section of this chapter, we present a gallery of their images, for the most part in fulfillment of Jewish teaching and observance.

Just as my grandfather, Meyer Ezra/Eliyahu Musleah in 1940 helped me put on Tephillin, in August 2003 I presented Flora with a pair of Tephillin and assisted her put them on — a little late, but moving with the times.

In the same family convention, I lent a hand to Flora's sons, Aaron and Joel, to drape Tephillin as they became Bar Mitzva.

In a moving image of Eliyahu, a name borne in every generation of Family Musleah in India, Eli lights the Hanukka Menorah which belonged to his great–great grandfather, Meyer Ezra Musleah, in red glasses owned by Meyer Ezra's father, Eliyahu.

Preparing Flora's third son, Benjamin for his Bar Mitzva parasha, in 2004.

Rahel's daughters, Shira and Shoshana, in a loving pose.

A portrait drawn by Rahel in her teens. Could it be a likeness of one of her rabbinic forebears?

In honor of Margaret's 65th birthday, Aliza presented her with a depictment of the biblical Miriam, Margaret's name in Hebrew. The image portrays Miriam in double characterization — as the leader of Israelite women in victory celebration at the Sea of Reeds, and as the Rabbis of old figured her, in association with the well of water from which the Israelites drank during their trek through the desert. In our picture are Aliza's daughters, Penina and Miriam.

Also seen hanging on the wall to the right is another of Rahel's drawings — the Cave of Machpela in Hebron.

Perpetual is Your love, Lord our God, boundless Your tender compassion. You taught our ancestors life–giving laws to do Your will with a full heart. So show us compassion and grant us understanding and discernment to study Your Torah, heed its words, teach its precepts, and follow its instruction, lovingly fulfilling all its teachings.

— from the prayerbook

In humble thanksgiving, here is testimony of life–long study and teaching of Torah.

My certificates, left to right, length–wise, bottom to top:

St. James School, Calcutta, High School

The Joint Bet Din of the Conservative Movement, Mesadder Gittin (English)

Ditto (Hebrew)

University of Calcutta, Bachelor of Arts with honours in Philosophy

The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Doctor of Divinity (honoris causa)

Ditto Rabbi, Preacher and Teacher (English)

Ditto Hakham and Rabbi (Hebrew)

Ditto Doctor of Hebrew Literature (English) (Hebrew not shown)

Aunt Ramah's 90th

When my grandfather, MEIR EZRA /ELIAHU MUSLEAH z"l reached 70 years of age, my father, ISAAC SASSOON z'l prepared readings which father and son recited at a family get–together in December 1938.[2]

In 1997, another gathering of family members collected at the same venue, around the same table, to observe the 90th birthday of his daughter, Rahma, then the sole surviving member to continue living there. My brother Meyer, named for his grandfather, could not make the trip, but commented in a recorded tape of congratulations from his home in Sydney, Australia. He said that for Grandpa's 70th in 1938, the family gathered from different parts of Calcutta — Garden Reach, Prinsep Street and 19B Bowbazar. For Aunt Ramah's birthday, a nephew and nieces had to make the trip from three continents — Ezekiel from America, Ruby from Australia, and Mavis from London, England.

The central hall was beautifully embellished with streamers and balloons, and a Maghen David adorned the brass chandelier. The tiny Jewish community was well–represented; her non–Jewish neighbors and her doctor with his wife were invited.

The happy proceedings began with my conduct of Minha, the last time that a religious service would be conducted at a happy occasion by a male member of the Musleah family. It was a common occurrence on festive occasions.

I had prepared the prayers and readings.

2. Page 42 (Chap 3.)

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA

I introduced the spirit of the occasion by a simple D'var Torah:

"Last Shabbat we read in the Parasha how Jacob left his father's house bound for Laban's house. On the first evening of his long journey when the sun had set, he chose a spot to rest for the night. He looked around for a head–rest and came across many stones מֵאַבְנֵי הַמָּקוֹם which he used as a head–rest. Next morning, the Torah says,

וַיִּקַּח אֶת הָאֶבֶן אֲשֶׁר שָׂם מְרַאֲשׁוֹתָיו וַיָּשֶׂם אוֹתָהּ מַצֵּבָה וַיִּצֹק שֶׁמֶן עַל רֹאשָׁהּ

Jacob took the one stone he saw lying in front of him which he used as a pillow and sprayed it with oil. The night previous, there were many stones; in the morning, only one.

Our Rabbis puzzled over this, and came up with the following theory: The many stones of the previous night scrambled for position to be a cushion for that righteous man. Each wanted the honor and privilege to serve him in his time of need. Miraculously, they turned into one stone, and Jacob used it as a pillow. In the morning, Jacob was impressed by the togetherness of the stones and declared them holy. He poured oil over that one stone and made a vow: 'If I should return to this stone peaceably, I shall make it the cornerstone of a house of God,' a place which brings out our deepest emotions and at which we offer our noblest thoughts.

"Today we come to honor a beloved aunt and respected teacher who showered love on, and taught discipline to, two or three generations. We all sort of scramble for position to celebrate with her. Each wants the honor and privilege to be here on this auspicious occasion. We come here as one — of one mind, one purpose and one heart to demonstrate our love and esteem for this remarkable woman. Because of our togetherness, this occasion has assumed an air of sanctity, and will remain with her and with us for all time. Our togetherness has become a sort of house of God, where the best in us has been brought out.

"On behalf of our family and the Jewish and non–Jewish communities all over the world ready with their messages of felicitations, we thank you, each of you, for demonstrating you affection for our aunt and teacher. And we know we are joined by hundreds of others the world over wherever former students and friends live.

"While we are grateful to all, we wish to mention specifically David Nahoum, a close friend and well–wisher, whose constant care and attention in effect has made it possible to celebrate this happy day. He devotedly attended to her every need after her fall and brought her back to reasonable health. He is true to his name. In Hebrew, every letter has a numerical value. So the first two letters, Dalet and Vav, add up to ten, and then the second Dalet doubles to more than ten. What David has done and continues to do for my aunt, ten people and more would not have been able to do."

Aunt Ramah then read verses of prayer in acrostic of her name:

רַחְמָה מַצְלִיחַ

רָמָה קַרְנִי בַיי רָחַב פִּי עַל אוֹיְבַי כִּי שָׂמַחְתִּי בִּישׁוּעָתֶךָ

I Samuel 2:1 I have triumphed through the Lord, I gloat over my difficulties, I rejoice in Your deliverance.

חִלִּיתִי פָנֶיךָ בְּכָל לֵב חָנֵּנִי כְּאִמְרָתֶךָ

Psalm 119:58 I have implored You with all my heart;
Have mercy on me, in accordance with Your promise.

מִי הָאִישׁ הֶחָפֵץ חַיִּים אֹהֵב יָמִים לִרְאוֹת טוֹב

Psalm 34:13–15 Who is the person who is eager for life, who desires years of good fortune?
Guard your tongue from evil, your lips from deceitful speech.

הוֹרֵנִי יי דֶּרֶךְ חֻקֶּיךָ וְאֶצְּרֶנָּה עֵקֶב

Psalm 119:33 Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your laws; I will observe them to the best of my ability.

מַלְכוּתְךָ מַלְכוּת כָּל עוֹלָמִים וּמֶמְשַׁלְתְּךָ בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר

Psalm 145:13 Your kingship is an everlasting kingship; Your dominion is for all generations.

צַדִּיק כַּתָּמָר יִפְרַח כְּאֶרֶז בַּלְּבָנוֹן יִשְׂגֶּה

Psalm 92:13 The righteous bloom like the date–palm;
They thrive like a cedar in Lebanon.

לְהַגִּיד כִּי יָשָׁר יי צוּרִי וְלֹא עַוְלָתָה בּוֹ

Psalm 92:16 Attesting that the Lord is upright, my Rock in whom there is no wrong.

יֵלְכוּ מֵחַיִל אֶל חַיִל יֵרָאֶה אֶל אֱלֹהִים בְּצִיּוֹן

Psalm 84:8 They go from strength to strength, appearing before God in Zion.

חַיִּים שָׁאַל מִמְּךָ נָתַתָּ לִי אֹרֶךְ יָמִים לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

Psalm 21:5 I asked you for life, You granted it; a long life.

Aunty Ramah then lit nine candles of celebration, one for each decade of her life. She began with an Arabic phrase she was happy with, in consonance with her name.

1. Bil Rahmit Allah — by the grace of God, I was born on 10th Kislev in the year 1907.
2. I was brought up by good, God–fearing parents.
3. I was fortunate to have had loving brothers and sisters, of blessed memory. Bless in life and good health my sister Seemah.
4. I was happy and contented with a fulfilling occupation in teaching.
5. I was blessed with a noble principal and cordial colleagues while teaching two generations of children during my over fifty years on the staff of the Jewish Girls' School.
6. I am grateful that I am self–sufficient and not dependent on human beings for my maintenance and upkeep.
7. I am indeed fortunate to have very loving and devoted relatives, good friends and faithful helpers to sustain me in my physical frailties.
8. I am doubly blessed that my beloved nephew Ezekiel Nissim and devoted nieces Ruby, Mavis and Margaret are here to celebrate this happy day with me.
9. Above all, I offer my heartfelt gratitude to my Maker שֶׁהֶחֱיָנוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לַזְּמַן הַזֶּה for granting me life, sustaining me and bringing me to this wonderful day of rejoicing.

We then chanted a part of the Hallel, Psalm 118, followed by readings of faith and thanksgiving by the four of us.

ENM: Isaiah 25:1 O Lord, You are my God, I will praise You, for You have done wonders for me.

Ruby: Isaiah 25:4 You have been refuge for poor me, a shelter for needy me in hard times.

Mavis: Isaiah 25:9 So today I say: This is our God; we trusted in Him and He delivered us. This is the Lord in whom we trusted, let us be glad and rejoice in His deliverance.

Margaret: Psalm 34:2–3 I bless the Lord at all times, praise of Him is ever in my mouth. I glory in the Lord, let the lowly hear it and rejoice.

ENM: Psalm 34:4–5 Exalt the Lord with me; let us extoll His name together. I turned to the Lord and He answered me, He saved me from all my afflictions.

Ruby: Psalm 34:7–9 I am the humble person who called and the Lord listened, and delivered me from all my troubles. The angel of the Lord camps around those who revere Him and rescues them. Taste and see how good the Lord is; happy the person who takes refuge in Him.

Mavis: Psalm 34:19–21 The Lord is close to the broken–hearted; those crushed in spirit He delivers. Though the misfortunes of the righteous be many, the Lord saves them from all, keeping all their bones intact.

Margaret: Psalm 34:23 The Lord redeems the life of His servants; all who take refuge in Him shall be saved.

ENM: Psalm 86:1–7 Incline Your ear, O Lord, answer me, for I am needy. Preserve my life, for I heed Your commandments. O You, my God, Deliver Your servant who trusts in You. Have mercy on me, O Lord,

Ruby: For I call You all day long; bring joy to Your servant's life, for on You, O Lord, I set my hope. For You, Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon You. Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer; heed my prayer for mercy.

Mavis: Psalm 86:11–13 Teach me Your way, O Lord; I walk in Your Torah; let my heart be undivided in reverence for You. I praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart and pay honor to Your name forever. For Your great love toward me has humbled me; You have saved me from many dangers.

Margaret: Psalm 86:16–18 Turn to me and continue to protect me; strengthen me, give me courage, and deliver me from all harm. Show me a sign of Your favor, for You, O Lord, are the source of my help and my comfort.

All then relished the repast, talked happily with, and extended good wishes to, the birthday lady. The entire proceedings were recorded on video tape.

Our Mother's 60th Yartseit

Ruby and I took the opportunity, after many years, to visit our mother's grave on the 60th anniversary of her death, 24th Heshvan 5758–24th November 1997. After reading the traditional portions of Mishna, Zohar and Psalms, I delivered a D'var Torah at graveside.

> "What prompted Abraham to decide to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice to God? One reason alone — his intense love of God. He initially thought that his love for God and his love for his son were mutually exclusive. On the strength of that belief, he made a major decision: that his love for God was greater. To come to that decision was the most emotional experience of his life. And he was ready to carry his decision through.
>
> Jewish tradition calls this episode a test. Abraham's love for God was put on trial and he successfully overcame that test.

"He took his son to the mountain–top to be vindicated in the eyes of the Divine. It required him to sacrifice his future for the intense moment of the present. For Abraham, God was the ever–present love of today. Isaac was the insurance of tomorrow. He chose the all–pervading present.

"But Abraham rethought the consequences of his emotional act. He took two paces back, so to speak, and introspected. Was that what God wanted him to do, to self–destruct, to obliterate the future of the monotheism he had discovered? Would he be happy to live in a world filled with God but without his son? What a relief! He decided he wouldn't follow through on his initial decision. He would be happier with both God *and* his son.

In Jewish tradition, the most significant outcome of Abraham's rethinking demonstrates his sturdy and robust character which helped him stand the test, and thus preserve both his present and his future, both his love for God and his love for his son.

"All of us have some extreme emotional experiences. How we react determines our characters. Perhaps the most shattering encounter of *our* lives was Mum's death. I was 10, Ruby 14, and Meyer almost 17. It was, of course a severe test of our moral stamina. Would we give up our future and succumb to the devastating blow of losing our mother? Would that be what she would have liked us to do? Would we yield to the 'slings and arrows of outrageous fortune' and lead the average uneventful lives so many of our contemporaries had chosen? No way! As an inscription on her tombstone reads, Mum was gone but not forgotten. And in not forgetting, we had to show that we were not going to live only in the present, represented by our overreaching love for her, and sink into an abyss grieving for her. We had to show that we each had a future she would have been proud to see. Part of her genes lives in us and in our children. For two successive years she had won both the Dux [the highest academic award] and the Good Conduct medals in Calcutta's Jewish Girls' School. She was the pride of her teachers and the envy of her peers. She had fought every step of the way against that which made life unhappy.

"We too are fighters for the right, the true and the beautiful.

"What did Abraham do after Sarah's death? He was eager to insure his future. He sought to guarantee, in the words of Torah:

כִּי יְדַעְתִּיו לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יְצַוֶּה אֶת בָּנָיו וְאֶת בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ דֶּרֶךְ יי לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט לְמַעַן הָבִיא יי עַל אַבְרָהָם אֵת אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר עָלָיו

Abraham would instruct his children and his posterity to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is just and right, in order that the Lord may bring about for Abraham what He has promised him. [Gen. 18:19] So he set about to seek a wife for his son so as to assure continuity for his ideas and activities.

"We too married and have good sons and daughters. We too, as our parents' children, have expressed our determination to continue the tradition of excellence and virtue in our own lives and in the lives of our children. We have striven to live good Jewish lives, to

help human being with their lives, to teach knowledge of Judaism and Jewish values and practises. וְעֹשֶׂה חֶסֶד לַאֲלָפִים לְאֹהֲבַי וּלְשֹׁמְרֵי מִצְוֹתָי God shows kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Him.[3] We have faith that God will continue to show us kindness, for we had parents who loved God and kept His commandments.

"We have had our traumas and crises, but in the tradition of Abraham and Sarah, and that of our own parents, by the grace of God and our own efforts, we chose the bright future מצליח. over the dreary present, and have emerged triumphant."

Since Meyer was not present, I wrote him a note of consolation:

"As we observe Mum's 60th anniversary, the memory uppermost in our minds and hearts is the responsibility that fell to your lot as the oldest sibling, and that you undertook and devoted yourself so well to compensate in some small measure for the loss we all had to live with.

"Your birthday is ever a time to look up to you for splendid and extraordinary family and social leadership.

"May you long deservingly savour the memory of challenges you so boldly surmounted, and shimmer as a bright luminary for Rae and your lovely family."

My 70th, Margaret's 65th

When I reached the age of 70, and Margaret was 65, our families celebrated at a combined function in August 1997. Our children read out what they had compiled, and I read out what I had composed. Mine, an acrostic in Hebrew:

יְגַדֵּל אֱלֹהִים חַי וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח נִמְצָא וְאֵין עֵת אֶל מְצִיאוּתוֹ
חִזְקוּ וְיַאֲמֵץ לְבַבְכֶם כֹּל הַמְיַחֲלִים לַיי
זֶה הַיּוֹם עָשָׂה יי נָגִילָה וְנִשְׂמְחָה בּוֹ
קוּמִי אוֹרִי כִּי בָּא אוֹרֵךְ וּכְבוֹד יי עָלַיִךְ זָרַח
אַשְׁרֵי הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא הָלַךְ בַּעֲצַת רְשָׁעִים וּבְדֶרֶךְ חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמָד וּבְמוֹשַׁב לֵצִים לֹא יָשָׁב
(כִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת יי חֶפְצוֹ וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ יֶהְגֶּה יוֹמָם וָלָיְלָה...וְעָלֵהוּ לֹא יִבּוֹל וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר הוּא עוֹשֶׂה יי מַצְלִיחַ)
לְמַעַן יֵדְעוּ דּוֹרוֹתֵיכֶם כִּי בַסֻּכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי יי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

נַפְשִׁי אַל זַכְרְתִּי וַחֲסָדֶיךָ סִפַּרְתִּי עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי גָדוֹל יי
סִבּוּ אֶת הָעִיר וְהֶחָלוֹזִין יַעֲבוֹר לִפְנֵי אֲרוֹן יי
יְמִינְךָ יי נֶאְדָּרִי בַּכֹּחַ
מַחַר יַעֲשֶׂה יי בְּקִרְבְּכֶם נִפְלָאוֹת
מִאֵל אָבִיךָ וְיַעְזְרֶךָּ וְאֵל שַׁדַּי וִיבָרְכֶךָּ
צַהֲלִי וְרָנִּי יוֹשֶׁבֶת צִיּוֹן כִּי גָדוֹל בְּקִרְבֵּךְ קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל
לִישׁוּעָתְךָ קִוִּיתִי יי
יְדִיד יי יִשְׁכֹּן לָבֶטַח עָלָיו וּבֵין כְּתֵפָיו שָׁכֵן
חַי יי וּבָרוּךְ צוּרִי

3. Exodus 20:6

חָזָק וֶאֱמָץ אַל תַּעֲרֹץ וְאַל תֵּחַת כִּי עִמְּךָ יי אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵךְ
זִכְרוּ נִפְלְאוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה
קָרוֹב הַדָּבָר בְּפִיךָ וּבִלְבָבְךָ לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ
יִהְיוּ לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי פִי וְהֶגְיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ יי צוּרִי וְגוֹאֲלִי

The living God is greatly to be praised; no time can limit Him to whom we pray.[from Maimonides' Thirteen Faith Principles]

Be strong and of good courage, all of you who wait for the Lord [Psalm 31:25]

This is the day that the Lord has made — let us exult and rejoice on it [Psalm 118:24]

Arise, shine, for your light has dawned; the presence of the Lord has shone upon you. [Isaiah 60:1]

Happy is the man who has not followed the counsel of the wicked … rather, the teaching of the Lord is his delight, and he studies that teaching day and night [Psalms 1:1,2]

In order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I the Lord your God [Lev. 23:43]

Divine miracles I recall and His kindnesses I do relate. Even now I know how great is God [From a Baghdad hymn in the Passover Haggada]

March around the city (of Jericho), with the vanguard marching in front of the Ark [Joshua 6:7]

Your right hand,O Lord, glorious in power [Exodus 15:6]

Tomorrow the Lord will perform wonders in your midst [Joshua 3:5]

The God of your father helps you, and Shaddai blesses you [Gen. 49:25]

Oh, shout for joy! you who dwell in Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel [Isaiah 12:6]

I wait for Your deliverance, O Lord! [Gen. 49:18]

Beloved of the Lord, resting securely beside Him; as he rests between His shoulders [Deut. 33:12]

The Lord lives! Blessed is my Rock! [II Samuel 22:47; Psalm 18:47]

I charge you: Be strong and resolute; do not be terrified or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go [Joshua 1:9]

Remember the wonders He has done [Psalm 105:5]

The Teaching is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to do it [Deut. 30:14]

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to You, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer [Psalm 19:15]

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA

Aware of my penchant for Gematria, the mystical system of numerical equivalents of the Hebrew alphabet, my daughters made the following clever expedient:

"In Yaakov's blessing to his sons, he says: בֵּן פֹּרָת יוֹסֵף בֵּן פֹּרָת עָלֵי עָיִן בָּנוֹת צָעֲדָה עָלֵי שׁוּר

'The usual translation is: Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by the spring; its branches run over the wall.' I [Rahel] think the rabbis missed the obvious translation of this verse. How could they ignore the fact that it's a futuristic allusion to our family? After all, the first Musleah we can trace in Baghdad is Yosef Musleah. Then there are simple figures: If you add up the Gematria of יוֹסֵף, you get 156. And, believe it or not, (I, for one, couldn't believe my eyes!) if you add up the Gematria of יְחֶזְקֵאל you also get 156!

"Furthermore, בְּאָב ט"ו the date on which you were born, daddy, adds yet another layer. ט"ו is 15, and בְּאָב is 5. The extra little abbreviation sign between the vav and the teth in ט"ו has to add one more number [in a good rule of the system], to make a total of 21=יוֹסֵף . Add up 15+6 the Gematria of בְּאָב ט"ו gives the value of יחזקאל [15 6] and and guess what? It's 21! [Meaning, my birthdate was auspicious, not only as a red–letter day in the Jewish calendar, but also as a happy augury for me to be a continuation of Yosef's traditions.]

"Why else are יְחֶזְקֵאל and יוֹסֵף equivalent? Of course, אִישׁ מַצְלִיחַ is called יוֹסֵף and it's easy to see your fruitfulness in this gathering. [Children and grandchildren present.]

"Still unbelievers? OK, on to the second phrase: בֵּן פֹּרָת עָלֵי עָיִן Where was Yosef fruitful? — עָלֵי עָיִן At the source of water? "On the Banks of the Ganga", maybe?

The second explanation of עָיִן is … you guessed it … 70 [the numerical value of the letter Ayin is 70!]. Yosef or Yeheskel is a fruitful bough at age seventy.

"Need more convincing? OK, this from the third phrase: בָּנוֹת צָעֲדָה עָלֵי שׁוּר What can we בָּנוֹת [daughters] say? How else would you interpret but in reference to three daughters who did —

who do — their best to climb heights — not to be immodest or anything …

The verse ends by endorsing this interpretation: What's the last word of? בָּנוֹת צָעֲדָה עָלֵי שׁוּר

שׁוּר transliterated in English, is SURE! Daughters climb heights … SURE!

"We'll pause a second for the groans, but we want to end by saying that we hope your fruitfulness has given you joy and blessing and will continue to do so in the years ahead."

For Margaret, an acrostic in Hebrew by her daughters.

מַה יָּפִית וּמַה נָּעַמְתְּ
רַבּוֹת בָּנוֹת עָשׂוּ חַיִל וְאַתְּ עָלִית עַל כֻּלָּנָה
יְשַׁלֵּם יי פָּעֳלֵךְ וּתְהִי מַשְׂכֻּרְתֵּךְ שְׁלֵמָה מֵעִם יי אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
מַיִם רַבִּים לֹא יוּכְלוּ לְכַבּוֹת אֶת הָאַהֲבָה
מַאֲשֶׁר שִׁמְּנָה לַחְמוֹ וְהוּא יִתֵּן מַעֲדַנֵּי מֶלֶךְ
צוֹפִיָּה הֲלִיכוֹת בֵּיתָהּ וְלֶחֶם עַצְלוּת לֹא תֹאכֵל
לֹא אִירָא רָע כִּי אַתָּה עִמָּדִי
יְצַו יי אִתְּךָ אֶת הַבְּרָכָה בַּאֲצָמֶיךָ וּבְכֹל מִשְׁלַח יָדֶיךָ
חַנּוּן יי וְצַדִּיק וֵאלֹהֵינוּ מְרַחֵם

יִהְיוּ לְרָצוֹן אִמְרֵי פִי וְהֶגְיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ יי צוּרִי וְגוֹאֲלִי

How fair you are, how beautiful! [Song of Songs 7:7]

Many women have done well, but you surpass them all [Proverbs 31:29]

May the Lord reward your deeds. May you have a full recompense from the Lord, the God of Israel. [Ruth 2:12]

Vast floods cannot quench love [Song of Songs 8:7]

Asher's bread is rich; he yields royal dainties [Gen. 49:20]

She oversees the activities of her household, and never eats the bread of idleness [Proverbs 31:27]

I fear no harm, for You are with me [Psalm 23:4]

The Lord ordains blessings for you upon your barns and upon your undertakings [Deut. 28:8]

The Lord is gracious and beneficent; our God is compassionate [Psalm 116:5]

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my Rock and My Redeemer.

Mummy, we know one of your favorite parts of the תנ"ך is Hannah's prayer. What most people don't know is that Hannah was 65 when she recited it. How do we know it? you ask.

Trot out that trusty Gematria, and you'll find that חַנָּה adds up to 63. Uh oh. But never fear, the two vowels under Heth and Noon gives the extra 2, adding up to 65.

Another untraditional interpretation is that Hannah prayed and gave thanks first when Samuel was born, and wrote another version when she retired. The first time, she sang:

עָלַיִן לִבִּי בַּיי רָמָה קַרְנִי בּיי רָחַב פִּי עַל אוֹיְבַי כִּי שָׂמַחְתִּי בִּישׁוּעָתֶךָ

My heart exults in the Lord; I have triumphed through the Lord.

I gloat over my enemies, I rejoice in Your deliverance.

The second time, upon her retirement, she sang:

עָלַיִן לִבִּי **בִּבְנוֹתַי** רָמָה קַרְנִי **בִּנְכָדַי** רָחַב פִּי **בְּאַהֲבַת בַּעֲלִי** כִּי שָׂמַחְתִּי **בִּפְרִישָׁתִי**

My heart exults **in my daughters**; I have triumphed **through my grandchildren**.

My mouth opens **in praise and love of my husband**. I rejoice **in my retirement**.

May you continue to rejoice in the years ahead and in all the love that surrounds you.

My Composition: Fifteen Verses of Hallel — Exultation — To Celebrate the Fifteenth Ab
הַלֵּל לְכָבוֹד יוֹם הַהַלֶּדֶת הַשִּׁבְעִים שֶׁל יְחִזְקֵאל נִסִּים מַצְלִיחַ נוֹלַד ט״ו בְּאָב ט״ו פְּסוּקֵי הַהַלֵּל

אֲהַלְלָה יי בְּחַיַּי אֲזַמְּרָה לֵאלֹהַי בְּעוֹדִי

Psalm 146:2 I praise the Lord for my life, sing hymns to my God all my life.

אֲהַלְלָה שֵׁם אֱלֹהִים בְּשִׁיר וַאֲגַדְּלֶנּוּ בְּתוֹדָה

Psalm 69:31 I extol God's name with song, and exalt Him with thanksgiving.

כִּי טוֹב זַמְּרָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ כִּי נָעִים נָאוָה תְּהִלָּה

Psalm 147:2 It is good to chant hymns to our God; it is pleasant to sing glorious praise.

הַלְלוּ אֶת יי מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם הַלְלֻהוּ בַּמְּרוֹמִים

Psalm 148:1 Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise Him on high.

הַלְלוּ אֶת יי מִן הָאָרֶץ...יְהַלְלוּ אֶת שֵׁם יי כִּי נִשְׂגָּב שְׁמוֹ לְבַדּוֹ הוֹדוֹ עַל אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמָיִם

Psalm 148:7 Praise the Lord, O you who are on earth

Psalm 148:13 Let us praise the name of the Lord, for His name, His alone, is sublime;

His splendour covers heaven and earth.

יְחַלְלוּ יי דּוֹרְשָׁיו יְחִי לְבַבְכֶם לָעַד

Psalm 22:27 Let all who seek the Lord praise Him. Always be of good cheer.

יְהַלְלוּ שְׁמוֹ בְּמָחוֹל בְּתֹף וְכִנּוֹר יְזַמְּרוּ לוֹ

Psalm 149:3 Let us praise His name in dance; with timbrel and lyre praise His name.

שֶׁבַע בַּיּוֹם הִלַּלְתִּיךָ עַל מִשְׁפְּטֵי צִדְקֶךָ

Psalm 119:164 I pray You seven times each day, for Your just rules.

בֵּאלֹהִים הִלַּלְנוּ כָל הַיּוֹם וְשִׁמְךָ לְעוֹלָם נוֹדֶה סֶלָה

Psalm 44:9 In God we glory at all times and praise Your name unceasingly.

בֵּאלֹהִים אֲהַלֵּל דָּבָר בַּיי אֲהַלֵּל דָּבָר
בֵּאלֹהִים בָּטָחְתִּי לֹא אִירָא מַה יַּעֲשֶׂה אָדָם לִי

Psalm 56:11–12 In God, whose word I praise, in the Lord, whose word I praise,
In God I trust, I am not afraid; what can man do to me?

בְּכָל יוֹם אֲבָרֶכֶךָּ וַאֲהַלְלָה שִׁמְךָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

Psalm 145:2 Every day I bless you, and praise your name for ever and ever.

וִירוֹמְמוּהוּ בִּקְהַל עָם וּבְמוֹשָׁב זְקֵנִים יְהַלְלוּהוּ

Psalm 107:32 Let them exalt Him in the congregation of the people,
acclaim him in the assembly of elders.

אוֹדֶה יי מְאֹד בְּפִי וּבְתוֹךְ רַבִּים אֲהַלְלֶנּוּ

Psalm 109:30 My mouth sings much praise to the Lord;
I acclaim Him in the midst of this loving group.

אַל יִתְהַלֵּל חָכָם בְּחָכְמָתוֹ אַל יִתְהַלֵּל גִּבּוֹר בִּגְבוּרָתוֹ וְאַל יִתְהַלֵּל עָשִׁיר בְּעָשְׁרוֹ
כִּי אִם בְּזֹאת יִתְהַלֵּל הַמִּתְהַלֵּל הַשְׂכֵּל וְיָדוֹעַ אוֹתִי כִּי אֲנִי יי עֹשֶׂה חֶסֶד מִשְׁפָּט וּצְדָקָה בָּאָרֶץ
כִּי בְאֵלֶּה חָפַצְתִּי נְאֻם יי

Jeremiah 9:22:

Thus said the Lord: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom;
Let not the strong man glory in his strength;
let not the rich man glory in his riches.
But only in this should one glory: in his earnest devotion to Me.
For I the Lord act in kindness, justice and equity in the world;
For in these I delight, — declares the Lord.

כֹּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תְּהַלֵּל יָהּ הַלְלוּיָהּ

Psalm 150:6 Let all that breathes praise the Lord.

We sang two of my favorite Pizmoneem:

אֵין דֵּי בְּאֵר חַסְדֵּי מֶלֶךְ הַמְפֹאָר

and

שִׂמְחוּ נָא בְּשִׂמְחַת הַשִּׁבְעִים

with special mention of my seventieth.

יהזקאל נסים מצליח חזק Special Hebrew Acrostic —

יוֹמָם יְצַוֶּה יי חַסְדּוֹ וּבַלַּיְלָה שִׁירוֹ עִמִּי תְּפִלָּה לְאֵל חַיָּי

Psalm 42:9 By day, the Lord provides me with His faithful care, so that at night to Him
may be with me, a prayer to the God of my life.

חֶסֶד יי מֵעוֹלָם וְעַד עוֹלָם עַל יְרֵאָיו וְצִדְקָתוֹ לִבְנֵי בָנִים

Psalm 193:17 The Lord's steadfast love is for all eternity toward those who revere Him,
And His beneficence is for children's children.

זֶה אֵלִי וַאֲנַוֵּהוּ אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי וַאֲרוֹמְמֶנְהוּ — הִתְנָאֶה לְפָנָיו בְּמִצְוֹת — עֲשֵׂה לְפָנָיו סֻכָּה נָאָה. וְלוּלָב נָאֶה. שׁוֹפָר
נָאֶה. צִיצִית נָעִים. וְסֵפֶר תּוֹרָה נָעֳעָה — וּמִשְׁפָּחָה נָאָה הַנִּקְדֶּשֶׁת לַתּוֹרָה וְלַמִּצְוֹת

Exodus 15:2 This is my God and I will beautify Him,
the God of my ancestors, and I will exalt Him —

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbath 133b — glorify Him through observances — make Him a beautiful Sukkah, an attractive Lulav, a lovely Shofar, a decorative Sisith, and a handsome Sefer Torah —

ENM: — as well as a beautiful family dedicated to the study and observances of Torah.

קוֹל רִנָּה וִישׁוּעָה בְּאָהֳלֵי צַדִּיקִים יְמִין יי עֹשָׂה חָיִל

Psalm 118:15 The tents of the victorious resound with shouts of deliverance; the right hand of the Lord is triumphant.

אַשְׁרֵי תְמִימֵי דָרֶךְ הַהֹלְכִים בְּתוֹרַת יי

Psalm 119:1 Happy are those whose way is whole–hearted, who follow the Teaching of the Lord.

לַשְׁמִיעַ בְּקוֹל תּוֹדָה וּלְסַפֵּר כׇּל נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ

I raise my voice in thanksgiving, and tell of all Your wonders.

נֵר לְרַגְלִי דְּבָרֶיךָ וְאוֹר לִנְתִיבָתִי

Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet, a light for my path.

סָמְכֵנִי כְּאִמְרָתֶךָ וְאֶחְיֶה וְאַל תְּבִישֵׁנִי מִשִּׂבְרִי

Psalm 119:116 Support me as You promised, so that I may live; do not thwart my expectation.

יִשְׁלַח מִמָּרוֹם יִקָּחֵנִי יַמְשֵׁנִי מִמַּיִם רַבִּים

II Samuel 22:17 He reached down from high, He saved me,
Drew me out of mighty waters [dangers].

מַה אָהַבְתִּי תוֹרָתֶךָ כׇּל הַיּוֹם הִיא שִׂיחָתִי

Psalm 119:97 O Lord, how I love Your Teaching! It is my study all day long.

מַה נָּאוּ עַל הֶהָרִים רַגְלֵי מְבַשֵּׂר מַשְׁמִיעַ שָׁלוֹם מְבַשֵּׂר טוֹב מַשְׁמִיעַ יְשׁוּעָה אוֹמֵר לְצִיּוֹן מָלַךְ אֱלֹהָיִךְ

Isaiah 52:7 How welcome on the mountain are the footsteps of the herald,
Announcing happiness, heralding good fortune, announcing victory,
Telling Zion: "Your God is King!"

צָמְאָה נַפְשִׁי לֵאלֹהִים לְאֵל חָי מָתַי אָבֹא וְאֵרָאֶה פְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים

Psalm 42:3 My soul thirsts for God, the Living God;
O when will I come to appear before God.

לְכוּ נְרַנְּנָה לַיי נָרִיעַ לְצוּר יִשְׁעֵנוּ

Psalm 95:1 Come, let us sing joyously to the Lord,
raise a shout for our rock and deliverer/

יִתֵּן לְךָ כִלְבָבֶךָ וְכׇל עֲצָתְךָ יְמַלֵּא

Psalm 20:5 May He grant you your desire, and fulfill your every plan.

חַסְדִּי וּמְצוּדָתִי מִשְׂגַּבִּי וּמְפַלְטִי לִי מָגִנִּי וּבוֹ חָסִיתִי

Psalm 144:2 My faithful one, my fortress, my haven and my deliverer,
my shield in whom I take shelter.

חִזְקוּ וְיַאֲמֵץ לְבַבְכֶם כׇּל הַמְיַחֲלִים לַיי

Psalm 31:25 Be strong and of good courage, all you who wait for the Lord.

זְכֹר רַחֲמֶיךָ יי וַחֲסָדֶיךָ כִּי מֵעוֹלָם הֵמָּה

Psalm 25:6 O Lord, be mindful of Your compassion and Your faithfulness;
they are old as time.

קַדֵּשׁ וּרְחַץ כַּרְפַּס יָחֵץ -- פֵּיר בּוֹלוֹ!

Mneumonics of Passover Haggada order and my grandfather who would encourage his family to say it a second time for the fun of it: He would say: Phair Bolo! Repeat it!

יְהִי רָצוֹן לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּיַחַד!

I pray: With God's will, we shall celebrate as family next year again!

דְּבַר תּוֹרָה בְּיוֹם הוֹלַדְתִּי הַשִּׁבְעִים — ט"ו באב תשנ"ז

Words of Torah on my seventieth birthday — 15th Av 5797

הִלּוּלָה רַבָּה *GREAT CELEBRATION*

וְכִי תָבֹאוּ אֶל הָאָרֶץ וּנְטַעְתֶּם כֹּל עֵץ מַאֲכָל ... שָׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים יִהְיֶה לָכֶם עֲרֵלִים לֹא יֵאָכֵל: וּבַשָּׁנָה הָרְבִיעִית יִהְיֶה כֹּל פִּרְיוֹ **קֹדֶשׁ הִלּוּלִים לַיי**: וּבַשָּׁנָה הַחֲמִישִׁית תֹּאכְלוּ אֶת פִּרְיוֹ ...

When you enter the land and plant any tree for food ... three years it shall be forbidden for you, not to be eaten: In the fourth year, all its fruit shall be **set aside for jubilation before the Lord.** Only in its fifth year may you use its fruit.[4]

Similarly, the Prophet of the exile,[5] looked expectantly to the restoration of Jerusalem where, not the enemies of Israel, but its Jewish citizens will eat her grain וּמְקַבְּצָיו יֹאכְלוּהוּ **וְהִלְלוּ אֶת יי** כִּי מֵאַסְפָיו יֹאכְלוּהוּ וּבְחַצְרוֹת קָדְשִׁי and drink her wine.

Only those who harvest it shall eat it and **celebrate it jubilantly** before the Lord, and those who gather it shall drink it in My sacred courts.

וַיֵּצְאוּ הַשָּׂדֶה וַיִּבְצְרוּ אֶת Another biblical reference occurs in the Book of Judges [9:27]
כַּרְמֵיהֶם וַיִּדְרְכוּ **וַיַּעֲשׂוּ הִלּוּלִים** וַיָּבֹאוּ בֵּית אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ

They (the Shechemites under Gaal ben Eved) went into the fields, gathered and trod out the vintage of their vineyards, and **celebrated rites of jubilation.** They entered the temple of their god ... they ate and drank ...

The concept of celebration and jubilation is expressed also in rabbinic literature in the realm of mysticism.[6] Rabbi Isaac asks the spirit of his deceased father: 'Father, how long more do I have to live in this world?' He replied: 'I am not permitted to tell, nor is it made known to mortals, but you shall prepare the table at Rabbi Shimon's **הִלּוּלָא רַבָּא Great Celebration** [in the Hereafter when Rabbi Shimon will reap the spiritual

4. Leviticus 19:23-25
5. Isaiah 62:9
6. Zohar II 217a on Genesis 47:29

rewards for his singular Torah labors, that is, Rabbi Isaac will predecease Rabbi Shimon.] The Zohar bases this teaching on the text in the Song of Songs [3:11], Go forth, O maidens of Zion, [=Jews in the Hereafter,] go forth and gaze upon King Solomon wearing the crown [=enjoy the sight of Rabbi Simon being felicitated in the heavenly realm] that his mother gave him on his wedding day, on his day of bliss [on the day of his coronation celebrated with great pomp].

Another context portraying **Hillulah** is the mystic formula before making Motsie [I translate from Aramaic into Hebrew and English].

לְבָצְעָ עַל פַּת We break bread
כְּבֵיצָה וּכְזֵיתָ sized at least as large as an egg or an olive
כְּשֶׁתֵּי יו"דִין כַּדַּת symbolic of the two Yods in God's name
סְתִימִין וּפְרִישִׁין concealed or self–evident
מִשֻּׁמָּן זֵיתָ זָךְ of pure olive oil
מִזְּפָצִים הֲרִיחוֹת their aroma spreads
שֶׁיָּצִיפוּ הַנְּהָלִים and the rivers inundate
מִמָּרוֹם נִמְשָׁכִים flowing from heaven above
הֲלָא נְגַלֶּה קְצָת סוֹדוֹ Let us reveal a part of their secret (of rest)
וְרָזִים דְּרָזִים veiled in mystery
שֶׁאֲסוּרִים מִלְּגַלּוֹת forbidden to reveal
בְּיוֹם חוֹל לָרַבִּים publicly on weekdays
וְהָאן כַּלָּה מִתְעַטֶּרֶת Today the Sabbath Queen is adorned
בְּרָזִים מִשָּׁמַיִם with secrets (of Sabbath rest) from heaven above

בנו חָאי חִלוּלָא= בְּתוֹךְ שִׂמְחָה הַגּוֹבֶרֶת

amid overpowering joy and celebration
מִשֶּׁל מַלְאָכִים וּקְדוֹשִׁים derived from the holy angels

חִלוּלָא The central thought here is: Shabbath is the source of joy and celebration like that which resides only in heaven, and available to humans only on Shabbath. We want to celebrate it for the short time it is at our disposal and derive from it spiritual and mental uplift to be better able to do our destined tasks.

The two loaves of bread are Divine gifts whose secret of mental and physical replenishment is the key of the proper observance of Shabbath. They are also the portals הלולא of family , not only for those presently living, but also for those from whom we are descended. Imagine the **חִלוּלָא רַבָּא דְּמִשְׁפַּחַת מַצְלִיחַ**, the overpowering and unifying joy and celebration, including my mother and every previous generation, every week at Motsie, they and we in extraordinary cheer and delight, sitting around the table, they because their example and teaching have borne fruit, and we because we cherish being the fruit.

And for you, our beloved group here assembled, this is indeed a חִלוּלָא רַבָּא, a celebration of intense significance as we mark, in thankfulness for the grace of God, my 70th birthday in the spirit of the following interpretive comment:

זֶה אֵלִי וְאַנְוֵהוּ אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי וַאֲרוֹמְמֶנְהוּ
אִם יָכוֹל מִי שֶׁהוּא לְהַגִּיד "זֶה אֵלִי" הֵינוּ בִּכוֹחִי וּבַעֲבוֹדָתִי בַּתּוֹרָה וּבַעֲבוֹדָה הִגַּעְתִּי לְמָה שֶׁהִגַּעְתִּי אָז "וְאַנְוֵהוּ"
זֶה יָפֶה וְנָאֶה לוֹ שֶׁהִגִּיעַ וּמְצָא. אֲבָל הַמִּתְפָּאֵר בְּ"אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי" וְכָל הַיִּחוּס שֶׁלּוֹבָזֶה שֶׁהוּא בֶּן אוֹ נֶכֶד אוֹ צֶאֱצָא
אֶחָד הַגְּדוֹלִים. אֲזַי אֵין זֶה אֶלָּא "וַאֲרוֹמְמֶנְהוּ" — תְּלִיָּא בְּאֱלֹאֵי רַבְרְבֵי — וְיֵשׁ בּוֹ שֶׁמֶץ גַּאֲוָה וְהִתְנַשְּׂאוּת.
אֲמְנָם הַיִּחוּס הָאֲמִיתִי הוּא רְכוּשׁ תּוֹאַר בִּירֻשָּׁה בְּצֵרוּף לְיִחוּס עַצְמוֹ

He who says זֶה אֵלִי, that is, through my own skill and personal devotion to God and service in Torah I have attained my success, it is then proper to say וְאַנְוֵהוּ it is befitting and becoming to claim such repute for himself.

But he who boasts only "אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי" referring to his favored ancestry, that his claim to renown is based merely on his descent from a noted past personality or reputed family, his reputation is then based only on descent, and there is here a reflection of vainglory and haughtiness. True noble ancestry is a combination of good descent *as well as* personal achievements.

Though it is a mark of high distinction to be נִין מַצְלִיחַ, a descendant of my noble forbears, I was never comfortable to plume myself with mere noble stock. I have ever striven, sometimes at the cost of considerable personal sacrifice, to be a worthy descendant by emulating in a small way my rabbinical ancestry, using my best endeavors to love and respect my parents and elders, promoting and glorying in affection and admiration for my wife and children and grandchildren, to achieve family closeness and solidarity, and not least, bestowing Torah I had received from dedicated teachers and other respected folks to our children, thus preparing them to add in turn another generational link devoted to Torah and family.

For me, with God's blessings, chronology and lineage are accompanied by personal decoration. And now, this extraordinary **הִלּוּלָא**

יְחֶזְקֵאל נִסִּים בֶּן יִצְחָק שֵׁשׁוֹן וּפְרִחָה בֶּן מֵאִיר עֶזְרָא וּמַסְעוּדָה בֶּן אֵלְיָהוּ וְאֶסְתֵּר בֶּן יוֹסֵף
וְדִינָה בֶּן חָכָם אֵלְיָהוּ וְרִיטָה בֶּן חָכָם יְחֶזְקֵאל בֶּן חָכָם רַב צָאֱלַח בֶּן חָכָם רַב יוֹסֵף מַצְלִיחַ
חַקָּטָן בְּשִׂבְטוֹ וּבְמִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ

Five years later, my family and I were together again celebrating another of my milestone birthdays, and toyed again with the gematria (numerical value) of my name, a name destined to live; the first two letters of my first name יְחֶזְקֵאל and the last two of my last name מַצְלִיחַ represent ח״י and ח״י or life. The gematria of the remaining letters of יחזקאל equals 138 or בְּקוֹ״ל [Gen. 39:14] "with a (loud) voice." The gematria of the remaining letters of my family name מצליח totals 160 or לְקַ״ל [Exodus 4:8], referring to the wonders displayed by Moses in Pharaoh's presence, as does my full middle name נסים, in all referring to miraculous signs that had a successful conclusion of Israelite deliverance.

So I give loud voice of thanksgiving to a verse in פָּרָשַׁת וָאֶתְחַנַּן read on the Shabbat in 1927 when I was born [Deut. 4:9–10] כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ וְהוֹדַעְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ וְלִבְנֵי בָנֶיךָ יוֹם אֲשֶׁר עָמַדְתָּ לִפְנֵי ה׳ אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּחוֹרֵב כֹּל הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר הֵם חַיִּים עַל הָאֲדָמָה וְאֶת בָּנֵיהֶם יְלַמֵּדוּן

As long as you live, make the Teachings of the Torah known to your children and to your children's children (as) on the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb [to learn Torah = at the Seminary?]. As long as [you and] your children and theirs live, keep teaching them אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֵוִי כֹּל הַמְלַמֵּד אֶת בֶּן בְּנוֹ וּבֵן בְּנוֹ תּוֹרָה מַעֲלֶה עָלָיו הַכָּתוּב כְּאִילּוּ קִבְּלָהּ מֵהַר חוֹרֵב שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וְהוֹדַעְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ וְלִבְנֵי בָנֶיךָ וְאַחַר כָּךְ כָּתוּב יוֹם אֲשֶׁר עָמַדְתָּ בְּחוֹרֵב

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi taught: He who teaches Torah to his children and grandchildren, Scripture accounts it to him as though he [= the teacher, ENM] had received it from Horeb [= at the Seminary].

This refers to my past, the pledge of teaching I made at the Seminary.

דָּבָר אַחֵר Another interpretation refers to my future from that point on: וְהוֹדַעְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ וְלִבְנֵי בָנֶיךָ מְלַמֵּד שֶׁכֹּל הַמְלַמֵּד אֶת בֶּנוֹ וּבֶן בֶּנוֹ תּוֹרָה מַעֲלֶה עָלָיו הַכָּתוּב כְּאִילּוּ לִמְּדוֹ לוֹ וְלִבְנוֹ וּלְבֶן בְּנוֹ עַד סוֹף כֹּל הַדּוֹרוֹת

Whoever makes the Teachings of Torah known to his son/daughter, to their children and to their children's children, it is as though he has taught not only his son/daughter and their children, but yet another generation, even until the last generation [of his family]. [He seems to have fulfilled his obligation to forge the link of faith and observance he had received, and insured the fastness of the chain for generations to come.]

Watch clearly the gematria of the generations the Torah mentions: לוֹ = 36; וְלִבְנוֹ = 94

וּלְבֶן בְּנוֹ = 146 Total = 286 = פְּרוּ = Be FRUITFUL [and TEACH!]

The fruits of my teaching are beautifully expressed in a letter our Flora wrote me as her Joel's Bar Mitzva approached.

6/20/99 With the help of Heaven בְּסִיָּעְתָּא דִּשְׁמַיָּא

> Daddy, The card is cute but it's not enough for what I want to say now. I wanted to thank you for working with Joel this year. I'm sure he'll always remember the time he spent with you and it will make his bar mitzva that much more special.
>
> Second, I wanted to say in words how much I appreciate all I've learned from you – the דִּקְדּוּקthe תנ"ך the גְּמָרָא the Torah reading – and most of all the love of teaching and learning.
>
> Last. I've enjoyed the time we've spent studying and talking together. Although there are still things I'll never do as well as you, I've felt, (especially recently), that we can do those things more as equals. That's a very powerful feeling for me.
>
> That's it for now. I'll wait a few years to thank you for helping Benjamin prepare for *his* Bar Mitzva!
>
> With much love,
> Flora

Her grandmother and namesake would have been proud and delighted!



בָּרוּךְ הַמְלַמֵּד תּוֹרָה לִי
וּלְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְשֶׁהֶחֱיָנוּ
וְקִיְּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לַזְּמַן הַזֶּה

Praised be God Who teaches Torah to me & His people Israel & Who has given me life, sustained me and brought me to this very happy occasion in celebration with my children and grandchildren.

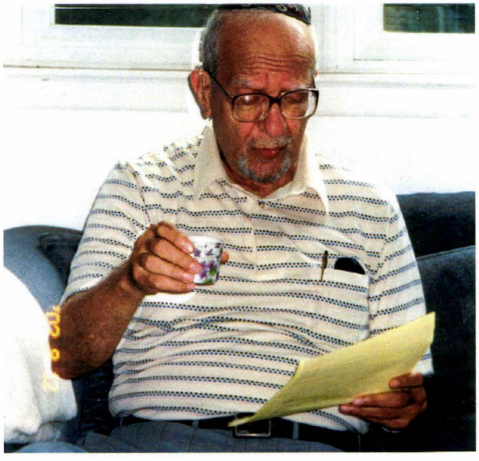


Figure 169. ENM's 75th Birthday Celebration, Cake and Kiddush.

Figure 170. Flora in Tephillin.

I presented Flora with a pair of Tephillin in August 2003. She puts them on at morning services in the school where she teaches.



Figure 171. Aaron and Joel As Bar Mitsva.

In the tradition of my grandfather, Meyer Ezra Musleah, who helped me put on Tephillin the first time in August 1940, I did the same for my grandchildren Aaron and Joel.



TEACHING & LEARNING



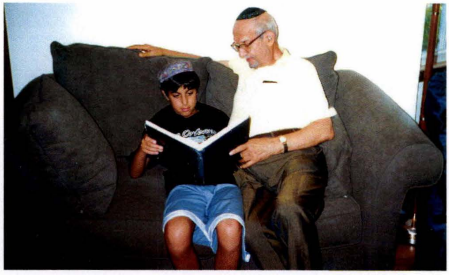


Figure 172. Benjamin's Turn Will Come.

Benjamin's turn will come, אם ירצה השם in August 2004. I am checking him out.

"Assemble the people, the men the women and the children" [Deuteronomy 31:10–12] Rashi, quoting BTHagigah 3a: "Men came to learn, women came to listen to words of Torah, and children, why did they come? For no other purpose than that a reward be given to those who brought them."

I am fortunate that I introduced our daughters to the study of, and taught them, Torah, in the spirit of the saying of Ben Azzai (JT Haggigah 1:1): "A man is obliged to teach his daughter Torah."

CHAPTER 24

OFFICIAL UNREST AND RESTLESSNESS & SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

As Rabbi, my "honeymoon" with Mikveh Israel lasted about five years. I took the downs with the ups — in stride. I thought I could tolerate all the downs, until the school building was sold in 1970. With it, the activity that kept my rabbinic soul in one piece was gone. The annual meetings of 1969 and 1970 were not called. Not all conflict is on the field of battle. The turmoils that rage in the human heart when desire struggles with conscience, when service is opposed by selfishness, are the conflicts that destroy peace of mind. I tried hard to master self to find peace, but peace was hardly to be found. Peace is a mode of living, a state of well–being, a condition of self–control, in which one contributes to the creation of desirable things. There was no peace, even though I strove to maintain an outward semblance of peace. Was this, too, in the sphere of a pioneer? Thus, I prepared and read this report at the annual meeting of 1971.

"Carlyle once said that reading a novel by Scott was like having a massage at a Turkish bath, because you enjoy the 'delights of activity' while remaining in a state of 'total idleness.' This dual affection sums up where we are today, and where we have been these past two years.

Depending whether one is on the administrative or administered side of the fence, this might be taken as praise or criticism. To those who waited for something to happen and it didn't happen, the state of the Congregation seems to be one of 'total idleness.' To those, however who had responsibilities to shoulder, these years have been full of, if you please, 'delights of activity.'

"Now let's understand the nature of the Congregation. It consists of 183 adult individuals of whom: 43 do not participate at all except to pay dues; 67 attend services on High Holydays or very rarely; 40 attend, in addition, on anniversaries and festival days; and but 33 person can be depended upon to attend regularly.

"The disposition of our membership and the absence of a center, preclude a more cohesive attitude. There is a diaspora or dispersion — members live in different parts of the greater city area, and even outside it, and many enjoy 'dual nationality,' that is, belong to other synagogues as well. Our synagogue building itself is in Galut, with all the pains and irritations of exile, and has taken the Rabbi and his family with it. I feared for the safety of myself and my family. One day last April, I was mugged on my way to the synagogue, pushed into a car at knife–point, and released only upon identifying myself as a 'priest.' My daughter Flora was relieved of her purse as she went up the subway steps near our house. And just as the matriarch Rachel wept for her children, the matriarchs of the Congregation cried over the predominantly female Musleah brood, and prayed that all would be well. Our beautiful Sukka had to have a police guard around the clock.

"Now for some of my other 'delights of activity.' First and foremost, preparing remarks to be delivered from the pulpit every Shabbat and holydays — these are listened to by some with understanding and appreciation; by others, with varying degrees of patience; and still others, with explicit impatience. This is not unique by any means. But when there are only 33 persons attending in different degrees of regularity, the worthwhileness of the lectern may well be questioned.

Figure 170. Flora in Tephillin.

I presented Flora with a pair of Tephillin in August 2003. She puts them on at morning services in the school where she teaches.



Figure 171. Aaron and Joel As Bar Mitsva.

In the tradition of my grandfather, Meyer Ezra Musleah, who helped me put on Tephillin the first time in August 1940, I did the same for my grandchildren Aaron and Joel.



TEACHING & LEARNING



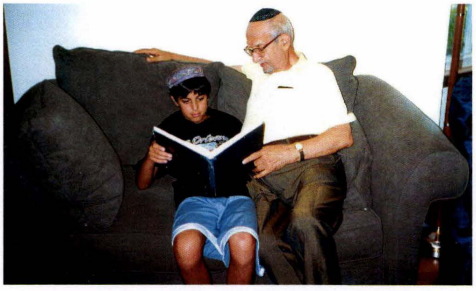


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I am fortunate that I introduced our daughters to the study of, and taught them, Torah, in the spirit of the saying of Ben Azzai (JT Haggigah 1:1): "A man is obliged to teach his daughter Torah."



Figure 173. Eliyahu Lighting Great-Grandfather's Hanukkiah.

Eliyahu lights the Hanukkia of his great-great grandfather, Meyer Ezra Musleah, in red glasses that belonged to still one more generation, Eliyahu/Yosf Musleah.



Figure 174. Learning to Make Kakas.

Aliza's children, Eliyahu, Penina and Miriam being trained to make kakas in our dining room in Philadelphia. 1998.

Figure 175. Rahel's Portrait of a "Hakham".
Rahel's portrait of a hakham. Could it be a likeness of her Baghdad forbears?





Figure 176. Rahel.

Figure 177. ENM Awarded Certificate.
Awarded a certificate for fifty years of service in the rabbinate at a Rabbinical Assembly convention on February 13, 2002.

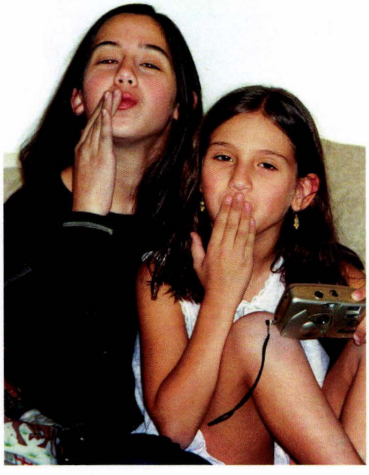


Figure 178. Rahel's Daughters Shira and Shoshana.



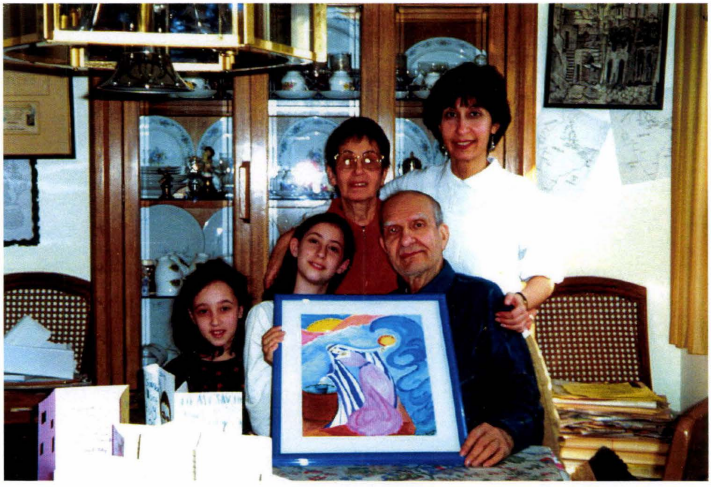


Figure 179. Aliza's Painting of the Prophetess Miriam.

To celebrate a special birthday, Aliza presented her mother with her own painting of the biblical Miriam, reputed for the prophetess's leadership of women at the crossing of the Sea of Reeds, and of the well that supplied the Israelites drinking water in the desert. Margaret's Hebrew name is Miriam. Also seen are Aliza's daughters, Miriam and Penina.



Figure 180. Helping to Make Halek.

Aliza's children helping their grandparents to squeeze dates for halek in an hydraulic machine set up in the kitchen.

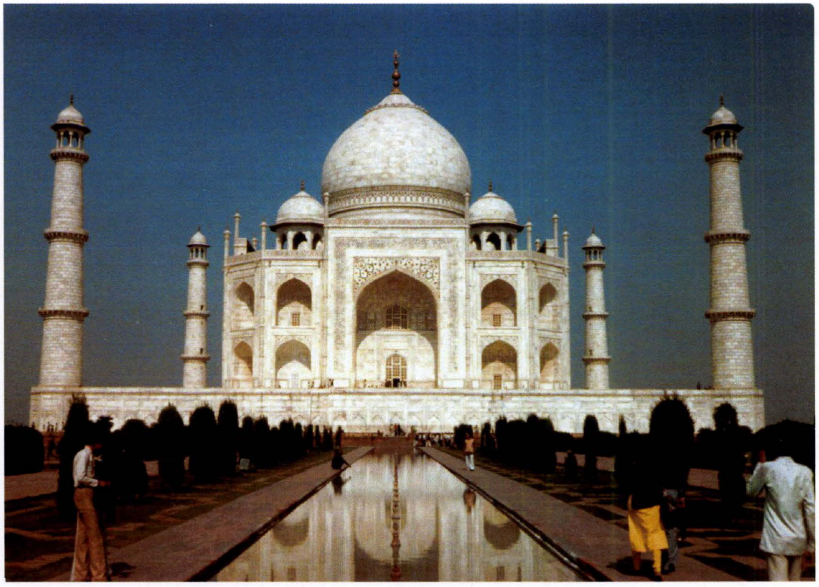
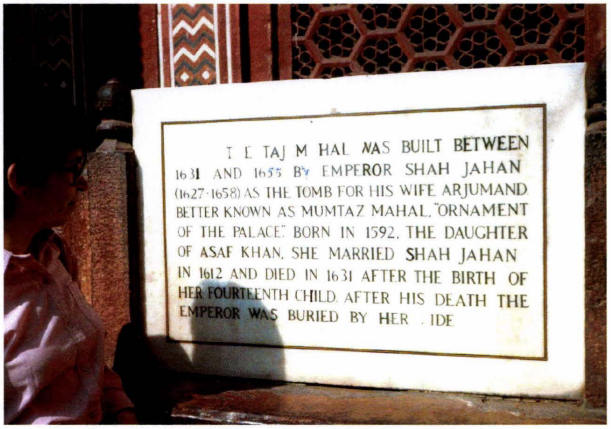


Figure 181. Taj Mahal, 1985.

We visited the gorgeous Taj Mahal in 1985 and again in 1997 — a breath–taking and stupefying experience. We reproduce the inscription:

The Taj Mahal was built between 1631 & 1655 by Emperor Shah Jahan (1627-1658) as the tomb for his wife Arjumand, better known as Mumtaz Mahal, "Ornament of the Palace:" Born in 1592, daughter of Asaf Khan, she married Shah Jahan in 1612 & died in 1631 after the birth of her fourteenth child. The Emperor lies buried by her side.





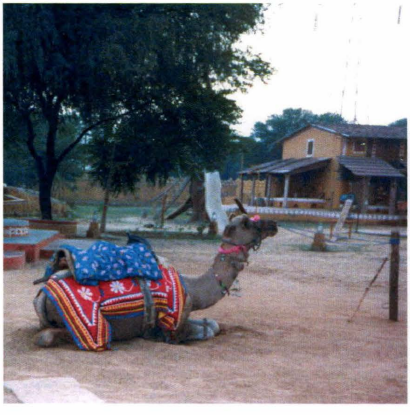




Figure 182. Elephant and Camel Rides in Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.

India, where leisurely transportation is by elephants or camels. It's not how slow but how elegant the ride is. Not far away is a much faster vehicle. Jaipur, Rajastan, 1997.

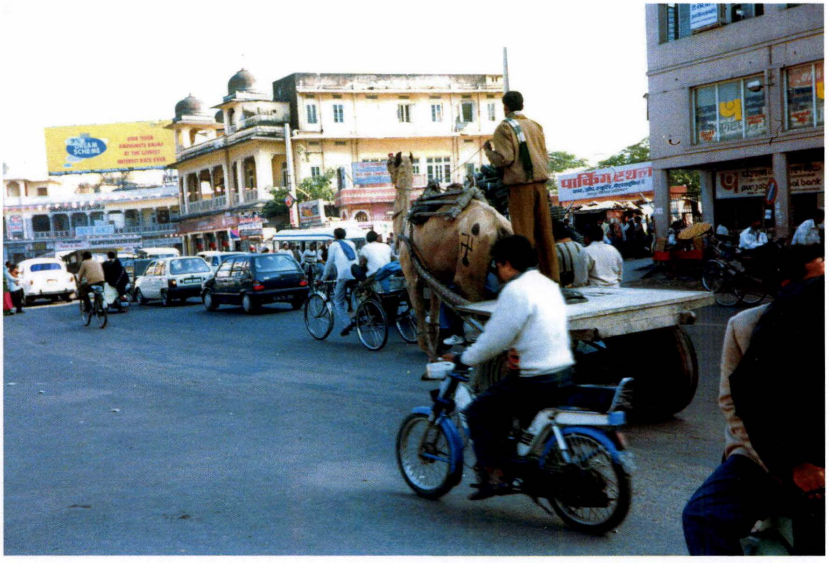


Figure 183. Camel and Vehicular Traffic Compete.

Camel and vehicular traffic compete in Jaipur, Rajasthan.



Figure 184. Jaipur Dancer Deftly Balancing Bowls.

Cumbered Jaipuri dancer deftly balancing bowls to musical accompaniment.



Figure 185. Sunrise from Tiger Hill in the Himalayas.

A spectacular view of sunrise from the world-famed Tiger Hill, a short distance from Darjeeling in the Himalayas.

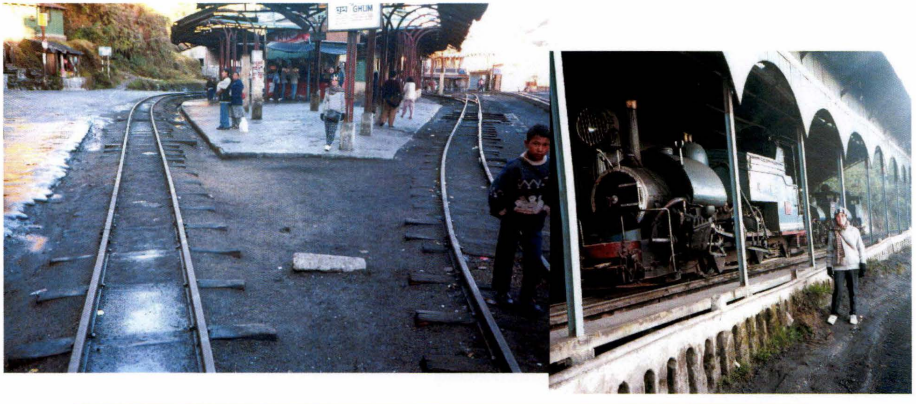


Figure 186. Ghum, One of the Highest Railroad Terminals in the Himalayas.

Ghum, one of the highest railroad terminals in the Himalayas. Margaret, standing alongside a "toy" locomotive and at the narrow-gauge station.



Figure 187. Aunt Ramah's 90th Birthday Celebration.
Posing with Margaret and a nurse.
(Below) Prayers before the party. David Nahoum at her side.

CHAPTER 24

OFFICIAL UNREST AND RESTLESSNESS & SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

As Rabbi, my "honeymoon" with Mikveh Israel lasted about five years. I took the downs with the ups — in stride. I thought I could tolerate all the downs, until the school building was sold in 1970. With it, the activity that kept my rabbinic soul in one piece was gone. The annual meetings of 1969 and 1970 were not called. Not all conflict is on the field of battle. The turmoils that rage in the human heart when desire struggles with conscience, when service is opposed by selfishness, are the conflicts that destroy peace of mind. I tried hard to master self to find peace, but peace was hardly to be found. Peace is a mode of living, a state of well–being, a condition of self–control, in which one contributes to the creation of desirable things. There was no peace, even though I strove to maintain an outward semblance of peace. Was this, too, in the sphere of a pioneer? Thus, I prepared and read this report at the annual meeting of 1971.

"Carlyle once said that reading a novel by Scott was like having a massage at a Turkish bath, because you enjoy the 'delights of activity' while remaining in a state of 'total idleness.' This dual affection sums up where we are today, and where we have been these past two years.

Depending whether one is on the administrative or administered side of the fence, this might be taken as praise or criticism. To those who waited for something to happen and it didn't happen, the state of the Congregation seems to be one of 'total idleness.' To those, however who had responsibilities to shoulder, these years have been full of, if you please, 'delights of activity.'

"Now let's understand the nature of the Congregation. It consists of 183 adult individuals of whom: 43 do not participate at all except to pay dues; 67 attend services on High Holydays or very rarely; 40 attend, in addition, on anniversaries and festival days; and but 33 person can be depended upon to attend regularly.

"The disposition of our membership and the absence of a center, preclude a more cohesive attitude. There is a diaspora or dispersion — members live in different parts of the greater city area, and even outside it, and many enjoy 'dual nationality,' that is, belong to other synagogues as well. Our synagogue building itself is in Galut, with all the pains and irritations of exile, and has taken the Rabbi and his family with it. I feared for the safety of myself and my family. One day last April, I was mugged on my way to the synagogue, pushed into a car at knife–point, and released only upon identifying myself as a 'priest.' My daughter Flora was relieved of her purse as she went up the subway steps near our house. And just as the matriarch Rachel wept for her children, the matriarchs of the Congregation cried over the predominantly female Musleah brood, and prayed that all would be well. Our beautiful Sukka had to have a police guard around the clock.

"Now for some of my other 'delights of activity.' First and foremost, preparing remarks to be delivered from the pulpit every Shabbat and holydays — these are listened to by some with understanding and appreciation; by others, with varying degrees of patience; and still others, with explicit impatience. This is not unique by any means. But when there are only 33 persons attending in different degrees of regularity, the worthwhileness of the lectern may well be questioned.

"I have always been a firm believer in lay participation at services. The children's activity in this regard has been widely acclaimed, and preparing them over the years in leading smaller parts of the service enables them to take more impressive roles at their Bar Mitsva. Some adult men have infrequently conducted portions of the Shabbat service.

"The Tisha B'Av evening service has been somewhat modified in honor of the unification of Jerusalem, which I consider to be the greatest event in our religious calendar since the redaction of the Oral Law, or in almost 1700 years. Yes, it is religiously an even greater event than the establishment of the State of Israel. To mark the triumph of the Holy City, I have restored the Ner Tamid (Eternal Light), absent from pre–1967 services, and restored normal drapery to supersede the black coverings. Following the completion of the evening service, the dim Tebah lights are turned on and mention is made of the number of years since the freedom of Jerusalem to supplement an earlier reference in the service to the number of years since the destruction of Jerusalem.

I am on furlough from the directorship of the school — our school has been closed since the building was sold — but I have confidence in the name of the Congregation and hope for the Redeemer to come speedily to Israel. Till he comes, though he may tarry, my labors in preparing our youngsters for children's services and Bar Mitsva have been compounded.

"I plan the monthly bulletin, and like all Congregational bulletins, it is amateurish. But what can be done when the professionals are dormant?

"To visiting groups, I explain our history and ideals, and show them our artifacts and rare objects. It is then that they ask: 'Rabbi, where are *you* from …'

I have been long enough with Mikveh Israel to know that it is not only a Congregation, it is a way of life with a difference.

"With all other Congregations, one can go by the book and have a reasonable hope of learning their ways; but with Mikveh Israel, unless you have lived it, you will get nowhere.

"Other Congregations dip into outside ideas all the time; Mikveh Israel dips only occasionally, though the flavor remains the same.

"With other Congregations, there are hosts of closely allied types to draw inspiration from; Mikveh Israel stands alone in Congregational lists.

"Finally, as in the Haggada, others sit upright and proceed according to the rules; our blue–blooded relaxation makes us lean.

"You are soon to have an election and choose a president and other members of the Board. But much will depend on what *you* do to ease their burdens. Listen to this illustration: 'A young girl, applying to an exclusive women's college, received a personality questionnaire to fill out. One of the questions was: 'Are you a leader or a follower?' After some hesitation, she decided to tell the truth even if it cost her the

admission. 'In my judgment,' she wrote, 'I am a follower. She received a prompt reply from the office of admissions congratulating her on her acceptance. The letter went on to say: 'We are especially happy to have you, since in next years class we will have 400 students — 399 leaders and one follower.'

"This story points up, in a humorous way, our tendency to overvalue leadership when we should be equally concerned with *followship*. Followship is the ability to do *your* duty while the leader does his. The administration, I am sure, will continue to enjoy the 'delights of activity;' but whether or not we will continue to be like a Turkish bath massage and remain in a 'state of idleness,' will depend on how much of your duty you have done and how much you have followed the leader."

On another occasion, amid other comments, I made these remarks:

"To me; it was never strange that a Jew in Jerusalem should say: 'Next year in Jerusalem,' because even in Jerusalem, on the contrary, especially in Jerusalem, where one senses holiness most closely, one can feel the sense of exile in the spiritual sense much more poignantly than anywhere else. This is the sense we have acquired — an awareness that we are exiles in our own synagogue, because this is a state in which we do not want to feel that we are perfectly adjusted. We don't want to be adjusted in a synagogue where the school is five miles away, where there is the loosest association among its members, where the facilities for cultural and spiritual advancement are less than minimal. We have only to pass the Mall neighborhood, our Jerusalem in Philadelphia, and the contrast what is and what ought to be smacks home and we say nostalgically, 'Perhaps next year!'

"The burden of responsibility till that time arrives is to hold together ... and assist tide over the Galut of the already distended interim period. You will recall how the Bible tells that when Nehemiah returned to the small and struggling settlement in Jerusalem, he found it beset by countless problems within and untold perils without. Even the safeguard of the city wall to guard the inhabitants against attack was lacking. With characteristic sagacity, Nehemiah decided to repair this lack. He recommended the relatively simple expedient of having each householder build that section of the wall in front of his house. Let us follow in their footsteps!"

Upon the conclusion of Bicentennial activities and the synagogue moved, a sizable minority of the Congregation, worked up by a small, but influential, opposition group, was determined to have me sever my relations with Mikveh Israel. At the annual meeting in the Fall of 1976, a member of that group asked another: "When are you going to go after him?" And after me they went.

Two of their inimical tactics will be sufficient exhibition. There were strong grounds to suspect that President Gerald Ford's letter, intended for inclusion in the dedication booklet, was intercepted and suppressed. Postal dates confirm this suspicion. The letter bore the postal mark of Tuesday August 31, 1976. On Thursday, I made anxious inquiries at the Museum office, and then at the post office, to no avail. I frantically called the White House and was assured that the letter signed by the President was sent out, and that its mail is not usually lost or delayed.

Friday, I repeated the merry–go–round, again in vain. I then called David Lissy's secretary and arranged for a copy to be sent by registered mail to my home address. It arrived on Saturday. On Sunday I made a special arrangement with Bricklin Press [the printers] to have the letter processed. The following Sunday was the dedication.

Meanwhile, [the official] was making tender inquiries as to what I would do should the letter not arrive. Told that I was expecting a copy, she handed over the original when a second copy arrived at the synagogue on Tuesday after Labor Day. Meanwhile, the copy that arrived at my home address was already in print.

At the annual meeting in May 1977, when my election was voted upon and my defeat announced by two or three votes, I raked the thrash can and found **five discarded votes of members who were present and voted for me!** I showed them to my lawyer who, graciously for the election organizers, would not pursue the matter further. And two older ladies whose votes went against me called to assure me that **they had not voted!**

My comments: So long as we live in a world of people who do not accept a single law of conduct, a single standard of ethics, we shall have to face the problem of differences of opinion and disagreements. So long as we mingle socially and in our communities with people whose views and standards of living are not identical with ours, we shall be confronted with a choice between being different in some respects, or sacrificing our own standards and beliefs for the sake of not being different.

Some people uphold their ideals and cherish their convictions with admirable courage and loyalty. Others, who many times theoretically believe in the same standards and principles, abandon them on occasion for fear of courting the disapproval of the unthinking crowd. But when such considerations cause us to waver, we should remember that to uphold an ideal is a social achievement of the highest order. The most enviable grace, the most admirable poise, and the most lovable ease of manner, belong to those who, with sincere dignity and tolerant conviction, are true to their ideals on all occasions.

The kind of popularity that depends for its existence upon the sacrificing of ideals and principles never was and never will be worth the price that anyone ever paid for it. No one who sacrifices his or her own convictions for the superficial good opinion of others can ever hope to enjoy permanent respect or esteem. Much rather should we seek after acceptance among those people to whom the maintenance of a worthy ideal is a recommendation of the highest order.

Here is the story of a man whose dedication to the highest ideals of humankind and yiddishkeit made me proud to be associated with him. One of the last acts of mine as Rabbi of Mikveh Israel was to dedicate the summer issue of The Mikveh Israel Record to Sidney Lerner, the Shamas of many years who died in May 1978.

TRUE CHARACTER

"A great many honors are bestowed by men upon their fellow men in recognition of various accomplishments. We have earned and honorary scholastic degrees. We have honors and awards for achievements in science and literature and the arts; recognitions for contributions to that elusive peace which the world has not yet found; we have the honors and titles bestowed by social, civic and religious organizations. Some of these honors which are bestowed are partisan and prompted by causes other than merit. Some of them are sincerely earned and deeply deserved. Others are the creations of enterprising publicity agents. Many are helped on their way by endowments, funds and gifts of money.

"While it is a generous and commendable thing for men and organizations to recognize by formal designation the merits of their contemporaries, these honors mean nothing more than the integrity and judgment and motives of those who bestow them and those who receive them. In an absolute sense, however, there is no hallmark of character except as a man demonstrates his metal by good works of a lifetime.

"What recognition can be given to Sidney Lerner, who moved about us from day to day, from week to week, carrying hidden within his heart a load of cares, while giving his best to Congregation and community? We recall a poem by Hayyim Nahman Bialik, as if to describe Sidney's life.

When you find the scroll of my heart covered with dust,
Thus you shall say: Here was a man of integrity,
    a simple man, tired and weak.
Thus did the man live in his simplicity, withdrawn unto himself.
He accepted in silence, without excitement or dejection,
    that which came by itself.
The man went about his work sincerely, his ways he did not pervert.
He did not run away from the trivial, neither did he see prominence.
But if the extraordinary did happen, uninvited,
The man stood and looked stunned, expressed his gratitude,
    and went on his way.
The man had a small attic, which had a small window;
To him it was precious, but an angel would not know it,
    nor would Satan look enviously at it.
The man had a prayer, and when in distress he would go up there
    and pray in silence,
And the prayer was as long as the length of his life,
    but God did not look at it with favor:
What he did not want he got, and the one thing he wanted he did not find.
But the man, until his last day, did not despair of God's mercy,
He hoped fervently and prayed with all his heart.
He prayed — and died in the midst of his prayer.

"As a strong, industrious lad out of college, or in his stint in the army during World War II, or in his performance as Shamas of Mikveh Israel, Sidney was the same sincere, hardworking and devoted man.

"A man of integrity, he was honest in the business of vending books and periodicals. He went about his work wholeheartedly, with a high quality of character.

"He never shied away from the trivial — which the job of Shamas sometimes entails. He took many an undeserved rap with the same dignity as when someone praised him for a job well done.

"He was so busy going about his normal routine, he did not realize how many friends he had made. We doubt if he received a formal award. One about which he assuredly never knew was written a day after he was buried. Unaware of his death, the American Institute of Architects sent him the following letter:

'Dear Sidney, The Philadelphia Chapter, AIA, its Board of directors and staff are pleased to inform you that you have been nominated to receive a special award for service to the profession to be presented to you at the AIA Annual Award Presentation to be held on the evening of May 15, 1978, 6:00 p.m. ...

'Your many years of devoted service provided to the members ... in bringing many needed books and periodicals to our attention both as students and practitioners have not been forgotten. In recognition of this cheerful and dedicated service, the Chapter would like to acknowledge you publicly.

'Personally, I am delighted to be able to inform you of this decision. Every time I look at the shelves in my library, I can recall the wonderful moments spent not only discussing the books with you, but architecture, people, and architects as well. I know I share this feeling with many of my colleagues who have known you.

'I will be in touch with you personally and to see if you will be attending our presentation.'

"If Sidney would have read this, he would probably have been stunned but pleased, said his sincere 'thank you,' and gone on his way.

"He derived great satisfaction from observing Judaism. His piety led him to pay out of his pocket for the Eternal Light that burned at the synagogue. In a sense, it is his memorial.

Our Tradition tells us: 'The power of the holy Hechal is such that he who upholds it is upheld by it.' Sidney was rewarded by his devoted service to the synagogue by being in turn supported by it. The religious artifacts were sacred to him, more sacred, perhaps, than his own possessions. It was a lesson in dedication to watch him lock the doors of the synagogue at Broad and York Streets, or secure the Hechal doors in the new synagogue.

"Sidney's tenure as Shamas began before the High Holy Days in 1947 on a salary of $60 a month. He had returned from army duty and was already a member of the Congregation. The Board offered to include honorary membership in his contract, but he would have no indulgence. He served thirty years, longer than any previous Shamas. Deeply sensitive about the needs of the new building, he bequeathed to the synagogue $1,000 to be applied to the Building Fund.

"Sidney inherited a house from his parents ... There he was born, and lived with his parents and cared for his father after his mother passed on. What he did not want he got — he dreaded his solitude after his father had gone. And that which he wanted — peace of mind — he did not find, because he was concerned for his neighborhood and his own failing health. But the man till his last day did not despair of God's mercy. He died in harness. He was returning home from synagogue after having prepared the Sepher for the next day's reading. Having been stricken earlier, he had hoped fervently and prayed with all his heart that he would be allowed to continue a normal life. He prayed — and died in the midst of his prayer.

"Here was one individual who honored himself by honoring others and living an honorable life."

THE LAST, MOST DISTINCTIVE, BAR MITZVA — BY LONG DISTANCE.

The business of being a parent is not merely a biological process. It is constituted by lifelong acts of sacrifice, patience, painstaking love, and sound teaching both by precept and example. The traits of character which early become evident in a child are persistent, and if we want to make a noble and useful man, we must begin by making a noble and useful boy. What follows is the story of the Weisman family is charming as it is inspiring.

Bar Mitzvas are always Simhoth (specially happy occasions), but the Shabbath marking the religious majority of Aaron Weisman had aspects, which made it unique in many ways — something to remember.

One starting point lies in distances involved. Aaron lived in Pawtuckett, Rhode Island with his brother and sister and parents, Dr. Barrie and Annette Weisman, members of Mikveh Israel. And most of his study and preparation with me took place via tape recordings and courtesy of long distance lines.

So was a large and challenging assignment young Aaron took on eighteen months before. It was then that his parents had come to Philadelphia to visit Dr. Weisman's father, hospitalized with what was to be his last illness. The Weismans came to services, met with me, and decided thereafter that Mikveh Israel was the only place for that upcoming Bar Mitzva.

Their new membership signaled the fourth generation of their family to be imbued with the special traditions of the synagogue. The association began in 1890 when Sarah and Robert Veil were married by Dr. Sabato Morais at the Seventh and Arch Streets synagogue. Three children, born of that marriage, were present at the synagogue. Herbert Veil and his wife Dorothy had an unbroken span of membership in Mikveh Israel. We were privileged also to have had with us the oldest living member of the family in direct line — Julia Veil Sperling, Aaron's great–grandmother, whose son, Stanley Sperling also was Bar Mitzva at the synagogue.

Aaron's work was cut out for him. I tape–recorded what he would be asked to read, including the morning's Parasha in its entirety, the Haftara and the Musaph service. The Weismans arranged for periodic visits with me when Aaron reviewed his progress.

Besides learning the texts, Aaron had to familiarize himself with tunes and musical modes strange to him. Aaron's day–school education and fully observant family life helped him greatly in his preparation, but his own determination and ability, coupled with the devotion and support of his family, helped please and gratify a very large number of friends, relatives and synagogue members who happily gathered on the morning of June 17, Shabbath Naso, when Aaron proudly ascended the Tebah and chanted the long portions he was well–prepared for.

His parents' sacrifice, patience, painstaking love and sound teaching both by precept and example, proved amply rewarding. I was privileged to have been a small instrument.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE – MY STRENGTH יְחִזְקֵאל ***AND MY MIRACULOUS DELIVERANCE*** נִסִּים

I have ever poured out my heart in prayer for sustenance and deliverance; my needs have been provided by an Unseen Hand. God lives; He hears and answers prayer. As hazards multiplied, and as I found myself beyond the help of any human power, I fell into the Strong Hands of Divine Providence. There came to mind these words from Hamlet: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy." I had come to bear witness of the intervention of God in my behalf, when none but Providence could have saved me.

I hardly ever would attend meetings of the local chapter of the Rabbinical Assembly, the body of Philadelphia Conservative Rabbis. I felt I was prompted by Providence to attend a meeting in the Fall of 1978, which was to discuss a vacancy in the chairmanship of the Beth Din in charge of religious divorces. It was a fully–attended meeting and I was among those who stood outside the room, and when the chairman asked for volunteers for the job, mine was the only hand that went up. I was, of course, fully trained at the Seminary to execute the office of Mesadder Gittin (Coordinator of Religious Divorce), a paying job. My credentials were checked out with a former registrar of the Rabbinical School, and I was appointed. Later, I began writing those documents. I still hold that position. In addition, I began reading the Parasha in synagogue, which I still do.

I vowed never again to seek the rabbinical position of a congregation. In support of that pledge, I read a brilliant article by a distinguished colleague, Rabbi Howard Singer, that appeared in the 1976 Spring–Summer issue of The United Synagogue Review, which encapsulate my sentiments.

> "The session had been a long one and the last case of the day was called. Metatron, the presiding angel, sounded his judge's gavel and the clerk read the bill of particulars. The prosecuting angel rose and began to declaim.
>
> "This defendant," he said, "is one for whom I have no sympathy whatever. His parents brought him up in a tradition of learning, of respect for duty. He had superb teachers and other advantages. But what happened? He had the poor judgment of becoming a rabbi — no less of that species known on earth as Conservative. A rabbi is supposed to inspire his Congregation, but when he was called from life, his Congregation was no different from what it was when he first arrived. There is only one place for him, therefore, and it's not up here with us."

Metatron sighed, leaned forward, beckoned to the defendant. The freshly deceased rabbi approached the bench.

"Well, what do you have to say for yourself?"

The defendant shrugged and hung his head.

"I see. You plead guilty. Of course you must have some explanation?"

"I have only my bewilderment," the dejected one said. "One minute I was a young man, eager to do great things for the faith and the people; the next minute I was middle–aged and dismayed. When I tried to teach the authentic tradition, they said I was insufficiently modern and irrelevant. When I tied to be relevant, they said I was too political and controversial. When I was serious, they said a light touch is needed in the pulpit these days. When I was humorous, they said a rabbi should be staid and dignified to retain a congregation's respect. When I spent time with my books, they said I was a recluse. When I became active in organizations, they said a rabbi should be scholarly and spend time in his study. When I became friendly with active members, they said I was cliquish. When I sought out the more aloof, they said I was neglecting the real workers. When I concerned myself only with religious matters, they said I was narrow; when I revealed that I had other interests, they said I was probably neglecting the synagogue. When I tried to encourage parents to take their children's religious education seriously by practising the traditions in the home, they said I was interfering with the orderly patterns of their lives. When I left them alone, they said I didn't care about their children's education. When I attended their social gatherings, they said I inhibited them. When I declined invitations, they said I was a snob. When I tried to be folksy, they insisted a rabbi belongs on a pedestal. When I mounted the pedestal, they said they wanted their rabbi to be one of the boys. When I was sincere, they said I was taking myself too seriously. When I was casual, they said I was flippant. When I was frank, they called me tactless. When I contented myself with hints, they said I lacked courage and evaded the issues."

"It's all their fault — is that your excuse?" said the prosecuting angel.

"I didn't say that. I have no defense. I'm just trying to explain. A wiser man might have achieved more."

"We are measuring your sincerity," said the prosecutor, "not your wisdom."

"Oh. I tried, although I may have given up toward the end ... I got to the point where I couldn't take my congregation seriously any more. Oh, I liked most of them as individuals, and some I loved deeply. But I secretly gave up thinking I could affect their religious development. I sensed that most people really wanted a small and measured faith for limited purposes, something polite and suitable for genteel family celebrations. They wanted me to be the low, careful flame under a pan of popcorn. Did I ever have it in me to be a signal fire on a mountaintop? Probably not! But even if I had, I knew it would have bewildered and antagonized them. Besides, I was mortally afraid of appearing too earnest, too unsophisticated, and hence, ridiculous. I was afraid of being called a humorless fanatic. And so I gave them what the situation seemed to require. I learned to think of it as a profession, a job. I soon achieved a craftsman's competence, while losing the prophet's passion. Therefore, I failed as a genuine religious leader. I plead guilty. But I tried."

"Did you really?" said the prosecutor. "Did you ever pour out your heart to them simply and directly and without affectation? Even once? The truth now."

"The truth," said the defendant slowly. "At least once, yes. I remember it distinctly. It was on the high holidays, long ago. There was a certain glowing moment. It began in an ordinary way but somehow, as I proceeded, I forgot myself, my ego, my growing cynicism, and my petty complaints, and I spoke to them of the glory and terror of being a Jew. I had planned my sermon carefully, but as I spoke, I found in myself an eloquence I didn't know I had, and that never again returned. There was a hush. I was inspired. I felt uplifted. For that moment, at least, I felt I was the heir of Moses and Akiba and Hillel and Isaiah and Amos. My moment of glory! But a member of the congregation ended it for me. A good, fine, devoted man he was too."

"How?"

"He came up to me after the services and spoke to me. 'Rabbi,' he said, 'I have to tell you something about your sermon.' His voice trembled. I thought it trembled with the depth of the religious emotion I had kindled in him and I thanked God for letting me be, at least once in my life, His channel to one of my fellow creatures. 'Rabbi,' he said then, 'I timed you. You were seven minutes longer than usual.'"

Metatron sighed. The prosecutor opened his mouth, closed it, walked to the prosecutor's table and sat down.

"I was a failure," the defendant said, "and I plead guilty. So pronounce the sentence and send me to the other place. I suppose I'll get used to it and at least it will be a change."

"A change?" said Metatron. "But that's the one thing it won't be. Where do you think you've been for the last thirty years?"

And finally, my definitions of two basic values that had guided me through life! I had ever been impressed with the overruling fact that every person in his or her own way seeks **happiness**. It is proper that life should be a quest for happiness.

Difficulties begin with the distorted ideas people have concerning happiness. Some wrongly suppose that domination of others will bring them happiness. My experience tells me that such domination does not last. Some seek happiness in the realm of material things, only to find that their accumulations in and of themselves do not bring what it was hoped they would. Some mistake a passing thrill for happiness, and pay a great price for it. Now since the search for happiness is properly the business of life, perhaps we should remind ourselves of some of the basic elements of happiness.

First, genuine happiness never consists of things that give distorted pleasure to one and cause another misery. It must be made up of ingredients of which all good men and women may be partners. Another element of absolute happiness is timelessness. It must endure beyond the present moment. It must not be something that gives indulgence today and a headache tomorrow. And happiness must be of such nature that it may be increased by the sharing of it. In short, happiness is that much pursued state of being which is made up of things, which are for the everlasting good of as many persons as can avail of it.

NO SHORT CUTS TO FAR HORIZONS
PIONEERING PATHS FROM JEWISH INDIA

And now, as אִישׁ מַצְלִיחַ, the notion of **success**! Here too there is a prevalent disposition to state success in terms of material acquisition or public acclaim. It is as though success had become a synonym for wealth or position or association with people of influence. Whether a person is successful depends upon whether or not he has obtained the objective he set out to achieve. If a man's intended purpose in life is to rear a useful and respected family, to tread the path of a pioneer, to make a plant grow where none has grown before, to render a service where no service has been given, to build a teaching unit where teachers are scarce, to display acts of generosity where they are most needed, — in the doing of these things he finds success no matter what his financial rating or his publicity value. My lesson of a pioneer has been to learn to hold principle above convenience, and truth above popular favor; learn to know that there are no short cuts to far horizons, no bargains where fundamentals are concerned. There are some things that are worth any price you have to pay for them, things without which life would be intolerable. In an absolute sense, there is no success except for those who travel the course that leads toward those eternal values among which are numbered peace, happiness, the honest respect of people, the approbation of God and the sense of having lived life well in His service.

> This life has been the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our sight.
> These are the paths that the Lord had made — let us exult and rejoice in them.
>
> [From Psalms 118:23–24]



Figure 188. Cochin Synagogue, Built 1568.

The Cochini synagogue in Mattancheri, Kerala, India, built in 1568.

The 1100 hand-painted tiles of willow pattern were imported from Canton, China, and laid in 1762. No two are alike.

We visited in 1997.

A second picture appears on the following page.



Figure 189. Another View of Cochin.



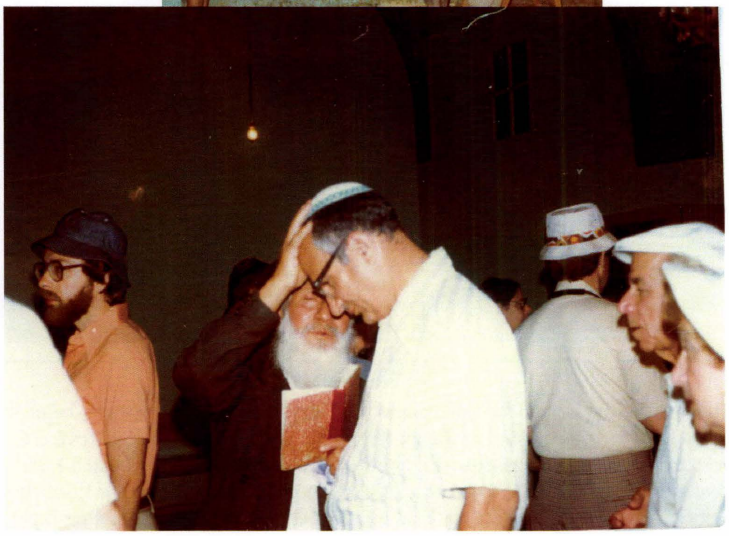


Figure 190. ENM Being Blessed at the Tomb of Yaakov Avinu.

Tomb of Yaakov Avinu at the Cave of Machpela. Margaret peeking through closed doors.

The caretaker extending Jacob's blessing to me. We visited in August 1978.



Figure 191. At the Kotel.

My thoughts at the Kotel, fittingly inserted at the conclusion of my work, begin with the words of Koheleth: "The sum of the matter, when all is said and done: Revere God and observe His commandments! For this applies to all humankind." To which I add: There is no loneliness so great as the loneliness of one who cannot call upon the Lord. We may surround ourselves with all the material things that life has to offer, & a circle of congenial friends and the warm kinship of family life. But one who, in time of need, cannot pray with confidence that he/she is being heard, is most lonely in the world where there is much loneliness. "Happy are those who dwell in Your house; they forever praise You." [Psalms 84: 5]. "Happy the people who have it so; happy the people whose God is the Lord." [144:15].

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