



Finding Home #30 18" x 24" Gouache and 22K gold leaf on paper 1999

**Siona Benjamin** (Painting Title: Eliyahu hanavi)

[www.artsiona.com](http://www.artsiona.com), [www.BlueLikeMe.com](http://www.BlueLikeMe.com)

US - Nehru Fulbright India scholar 2011, Fulbright Israel scholar 2017

Shaniwar Teli e-newsletter Jan.2021 issue 1



From the City of Ashdod, Israel

## SHANIWAR TELI e-Newsletter

[shaniwarteli@gmail.com](mailto:shaniwarteli@gmail.com)

(English Marathi & Hebrew)

### Jan. 2021

Vol: 5

*Binding all Bene-Israel Community  
Worldwide*

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/wbwo.daniels.1/>

# Contains

Collections of many short articles related to Bene-Israel community and Judaism

- 4-Letters
- 5-Writing articles and giving speeches on Bene-Israel
- 9 -Origin of Malida ceremony
- 11- Research shows Prophet Elijah lived with Bene-Israel ancestors?
- 12- Life After 50
- 13-Five things to know about COVID Vaccine.
- 16- Why will you wear masks after taking COVID Vaccine?
- 17- Bene- Israel 'Living Legend'
- 19-Bene-Israel have already reached planet Venus!
- 20-Angelica's Corner a BI from Australia
- 22-Hitler's confusion.
- 23-Thirteen principles of Jewish Faith
- 24-Did Mid-Age Hindus Observed Shaath?
- 24-The Kabbalah of Brit-Milah
- 25- Getting fired at age 50+
- 26-The future of Israel's economy (with COVID)
- 30- Leora's Corner
- 31-Why do we celebrate New Year in Fall instead of Spring as in Bible
- 33- Ben-Gurion: Prayer is self- deception?
- 36-There is no God!
- 37-Prove you are a Bene-Israel?
- 38- BI living in Australia 30+ years; experiences.
- 40- Population of Australia by percentage.
- 41-Thriving Bene-Israel WhatsApp Chat groups.
- 45-New laws being drafted for future WhatsApp's groups
- 46- Pictures of value
- 47- New Born / New Mother Bai massage; is it useful?
- 50-"Finding Home" Bene-Israel written Book & its review.
- 52-World Cycle and its end/restart?
- 53-Dr. Ambedkar and the Jewish people (Must Read)
- 57-To be an Acoustical Engineering; how, why?
- 58- CHILDREN: Yonah and the Fish.
- 59-Evolution of Ritualistic in Synagogue & Home
- 60-Understanding Kashrut Certificate Paradox!
- 64-What did BI do from 12th to 20th centuries?
- 65-Gross Idolatry

Chief Editor:

Dr. Shulmith Solomon (Charikar) Ph.D, DHE

Idea & Creator:

Elijah (Leo) Daniels (Walwatkar) B.Sc. M.B.A

Consultant for Heritage & Bene-Israel History:

Dr. Nissim Moses (Talkar) B.Sc. Eng. Exprt on BI History

Manager - Canada:

Mr. Abraham Samson (Mapgaonkar) (B.Tech., (IIT) M.M.S (Operations)

Manager - Australia:

Mr. Solomon Erulkar (Handasi B.Tech)

Manager - New Zealand:

Mr. Yoel Reuben Samson (Killekar) MPA

Manager - Raigad District:

Mr. Herzl Levy Bhonkar (Adv)

Manager - Pune:

Dr. Reuben Daniel (Pezarkar) Ph.D

COVER:

In her "Finding Home" series, Siona raises questions about what and where "home" is, while addressing issues such as identity, immigration, motherhood, and the role of art in social change. With her transcultural background, the desire to "find home," spiritually and literally, has been a persistent theme. Her feeling of being unable to establish deep roots anywhere unnerves her yet also pulls her toward a seductive spiritual borderland. [www.artsiona.com](http://www.artsiona.com)



**65-Gross Idolatry**

**71- BI Pilgrimage landmarks in Raigad.**

**73-ADJC director in India retires after 28 years; Elijah Jacob's farewell letter and achievements.**

**78- Jewish prays for protection from the "Evil Eye"**

**79-943 Brit's in 50 years in India.**

**78-Israeli Green Salads**

**80-Chabad Jewish Philosophy is different than Jewish Philosophy (Must Read)**

**84-Beme-Israel landmarks to visit Raigad.**

**85-Bene-Israel lived 2200 years India of which 1600 years with Muslims.**

**87-Dr. Kranti Farias and her findings.**

**87-Why did Noah sow grape seeds after floods?**

**88- If Adam & Eve were Bene-Israel Jews?**

**89-History of Bene-Israel's living in Ajmer, Rajasthan.**

**90- What recipe has Ronith prepared for us?**

**92-Amusing Newspaper Captions.**

**93-The Abraham Accords; Peace with Arabs!**

**94-Shave Israel, discovering hidden Jews around the world!**

**95-\$100 winner of the "Hanukah Competition"**

**97-AJDC Khai Festival -2020**

**99- Aliyah to Israel; Oren & Shirley do wonders in COVID times!**

**101-ORT- 2021 committee and plans**

**102-Raigad Jewish Association (RJA) work progress in Raigad.**

**103-IJHC**

**104-BJP Jewish Minority work in progress**

**104-Canada**

**104-New Zealand**

**104- IOBI**

**105-Australia**

**105-Thane**

**106 Pune**

**106 Eilat**

**106 IJF**

**107-Bene-Epharain Community from Andhra Pradesh claim to be Jews?**

**112- How are Jews from Bangladesh Jewish?**

**116-One BI's family effort in collecting old Marathi prayer books for a future Museum.**

**120 Gaberial Project Mumbai- Helping in difficult COVID19 in slums**

**123 Bene-Israel Jokes**

Artist Siona Benjamin's visit to a small Jewish community in Mumbai is chronicled in this documentary.



Nandgaon village in Raigad





## Letters

17<sup>th</sup> Sept. 2020

The section of Saul Aptekar on pg 83 is incorrect. Bidda is not there in July-August as it is planted after harvesting the rice crop in about Oct. -Nov

Any Bidda in July is only in the imagination of a person who writes religious fiction.

Birda is derived from the Hebrew of **Be Yerida** (going down) the opposite of **Aliyah** (going –up) as per Mr. Shalom Abraham Cheulkar-J.P.

Please verify such garbage before publishing.

Nissim Moses

17<sup>th</sup> Sept. 2020

Please mention that Magen Aboth synagogue was first built in 1840 which is mentioned in the marble plaque of the synagogue.

Some books are mentioning different dates.

Adv. Herzl Bhonkar

17<sup>th</sup> Sept, 2020

Leo there is a grave error on pg 37 in the listing of synagogues establishment dates.



Shar E Rahamin was the 1st synagogue. It was first built in about 1796. Later it was rebuilt about 100 years later .

The next synagogue was re-named Shaar E. Rason, about 45 years later.

Then came all the other synagogues. There are few other errors in Jay A Waronkars book “**the Synagogues of India**” such as the wrong location for a synagogue. I wrote to him about these mistakes. He is another half- baked researcher from the west. Call me if you need more clarifications.

Nissim Moses.

**Letter from G\_D to humanity**

**I AM ALWAYS WITH YOU**

17<sup>th</sup> Sept. 2020

Please mention that Magen Aboth synagogue was first built in 1840 which is mentioned in the marble plaque of the synagogue.

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Herzl Bhonkar



**Letters on “ A letter from an Israeli India Jew”**

Shaul Aptekar

Went through your booklet, good work. What is your source for the 6 mitzvot? What is the Torah view on demons? Do they exist? What is your opinion on the dowry system? Does it exist in Judaism?"

## Letters on “ A letter from an Israeli India Jew”

### Jerry Kolet

Being Jewish is between You and God...it is a mix of self actualization and self sacrifice.

The way you behave with the world around you and not how the world behaves with you. We are here not as victims of a situation, but the situation is a starting point to emerge victorious.

Others judge, comment.....you can't help by being a victim. never find yourself in such position. Rather put yourself in a position where every situation was created for you to emerge victorious.

With a rich past a Bene Israel of India is positioned very strongly for world. (Sometimes seems negative) if you think and believe positive, you are right. If you think and believe negative, you are right too.

Finally the situation you find yourself struggling or Happy both come from Hashem ....and Best for you. Sages said the **world was created only for You.**

To understand that You are the only real....the rest is an image in the retina of your eye. You treat it with respect and create your beautiful world.

(Always ask What can I do ? and not what the world can do for me?)

Society has an agenda which may or may not match with me and my personality. If I am expected to sacrifice myself for the higher cause should be entirely my decision.

God has a purpose in my individual existence and made me different from you. If you help me archive my highest potential you are a great motivator but if you change me and manipulate me for your agenda you are like Sodom and GAMORA .....where Talmud says had one size bed for all. if tall cut his legs,if short pull him till he fits.

We have children with different personalities....do we name them the same and plan same for all....or help them grow and become their highest potential ?

Torah teaches us that these past stories are the same values people practice around us today....be careful not to create situations which make society handicapped.

### Nissim Moses

The author has the right to his opinion.

I do not agree with a lot of what he has to say especially about his concept of the supposed Division between, Religious, Conservative and Reform Judaism the segregation/Separation of Women from Men.

Judaism has evolved from the original Abrahamic concept to its modern form over 3,000 thousand plus years. So what is the original orthodox form of worship? I have researched this subject in depth and would like the author to know that most of what we consider as Jewish is borrowed from other Eastern religions that predated Judaism, such as

Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and ancient Egyptian and there have been Jews that followed earlier versions of rituals without being lesser Jews than others.

Many a Jew believes that Hinduism is a Pluralistic religion. See Attached Document (Memorandum of Understanding) validated twice by Chief Rabbi Metzker and the Rabbinical Council with the Hindu Acharias & Sanchariahs once in New Delhi and again in Israel-saying the Both Hinduism & Judaism are Monotheistic Religions all this distortion of the Rabbis is all part a lot of Rabbinical "B.S. " to promote and indoctrinate people with their half-baked writings.

I would suggest the author to seek the Origin of Alphabetically written name of God both in Hebrew & Sanskrit/Hindi/Marathi Script "Ohm" and "Yaweh" Look at them and See how both tell you visually "God made man in His own image-and both will show you Man & woman in his name" So if God is perfect and infallible and in his own name he does not separate Why do the Rabbis Separate Man from Woman. Why do they need "Tikun Olam" if they themselves say God is Infallible.

If the author has an open mind and wants to learn more he can communicate with me.

Regards

Nissim Moses, Historian Indian Jewish Heritage and Bene Israel Genealogy Research

## Shaniwar Teli Editor's Desk

## Shaniwar Teli Creator's Desk

Dear Shaniwar Teli's ,  
Shaniwar Teli is a secular e-newsletter intended to bring news from the Bene Israel diaspora. We accept articles and letters from all our readers belonging to various professions who are entitled to practice their personal ideology. We do not aim to offend any of our readers or their professions.

Israel's third lockdown is aimed at controlling the surge of COVID 19 cases. The two previous lockdowns in April and September succeeded in reducing the morbidity rates. All of us should adhere to health guidelines and maintain social distancing. With the vaccines - there is hope from uncertainty. According to the World Health Organization, we should avoid the 3C's: Crowded places, Close contact and Confined spaces.

As we come to the end of a challenging year, what can we contemplate on? We have learnt patience, empathy, minimalism, survival, flexibility and seen ourselves grow and thrive over challenges.

Life won't suddenly change with a change in the date, our problems won't run away just because the year has changed. The only way to live better is by changing our mindset. Let's remember 2020 as a year that taught us valuable life lessons and befriend fear. We have all risen magnificently to the challenges of 2020.

2021 will see some changes as well - the U.S.A will welcome their new President Joe Biden. Israel has opened its skies to UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, Morocco and Bhutan and will see further trade and economic improvement in 2021.

We wish everyone a happy 2021 and hope it will bring with it - new beginnings to each one of us.

Shulamit Solomon Charikar



Dear Readers,  
With time Shaniwar Teli is getting introduced to so many members of our Bene-Israel community on whom we feel proud. Our small community (less than ¼ of world population) have been recognized for our excellence on the surface of planet Venus and on the planet earth from professors doctors engineers writers architects painters lawyers actors Chartered accounts mayors and even our very own historian. Be linked to us and feel proud of your Bene-Israel roots.

Marathi Shaniwar Teli will be compiled and edited by Mr. Sassoon Phansapurkar.

Hebrew Shaniwar Teli is waiting for an able person who is a Bene-Israel, born in Israel and has love for his community and would like to compile and edit the Hebrew version.

Elijah (Leo) Daniels Walwatkar



## A Leader Article on Writing about Bene Israel Heritage, History Traditions and Customs

Nissim Moses, Historian Indian Jewish Research and Bene Genealogy Research



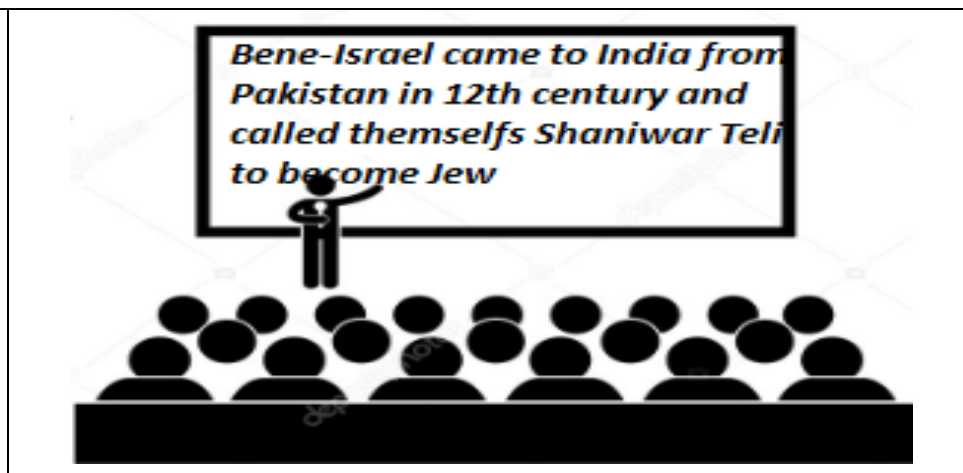
Of recent a few from the younger generation of Bene Israel community have joined the cadre of historians and genealogists and socio-anthropologists and I warmly welcome them to work to research our ancestry, heritage, customs, traditions cuisine, the origin of our names, the source and background to our customs and those of other Jewish Communities in the same region and the reason for those differences if any. So, that when they write their Thesis or article you are certain that the source material is correct. If the source material writer made an error it does not Justify you to propagate and or promote that error through your research. This creates a wrong assessment of the Community and many generations pay the price for this. Here I shall give a couple of examples students who have been led by the wrong Academic personnel who sometimes have no knowledge of the particular use their students to do book research and leg work without having the faintest concept of the subject which they want their students to research. They firmly believe that their University Titles permit them to produce some of the garbage that they write under their titles.

1. Once a student from a reputed University in Israel was researching the Jews of the Malabar region (Cochin India). In one of her findings, she quoted a leading Pardessi Community leader of past, stating that there is great similarity between Hebrew, Sanskrit and Malayalam- the language of the region and she quoted the examples that he had given. When I asked her whether she herself had checked it. She said no but he has stated it. That is when I told her then what is your research about. When she went to the inter-language translation dictionary, she suddenly found out that it was wrong what she had quoted.
2. Another example is from a doctoral candidate student from Canada who spent a whole year about 10 or more years ago in Israel researching the discrimination suffered by the Jews of India (the Bene Israel) by the European Jewish Controlled Immigration Authorities in Israel. He collected a lot of material about the various aspects of his research subject and started writing his thesis upon his return to Canada, The, first time he wrote the draft of his thesis he had properly framed the whole text as and put the blame as it should have been and he sent me a copy of his draft for review (which I still have as evidence) and I was very impressed by his honesty and approach exposing the bias and discrimination involved. Three months later I receive a completely watered-down modified version of the same chapters removing all blame and responsibility of the

Authorities for the problems they had created. When I wrote to him about it he wrote back that when he gave his thesis to his Professor and Guide they bluntly told him that if he submits that (The Truth) about the problems his Professor had told him in no uncertain terms that he would not support his Thesis. He further informed me that once he gets his Doctorate degree, he would be writing a book and he would put the correct version. This letter also I have in my archives. The Book has been written and published and again the wrong thesis version has been published. Here was an example of a Professor strong arming a student to intentionally write the wrong thing.

3. Many article that I have read are written foreign authors claiming to have researched the various aspects of Indian Jewry and are totally baseless, false, and are incorrect in context. But since this has been written it gets published and then whole community suffers the consequences of this. This has happened to in the late nineteenth century to several writers and supposedly British Scholars like Rev. Wilson and Reve. Lord (generally) very sympathetic to the Jews of the Bombay area (because of heir ongoing efforts to convert them to Christianity criticized and often attacked the publications of Bene Israel Historian and Educationist Mr. Haeem Samuel Kehimkar. A hundred years later the whole world remembers and refers to the works of Haeem Samuel Kehimkar, and except for a few academics who even has heard of Wilson or Lord.

My appeal is to all these new generation researchers and authors be very careful what you write and in the name of God do not write or contribute or indirectly support incorrect information about your people for at some time it is going boomerang on you or your descendants. You may earns a few bucks but your people will pay the price.





*We have never heard this story.*

## Malida- An Indian Bene Israel Community Tradition

<https://www.yahelisrael.com/single-post/2019/04/23/malida-a-bene-israel-community-indian-tradition>

by Jonathan Nagavkar for Yahel (<https://www.yahelisrael.com/>)

There is a history behind this. It is folk story that I can't promise to be true but it is something I was told by my grandpa.

Mostly in the 16th century, the bene Israeli community was living near a coastal village near Mumbai called Alibag. Even the village has a pretty good Jewish history. This village was named after a Jewish person who had many farmland. His name was Ali/ (Eli). That's why it's called Alibag. Jews used to live in peace with many communities specifically the Hindu Brahmins (Hindu priest community), the Kolis ( the fisherman community), and Muslims( Islam).

There was harmony and good relations between the community in the vicinity. They also use to participate in each other's festivals like Diwali, Holi, Eid, Rosh ha Shana, Passover and many more.

All the communities decided that they will carry some of their community specialty to the others' functions. The Muslims decided to carry shir kurma which is type of sweet dish made out of condensed milk, sugar and lots of dry fruits. The Kolis took puran poli which is a sweet type of tortilla.

The Jewish community didn't have a signature dish so some Jewish traders dealing in food items decided to bring things from their businesses. Some brought poha(flattened rice), sugar, dry fruits, and shredded coconut. After much thought, the bene Israeli came up with a very tasty dish named Malida. They took it along with them to the Hindu function and distributed among all communities, and what was the outcome??? All the communities enjoyed the dish. After that event the bene Israeli decided to make this dish as a part of their rituals and culture.



*The malida platter...filled with five types of fruits, some flowers and flattened rice with sugar powder and shredded coconut. It the five fruits chosen there are two fruits that grow on vine and three that grow on tree.*

*Legend claims "The bene Israeli community from the entire Alibagh village came together and performed the malida ceremony with a wonderful song. " eliyahu hanavi...elijahuu hanavi"*

Link to Malida prayers in Hebrew and Marathi:  
<https://elijahuhanavi.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/elijahuhanavi-malida-translation-transliteration.pdf>

Afterward, religious heads decided that they would offer this dish as a giving of thanks before any auspicious functions and ceremonies in the community. Malida has become synonymous with celebrating the Prophet Eliyahu and giving thanks to him.

This ceremony has become a very important part of this Jewish community's life and thus, there are rules about when Malida can and cannot be performed.

It is customary NOT to hold the "Malidah Ceremony" on the following days:

- Erev Shabbath, Shabbath, Erev Rosh Chodesh, Rosh Chodesh, Erev Yom Tov, Yom Tov,
- From the 13th of Nissan (two days before Pesah) until Lag BaOmer (18th of Iyar) [ some say until Shavuoth ] ,
- From the 17th of Tammuz until Tu-Be Av,
- During the Ten Days of Repentance which are the first 10 days of Tishrei i.e. from 1st to 10th of Tishrei, or rather from Rosh Hashanah till end of Yom Kippur,
- Isru Hag (the day following Yom Tov),
- On the communal fast days. These are the 5 rabbinic fast days, the Prophets designated to observe as national tragedies. They are

The 10th of Tevet when the armies of the Babylonian emperor Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem,

-17th of Tammuz when Moses destroyed the Golden Calf, and re-ascended Mount Sinai to plead G-d's forgiveness for the Jewish people, Tisha B'Av which is the 9th day of Av, which is the day on which the Holy Temples which stood in Jerusalem were destroyed,

- The Fast of Gedaliah which is 4th of Tishrei,

-The Fast of Esther which is the 13th of Adar.

- Purim (14th of Adar), Purim Shushan (15th of Adar).

### **The status of Malida in Israel:**

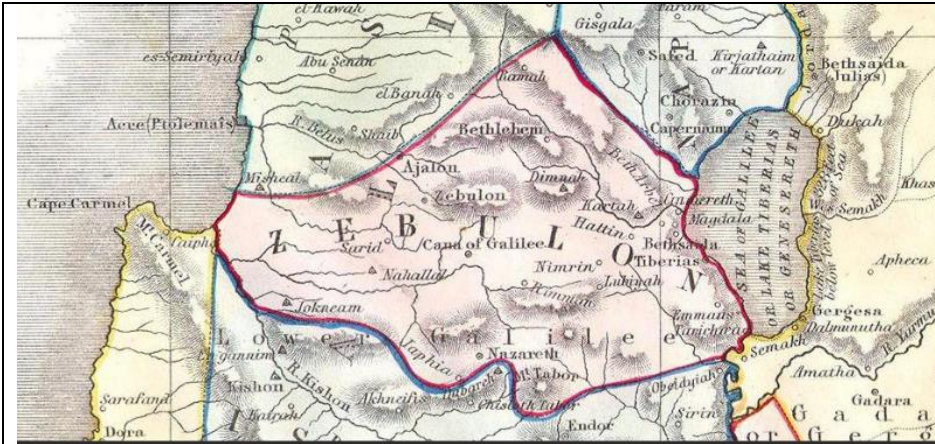
**As Sigid is the Ethiopian national holiday recognized all over Israel, the bene Israeli community is attempting to make Malida a national holiday for the community in order for them to thank God for opening the door of the state of Israel for them. A where they could flourish and create a safe and healthy future for themselves and their future generations in Israel.**

**Check out this video of the Malida Ceremony in for the Bene Israeli community:** <https://youtu.be/Uy8NTOFuhbE>

**From the Desk of Mr. Nissim Moses, Bene-Israel Historian;** To understand the Malidah ceremony we first need to understand that the last Prophet; Prophet Elijah lived among the ancestors of Bene-Israel (From the Tribe of Levy) in the tribal region of Zebulun and they were aware of him ascending to Heaven in the "Chariot of Fire". They left before the destruction of the Second Temple. When their ships sank along the Konkan Coast; the survivors believed it was Prophet Elijah who saved them. As it was their tradition, they performed Malidah Ceremony-as a thank giving. (Malidah is the word Malidoh from Persian language where for thanks giving a variety of fruits and food items were blessed and was shared & distributed among the participants). Malidah is prevalent only among the Bene Israel community in one form or another, probably from the time of their exodus from the land of Israel about 2,300 years ago.

# Bene-Israel & Prophet Elijah

The reason why Bene-Israel's love Prophet Elijah is what they learned from their ancestors, who lived with Prophet Elijah in Zebulon. The cave of Elijah we visit today near Haifa fell in Zebulon area where Elijah went in to hiding, before he faced the challenge God gave him.



Regarding the ancestors of Bene-Israel coming from this area, research scholars Rev Lord Wilson, Haim Samuel Kehimkar and Dr. Samuel Aptekar have all published books on this subject between 50 to 120 years ago.

Further, in those days sea faring was practice as a hereditary profession. The Levites lived among the People of Zebulon who were mariners by profession. Issachar were traders and business people.

So for each of their ships in their Flotilla or as a group they had their Rabbis/ Health/ Administrators to care for them. All these persons were basically, by professional farmers and in that region they not only grew food but extracted the best olive oil. In India they operated with coconut and ground nut oil in lieu of olives.



Follow the link to know about last Jews from Calcutta.

[The Last Jews Of Kolkata | Unique Stories From India - YouTube](#)

(Courtesy: Sam & Erna Daniel, USA)

Did you know that "Rickshaw" was introduced to India by Jews in Calcutta who imported them from Hong Kong? Later Bajaj started producing them locally in 1977 in Pune.



## Life After 50

*This message is floating around WhatsApp and we thought it is a wonder message to share. Hope it will teach us something new.*

I asked one of my friends who has crossed 50 & is heading to 60. What sort of change he is feeling in him?

He sent me the following very interesting lines, which i would like to share with you all.....

- 1) After loving my parents, my siblings, my spouse, my children, my friends, now I have started loving myself.
- 2) I just realized that I am not "Atlas". The world does not rest on my shoulders.
- 3) I now stopped bargaining with vegetables & fruits vendors. After all, a few Rupees more is not going to burn a hole in my pocket but it might help the poor fellow save for his daughter's school fees.
- 4) I pay the taxi driver without waiting for the change. The extra money might bring a smile on his face. After all he is toiling much harder for a living than me
- 5) I stopped telling the elderly that they've already narrated that story many times. After all, the story makes them walk down the memory lane & relive the past.
- 6) I have learnt not to correct people even when I know they are wrong. After all, the onus of making everyone perfect is not on me. Peace is more precious than perfection.
- 7) I give compliments freely & generously. After all it's a mood enhancer not only for the recipient, but also for me
- 8) I have learnt not to bother about a crease or a spot on my clothes. After all, personality speaks louder than appearances.
- 9) I walk away from people who don't value me. After all, they might not know my worth, but I do.
- 10) I remain cool when someone plays dirty politics to outrun me in the rat race. After all, I am not a rat & neither am I in any race.
- 11) I am learning not to be embarrassed by my emotions. After all, it's my emotions that make me human.
- 12) I have learnt that it's better to drop the ego than to break a relationship. After all, my ego will keep me aloof whereas with relationships I will never be alone\*.
- 13) I have learnt to live each day as if it's the last. After all, it might be the last.
- 14) I am doing what makes me happy. After all, I am responsible for my happiness, and I owe it to me.

I decided to send this to many, because why do we have to wait for so long, why can't we practice this at any stage and age in life.



COVID 19 Vaccine is now available in Israel and will be soon available in other countries

## Vaccine Five things to Know About a COVID Vaccine: *It Won't Be a 'Magic Wand'*

<https://khn.org/news/5-things-to-know-about-a-covid-vaccine-it-wont-be-a-magic-wand/amp/>

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. A vaccine is vital in fighting the virus, but it won't be a quick pass back to our old lives. | 4. So don't throw out your masks yet.      |
| 2. After vaccines gain approval, the real-world evaluation ensues.                               | 5. What if I don't want to get vaccinated? |
| 3. After a vaccine is approved, you still may need to wait awhile to get your shot.              |  |

Dozens of vaccine candidates are in various testing stages around the world, with 11 [in the last stage](#) of preapproval clinical trials — including four in the U.S. One or more may prove safe and effective and enter the market in the coming months. What then?

Here are five things to consider in making vaccine dreams come true.

### **1. A vaccine is vital in fighting the virus, but it won't be a quick pass back to our old lives.**

Vaccines have helped rid the world of scourges like smallpox, but the process takes time and there are no guarantees. Until clinical trials have been completed on this first round of vaccine candidates, no one knows how effective they might prove to be.

The minimum requirement by the Food and Drug Administration for any COVID-19 vaccine is that it should at least prove 50% effective when compared with a placebo — that is, a neutral saline solution.

By comparison, the annual influenza vaccine ranges [between 40% and 60% effective](#) in preventing the illness, depending on the recipient and the season examined. In contrast, a full course of the measles vaccine is about [97% effective](#).

“It's very unlikely that a first-generation vaccine will be something like a measles vaccine,” notes Dr. [Amesh Adalja](#), a physician with expertise in infectious diseases and senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins University Center for Health Security.

### **2. After vaccines gain approval, the real-world evaluation ensues.**

Vaccines undergo a protracted testing process involving thousands of subjects. They win FDA approval only after they

demonstrate safety and meet at least the minimum standard of effectiveness. Monitoring continues after they hit the market; effectiveness and any rare side effects or safety issues become more apparent after millions of doses are given.

Hypothetically, let's say the first new COVID vaccines prove 70% effective at preventing the disease. That would mean seven of every 10 people who roll up their sleeves will be protected, but three will not.

While that's good news for those protected, questions remain about who is covered and who is still vulnerable. It's possible, Adalja said, that the vaccine would reduce the severity of disease in the remaining three people, thereby helping cut hospitalizations and severe side effects.

But it's also true that regulators are focused on whether a vaccine prevents disease. Some vaccines can keep you from getting sick without preventing infection, in which case you could still spread the virus even without exhibiting symptoms.

Mysteries remain, at least for now. Scientists don't know how long the protection will last, for instance. Will protection fade, requiring annual shots, as with influenza? Or will it last for years?

Also, the COVID vaccine candidates are being tested only in adults so far. Most vaccine makers have [delayed testing](#) among children or pregnant and breastfeeding women, for example. That could mean an initial lag in safety and efficacy data for those groups, complicating vaccination efforts for children or even front-line health care workers, many of whom are women of childbearing age.

For all those reasons — “if you are looking for a magic wand, you won't find one in vaccines,” said Dr. [William Schaffner](#), a professor of preventive medicine and infectious disease at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tennessee. “That said, vaccines will play a substantial role in reducing the epidemic.”

### **3. After a vaccine is approved, you still may need to wait awhile to get your shot.**

Making vaccines is complicated. And so is distributing them. Vaccine makers say they are already producing vaccine in advance of knowing whether they will win approval. But simply having ample vaccine supply doesn't mean manufacturers will have all the needed glass bottles, syringes or injectors to ship them right away. Indeed, some experts fear that a shortage of both production-line capabilities (special facilities are needed to make vaccines under strict sterile conditions) and limited supplies could hamper distribution of an approved vaccine. Many of the vaccine candidates must

be shipped and stored at super-low temperatures, adding to the complexity.

“Even if you have the vaccine, that doesn’t mean you can ship it out. There are multiple, multiple steps, and all of them have to work,” said Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel, a vice president at the University of Pennsylvania who has [warned](#) of potential shortages.

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine have issued a [framework](#) for who should get priority for the initial vaccine. State and local health departments will also have a say in how supplies roll out.

Current recommendations say first in line will be health care workers and people with medical conditions that put them at highest risk if they get the virus. People living in nursing homes and other congregate settings will also be higher on the list. Further down are average healthy adults.

Pay attention, and go when it’s your turn, said Schaffner.

“If they say it’s time for people who are middle-aged and have chronic underlying illness such as diabetes, heart disease and lung disease, you have to know what you have and understand it’s your turn,” he said. “You also have to understand if it’s not your turn yet. Be patient.”

Finally, many of the vaccines under consideration will require two doses spaced a few weeks apart, which would add to the delay. If more than one vaccine is approved, which is likely, people will need the second dose to come from the same manufacturer as the first. That could prove a record-keeping nightmare and lead to more delays — depending on how vaccine supplies hold up.

In testimony before Congress in mid-September, CDC Director Robert Redfield said that tens of millions of doses of vaccine may start to become available by late November or December. But the [logistics of vaccine distribution](#) means the country won’t be able to return to “regular life” until “late second quarter, third quarter 2021,” Redfield predicted.

#### **4. So don’t throw out your masks yet.**

Because any vaccine is likely to fall short of 100% effectiveness and won’t be in widespread distribution for a while, the use of masks and maintaining social distance will be required well into next year, experts say.

“The vaccine will be a start, but we’ll still need to do the things we’ve been discussing throughout — hand hygiene,

wearing masks and continuing to remain specifically distant,” said Dr. Krutika Kuppalli, an assistant professor of infectious disease at the Medical University of South Carolina. “Those are the arsenal of tools we will need to use.”

## 5. What if I don't want to get vaccinated?

Polls show a good percentage of Americans either don't want a vaccine or want to wait a bit before getting one. Can they be required to get a shot?

Certain employers, such as hospitals or food production plants, could require their workers to be vaccinated, but a federal mandate is highly unlikely and probably would be unconstitutional, said professor [Dorit Rubinstein Reiss](#), an expert on employer and vaccine law at the University of California-Hastings College of Law.

The likely approach of public health authorities is to educate people about the benefits and potential side effects of a vaccine — down to whether one might experience a sore arm.

“That's what we do for every vaccine,” said Adalja of Johns Hopkins. A requirement of vaccination for the general public would create resistance and “foster conspiracy theories,” he said.

Most [regulation of public health](#) falls to state and local governments and health agencies, Reiss said. States would be “more likely to have narrow or specific mandates that could survive judicial review,” she said.

Schools, of course, require students to be vaccinated against a wide range of illnesses. But a school-age COVID vaccine mandate is doubtful, at least in the near term, because the vaccine hasn't been tested on school-aged children.

Generally speaking, employers, including the federal government, [have the power](#) to require vaccinations, especially if they don't have a unionized workforce with a contract that might limit their power. All employers, however, face limits set by civil rights and disability laws and may have to provide alternatives for people who can't or won't get vaccinated, Reiss said.

**Here's why vaccinated people still need to wear a mask. - The New York Times (Courtesy: Sam & Erna Daniel)**  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/08/world/heres-why-vaccinated-people-still-need-to-wear-a-mask.html> (follow this link)



## Our Bene-Israel's **"LIVING LEGEND"**

Our BI Living Legend this time is **Mr. Levy Asher Bhonker**.

Mrs. Dinabai and Mr. Benjamin Samson Bhonkar were the great grandparents of Mr. Levy Asher Bhonkar who were originally from Alibag., Raigad.

Their home was near Magen Aboth Synagogue in Alibag. This family for purpose of railway related jobs resided in Eden in Africa (today's Yemen) for long period of time. Dinabai (great grandmother of Levy) was the daughter of this Mr. Banaji (Benjamin) Shahapurkar of Alibag.

Mrs. Elisheba (who was from Malyankar family from Roha) and Mr. Reuben (Shlomo) Benjamin Bhonkar, grandparents of Mr. Levy Asher Bhonkar came to India during 1931 from Eden when Levy's father; Mr. Asher Reuben Bhonkar was 18 years old . Levy's grandfather Asher was working in Telegraphy Department in Eden .

Upon his return to his home village, Asher bought a farm land in Thal near Alibaug. This farm land is about 5 acres and has several different fruit trees from coconut to banana all in in commercial quantities.

Mr.Asher was married to Rebecca (Ruby) David Bhonkar from Pune [Chhapkhanawala Bhonkar (Printing Press owners). Levy was born in this farm home and now at the age of 74 he still continues to lives in the same farm. Levy was also married in the same home to Lebana- Abigael Eliyahu Navgaonkar (Adopted Parents - biological parents were Mrs. Rachael – Bathsheba and Jacob Shalom Jitekar also from Thal. They were blessed with three sons and in the same farm home; Rual, Herzl & Ronen. Today all the son's are married and Levy he has seven grandchildren.



**Mr. Levy Asher Bhonkar  
& 3 sons**



**Rual/Moshe Bhonkar**

***While most of the Bene-Israel's sold their farms and moved first to Bombay and later to Israel and Canada, Levy did not leave his farm. With this mass immigration of Bene-Israel people, Levy's farm become an unique and ideal representative of how Bene-Israel families lived in India. It is still preserved like a typical farm with a home.***

***Levy's farm has been visited by hundreds of Jewish & non-Jewish foreigners and local visitors to understand how Bene-Israel's lived in Raigad. All these visitors who signed in a register and left their wonderful remarks on grand hospitality Levy and Lehana and of their three children. Many foreigners who wrote & published commercial books on Bene-Israel thank Levy for his help in explaining and showing them the Raigad Bene-Israel landmarks.***

For last 20 years Mr. Levy is the president of Magen Aboth Synagogue in Alibaug as well as of Bene-Israel Cemetery in Navgaon. Levy also received the ***Award from Indian Jewish Federation (IJF)*** during the year 2019 for his selfless services to community.

Levy's lawyer son Herzl who has kept the family tradition fire burning by continuing to live in his Great Grandfather's home and forming a Raigad Jewish Association (RJA) that is looking to highlight the Jewish landmarks in Raigad. Recently they have erected a candle lighting cabinet at Elijah's chariot markings in Khandala, Raigad. Currently They are working on re-building the Ambepur synagogue that was closed decades ago. The thoughts of RJA are to make it in to a synagogue-cum-Bene-Israel museums, if it will be possible.

Youngest son Ronen is also elected as managing Trustee and secretary of Magen Hassidim Synagogue Agreepada Mumbai in year 2019. Rueil (Moshe) the eldest son of Levy lives in Israel with his four children following religious teachings.

**Shaniwar Teli sees Mr. Levy Bhonkar a unique person who has kept the Bene-Israel old living cultures and traditions alive in the village itself. Therefore he is our Living Legend!**



Advocate Herzl Bhonkar



Ronen Bhonkar

# What Do a Crater on Venus and India's Jewish Community Have in Common?

International Astronomic Union

(<https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/features/.premium-what-do-a-crater-on-venus-and-india-s-jewish-community-have-in-common-1.5824759>)

<https://medium.com/teamindus/heres-why-three-craters-on-venus-are-named-after-three-indian-women-586c29cc5cee>

**International Astronomic Union (IAU)** was established in 1919 and is the official body which names planets, comets and satellites.

The IAU is responsible for naming the craters found on the planets. In 2017 there were 700 craters on Venus, all of them named after famous women. **“The Jhirad Crater”** on Venus is to acknowledge the excellent contribution that a member of **India’s Bene Israel community** made to her country.

**The Jhirad Crater** is named after Dr. Jerusha Jhirad (1891–1984). Jhirad was also a physician. She was a member of the **Bene Israel Jewish community**, familiar to our grandparents as the “Native Jew”. They are revered as descendants of the one of the Ten Lost Tribes, the ten historic/mythical communities who were forced to leave Israel when Damascus was sacked by Assyria in a biblical battle. Jhirad was the first woman to be awarded a Government of India scholarship to study in the United Kingdom, where she earned an M.D. in Obstetrics and Gynecology from the University of London. For her achievements and her efforts to improve medical education in India and advance the cause of woman doctors, she was awarded the MBE (Member of the British Empire) (Civil) by the British and the Padma Shri by the government of India in 1966.



Dr. Jerusha Jhirad  
(1890-1984),



The ORT India management committee member Mr. Johnny Jhirad sat in his office reviewing the applications ORT had received for grant requests for laptops from students when a student walked in. Jhirad looked up, “Yes Bension”?

Bension: Sir, I really think all Bene-Israel community should be very proud of The Jhirad Crater named on Venus after your grandmother.

Jhirad looks at Bension for a long moment and then.....

Jhirad: Bension, did you apply for the computer grant?

Bension: Yes sir (excited)

Jhirad: It will be a good idea that you leave before I fly you straight into the same Jhirad Crater on Venus!



Shaniwar Teli Q1, 2021

## Angelica's Corner from Australia

Angelica Jacob (Dandekar)



### The inspiration behind writing “Finding Home: Memoir of a Jewish Girl”

Over thirty-six years of my life in Australia, I collected innumerable books, articles, interviews and snippets about the Bene Israel. When my dear Dad sadly passed in 1987, I brought back to Australia his many diaries, notes, letters, leather-bound Hebrew prayer books (he was a Hebrew scholar from St. Xavier's College), their wafer-thin pages fraying between my fingers, my parents' magnificent *ketubah*, an assortment of Judaica and old family photos. These inspired me to write three or four chapters on my family and the history of the Bene Israel. Then, life, children and career took precedence, and the chapters were relegated to a folder in the storeroom of my Sydney home.



Over the years, I read, re-read, then carefully filed, every article and book review on the Jews of India published in the Australian press. In one instance, I wrote an indignant letter to the editor on a book that did not mention the Jews of India. Justifiably, much of the Jewish narrative in Australia was, and still is, dominated by the European Jewish diaspora and their horrific Holocaust experiences which continues to haunt them.

By 2017, my husband and I had achieved most of our personal and professional goals, and built the life of which we had dreamed. Both our children exceeded our expectations, and were happy and flourishing in their lives and careers. Since arriving in 1984, we had lived outside Sydney for more than a year only twice before. Now, we were restless.

So when the opportunity arose to move to New York City for two years, we decided to take it. Armed with my folder of notes and diaries, I finally had the time, intellectual freedom and mental space to research and think about a written work, and what shape it would take. I set myself a two-year deadline. It was a rite of passage.

#### Research

My first port of call, after settling down, was the magnificent New York Public Library (NYPL). Inside NYPL's Stephen Schwarzman building sits the well-resourced Dorot Jewish Division. I struck an instant rapport with Amanda Seigel, the energetic librarian. I told her I wanted to read every book, academic paper, article and newsletter, and view every photo and microfiche on the Bene Israel. Benjamin J. Israel's *The Bene Israel of India – Some Studies* (Orient Longman Press, 1984) was a starting point. Over the next four months, many hours several times a week were spent researching inside the Library's hallowed walls.

#### Inspiration

Two books in particular inspired me. One is Joseph Hodes's *From India to Israel* (McGill Queen's University Press, Montreal, 2014), which I read and re-read – it was thoroughly researched, and illuminating. The other was a beautiful, leather-bound 1935-5695 edition of the Hebrew/Marathi Haggadah, donated to NYPL on June 3, 1993. It is a testament of the Bene Israel community's devotion, zeal and dedication to Hashem.



Anti-Semitism is alien to the Indian psyche. The need to celebrate that, to record my experiences, and showcase Australia's egalitarianism and successful multiculturalism, were compelling. Little is known of our religious and cultural life within the Jewish diaspora and broader communities, or is restricted to academic studies and niche audiences. Even less is known of the generosity of the Indian people who enabled us to assimilate and thrive for centuries without persecution or anti-Semitism.

I wanted to create awareness, recognition, and a deeper understanding of these facts among a wider audience. There was also a need to leave a testament for posterity. The book interweaves historical research and facts of the Bene Israel, their origins, past and place into the narrative.

### **Editing and Publishing**

Four months of intensive research at NYPL later, I began to compile all my notes. I decided that personal vignettes were the most honest and fearless way to recount parables of the time, the people, and the places as I remembered them.

Each vignette has a *raison d'être* of its own. They are stories about growing up in what was then a gracious inner-city neighborhood of Bombay—of an idyllic childhood, living a Jewish life as a minority in an inclusive, pluralistic culture.

I also worked with two (one Jewish) editors, both then Adjunct Professors at New York University. I considered returning to Australia and approaching my previous publisher, Simon & Schuster Australia, but commercial return was never the motivation for writing this memoir; it was personal.

In the end, I decided to self-publish on Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) for my publishing platform. For the book cover, I engaged the Australian website 99Designs. Monika Kulbat's evocative winning cover design of a young woman's face with striking shades of saffron and the Star of David was the clear winner.

On September 25, 2019, my mother's birthday, *Finding Home – Memoir of a Jewish Girl* was published! As of November 2020, the book is also available in paperback.

I hope *Finding Home* offers a poignant message of inclusivity in these divisive times as we witness the rise of anti-Semitic and anti-immigration sentiments.

### **So...what's Next?**

I've always wanted to write a biography, but that's currently on the back burner. These days, I spend my time learning the Tanach and Hebrew with my teacher in Israel, and am enjoying every minute of it.

# Confusion!

## The Origins of the Swastika

The word swastika comes from the Sanskrit swastika, which means “good fortune” or “well-being.” The motif (a hooked cross) appears to have first been used in Eurasia, as early as 7000 years ago, perhaps representing the movement of the sun through the sky. To this day, it is a sacred symbol in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Odinism. It is a common sight on temples or houses in India or Indonesia. Swastikas also have an ancient history in Europe, appearing on artifacts from pre-Christian European cultures.



The Buddhist swastika is left facing form put flat and mainly in gold, yellow and red colour.



The Nazi used the right facing form and tilted the swastika symbol at an angle of 45 degrees with the corners pointing upwards and invariably in black.

European scholars and thinkers linked the symbol to a shared Aryan culture that spanned Europe and Asia. However, the work of European linguists and other scholars was taken up by racist groups, for whom the swastika was a symbol of “Aryan identity” and German nationalist pride. This conjecture of Aryan cultural descent of the German people is likely one of the main reasons why the Nazi Party formally adopted the swastika or Hakenkreuz (Ger., hooked cross) as its symbol in 1920. However it seems someone did not notice the direction of the original Swastika and created its mirror image for Hitler.

**Original**= Anti Clockwise Direction **Nazi** = Clockwise direction

# The Thirteen Principles of Jewish Faith

(We Bene-Israel's sing this song 'Yagdal' during every Friday night prayers)

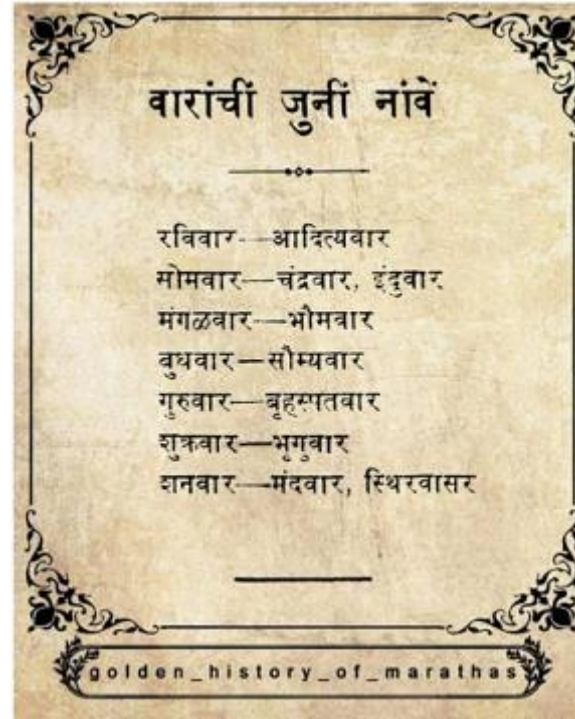
The great codifier of Torah law and Jewish philosophy, Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon ("Maimonides" also known as "The Rambam"), compiled what he refers to as the *Shloshah Asar Ikkarim*, the "**Thirteen Fundamental Principles**" of the Jewish faith, as derived from the Torah. Maimonides refers to these thirteen principles of faith as "**the fundamental truths of our religion and its very foundations.**" The Thirteen Principles of Jewish faith (as recorded in Maimonides' introduction to Perek Chelek) are as follows:

1. Belief in the existence of the Creator, who is perfect in every manner of existence and is the Primary Cause of all that exists.
2. The belief in G-d's absolute and unparalleled unity.
3. The belief in G-d's non-corporeality, nor that He will be affected by any physical occurrences, such as movement, or rest, or dwelling.
4. The belief in G-d's eternity.
5. The imperative to worship G-d exclusively and no foreign false gods.
6. The belief that G-d communicates with man through prophecy.
7. The belief in the primacy of the prophecy of Moses our teacher.
8. The belief in the divine origin of the Torah.
9. The belief in the immutability of the Torah.
10. The belief in G-d's omniscience and providence.
11. The belief in divine reward and retribution.
12. The belief in the arrival of the Messiah and the messianic era.
13. The belief in the resurrection of the dead.

It is the custom of many congregations to recite the Thirteen Articles, in a slightly more poetic form, beginning with the words *Ani Maamin*--"I believe"--every day after the morning prayers in the synagogue.

## Did Mid-age Hindus Observed Sabbath?

As many know on Saturday many Hindus do not use Iron tools and many Balutedari (service for service trade) used to take day holiday on Saturday. Further medieval Maratha document has these names where **Saturday mentioned as Wasar or rest day** or a day where you will **slow down several tasks**.



## The Kabbalah of Brit-Milah

[https://www.chabad.org/multimedia/video\\_cdo/aid/4922605/jewish/The-Kabbalah-of-Brit-Milah.htm](https://www.chabad.org/multimedia/video_cdo/aid/4922605/jewish/The-Kabbalah-of-Brit-Milah.htm)

Courtesy :  
Samuel & Erna Daniels,  
Manhattan, USA.



## Prayer lifts your HOPE

Prayer is you talking to yourself believing your creator is listening to you and will take care of you.

Leave it to the creator.  
He knows the best.

## Have you noticed that the prayers are always answered?

**I have!**

Acceptance of prayers depends on intensity in your prayers and how many pray for the same reason and with the same intensity.



# Getting Fired at 50+

Most of the good employees get fired around 50+ for mainly two major reasons;

1. EMPLOYERS BELIEVE YOU'RE MORE COSTLY THAN YOUNGER MORE ENERGETIC REPLACEMENT
2. THEY ASSUME YOU CAN'T/WON'T GRASP NEW TECHNOLOGY

Every employee fired for age discrimination knows it.



**Loss of Job:** Losing your job after being 30 years at work is a very scary feeling. You wake up at 7 in the morning and realize you have nowhere to go. You cry quietly not showing to the family. You realize you gave your whole youth to the company, many times at the cost of your family time, but now I have become a burden to the company I help built with my sweat and blood. New jobs offer 1/4<sup>th</sup> of your previous salary or if you change your profession you have to start with a salary of a newcomer at age 50+ and work under youngster who have no patience for your slow understand of technology. You start going in to depression and your family get tired of supporting your depression.

**Depression & Recovery:** You need to realize that only one who can help you is yourself. First you have to ask yourself if you really need such a high salary now that you are 50+ and why. By this age your children are grown up and are no more your responsibility. You don't have to pay any more school fee and collage fee. You will start realizing that your need of money is much low now that your responsibilities are over. Then you will look at your savings and retirement fund and realize you are quite well covered with the limited expenses you have. After few years you normally would than God for getting fired and finish the donkey's life earning for your family and giving time for yourself.

**Good Example:** Army soldiers retire from ages 40 to 55 depending on their job. As they know this before, they do not go in to depression but find jobs outside army in security and other jobs where their experience is useful. For example, in Israel many 50+ new immigrants Bene-Israel work in security as it is an essential requirement in Israel.

# The future of Israel's economy

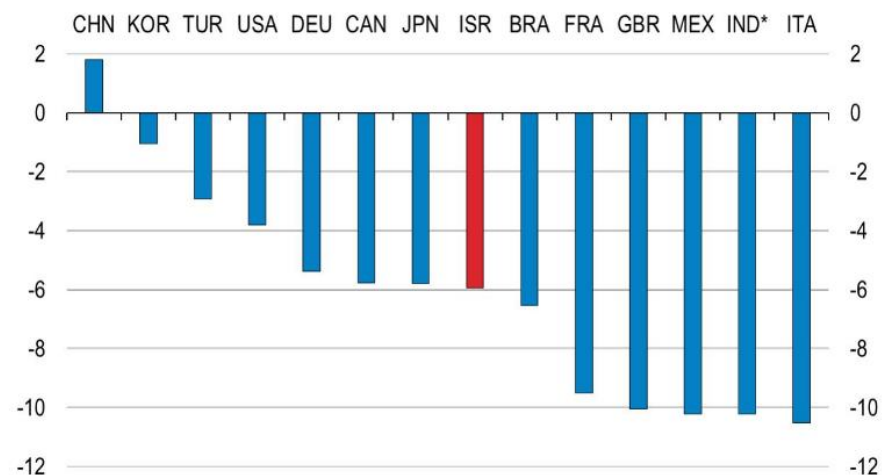
Daphna Samuel Pugaukar



**Disclaimer:** We are currently living in very volatile times. There are continuous developments on the morbidity and the vaccine effectiveness front. This article is based on the research and updates published in public domain as of 12<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

Israel has always been reviewed as one of the strongest economies in the Middle East. The state has enjoyed a favourable ranking from International research and ranking organizations. The economy was performing well but the shock of the pandemic is threatening to reverse economic achievements, raise poverty and worsen productivity disparities between the vibrant hi-tech sectors and under-privileged sectors.

Projected real GDP growth, % 2020



\*Fiscal year starting in April.  
Source: OECD Interim Outlook, including estimates for Israel.

When hit by the pandemic and primary lockdown, Israel witnessed a steep fall in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 3.7% in Q4 of 2019 to 0.5% in Q1 of 2020. As further restrictions were introduced, there was a further reduction in GDP dropping to -8.2% in Q2 of 2020. Israel saw a slight recovery in Q3 at -1.5% but still a dramatic decline from 3.5% made during the same quarter during 2019. Israel also saw similar unwelcome numbers with their unemployment rate which stayed under 4% last year. The unemployment rate rose to 4.7% in October (this is the rate of absolute unemployment and excludes numbers compensated by the government under the 'leave without pay' policy).

Israel is currently experiencing deflation indicating the fall in demand. Israel recorded an inflation rate of 0.6% in December 2019 and saw a drop to -1.6% in May 2020. The deflation rate as of October 2020 stands at -0.8%. Israel has experienced several crises like the "Egg shortage", "Toilet paper shortage" and prices shot up where the production was stopped or reduced. The trade deficit in Israel was

lower at \$1553.8 million in October 2020, compared to \$2569.9 million a year earlier, which is a good sign as exports exceeded imports. Exports surged 17.1 percent year-on-year to USD 4160.9 million while imports declined 6.7 percent to USD 5714.7 million.

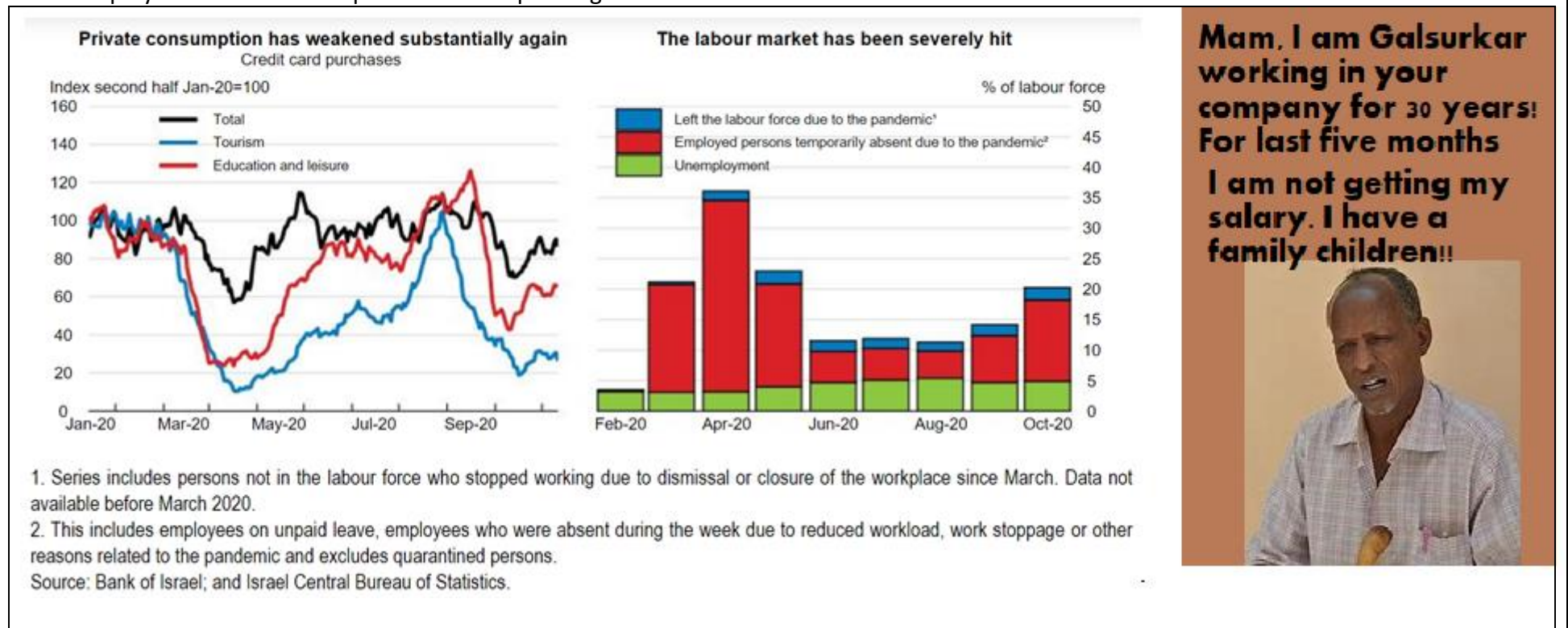
As the world is still fighting against the outbreak and trying to keep their economy afloat, the vaccine race is also on. Israel has signed deals with all three companies that have announced possible candidates – Pfizer, Moderna and Astrazeneca. In addition to these companies, Israel has signed deals with Arcturus (US), ReiThera (Italy), Russia's candidate Sputnik V while awaiting a vaccine from Israel's Biological Research Institute as well. These deals are going to cost the Israel's government several thousands and millions of US Dollars. Israel has also announced stimulus packages that aim to help the citizens worst hit by the pandemic. How will Israel pay such huge amounts to these companies and continue funding the massive stimulus plan that aims to mitigate economic damage caused by the pandemic?

Israel has issued, in a first, 100-year bonds worth \$5 billion, increasing the government debt in March this year – *100-year bonds sold will amount to \$1 billion at 4.5% annual interest, \$2 billion will be sold in 10-year bonds at 2.75% annual interest and an additional \$2 billion in 30-year bonds at 3.875% annual interest.* The government needs the funds to pay the 80 billion shekels economic plan which will reduce tax revenues significantly. However, the bonds issue was oversubscribed with demand of over \$25 billion (5 times the initial issue). The reason for such a positive response could be attributed to Israel's credit ratings by Moody's at A+ Stable, S&P's at AA- Stable and Fitch's at A1 Positive. (These firms do not rank the bonds, only the economy based robust growth potential, strong external position and highly credible institutions which support the credit profile). In October, the Government raised another NIS 35 billion government bonds to boost the economy following the second lockdown. This was coupled with the Central Bank announcing that it will keep the four-year loan to banks at a fixed rate of -0.1% which helped banking stocks jump during the trading session. However, this disappointed the investors who expected a similar cut to the base lending rate which stayed the same at a record low of 0.1%. The markets responded negatively thus causing mixed results and creating further panic.

The main questions are – Is Israel a haven to make long term investments? Will Israel lose its economic ranking in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)? Will Israel's economic performance deteriorate? The forecasts seem to believe that Israel will perform well over the next couple of years and get better and stronger and might be one of the few countries to recover faster than its allies from the health and economic crisis. Although, the road to recovery may be slow and challenging one.

After a decline of around 4.5% in 2020, GDP is projected to recover modestly by around 2.3% in 2021 before expanding by 4.2% in 2022 as an effective vaccine is rolled out according to OECD estimates. The Bank of Israel sees the Israeli economy growing 5.4% in 2021, slightly higher than the Ministry of Finance's forecast of 5% growth next year. According to Trading Economics global macro models and analysts' expectations, GDP Annual Growth Rate in Israel is expected to be 2.1% by the end of this quarter. In the long-term, the Israel GDP Annual Growth Rate is projected to trend around 4.30% in 2021 and 3.20% in 2022, according to econometric models. Leading Economic Index in Israel averaged 0.34% from 1975 until 2020, reaching an all-time high of 1.11% in May of 1991 and a record low of -2.50% in April of 2020. This index is used to predict the direction of global economic movements in future months. This index is expected to stay at 0.30% within the next 12 months. In October 2020, the index stood at 0.06%.

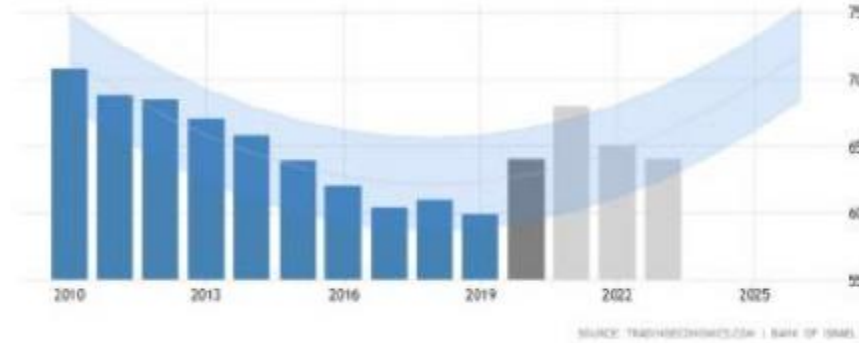
All this indicates that the economy will bounce back eventually. However, a major concern is the country's poverty rate. Huge numbers have been left unemployed and there is drop in consumer spending.



According to the Economic forecasts, published by OECD, the recovery from the pandemic will be slow. If we see a deterioration of the health situation, there will be a need to impose new restrictions which will slow down recovery. The OECD report states, approving a budget for 2021 as soon as possible will reduce uncertainty and improve fiscal transparency. Focusing on retraining and job search support to help the unemployed transition to new jobs will enforce better employment mobility. It states that there is an opportunity to introduce funds to sectors that need a boost in the short term to improve productivity and reduce the socio-economic gaps. Improving infrastructure, improving child-care capacity in the regions that have fallen behind will also help. Strengthening working benefits would support households in need and improving incentives for low-skilled workers is the need of the hour.

Sources: <https://taubcenter.org.il/>  
<https://tradingeconomics.com/israel/indicators>  
<https://www.oecd.org/israel/>  
<https://www.boi.org.il/en/Pages/Default.aspx>  
 Economic news websites:  
<https://en.globes.co.il/en/economy.tag>  
<https://www.themarket.com/>  
<https://www.bloomberg.com/middleeast>  
<https://www.calcalist.co.il/>

On the flip side, according to macro-economic estimates, Israel is expected to utilize 68% of their 2020 GDP on debt repayments. This expenditure is expected to be 65% in 2021 and 64% in 2022. The Government Debt to GDP was 59.90% in 2019. Below is a graph showing the estimates of Government debt to the GDP.



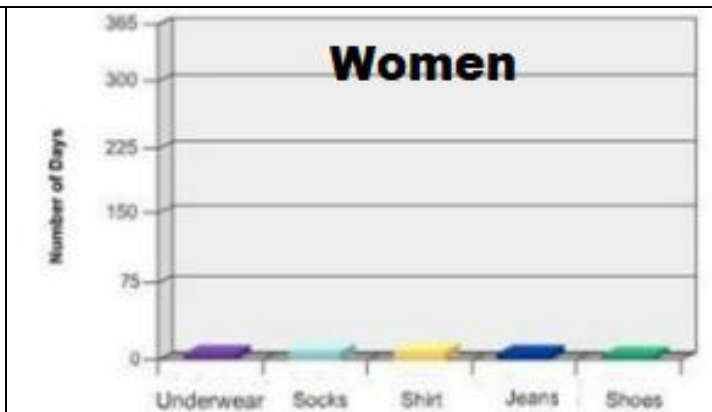
All things considered, there is a plausibility of headwinds and tailwinds for Israel's economy and no one currently knows what the future holds and where the economy stands in the next couple of years. We will have to wait this one out patiently!!!

*Dandeker we are fishing three hours but not a single fish!!!*

*Yes Palker. I am also wondering why. And it is the famous Dead Sea!!*



## Days in Row Men/Women can wear the same thing.





# Leora's Corner

Leora Micah Joseph



The year 2020, will go down in history as a landmark year. It was the year when the whole World came to a STOP!! None of the advances in science and technology could help prepare us for what we had to face. The pandemic shocked us, scared us, worried us, killed quite a number of our friends and relatives and sent many of us into depression. Despite the many theories floating around, we will never know exactly how or why the pandemic happened. We all had to stop doing all that we had been doing - travelling, socializing, going to the work place, going to school as well as indulging in leisure activities. We have spent the better part of the year just staying put at home. We had nowhere to go as all International and domestic travel was suspended. Entire nations went into lockdown - something that had never happened before. This upheaval has cost countries their economies. We have had to undo and unlearn things in various aspects of our lives.

**2020 Die in Corona!**



I believe in the adage “All that happens happens for the best”. We have many questions but no answers yet. Hopefully, someday the answers will be revealed and we will finally realize the truth of the above quoted statement.

The lockdown period ushered in CHANGE. We had to unlearn most of what we knew. We had to learn new things and adapt to the “new” circumstances and situations in our lives. Change is the only thing that is constant in life. Once we understand this and accept it, life becomes easier. Resistance to change will bring only frustration and invite stagnation in our life. Embracing the change with an open mind will enable us to grow and evolve.

New words like Corona, Covid 19, Pandemic, Social Distancing, Mask up, Vaccine, Work from Home and New Normal began trending. We all now have a common daily To Do list: - Use a mask to cover your mouth and nose when you step out, maintain social distancing, sanitize your hands regularly with a sanitizer or soap and water, do not touch your face with your hands, take a shower immediately when you return back home and so on and so forth.

Except for essential services, everything from schools, colleges, businesses, offices, places of worship, restaurants, theatres, gymnasiums, was shut! Sport meets were cancelled. Public Transport services were suspended for the general public. Life as we knew it came to a standstill. Wedding celebrations became a problem as numbers were highly restricted. This resulted in many postponing their wedding date or having a very small intimate gathering for the nuptials. Even fewer people were allowed to attend funerals. The sick found it difficult to get doctors to examine them and vacant beds in hospitals were a scarcity.

Most activities such as office work, business meetings, school and college education and placing orders for even essential goods such as food and grocery and paying for them shifted online forcing us to get better acquainted with the digital world and the Internet. Those unable to do so had to depend on family and friends to help them out. Children were forced indoors and had to adapt to online classes. No more physical interaction with your friends or teachers. Children adapted quickly to the 'new normal' but still miss their school, their friends, their teachers and want to know when they can go back to school!! Working adults suddenly had to adapt to "working from home" – a concept Indians especially, are not quite familiar with. Official meetings became virtual meetings on Zoom or other such digital platforms. One got ready for work, but went nowhere – only sat in front of the computer!!

The lockdown forced us into closer proximity with our family members as everyone was stuck at home. Though it gave us bonus time to spend with our families, it also added to work pressure as one had to balance house work (as house helps were not allowed to come to work), office work, and children's online classes – all together within the confines of the home, which in most cases are small. It was a situation fraught with many difficulties, leading to clashes with family members

The economy took a hit as many industries, businesses and even local vendors were forced to shut shop. People lost jobs and were left with no income. The most affected were the daily wage earners

This all sounds very depressing. But remember, every cloud has a silver lining. Let's take a look at the positive aspects and focus on life's lessons that this year has taught us. Many of the changes we made are here to stay. The lockdown gave birth to many NEW things – concepts, ideas, ventures, skill sets as well as businesses. The biggest lesson not just for individuals but for entire nations like India is that of becoming self-reliant. How did people spend their time during the lockdown? Some learned to cook as this skill became a necessity. The smart ones used the opportunity to upgrade their skills through various online training programmes. Yet others finally found time to either take up new hobbies or pursue those that they had neglected over the years. A few were motivated to kick out unhealthy habits and adopt a healthy life style during the lockdown. Then there were those who utilized their time to strengthen their relationships with their families. Couples on the brink of divorce, consciously took a step back and worked on reconciliation during this time. Staying indoors, forced us to press the pause button in our life, to look deep within ourselves, to thin and to reflect, and leading to self-discovery. We realized that actually our needs in life are very few.

Loss of jobs led to loss of income. However, new types of jobs and job opportunities emerged during the pandemic. Necessity is the mother of invention. Some who lost their jobs, did not give in to despair and depression. They utilized their time to upgrade their skills, moved into different fields or became entrepreneurs by providing necessary services.

The year 2020 showed us that the Spirit of Giving is still alive and kicking. Charity led from the front. It was heartening to see people dig deep into their pockets to help the less fortunate ones. Community kitchens were set up, food packets were delivered to the poor and financial aid was provided. Yet others volunteered their time helping others. Animal lovers stepped out to take care of the strays that would have starved to death during the lockdown. The young helped run chores for senior citizens living alone at home. These acts of loving kindness were a reassuring sign that humanity is thriving. How heart-warming indeed.

Staying indoors has made us appreciate nature even more. I hope Mother Nature will be able to completely rejuvenate herself. I fervently hope and pray that we humans have learned the most crucial lesson of all: If we wish to leave behind a better future for our progeny, we need to nurture and sustain Mother Nature and the time to do it is NOW. We need to learn to live and let live. The onus is on each one of us. As you sow, so shall you reap! Every act of loving kindness brings Paradise closer to the Earth.

# How did we come to celebrate the New Year in the fall when in the Bible it was celebrated in the spring?

What is the origin of the first month's peculiar name?



## Hebrew Months

תשרי Tishri	Sep/Oct	אדר ב' Adar II	Mar
חשוון Heshvan	Oct/Nov	ניסן Nisan	Mar/Apr
כסלו Kislev	Nov/Dec	אייר Iyar	Apr/May
טבת Tevet	Dec/Jan	סיון Sivan	May/Jun
שבט Shevat	Jan/Feb	תמוז Tamuz	Jun/Jul
אדר Adar	Feb/Mar	אב Av	Jul/Aug
		אלול Elul	Aug/Sep

According to Gilad's hypothesis, sometime during the first and second centuries CE, the Jewish sages gave a new meaning to the mysterious holiday described in the books of Leviticus and Numbers, according to the special status we attribute to it today.

They determined that this is the anniversary of the creation of the world, and the day on which human beings are judged for their actions during the past year, and on which their fate for the coming year is determined.

Gilad further speculates that the choice of the fall season for the New Year as opposed to spring, which was common throughout the region (for example, the new year in Iran is still celebrated around March), was intended to distinguish the Jewish people from the surrounding nations.

We also add that the destruction of the Temple and the severing of the agricultural connection from the religious ritual likely enabled this change in the calendar.

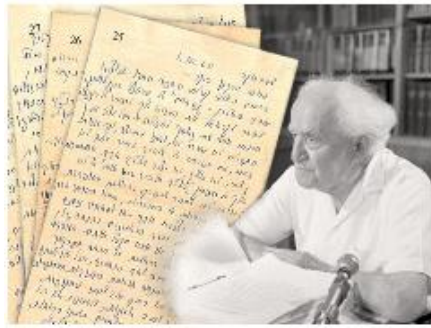
<https://blog.nli.org.il/en/tishrei/>



**Ben-Gurion – Freedom is your right but it does not come free**







## Ben-Gurion: *“Prayer is Self-Deception”*

(Self-Deception is the action or practice of allowing oneself to believe that a false or invalidated feeling, idea, or situation is true.)

**Israel's first Prime Minister reveals:**  
*I do not envy soldiers who pray. A unique glimpse into David Ben-Gurion's inner philosophy*

Not one thing about the journey undertaken by the members of the early Zionist movement was clear-cut, simple or predictable. To create a reality that exceeded imagination, Zionism needed creative minds; the young movement found what it sought in figures of the stature of Pinsker, Herzl and Ahad Ha'am. Even after these individuals had passed on, the movement's members continued to grow and establish Herzl's vision of a Jewish state that could serve as a spiritual center and “a light unto the nations”, as described by Ahad Ha'am.

After the state was established and the vision that was conceived through words and actions became a reality, manifested in everyday life, the leaders of this movement which evolved into a state continued to challenge the philosophers and theorists. Now they turned to the intellectuals who gathered in the newly-established universities and presented them with problems and questions raised by this rebirth of Jewish sovereign life.

David Ben-Gurion, a statesman with an avid interest in philosophy, made a point of constantly engaging in dialogue with academics and specialists from different areas of expertise. He conducted comprehensive correspondences with inventors, scholars and scientists, observed their opinions on various issues and clarified his own views on those same topics. The National Library collections include many letters sent and received by Ben-Gurion; among them is a letter he sent to the Israeli philosopher and academic Professor Samuel Hugo Bergman, as well as Bergman's reply.

In 1960, Israel's first Prime Minister contacted Professor Bergman to share his thoughts about a recent personal experience. Ben-Gurion opened his letter to Bergman with a philosophical-theological analysis of the biblical verse: “In the image of God He created him” (Genesis 1:27)

Was man truly created in the image of God? Ben-Gurion thought otherwise. Though he rejected atheism and denied the assumption that “the world consists of materials and atoms blindly put together, and that there is no logic, reason or rule to the cosmos,” he also regarded any personification of God as “different forms of idolatry.”

The inability to understand the universe and how it works brings man to “compare the ‘mysterious infinity’ (an expression from the Kabbalah that perhaps describes best the unknowable divine essence) to man – this is but naive haughtiness, an arrogant pretense of a small creature towards its ‘creator.’” Ben-Gurion wrote the word ‘creator’ in quotation marks, a way of pronouncing man’s inability to articulate the meaning of infinity or capture it through logic.

At the end of his letter, Ben-Gurion describes the experience that brought about the thoughts he shared with Bergman: “And it may seem strange that I write this immediately following Yom Kippur, after joining a company of paratroopers holding the Yom Kippur prayer service in one of the shacks here [in Sde Boker, Ben-Gurion’s desert home]. All evening yesterday and nearly the entire day today, until *ma’ariv* [the evening prayer]. I listened to the prayers and contemplated them. I could feel the devotion of the few people who believed in what they were saying; I felt respect and fondness for them – but I did not envy them.” Ben-Gurion argued that prayer is not a dialogue between man and his creator, claiming that “it may feel pleasant – yet it is not reality, but self-deception.”

One month later, on November 11<sup>th</sup>, Bergman sent his reply, apologizing for the delay. He addressed the Prime Minister by his name (“Mr. Ben-Gurion”) omitting his title but adding “the highly respected.” Bergman responded dismissively to the idea that Moses received the Torah at Mount Sinai: “Although I must say my view of the Torah is closer to that of those who have pure faith than to those who see the Torah as no more than a purely secular book and do not see the fundamental, vast difference between the Torah and secular literature.”

Bergman claimed, “it is a fundamental fact that there are holy texts; texts that were written with inspiration from above.” According to Bergman, these holy texts also include the New Testament, the Quran and the Indian Vedas. The fact that these texts are holy does not eliminate the necessity to “examine the books applying historical-scientific means of criticism”. At the same time, Bergman acknowledged the existence of higher worlds, “and these holy texts are the most important channels through which the higher worlds impact man’s development.”

The creation of the world, according to Bergman, just like the creation of man in God's image, is one of those facts that are true "in a divine, metaphysical or symbolic manner, if you will." Bergman agreed with Ben-Gurion that God cannot be comprehended through logic, and therefore one must "stand before Him in reverence and awe."

At the end of his letter, Bergman addressed the question that had been troubling the 'Old Man' (as the Prime Minister was commonly known) – the question of the essence of prayer. He wrote as follows: "The question whether or not prayer is a dialogue is not one that can be answered, in my opinion, through theoretical arguments. Theoretically, to all appearances, you are of course right that the person praying is speaking to themselves. Yet whether that is the whole picture, an onlooker cannot say. It is a matter of experience. I am an empiricist and therefore believe the reports of the greatest prayers of all religions and nations. He who says it is but 'self-deception' is like someone who observes two lovers, and insists that their love is but self-deception. 'Objectively', outwardly, he is right. And yet, 'love is strong as death.'"



**Experimental drug cocktail'** given to Trump to fight coronavirus. On Friday, October 2, President Trump was given a single one-gram dose of a "Regeneron polyclonal antibiotic cocktail," his physician Dr. Sean P. Conley said in a statement. "He completed the infusion without incident. The president has been taking zinc, vitamin D, famotidine, melatonin and a daily aspirin." Shortly after the statement was released, the president was flown to Walter Reed Military Hospital on Marine One for treatment of **COVID-19**. The White House has since released a video from President Trump he said "I think I'm doing very well but we're going to make sure that things work out."

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFZJR9yQpEY&feature=emb\\_rel\\_end](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFZJR9yQpEY&feature=emb_rel_end)



**TEST YOURSELF**  
**IF YOU ANSWER CORRECTLY ALL THESE QUESTIONS THEN YOU ARE PAKKA SHANIWAR TELI**  
 BY Ellen Daniels

1.	How do you take “naav”?	11.	On what occasions Bene-Israel’s perform “Malida “ceremony?
2.	When do you eat “bidda”?	12.	When do you say “Uncle Aunty Jewayla yaa”
3.	What is a must dish for “mendi “dinner?	13.	As Bene-Israel Tourist in Raigad, where would you go first?
4.	When do you make “Choi che Ladu”	14.	When do you arrange “Eliyadoo Hanavi” Chair
5.	When do you eat “karanji / puri”?	15.	When do you take “Naav”
6.	Why are you at “Bhau cha Dhakka”? once a year?	16.	When do you use “Suter Pheni”
7.	As young man, why do you keep looking up in Synagogues?	17.	When do you wear white clothes?
8.	When do you not take bath?	18.	When do you make “Ghari”
9.	When do you do “Chalsoni” ceremony?	19.	When do you “Ghatto Halwa”
10.	When do you make “puranpoli”	20.	When do you eat “Pink Halwa”

Correct Replies: Refer to your parents and grand parents

***Please send us your creative interesting materials for this page if your mind is creative.***



# Jewish Living in Australia and India as a Bene-Israel.

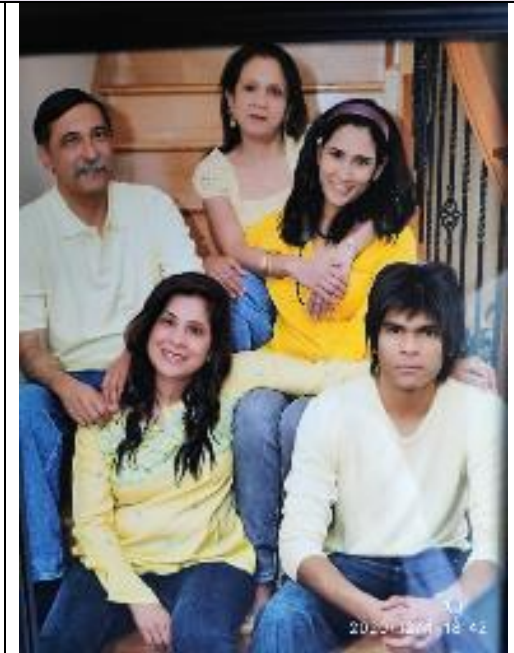
## Joseph (Joey) Joseph

### LIFE AS A BENE ISRAEL IN INDIA AND AUSTRALIA

When I first received a request to write my experiences as a Bene Israel in India and Australia, I had mixed emotions. My mind was crowded with the happiest most memorable memories growing up in India and while happy too, memories of a whole new learning experience in my almost thirty years living in Australia.

My parents were both from Karachi and came to Mumbai in 1947 during the partition. They came as refugees with their respective families and were forced to leave in a hurry with just the clothes on their body. While their Islamic neighbors took over their properties, they were given just 48 hours to leave Karachi. During family get together, stories of this period in their lives were often related with a touch of nostalgic sadness. They met and married in Mumbai then Bombay and started their lives from scratch. My parents together, had a total of 10 siblings which meant I grew up with a large extended family and numerous cousins. Therefore, every occasion, be it a regular Sabbath, our high holy days, a family event like a “Pospir Malida” or malida or just a simple get together, felt like a celebration.

My brother and I both completed our education from a Christian school with just about 7 other Jewish kids in our school. We generally experienced no difference in our treatment because we were Jewish. However, sometimes, our being Jewish was completely ignored and my father’s repeated request to the principal to please not hold exams on the Jewish high holy days was met with deaf ears. This felt insensitive, deliberate and discriminatory. On the other hand, at other times, I was favored and enjoyed a certain extra special affection from particular teachers because I was Jewish.



My brother and I both completed our education from a Christian school with just about 7 other Jewish kids in our school. We generally experienced no difference in our treatment because we were Jewish. However, sometimes, our being Jewish was completely ignored and my father’s repeated request to the principal to please not hold exams on the Jewish high holy days was met with deaf ears. This felt insensitive, deliberate and discriminatory. On the other hand, at other times, I was favored and enjoyed a certain extra special affection from particular teachers because I was Jewish.

As a Bene Israel Jew in Mumbai, I always felt special and unique because I was almost always the only Jewish person in most scenarios. Whether I was in any particular class in school, or when part of a batch of Engineering trainees, or sailing on various ships as a marine engineer or working as a superintendent for a shipping company. This uniqueness often generated tremendous curiosity amongst whoever I came in contact with and remarks such as “You are the first Indian Jewish person I have met” or “I had no idea that there were Jews in India” or surprisingly even a question like “Who or What is a Jew”? were not uncommon. The subsequent discussions about my Bene Israel Jewish background and history, presented me with the perfect opportunity, to make at least one more person aware of the Bene Israel presence in India, which I found immensely fulfilling and gratifying.

The 1967 Six Day War put Israel in the limelight. Listening to my elders discuss the Arab Israeli conflict and glorify the Israeli victory instilled in me a great love and pride for Israel. I felt blessed to be able to identify myself as Jewish and be part of the world Jewish population. I believe this feeling of pride, unconditional love and loyalty for Israel is common in most Bene Israeli Jews but unfortunately I have met many a Jewish person in Melbourne, who does not share that sentiment and I find it disheartening.

My life at home in Melbourne as a Bene Israel Jew hasn't changed drastically from what it was in Mumbai. I continue to maintain a traditional but not overly orthodox life with my family. Shabbath is still special and the Yigdal is still chanted along with the blessings for haetz and hadama. The difference is now we have khallah (Ashkenazi Jewish Sabbath bread) and sometimes some Ashkenazi/Sephardic friends at our sabbath table which we did not have in Mumbai. This once again presents a perfect opportunity to enlighten other Jews about Bene Israel customs and traditions which, from my experience, they always seem extremely curious about and fascinated by. We still perform a malida for auspicious occasions, still make coconut milk halwa for Rosh Hashanah and share it with our bene Israel and Ashkenazi friends, and still wear white to the synagogue on Yom Kippur even if the rest of the congregants are wearing blacks, blues and various other colours. More recently we have observed that a number of congregants who queried us about our white attire over the years have started to wear white themselves. It makes me proud that a Bene Israel family of 4, without even meaning to, has had an impact on some congregants and brought about a meaningful change. On the other hand we too have adopted certain Ashkenazi traditions into our Bene Israel home. For example, during the Passover seder, when comes the time for dinner, our first course now is always 'matza ball chicken soup'. A dish that my son absolutely disliked the very first time he tasted it, has now become a new Passover tradition in our home. Another one is the 'havdalah' ritual at the end of shabbath, something I never did in my home when in Mumbai. Today, we thoroughly enjoy performing the havdalah ritual and singing the 'Eliyahu Hanavi' in the Ashkenazi tunes in our Bene Israel home.

We have a small Bene Israel community here which we meet up with for family celebrations and events. Not all of us are members of the same synagogue. My family and I belong to two congregations, the Sassoon Yehuda Sephardic Synagogue and the Leo Baeck Progressive Synagogue. The Sephardic Synagogue helps us keep in touch with our background and our roots while the Leo Baeck Congregation (LBC) has helped our spiritual growth. As my wife and I don't read or understand Hebrew, the English transliterations and translations have made all the prayer services far more meaningful. One of the most redeeming factors of a prayer service at the progressive synagogue is that everyone, young and old, are either reading the prayers or respectfully listening. There is absolutely no talking unlike the orthodox synagogues, where the women perpetually talk and cause a disturbance.

Both my synagogues have often asked me to do presentations on the Indian Jews and/or Bene Israel Jews and I have grabbed the opportunity and done my bit to educate and dispel doubts and scepticism. I have also showed them videos of our religious traditions like our Bene Israel weddings, simultaneously providing an authentic explanation of the same. My wife Rebecca and her sister have taken part in the annual Jewish fete in Melbourne showcasing Bene Israeli cooking. The Australian Jewish News featured Rebecca's Rosh Hashana coconut milk recipe in one of their issues. Rebecca was also interviewed on Australian ABC radio in regards to Bene Israel cooking and has contributed one of her recipes to an Indian Jewish Cookbook funded by the Jewish Community Council of Victoria. In the year 2000 my wife Rebecca and I were interviewed for an article on the Bene Israel Jews of India in the Australian Jewish News. The Ashkenazi journalist who interviewed us and wrote the article titled it "Curry not Gefilte Fish" and looked positively shocked when I asked her "What is gefilte fish"? She realized then that the Ashkenazi Jewish delicacy gefilte fish, is not necessarily a delicacy representative of the world Jewish population.

In Melbourne, I have come across both, Jewish people who are well read, well aware and knowledgeable about the various Jewish sects and tribes

including the Bene Israelis of India and also Jewish people who are prejudiced and think that we couldn't possibly be 'really' Jewish. We regularly get asked about our Jewish heritage. Some of the times from genuine interest and an awareness of the Bene Israel Indian Jews and at other times from a place of total ignorance and scepticism. It was at a synagogue members brunch that I got asked and I quote "How do you get to be Jewish" by one of the guests. I instinctively felt my host, seated between us, cringe with embarrassment. We have sometimes been told "we don't look Jewish". This experience is not uncommon for Bene Israelis the world over. I recently read a book called "Burnt Bread and Chutney - a memoir of an Indian Jewish Childhood" by Carmit Delman. Carmit Delman grew up in America & Israel and is the daughter of a Bene Israel mother and east European father. I would like to quote a small passage from that book....

QUOTE " "Why don't you look Jewish?" people often asked us.

'What does Jewish look like?' we wanted to say in return. 'Judaism ....is not a look.'"

"But they asked this because most of the Jews they saw around them in America were descended from Eastern Europe and they assumed that those people defined Jews all over the world.

When we explained that we were the mixture of an Indian Jew and an Eastern European Jew, people automatically identified us by the brownness and what made us non-white.

Their assumptions drew a distinct line between us and them" END QUOTE From the outside, no matter what the gradations of our Jewish heritage, the shadow of Indian brown in our skin cause some, to automatically perceive us as non Jewish. . . . Still, we trek through life with the spirit of a Jew, fleshed out by the unique challenges and wonders of a combined Bene Israeli Indian, Jewish and now Australian tradition."



## Australia Population 23.4 Million (2016)

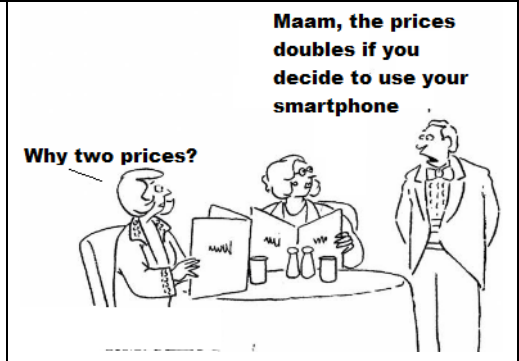
		%
English	7,852,221	33.6
Australian	7,298,238	31.2
Irish	2,388,058	10.2
Scottish	2,023,460	8.6
Chinese	1,214,438	5.2
Italian	1,000,013	4.3
Indian	619,163	2.6
Greek	397,435	1.7
Dutch	339,547	1.4
Others	232,004	1.2
<b>The white population in Australia is almost 95%.</b>		

# The Bene-Israel World of *WhatsApp Chat Groups*

Leora M. Joseph



Technology has changed the world. Our communication abilities and styles today are hugely influenced by it. Wireless technology has added a new dimension. The Internet took the world by storm leading to the birth of Electronic Mail, (E-Mail), Face Book and other such programmers that have become the norm. The simple telephone became a wireless mobile phone/ cellphone. That too underwent incredible changes. It is now like a mini computer equipped with a camera, capable of sending and receiving text, audio and visual messages, images and clips. We are now able to communicate instantly with anyone anywhere in the world.



WhatsApp Messenger was launched in 2009. It has become the easiest, quickest, cheapest and most popular mode of communication today. Through WhatsApp, one can send and receive text messages, images as well as audio and video clips. One can also make audio and video calls, thus enabling instantaneous communication with several people at once. It has become an extremely important part of our daily form of communication with one another. Few people understood early on the importance and the use of this technology to disseminate information quickly and simultaneously to many people. That is how WhatsApp Groups emerged. Our Indian Jewish community has also taken advantage of this technology to ensure that information is shared quickly to our people. Groups with specific goals came into existence starting with the Chosen People Group. Here is a compilation of the major groups. They have been listed according to the dates when they were created. This list has been prepared on the basis of information received.

**The Chosen People:** This is the first ever Jewish WhatsApp Group created in India in the Bene-Israel Jewish Community. It was the vision of Herzel Isaac (Pezarkar) who formed this group in January 2013. It was created primarily to bring the Jews in India together under one platform for sharing Jewish community related news, updates such as Shabbat Timings, Festival celebrations, community events, synagogue functions, youth activities, Kosher services as well as information about births marriages and deaths in the community. The group has members not just from Mumbai, and Thane, but all over India. Non



relevant information, good morning and other such messages are not allowed in this group. Social decorum and etiquette is to be maintained by all. There is a core Administration team that manages the group and takes policy decision. They have the right to remove members as per their discretion and without warning. The number of participants kept growing and could not be accommodated in a single group. Hence 2 more Chosen People groups were created in July 2014 and September 2014. Additionally, a Chosen People NRI Group was created in October 2016 to accommodate Jews from India who have migrated elsewhere – Israel, USA, Canada etc., but still wish to be connected to the Jewish community in India. All four groups together have more than 650 members.

**Kabbalah Group:** This group was created by Judah Kolet in January 2014. The purpose of this group is to have Kabbalah related discussions and talks on a regular basis. Forwards and non-relevant messages are not allowed on this group. The creator of the group Judah Kolet is the one who gives talks on the Kabbalah, shares information and initiates a discussion. This is a serious group focused on earnestly studying and learning about Jewish mysticism. This group of 44 individuals has members from India as well as abroad.

**The Bene Israel Stree Mandal:** This women only group was created by Florence Haeems in June 2014. This group is open to members of the Bene Israel Stree Mandal – a women’s organization which is more than 100 years old. A total of 56 ladies are part of this group. The WhatsApp group of the members was created for the purpose of easy communication. All programmers and events of the Stree Mandal are communicated to the members via WhatsApp. Other community related information is also shared on the group. Members are allowed to post other general information and messages in the group.

**Jewish Family Tip Corner:** This group was first started in August 2014 by Aaron Kolet and was called “A Tip Korner”. It included his family and friends and slowly the numbers grew. Initially he was the sole administrator. Later on others were added. According to him, entire families are part of this group. In 2018 the group was renamed as Jewish **Family Tip Corner**. According to its description, This group “shares news, events and activities that enrich others, keeping in mind our Jewish culture and traditions” Topics related to Jewish matters are shared and discussed. Members of the group are requested to avoid posting controversial material. The Administrators reserve the right to remove members. General messages are allowed to be posted on this group. However, the administrators do not allow members to send messages on Shabbat.

**Succath Shelomo Synagogue:** This group was created in April 2015 by Joseph Nowgowkar. It is for community members who are interested in the activities of the Synagogue in Pune. All information related to the Pune Jewish Community and synagogue is posted here. Only the administrator can post messages on this group. Other members are not allowed to send messages. This group consists of 94 individuals from India and abroad.

**The JRU Youth Group of the 1980's:** This is a closed group created in Israel in June 2015 and is only open for those who were members of the JRU Youth Group (Jewish Religious Union) in Byculla, Mumbai in the 1980's. There are 58 members in this group. JRU YG friends have scattered all over the world with a majority of them in Israel. Dr. Hananiel Solomon who is also in Israel mooted the idea of creating a WhatsApp group of all YG friends and the same was created by Leo (Elijah) Daniels. Initially, the group consisted of only those living in Israel. However, over a period of time as friends started re-connecting across the continents, those living in the Diaspora, were added to the group. This is a social group meant for friends to re-connect and stay in touch with each other. When a member visits Israel, those in Israel try to meet up with that member. If members come to India, those in India do the same. Apart from this, the members in Israel also meet up at least twice a year.

**Pune Jewish Community:** This group was started by Joseph Nowgowkar in January 2016 and administered by him. All information related to the local Jewish community and other Jewish community related information is shared on this group. There are 53 members in this group. Though members do post forwards and jokes, discussion on politics and other controversial subjects are not allowed.

**Magen Abraham Synagogue (Ahmedabad):** This was created in October 2016 by Mrs. Serena Jacob with the help of the youngsters from the community. This group has 79 members. It was created for the purpose of circulating community information to the Jewish community of Gujarat. Generally, only the committee members who are administrators can post the relevant synagogue and community related information on the group. Sometimes with permission, other members are also allowed to post information. Non relevant messages, forwards, discussion on controversial topics etc., are not allowed in the group.

**Shaare Rason Synagogue (Mumbai):** This group was created by Mrs. Sinnora Kolatkar in November 2016. This group is open only to members of the synagogue. All news and information about synagogue activities including dates and timings for prayers is shared on this platform. General messages and posts are also found in this group. This is a small group with 20 members.

**International Organization of Bene Israel:** This group was created by Elkan Palkar in Mumbai in January 2017. It is now administered by Yaffa Gupte- Samson and Saul Aptekar from Israel and a couple of others. It was created basically to bring all the Bene Israel Community members from across the globe under one platform. This Whatsapp group which has 194 members is also connected to the International Organization of Bene Israelis. Information related to Bene Israel tradition and culture is shared on the group along with news about the Organization's activities and events.

**Dibrei Torah:** This group was created by Mr. Raymod Ramrajkar in August 2017. It was formed specifically for the study of the scriptures of the week. Only the Administrators can post messages. Debates or discussions are not allowed. Every week

Torah insights are shared by Mr. Ramrajkar for the benefit of the participants. It is usually related to the Torah portion of the week. If any member has any query, he /she can directly contact Mr. Ramrajkar for clarification. Mr. Ramrajkar has a running theme every year. In the past he focussed on Torah and Ethics. Last year's theme was Torah and Talmud. This year the theme is Torah and Targum Onkelos. The group consists of members from India as well as Israel and other countries. This Group has 245 members.

**Piyut India:** This group created in January 2018, by Avichai Bhastekar in Israel. According to its' description, it " Aims to synchronise between the Jews of India, Bene Israel from anywhere in India and Israel and learn and teach songs and poems that passed between father and son." The songs could be in Hebrew or Marathi. The focus is on preserving our tradition and passing it on to the next generation. This group also has members from India, Israel and elsewhere. This group with 239 participants is very focused about its' goals and does not encourage members to post non relevant messages here.

**Joyous JRU:** This group was created in April 2018 by Johnny Jhirad. This was formed basically to bring together the congregation of the Reformed movement in India – the Jewish Religious Union which used to have its' synagogue Rodef Shalom in Byculla, Mumbai. Information regarding JRU activities and events are shared on the group. This year, as prayers could not be held due to the pandemic; they shared prayer recordings during the Festivals and also held memorial services on WhatsApp. This group has 76 members, mainly from Mumbai, Thane.


**The Torah Café Group:** There existed a group called Think Jewish which had been started by Sharon Garsulkar. However, in June 2018, he handed over the group to Saul Aptekar in Israel to manage. The group was recreated as The Torah Café. This WhatsApp Group has a very specific goal - "To learn Torah in the form of healthy, open discussions referring to the Jewish sources". Members are encouraged to ask questions related to Jewish philosophy and halacha and also share insights on the weekly parasha as well as post videos by various Rabbis on Jewish topics. There are 121 members in this group. The Administrators do not allow posting of good morning , Shabbat and festival messages. This group is closed over Shabbat and re—opened to the members on Saturday night.

**Tehillim Group:** This group was started by Mrs. Nina Shimshon Galsurkar earlier this year 2020 during the lockdown. The main purpose of this group is to read the Tehillim or Psalms of King David. The 45 ladies in this group mainly from Mumbai, have divided the reading of the 150 psalms amongst them. Every day, between them, they complete the reading of the entire Book of Psalms. Four ladies from the group have taken it upon themselves to also daily record a reading of a chapter from the Torah. It is then posted in the group for everyone's benefit. This is done in English and in Marathi. Non relevant messages and posts are not allowed in this group.

Apart from these, there are other smaller groups like Sephardic Friends and Taglit Groups. The Sephardic group consists of a

closed group of friends from India who went to Israel along with Rabbi Abraham Benjamin in different batches in the 1980s under the aegis of the Sephardic Centre, Jerusalem, Israel. This particular group consists of members who were part of the very first group that travelled to Israel with him in 1984. This group was formed only so that our batchmates can re-connect and stay in touch. There are likely to be more such groups created by the different batches that went to Israel in later years. In the last few years until 2018, ORT India has sent several Jewish youth to Israel on the Taglit Birthright Programme. Each year's group has its' own Taglit Group whatsapp. These are purely social groups to keep in touch with their Jewish friends.  
 Compiled by Leora M. Joseph

<p><b>Notes:</b> WhatsApp groups started as a social groups. However With time political groups were invented and with time news spread that the <b>administrators of the group will be responsible for any incorrect / damaging news</b> sent in the group. This <b>has scared all of the administrators</b> and communication on WhatsApp group is getting limited.</p> <p>The Union of Lawyer's in the USA have suggested 20 legal rules to be followed by all WhatsApp /Face Book / Tweeter/ Instagram and others social media groups.</p> <p>Though this moves has come under criticism blaming lawyers who will benefit in new business, there is a strong lobby supporting this movement with increasing disobedience over social media.</p>	<p><b>Laws for WhatsApp groups under development.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All WhatsApp groups will have to register in the local municipal office and get a registration number that should become the part of the name of the group and type of group.          Example: USANJ88321-P (USA New Jersey Zip Number P=Political Group).</li> <li>2. All members have to sign agreement they understand the purpose of forming the group and will behave responsibly.</li> <li>3. Unwarned members removed from the group can sue the administrator/s up to \$50,000.00.</li> </ol> <p>Other 17 rules. Look up internet on these subjects.</p>
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<p>I have 16000 WhatsApp friends! No one came?</p> 	<p>administrators</p> 	<p>I am member of 18 WhatsApp group. All send me the same messages again and again!??</p> 	<p>This new guy on our WhatsApp is talking integellent things and wants us to work for the community!?</p> <p>What??!! Just remove him from the group!!</p> 
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As soon as a baby is born in the house, parents start searching for a dai or a midwife who can bathe the baby and at the same time give the baby a good body massage. You question them about it and they say that a massage helps to strengthen the bones of the baby.

## **But does it really serve this purpose?**

**Let's check it out..**

**(<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/health-fitness/health-news/Sleep-tight/articleshow/3099435.cms> )**



Says Dr Indira Hinduja, a well-known gynaecologist, Actually giving massages with the help of a midwife to a newborn baby is like a tradition which has been continued down the ages.

But I don't see any health benefits in the practice at all. Actually they do it because it will strengthen the baby's bones but I don't think it serves that purpose. Also there is no scientific meaning to it. Parents normally hire dais or midwives to do the job who mostly don't do it the proper way as they are not trained in it. They perhaps may have learnt it from their mothers or grandmothers, she adds. Also the most dangerous part of the massage is that they put oil in the nose of the baby and in the ears which is very harmful, she warns.

In fact even Dr Nandita Palshetkar, also a gynaecologist, echoes similar views. The baby's skin is so delicate and through the massage spread any infection to the other parts of the body. I personally don't think it's a good idea to have a dai at home to give a massage, she says, adding, if at all the parents are interested in giving a massage to the baby then they should do it only after the baby is three months old. Initially they should avoid it.

She also advises against putting oil in the ears of the baby as it can cause fungal infections in the ear. Putting kajjal in the eyes is also not advisable because it has carbon. I see this practise followed only in India, nowhere else in the world do they follow such practices, she explains.

Dr B K Shah, a senior practitioner feels that this issue is still controversial as there's not much research done on the subject. But he does feel that, it's not very helpful to the baby. The massage is supposed to help the baby in the development of bones. But a child any ways does all the normal exercises and movements when he/she grows up, he reasons.

Putting oil in the ears or even in the navel is not hygienic at all, he affirms. In fact a mother should bother more about the

food that is given to a newborn baby as it is the food that will help in the development of bones rather than the massage. Even exposing the baby to early morning sunlight is very helpful as the sun's rays carry Vitamin D which is highly beneficial for the development of bones.

A mother herself should massage the baby, say the doctors. She should apply oil gently on the dry skin of the baby rather than use a midwife for the purpose who does it with forced rough movements which can harm the skin and bones of a baby if not done in a professional way. The touch, love and affection of a mother when she gives a soothing massage to the baby helps them both to bond well and even plays an important role in the growth of the baby, says Dr Hinduja.

### **Benefits of Massage to the Infant;**

Here are some of the benefits of infant massage if given by a mother as proven in research findings:

- The sleep quality can be improved through infant massage.
- It provides relaxation and also strengthens the immune system.
- Infant massage releases hormones which can assist in relieving discomfort from teething, chest and nose congestion, colic and emotional stress.
- Skin stimulation improves brain-body communication.
- Gentle massage encourages the development of flexibility and co-ordination.
- It also increases oxygen and nutrient flow to the cells.
- Infant massage decreases stress and tension for both you and your child. It encourages a state of calmness and relaxation.
- It increases parental confidence and self-esteem.
- It strengthens bonding, especially for those parents with interrupted bonding through prematurely, medical problems.
- Infant massage provides quality time for a working parent.
- It provides daily relaxation for both you and your child.
- It helps to maintain the strong bond between you and your child that forms the basis of loving, open communication.
- Massage can lessen the effects of postnatal depression and help mother have a more positive interaction with their baby.
- Bonding is a unique relationship between you and your baby. It is a pleasant experience for both of you. Strong attachment can develop a sense of security in your child. Quality time with children can often be affected with infant massage.
- Doing a massage right after getting home from work will help a parent reconnect with baby after a hard day, and will help both baby and parent unwind.

## Benefits of Massage to the Infant' mother;

The doctors also suggested that a mother can take a body massage soon after delivery. Says Dr Hinduja.

- A massage tones up the muscles of the mother which had all undergone a change during the nine months of pregnancy. But I still feel that exercise is a better option.
- Even Dr Shah feels that, the abdominal muscles of a mother get stretched during pregnancy and hence need toning up including the genital passages. So a good massage or even abdominal exercises will help a lot.
- One good thing about this old tradition of taking care of the mother after pregnancy is that the food given to a mother is high in proteins. She needs all these nutrients as she loses a lot of it after delivery.
- Also the 40 day rest period advised to a mother is very essential as it helps to maintain a hormonal balance during his period. The full system of the mother that gets altered during pregnancy needs this time to settle down.
- Dr. Palshetkar too is of the opinion that every mothers who have undergone caesarean deliveries should get their legs and thighs massaged.

So a massage given by a mother does convey the love of a mother to a child and in turn the bond grows deeper and deeper day by day.

## Expert Opinion:

When one of our representative discussed this article with a Bene-Israel lady living in Israel who is an expert in giving massage to infants and their mothers, she replied that these doctors are all "Hajams" !

She said the baby come out from a very compact place in to open air. In the womb there is restrict growth space and the infant gets adapted to the enlivenment. The infant massage gives the direction to the bones and muscles to grow healthy. The oil on the body keeps the skin of the infant moist so that it does not crack and get infected. The oil in the ear is to protect from water that goes in the ear and causes infection. The oil in the nose is to keep out the infection as the sinus is still weak to do it. Further the bath helps the infant to sleep, that helps healthy growth.

Further she said the infant does not cry or reject the massage as the infant feels comfort. Also a new born infant's mother giving massage is not correct as she has no experience and needs to take complete rest.



The expert did not want her name to be displayed. Most of us BI know her.

## BOOK Review :

“*Finding Home*” by Angelica Jacob from Australia

Angelica Jacob’s beautifully written memoir, “Finding Home”, begins in 1970’s Bombay and continues to 1980’s Australia. It is the story of a young woman’s journey to a new land, but it is also the story of an Indian Jewish community.

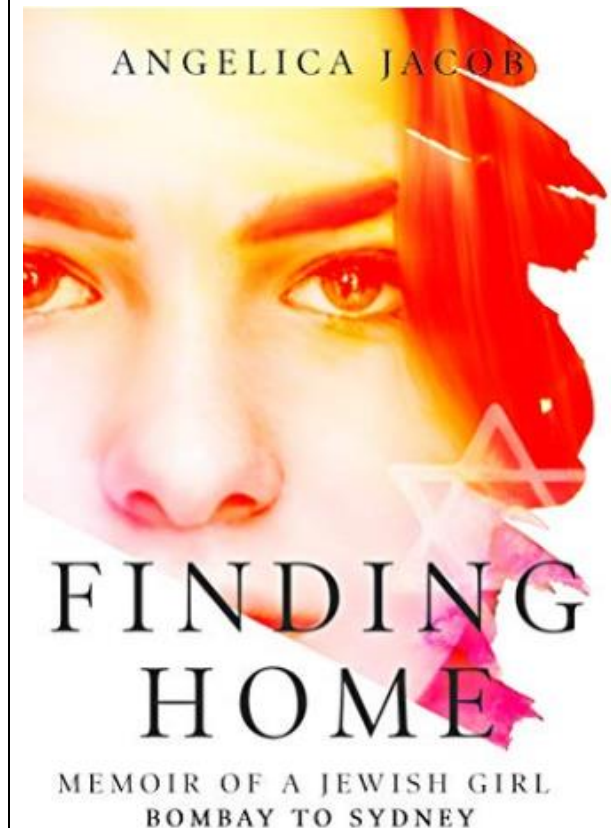
Angelica (Dandekar) is a member of the Bene Israel, Jews who have lived in India for 2,200 years.

“Since the creation of the state of Israel, the community has gotten increasingly smaller in India. This memoir weaves together what is uniquely Indian and universally Jewish, providing a fascinating account of a young woman’s journey. A good historian can recount the changing of the guard, but only a poet or skilled writer can write words that leap off the page and grab one’s emotions.

“This book does just that.” - Joseph Hodes, Ph.D., Author, “From India to Israel”, and Assistant Professor, International Studies, Texas Tech University, USA.

“Finding Home - Memoir of a Jewish girl: Bombay to Sydney” is based on themes of Jewish identity and home. The memoir documents the life of a young woman growing up in a once-flourishing Jewish community in post-colonial Bombay, who leaves the home of her birth to build a new life in Sydney, Australia.

The book germinated from a compelling need to record the unique milieu of the once-thriving, now vastly diminished Bene Israel of Bombay, believed to be one of the Lost Tribes of Israel, before the institutions and community completely disappear. The memoir unfolds as vignettes that poignantly, and



<http://www.angelicajacob.com/>  
ISBN-13: 979-8571299350

with humor, capture intimate scenes of the religious and cultural life of one Jewish family in Bombay (now Mumbai). They chronicle the trajectory of a steadily dwindling congregation captured by the imagination of a Jewish homeland, and the impact this exodus to Israel had on those who remained. Some historical research and facts of the Jews of Bombay, their origins, past, place and cultural and religious life are interwoven into the narrative.

The book offers a poignant message of inclusivity in these divisive times as we witness the rise of anti-Semitic and anti-immigration sentiments. It will appeal to the international Jewish diaspora as well as minorities and young people discovering their own identities in a multi-cultural world.

The book is now [available](#) on Amazon in paperback (RRP: \$US 9.99) and on Kindle (RRP: \$US 8.86).

### About Angelica Jacob

Angelica Jacob is an author, writer, former staff reporter of “The Australian”, Australia’s national broadsheet newspaper, editor, and entrepreneur.

She is a published nonfiction co-author of “Discover the Gifts and Talents in Your Child”, (Simon & Schuster, Sydney, 2000), a parenting book that equips parents and teachers with strategies, activities and skills to help children think and learn better and create an enriched home environment. She also co-edited “Gifted Children: The Challenge Continues” (NSW Association for Gifted and Talented Children, Sydney), a collection of papers and essays by Australian and international academic experts in the field of gifted education.

Angelica has a Master’s Degree in General Studies from the University of New South Wales in Sydney, a Professional Certificate In Financial Planning from UCLA – Extension and a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature from St Xavier’s College, then affiliated to the University of Bombay. See: [www.angelicajacob.com](http://www.angelicajacob.com)



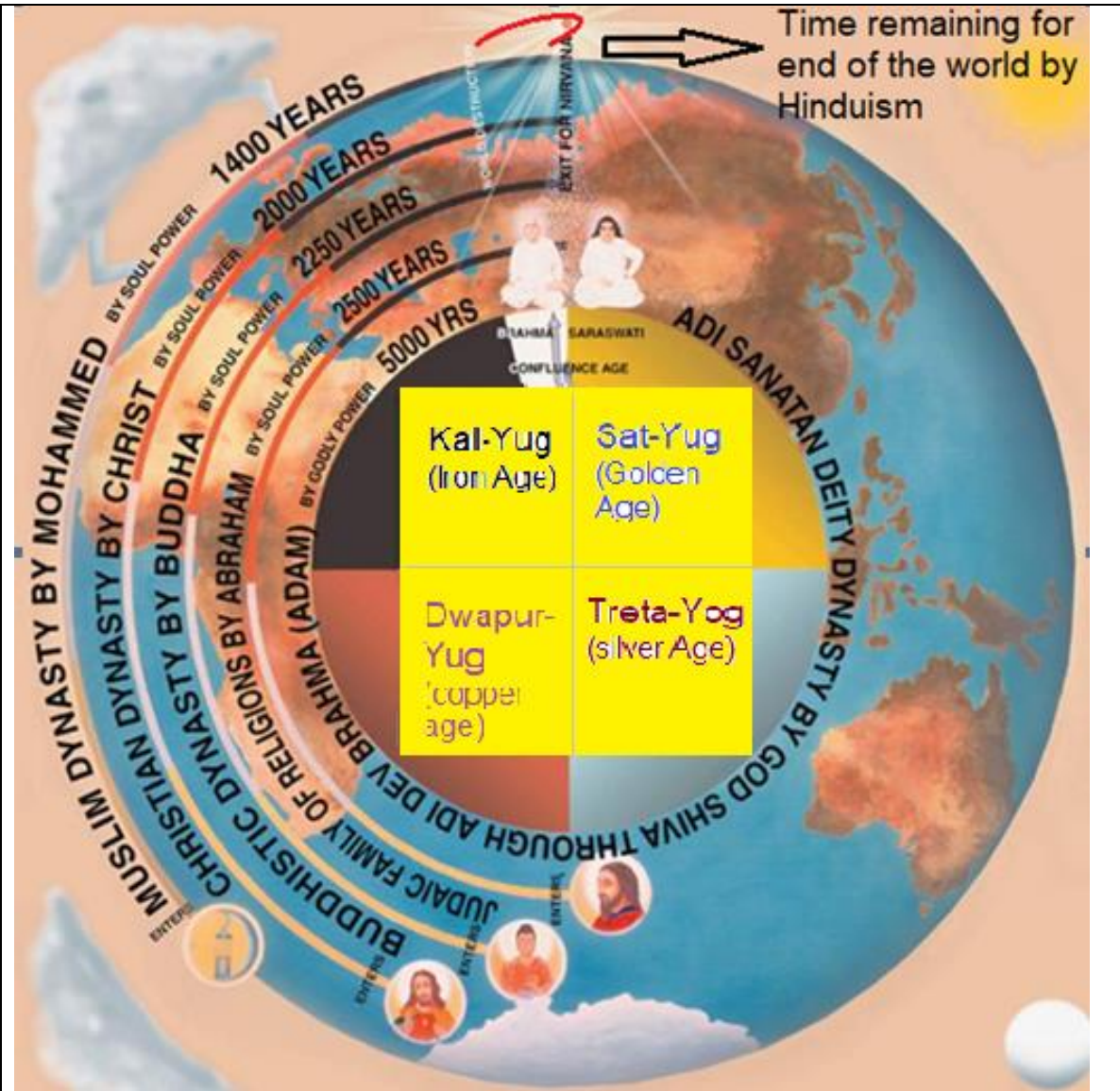
# World Cycle

This very interesting image represents. As per Hinduism this world will be destroyed in another 1,074,892 years by Shiva. Then it will be rebuilt by Vishnu.

At least we will not be there to see this happen. And perhaps in another 1,074,892 years people will be living in space on other planets.



*The End of the World*, commonly known as *The Great Day of His Wrath*,<sup>[1]</sup> an 1851–1853 oil painting on canvas by the English painter John Martin.<sup>[2]</sup> According to Frances Carey, the painting shows the "destruction of Babylon and the material world by natural cataclysm". This painting, Frances Carey holds, is a response to the emerging industrial scene of London as a metropolis in the early nineteenth century, and the original growth of the Babylon civilization and its final destruction. Some other scholars such as William Feaver see the painting as "the collapse of Edinburgh in Scotland". Charles F. Stuckey is skeptical of the link with Edinburgh. According to the Tate, the painting depicts a portion of Revelation 16, a chapter from the New Testament.



# Dr. Ambedkar And The Jewish People

“It amazed me to read this article. Every Jewish person must read this article on Dr. Ambedkar Only Dr. Ambedkar could see the Jews in this unique way. His view on Moses and the plight of Moses during Exodus is an amazing way of looking at things, that only a leader can understand. - Leo Daniels”

<https://velivada.com/2019/08/30/dr-ambedkar-and-the-jewish-people/>

**“I believe that just as there was a land of promise for the Jews, so the Depressed Classes must be destined to have their land of promise. I trust that just as the Jews reached their land of promise, so will be the Depressed Classes, in the end, reach their land of promise.”**

**-Dr. Ambedkar**



*Dr. Ambedkar was interviewed by Glora Becher, Consul of Israel in Bombay. The following text is from [Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches Vol. 17 part 1](#). Read it in Hindi from [डॉ. अम्बेडकर और यहूदी लोग](#). – Editors*

“Fifty years ago in a special interview with the editor of a monthly Jewish publication in Bombay (The Jewish Advocate, November 1941), one of the India’s most respected leaders expressed openly his admiration for the pioneering efforts of the Jews in Palestine “in respect of the Social order that was being created there” (in Palestine) as he said.

It was none other than the **“Father of Indian Constitution”** and the Leader of the Depressed Classes in India, Dr. Ambedkar. Dr. Ambedkar whose centenary is being celebrated all over the world, was among the few. In the Indian National Movement who was aware of and consequently sympathised with, the Jewish National Movement in Israel (then Palestine under British rule).

To understand the specialties Dr. Ambedkar had with the Jewish people one should read his article **“Moses and His Significance”** published in the Bombay Sentinel probably the same year, 1941. In this masterpiece of a short essay about the Biblical Leader Moses, Dr. Ambedkar exposes to the roots of his **special attitude towards the Jewish people**. Due to its importance, I feel it is only appropriate to reprint it once again.

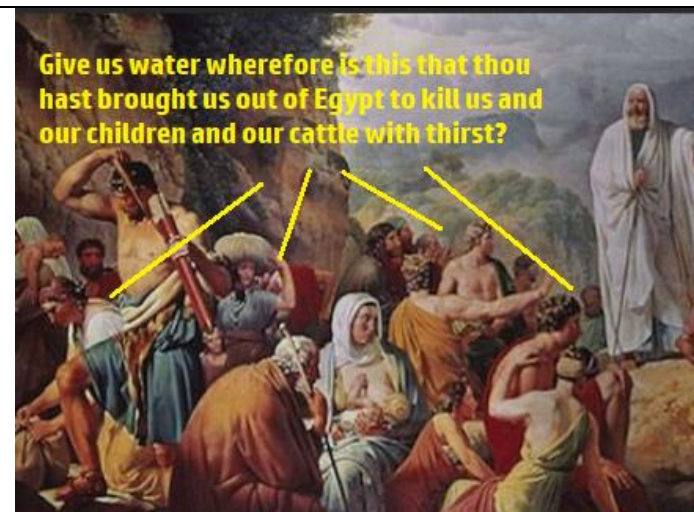
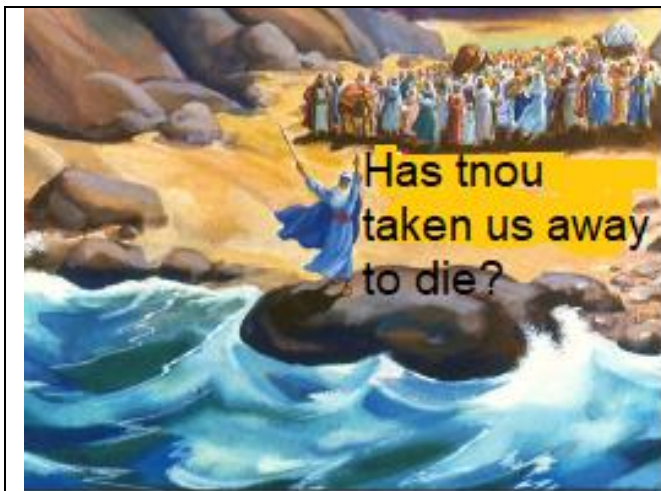
“The story of the Jews told in the Old Testament is a moving tale. It has few parallels. It is told in a simple but thrilling language. The pathos inherent in the subjugation and ultimate emancipation of the Jews cannot, but affect the emotions of those who are as depressed as the Jews were in Egypt in the days of Pharaoh. But the heart of everyone who is working for emancipation of a depressed people is bound to go to Moses, the man who brought about the emancipation of the Jews.”

### **“What did Moses not do for the Jews?**

He led them out of Egypt, out of bondage; he laid the foundation for their religion by bringing the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai. He gave them laws for social, civil and religious purpose and instructions for building the tabernacle.”

### **“What did Moses not suffer at the hands of the followers”?**

When the children of Israel left Egypt and were pursued and attacked by the army of Pharaohs they were sore and said unto Moses, ‘Because there were *no* graves in Egypt, **has thou taken us away to die?**’ It has been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in wilderness.”





“The marching Israel came to Elim and camped there. There was not sufficient water for them all. They all shouted, **give us water wherefore is this that thou hast brought us out of Egypt to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?** They were ready to stone him because there was no water.”

“Moses went up to Mount Sinai and delayed to come down. Immediately the Jews went to Aaron and said unto him. **‘Make for us Gods, which shall go before us;** for as for this Moses the man that brought us out of the land of Egypt,’ we woe not what has become of him.”



Even his leadership was challenged. The Old Testament records that **Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses** because of the **Ethiopian woman he had married** and they said, “Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us? Yet Moses bore their calumny, their abuse, tolerated their impatience and served them with the fullness of his heart.

“As the Old Testament truly says: **‘There arose not a Prophet since in Israel like unto Moses,** whom the Lord knew face to face’. Moses was not merely a great leader of the Jews. He is a leader whose birth, any downtrodden community may pray for.”

“Whatever interest others may have felt in the story of the exodus and the leadership **of Moses they have been to me a source of**

perennial inspiration and hope.”

**“I believe that just as there was a land of promise for the Jews, so the Depressed Classes must be destined to have their land of promise. I trust that just as the Jews reached their land of promise, so will be the Depressed Classes, in the end, reach their land of promise.”**

“I see in the present-day condition of the **Depressed Classes of India a parallel to the Jews in their captivity in Egypt**. In Moses, I see a leader whose infinite love for his people has given undaunted courage to face hardships and bear calumny.”

“I confess that if anything sustains me in my efforts to emancipate the Depressed Classes, it is the story of Moses undertaking the thankless but **noble task of leading Jews out of their captivity**.”

It is only natural that the Jewish people have always looked at Dr. Ambedkar and his life’s work with absolute admiration. His struggle for the weakest sector of society has found an echo in the hearts of those who for many hundreds of years since their expulsion from their **“Promised land”**—Israel—were suffering from discrimination and persecution just because of being different from the majority around.

We in Israel are till today proud of Dr. Ambedkar’s support in our struggle for rebuilding our national home in Israel.

(Courtesy: News from Israel).” Praja bandhu, dated 30th December 1991.**Read in Hindi at Pariah Street**



**Dr. Ambedkar saw that no one saw. The sufferings of Moses. Only a leader looking at other leader can see the facts!!**

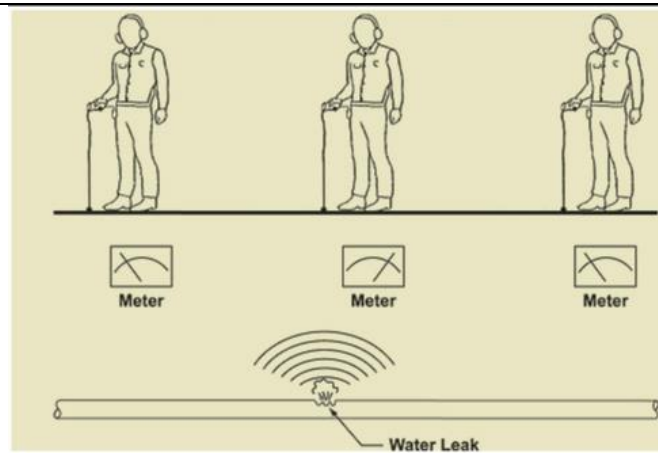


## Education: Undergraduate degree programs in Acoustical Engineering



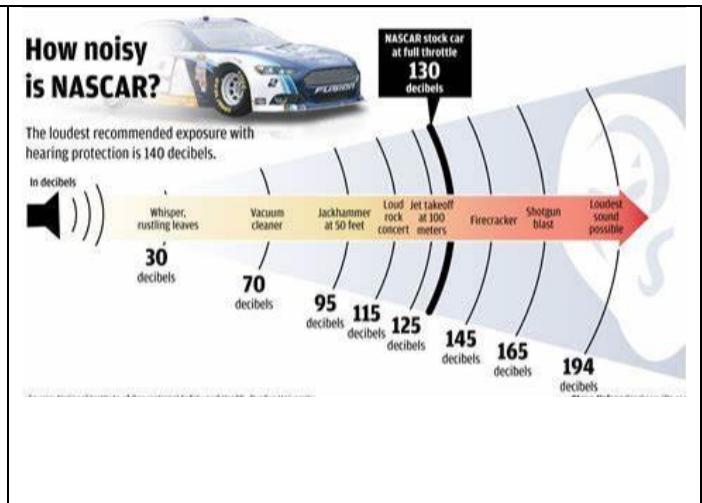
Inspired by career of Mr. Nissim Moses Talkar who started the Acoustics education in Israel and formed the first acoustic department at Israel Aircraft Industry (IAF).

Acoustics is a branch of physics under Sound that deals with the study of mechanical waves in gases, liquids, and solids including topics such as vibration, sound, ultrasound and infrasound. Acoustical engineer deals with application of acoustics present in almost all aspects of modern society with the most obvious being the audio and noise control industries (search for noise control Barrier companies on web).



### Some typical job duties for Acoustics Engineers include:

- Review building Architectural plans and layout
- Review Engineering plans
- Discuss space design, material selection and mechanical systems with team
- Measure and analyze noise and vibrations made from outside the building and their impact on the inside of the building
- Measure and analyze noise and vibrations from within traffic.



# Yonah and the Fish

## **Introduction:**

The story of Yonah / Jonah is read on Yom Kippur. It is a way to inspire atonement, because the story stresses how everyone is worthy of forgiveness.

God called to Jonah one day and told him to go preach to Nineveh because the people were very wicked. Jonah hated this idea because Nineveh was one of Israel's greatest enemies and Jonah wanted nothing to do with preaching to them!

Jonah tried to run away from God in the opposite direction of Nineveh and headed by boat to Tarshish. God sent a great storm upon the ship and the men decided Jonah was to blame so they threw him overboard. As soon as they tossed Jonah in the water, the storm stopped.

God sent a big fish, some call it a whale, to swallow Jonah and to save him from drowning. While in the belly of the big fish (whale), Jonah prayed to God for help, repented, and praised God. For three days

Jonah sat in the belly of the fish. Then, God had the big fish throw up Jonah onto the shores of Nineveh. Jonah preached to Nineveh and warned them to repent before the city is destroyed in 40 days. The people believed Jonah, turned from their wickedness, and God had mercy on them. Jonah now became angry and bitter because God did not destroy the Ninevites who were Israel's enemy! When Jonah sat to rest God provided a vine to give him shade. The next day, God sent a worm to eat the vine. Jonah now sat in the hot sun complaining and wanting to die.

God called out to Jonah and scolded him for being so concerned and worried about just a plant while God was concerned with the heart condition and lives of 120,000 people who lived in the city of Nineveh.



# The Evolution, Institution and Performance of Ritualistic Synagogue and Home Service Worship among the Jews

By: Nissim Moses-Historian-Indian Jewish Heritage and Bene Israel Genealogy Research

During the two diasporas of the Jews in Persia, the Hebrews, realized at some point, the value of introducing essential ritualistic bonding elements, into the practice of Judaism; in order to retain the ancestral relation between the descendants of our fore-fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in lieu of the fact that there no more existed a centralized Temple and synagogues were still not an integral part of Judaic system of worship. One of the major bonding factors was to institute Thanks-Giving Ritualistic Synagogue and Home Services; where single (then Joint Family Groups) would sit together and form a religiously oriented social bond between each other. All these customs and traditions evolved in Persia/Babel/Babylon and were universally adopted by other Jewish Communities with minor modifications to meet local social and political limitations, restrictions, availability but the overall format of the celebration, observation or performance remained generally as formulated by the sages.

Various essentially Thanks Giving-Ritualistic Customs-Adopted, Adapted and were Introduced as Customs and Traditions in Synagogue and Home Service Practices were diligently by all Indian Jewish Communities in order to stimulate better, social bonding and integration between the people and family groups.

The author after observing over several years our customs, traditions, practices; of the rituals and cuisine; found there to be a general lack of uniformity, understanding and misconception among the lay persons who performed these ceremonies both at the synagogue and home service level. The following are the generally observed variations:



1. Observation of the Lighting and recitation of the Bracha on the Sabbath Lamp and its origin
2. The Recitation of the Kiddush the period of its origin.
3. The Origin of the Hebrew Calendar
4. The Origin of the Festivals and its observation and Practice in the Synagogue and Home Service.
5. The Origin of the various Peace (Minchat Shalom), Thanksgiving Offering-(Minchat Hodayah), the unique "Korban Minchat Solet" practice of the Bene Israel community.
6. The wrong preparation of the Seder Plate for the various Malidah services.
7. The variations in the Seder Table arrangements and the preparation of special festival food items for each festival

8. The Variation in the Form of the Hanukiah, and the reason for calling it a Hanukiah and not a Menorah.
9. Codification of ceremonies for weddings, pre & post nuptial ceremonies, Bar Mitzvah and the introduction of Bat Mitzvah ceremonies,
10. The performance of The Pidyon ha Ben Ceremonies.
11. The recital of certain special prayers for special occasions. Though sometimes the tunes are the same – like the two versions of the Haneshama prayer -one version for Yom Kippur Service and the other for the Funeral Service. Many a community recited the Yom Kippur Haneshama of Yom Kippur at the funeral service for several years

**NB: The author has prepared a three part study and has prepared a detailed report after much Ethnographic research and study as to the origin, the reason and the preparation of the seder for service home ceremonies and the synagogue services.**

# Understanding Kashrut Certificate Paradox!

Elisha Shmuel (Agarwarkar), Beersheba, Israel.



Consuming only 'kosher badatz' food items is essential for the Jew and his family. This is possible only in Israel and not in those countries which do not have orthodox rabbis who supervise food preparations and certify them as 'kosher badatz'. We actually are exactly what we eat. All that we eat supplies blood to every vital organ in our body including the heart brain and liver. All thoughts and actions are therefore affected by what we eat. Please note that G-d provides us with sufficient income for our choosing kosher food items and better still "Kosher Badatz". The 'yetzer hara' enters the body through non-kosher food items and causes devastation in the Jew's life. The 'Haredi' (Orthodox) Jews ONLY consume food packets marked as "Kosher Badatz" which is the highest level of certification available from Rabbis. "Kosher Badatz" is a must for all Torah-observant Jews as well as secular Jews who wish to be holy, smart, and objective in their lives like their orthodox brothers & sisters. For all those who study Torah, "Kosher Badatz" food items are a must. The food consumed nourishes the body which is created in the image of G-d. For proper Torah comprehension & insight, Kosher Badatz is a must. All the confusion, indifference & misconceptions in the study & practice of the divine Torah and it's applicability to life, is primarily attributed to the consumption of non-kosher 'taref' food both vegetarian & non-vegetarian.

In Israel, there are non-orthodox religious Jewish communities like the NRP (national religious Party) which do not insist on consuming strictly "Kosher Badatz" foods just like the secular Jews do. The NRP people carry on with eating simple 'kosher' food. Simple kosher ensures limited sample checking as against item-wise checking of 'Kosher Badatz'. There are lower standards of kashrut (dietary laws) fixed for simple "kosher" food items. So when they study the divine Torah, they may easily tend to miscomprehend the proper messages and codes that are in the Torah. The 'Orthodox Haredi Jews' are generally quite aware of the extreme importance of "Kosher Badatz". Nothing could be better than resolving to eat only "Kosher Badatz" food-items. Other resolutions can include not talking in the synagogues, praying ('Amidah') with understanding, devoting two hours daily for Torah-study with a rabbi, not losing temper which is compared to idolatry (while knowing that everything is directed by G-d), praying three times a day in 'minyan' of 10 men, keeping family purity laws, observing Sabbath as per 'Halacha' (Jewish laws), etc. Every food-item to be consumed has to be properly checked as per procedure given under Jewish law & custom. This is a clear commandment from the Torah itself. In Israel, such checking is almost guaranteed when we buy 'kosher badatz' marked vegetarian food-items which means that orthodox rabbis have cleaned and checked each item. In India and other places, a Jew will himself have to learn to clean them and there are guiding principles discussed in videos



by rabbis for every item but generally, that's all in Hebrew.

About non-vegetarian meat food-items too we have 'kosher badatz' marked food packets but nowadays Torah-observant Jews have started to reject the authenticity of those 'kosher badatz' marked meat-items due to many known problems in selection & ritual slaughter of kosher animals strictly as per the demanding rules of 'halacha' (Jewish laws). The problem explodes in great dimension due to the extreme load of demand to be met. This makes the producers of "Kosher Badatz" meat factories work at high speed at the cost of the desired strictness & scrutiny pertaining to the proper procedure of meat production under 'Halacha'. As millions of dollars in income are involved the producers even though they are Orthodox Haredi rabbis are tempted to bypass the rules of 'kashrut' (set of Jewish dietary laws). Proper selection & slaughter of animals at the large-scale industrial level has become uncontrollably problematic and many animals not kosher are allowed to be slaughtered and the delicate slaughtering procedure as per Halacha is almost impossible to be maintained. Therefore, the truly Torah-observant Jews today have started depending on fish and vegetables as their main source of diet while they have rejected even 'kosher badatz' meat altogether.

According to Jewish Halacha (law) ALL vegetarian, meat, fish, wines, drinks & dairy food items need strict rabbinical supervision before their consumption by Jews. I mentioned buying food that has undergone "strict rabbinical supervision". This saves us the time to check the different foods that we consume. The Torah and senior rabbis set down intricate & complex laws for checking different food items. Not everybody has the time & patience to learn & practice all of those laws. And even if we know the laws and check the foods, we may make mistakes and breach an important divine commandment. The best policy is to buy kosher "badatz" marked food packets from restaurants, shops, and markets that have kosher "badatz" certification from the orthodox rabbis. It's best, of course, to check everything yourself like in the past when people used to do just that if you have the time & patience. But there are so many procedures and real fear of making mistakes.

It's also true, unfortunately, that today all these kashrut certificates have lost their value due to laxity in proper checking & slaughtering of animals due to staggering loads of demand. In my own family circle, therefore, we in the family completely stopped eating even "Kosher Badatz" meat even on Sabbaths & festivals due to problems with rabbinical supervision at the factory level which came out in the open. We continue only with fish consumption! Sometimes we travel all the way to Jerusalem or Bnei Brak to buy meat from a particularly well-known rabbi who ensures proper supervises and distributes meat in limited quantities only.

There is no question that Jewish dietary laws have beneficial health effects. For example, the laws regarding kosher slaughter are so sanitary that kosher butchers and slaughterhouses have been exempted from the US government's health department supervision. However, health is not the only reason for Jewish dietary laws. Another important reason is the purity of the Jewish spirit & soul. Eating non-kosher ('tareif') food leads to degradation of the Jewish soul and makes both the soul & body impure.

The laws of kashrut elevate the simple act of eating into a great 'mitzvah' which involves a blessing due to the observance of a divine commandment from the Torah. The Jewish dinner table is compared to the Temple altar which was used for making animal sacrifices to G-d. Dietary laws are designed as a call to holiness. The ability to distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil, pure and defiled, the sacred and the profane, is very important in Judaism. Kashrut is the body of Jewish law dealing with what foods we can and cannot eat and how those foods must be prepared and eaten. Rabbis or other religious officials do not "bless" food to make it kosher. The rabbis check the food, meat, vegetable, or dairy, as per Halacha to certify that they are kosher as per Halacha and valid for Jewish consumption. There are blessings that Jews should recite over food before eating it. Kosher dietary laws are observed all year round, not just during Pesach (Passover). There are additional dietary restrictions during Pesach, and many foods that are kosher for year-round use are not "kosher for Passover."

'Kashrut' laws derive from a few fairly simple, straightforward rules: Certain animals may not be eaten at all. This restriction includes the flesh, organs, eggs, and milk of the forbidden animals. Of the animals that may be eaten, the birds and mammals must be killed in accordance with Jewish law. All blood must be drained from meat and poultry or broiled out of it before it is eaten. Certain parts of permitted animals should not be eaten. Fruits and vegetables are permitted but must be inspected for bugs that cannot be eaten. Meat (the flesh of birds and mammals) cannot be eaten with dairy. Eggs, fruits, vegetables, and grains can be eaten with either meat or dairy. Fish should not be eaten with meat. Utensils including pots and pans and other cooking surfaces that have come into contact with meat may not be used with dairy, and vice versa. Utensils that have come into contact with non-kosher food may not be used with kosher food. This applies only where the contact occurred while the food was hot. Grape products made by non-Jews should not be eaten. This will ensure that the ingredients used are kosher. What's "Chalav (Milk) Israel" & "Chalav (Milk) Nokhri"? A Jew must be present from the time of milking to the time of bottling to ensure that the milk actually came from kosher animals and did not become mixed with milk from non-kosher animals. Milk that is observed in this way is referred to as Cholev Yisroel which alone is kosher. Chalav (Milk) Nokhri (non-Jewish) is when the supervision is done by a non-Jew who knows nothing about Jewish restrictions on food consumption which makes the milk non-kosher. What's "Mevushal (Cooked) Wines"? Wines that are made from grapes should be certified as kosher for consumption by Jews. Most kosher wines in America are made using a process of pasteurization called mevushal, which invokes some of the kashrut problems related to grape beverages. What's "Bishul Israel"? It means kosher cooking. A Jew, that is one who is himself required to keep kosher and knows its value must be involved as a supervisor in the preparation of food for it to be kosher. "Bishul Akum" (defective cooking) or more correctly "Bishul Goyim" (cooking by non-Jew) is the 'Halacha' that one is not allowed to eat something a 'goy' (non-Jew) cooks for the Jew or something that a 'goy' cooks for themselves. Food cooked by a 'goy' is forbidden, unless it is food that can be eaten raw. In a case where there is a 'goy' working in a Jewish home, one should make sure that a Jew turns on the flame or puts the food on the fire so that a Jew has some involvement in the cooking. A Rabbi should always be consulted. A utensil becomes non-kosher (or meat or dairy) if it comes into contact with non-kosher food. Not all utensils which become non-kosher by absorbing the taste of non-kosher food can be purged, or koshered. For instance, it is impossible to purge "taste" from

earthenware. Once an earthenware utensil is rendered non-kosher, it must be shattered and thrown away. On the other hand, metal vessels can be purged of their absorbed taste through a procedure called 'hagalah', purging. The basic principle to bear in mind when koshering is that the way the non-kosher food substance is absorbed into the walls of the utensil is the way it is expelled. Hence, a pot used for stewing can be koshered by boiling; a pan used for frying or baking can be koshered only by blowtorching (direct contact with heat).

The Jewish table is likened to an 'altar', its holiness compared to that of the Beit Hamikdash (the Holy Temple). Before dishes and utensils can be used in the kosher kitchen, they must acquire an additional measure of holiness which is conferred through the ritual immersion in a pool of naturally gathered water, or 'mikvah'. A mikvah is a specially constructed ritual pool connected to a source of pure rainwater. Vessels may also be immersed in certain natural bodies of water such as the ocean or river. The procedure is known as 'tevilah', or 'toveling' (derived from the Hebrew tovel, to immerse). Immersion in a mikvah is required only for utensils that were manufactured or ever owned by a non-Jew. Even those that were previously used without having been immersed still require immersion, after a thorough cleaning, and koshering if necessary. Preparation for immersion consists of the removal of any substance that would intervene between the water of the mikvah and the surface of the utensil, such as dirt, rust, stickers, glue from labels, and price markings. Steel wool and/or acetone (nail polish remover) are sometimes needed to remove all traces of surface markings. A vessel made of metal or glass with which one eats, drinks, cooks, roasts, fries, or heats up water for drinking requires immersion with a blessing. Examples of vessels requiring immersion with a blessing include Silverware, pots and pans, glazed china, kettle, and those parts of a mixer or blender which come into direct contact with food. When a utensil is made of two different materials, only one of which requires immersion, immersion is usually required. Examples include glazed earthenware, pans with a non-stick coating, wooden-handled utensils, and Thermos containers. Plastic items technically do not require immersion. Utensils that do not require immersion are: (1) those made of wood, paper, bone, or unglazed earthenware; or (2) disposable utensils such as plastic cups or plates which are not fit for long-term use and which one normally discards after using.



# What Did Bene-Israel's Do from 12<sup>th</sup>\* to 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries?

## Hebrew School in Nineteenth-Century Bombay: Protestant Missionaries, Cochin Jews, and the Hebraization of India's Bene Israel Community\*

MITCH NUMARK <sup>(a1)</sup>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X12000121>

Published online by Cambridge University Press: 12 March 2012

Journal:

[Modern Asian Studies](#) / Volume 46 / [Issue 6](#) / November 2012

Published online by Cambridge University Press: 12 March 2012, pp. 1764-1808 Print publication: November 2012

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/modern-asian-studies/article/hebrew-school-in-nineteenthcentury-bombay-protestant-missionaries-cochin-jews-and-the-hebraization-of-indias-bene-israel-community/6DA611C9F4BD0C6DC168433416515877>

This paper is a study of cultural interaction and diffusion in colonial Bombay. Focusing on Hebrew language instruction, it examines the encounter between **India's little-known Bene Israel Jewish community** and **Protestant missionaries**. Whilst eighteenth and nineteenth-century **Cochin Jews** were responsible for **teaching the Bene Israel Jewish liturgy** and forms of worship, the Bene Israel **acquired Hebrew and Biblical knowledge primarily from nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries**.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, **the Bene Israel community was a Konkan jati with limited knowledge of Judaism**. However, by the end of the century the community had become an Indian-Jewish community roughly analogous to other Jewish communities. This paper explores how this transformation occurred, detailing the content, motivation, and means by which British and American missionaries and, to a lesser extent, **Cochin Jews instructed the Bene Israel in Jewish knowledge**.

Through a critical examination of neglected English and Marathi sources, it reconstructs **the Bene Israel perspective** in these encounters and their attitude towards the Christian missionaries who labored amongst them. It demonstrates that the Bene Israels were active participants and selective consumers in their interaction with the missionaries, **taking what they wanted** most from the encounter: **knowledge of the Old Testament and the Hebrew language**. Ultimately, the instruction the Bene Israel received from Protestant missionaries **did not convert them to Christianity but strengthened and transformed their Judaism**.

(\*We used 12<sup>th</sup> century as in our records we know the Cochin Jewish made aware Bene-Israel of their Jewishness starting from 12<sup>th</sup> century to 14<sup>th</sup> century)



# GROSS IDOLATRY

Elisha Shmuel (Agarwarkar), Beersheba, Israel.

(Idolatry = Image-worship or divine honour paid to man-made object)



In Judaism, G-d chooses to reveal his identity, not as an idol or image, but by his words, by his actions in history, and by his working in and through mankind. G-d is limitless and it would be dishonoring G-d if He was to be represented by a limited object. We are obligated to worship G-d as an Imageless G-d. G-d appeared and gave the Torah to Moses and the Jewish people at Mount Sinai 3,316 years ago. This was seven weeks after the Exodus from Egypt, on the 6th day of the month Sivan, in the year 2448 of the Jewish calendar. On that day, G-d revealed Himself to the entire Jewish people which included some 600,000 adult men, in addition to women, children and the aged and declared to them the Ten Commandments. G-d prefers that an imperfect human who exercises free will, should keep the Torah than a mere flawless angelic entity.

The whole Jewish congregation at the time of Prophet Moses was spiritually raised to the level of prophecy. They are referred to as 'Dor Daya', knowledgeable generation. Note well that there's a Torah-based phenomenon called 'yerida hadorot' which meaning literally "the decline of the generations". We have to accept in humility the factual intellectual inferiority of our contemporary Torah scholarship and spirituality in comparison to that of the past. The Talmud mentions in tractate Shabbos page 88 that with the recital of each commandment, 'parcha nishmatam,' the souls of the Jews flew out of their bodies. So G-d had to restore them to life with 'Tal shel Techiya,' the Dew of Resurrection, the dew which would bring about a state wherein the soul and the body could co-exist fully.

Afterwards, Moses ascended Mount Sinai where, for forty days, G-d taught him the entire Written and Oral Torah. This was the only event in history where G-d revealed Himself to an entire people, who simultaneously witnessed and experienced His will. Moses himself emphasized to the people the uniqueness of this event: "Did ever a people hear the voice of G-d speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard? To you it was shown that you might know that the Lord is G-d" (Deut. 4:32-35). Rabbi Joseph Albo (Spain, c. 1400) comments on the significance of the way in which G-d gave the Torah: "That which is perceived by the greatest number of people is most widely believed; therefore the Holy One wanted the Torah to be bestowed through Moses with the greatest possible publicity and before a multitude of more than six hundred thousand comprised of intelligent and astute men of

diverse characters and attitudes so as to leave not the slightest shadow of a doubt in the minds of its recipients or in the minds of subsequent generations. Thus its reception would be both as correct and as fully credited as possible".



Today we witness repulsive pictures of ugly idolatrous pictures in Jewish magazines published for the Indian Jewish community. This is a high-grade SIN from the divine Torah especially for the Jews. It's also a grave SIN from the Torah for the non-Jews but they don't know of it. Jews do know of this as sin from their forefathers who never ever faltered in the matter. The awe for our loving forefathers and the value of their teachings has evaporated from within us. Even printing an advertisement with a picture of an idol of worship is absolutely forbidden for Jews. No rabbi will ever allow this. Even taking the name of an idol of worship is prohibited to the Jew. It's simply against the Halacha (Jewish law). There is even a Jewish girl who specializes in the sculpture of the Indian elephant god or the monkey god, etc. There is another Jewish girl who likes 'rangoli' and draws idolatrous images from it. These are terribly shameful idolatrous practices involved in by misled Jews in the Indian exile. If this is the state of affairs, it's time to end our Indian exile immediately. It's time to make Aliyah to Israel. It's a horrible new pitfall suffered recently by our Jews in India. Idolatry does not only mean actually worshipping before these idols. It also involves legitimizing, displaying, adopting, popularizing, exposing, and illustrating, these legendarily famous objects of idol-worship from the gentile world. All Jewish editors and proprietors of Jewish magazines and newspapers should make a policy to stop printing such repulsive figures and stop referring to them in their publications immediately. What I note with sadness is that such a problem was never witnessed in our Indian community before, say, 10 years. Now all of a sudden it has become so open. That which was just boiling has now exploded.

There has to be some responsible person from the local community who should scream aloud: "STOP". There is none. There is silence. If you know, even a Jew simply witnessing such sin in silence and not raising any objection makes him / her partner in the obnoxious sin. This is particularly true regarding publishing in the social media where

the Jewish editor, publisher and proprietor are direct partners in the sin of the author or contributor of the picture, article or advertisement. The sin of every such Jew multiplies as many times as other Jews see, gaze and appreciate those idolatrous objects. Those who gaze at idolatrous figures sin and their sins add up to the total sins of those promoters. It can reach more than a million sins in each promotor's heavenly account within just a short time. What kind of repentance, remorse, and penitence will erase such an astronomical figure? I don't know. One must consult a senior orthodox rabbi. Apart from that, such sinning and causing the public to sin as well, is very serious. G-d makes it tough for such a sinner to make appropriate repentance. Our Sages in 'Pirkei Avot' (Chapter 5) taught: "Anyone who causes the public to sin will not be afforded the opportunity to repent." So, if one causes the public to sin, he has no possibility of repenting, and he shall die bearing his sin and retribution will be sought from him in the World to Come.

According to the 7 Noahite laws, even all non-Jews are forbidden to indulge in idolatry. The non-Jew does not have to "know God" but must disregard false gods. Idolatry is one of three cardinal sins (along with adultery and murder) the Mishnah says must be resisted to the point of death (Sanhedrin 74a). The Jews are monotheistic. The central prayer of Judaism is the 'Shema Yisrael' in which the belief in a single G-d is reaffirmed: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one." This prayer is found in the 'mezuzah', the small, tubed case on the doorposts of all Jewish homes. About the 'Tefillin' Deuteronomy 6:8 mentions: "And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for ornaments between your eyes." The two boxes each contain four sections of the Torah inscribed on parchment. These passages cite 'The Shema' (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) - pronouncing the Unity of The One G-d. One of the boxes, the "Hand Tefillin" is placed upon the left arm so as to rest against the heart - the seat of the emotions, and the suspended leather strap is wound around the left hand, and around the middle finger of that hand. The other box, the "Head Tefillin" is placed upon the head, above the forehead, so as to rest upon the cerebrum. In this manner our attention is directed to the head, heart and hand. It teaches us to dedicate ourselves to the service of G-d in all that we think, feel and do. It is also to teach us not to be governed solely by the impulse of the heart, lest that lead us into error and transgression. Nor are we to be governed by reason alone, for that may lead to harsh materialism. Placed on the arm opposite the heart, and on the head, the Tefillin signify the submission of one's mind, heart and actions to the Almighty, as well as the rule of intellect over emotion. The 'Tefillin' energizes man in G-d's service. It leads to the attainment by the Jew of unity of mind and heart, intellect and emotion.

Therefore, idolatry ("Avodah Zarah" or "alien worship") in Judaism is absolutely prohibited. Judaism holds

that idolatry is not limited to the worship of an idol itself, but also worships involving any artistic representations of God. In addition it is forbidden to derive benefit (hana'ah) from anything dedicated to idolatry. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image" (Deuteronomy 4:13). "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:2 and Deuteronomy 5:6). Jews have sacrificed their lives but refused idolatry. The divine punishment for practicing idolatry is the worst kind of death - death by stoning! Deuteronomy 13:16-10 specifically prescribes the method of execution to stoning:

"If your very own brother, or your son or daughter, or the wife you love, or your closest friend secretly entices you, saying, 'Let us go and worship other gods' (gods that neither you nor your ancestors have known, gods of the peoples around you, whether near or far, from one end of the land to the other), do not yield to them or listen to them. Show them no pity. Do not spare them or shield them. You must certainly put them to death. Your hand must be the first in putting them to death, and then the hands of all the people. Stone them to death, because they tried to turn you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery."

A person who attempted to involve others in worship of a false god was similarly subject to capital punishment and was not to be spared even by a close relative (Deuteronomy 17:2-7). God's interest in exclusive worship is portrayed as a strong jealousy, like that of a husband for his wife:

"Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; for the Lord your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land" (Deuteronomy 6:14).

The Biblical prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Hosea referred to Israel's worship of other gods as spiritual adultery: [Jeremiah 3:6-9, 5:7, Ezekiel 16:38, 23:37, Hosea 1:2] "How I have been grieved by their adulterous hearts, which have turned away from me, and by their eyes, which have lusted after their idols" [Ezekiel 6:9]. This led to a broken covenant between the Lord and Israel, [Jeremiah 3:8] manifested as defeat by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon followed by exile of Jews and destruction of the First Holy Temple.

The Tanakh at 1 Kings 18 describes how the Prophet Elijah tries to convince the evil king Ahab whose land suffers from famine, of abandoning the worship of Baal and Asherah in favor of the one Lord G-d. He assembles all the prophets of Baal and Asherah on Mount Carmel and tells them: "How long will you waver between two

opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him." He challenges the prophets to a duel. The prophets whose god can burn meat pieces from a bull is the true God. Baal's and Asherah's prophets fail to set fire to the meat, but Prophet Elijah's Almighty G-d succeeds. But despite this victory for the Lord, Ahab refuses to change the official, polytheistic policy propelled by his wife Jezebel.

The Bible presents Daniel and his companions as distinct, positive examples of individuals refusing to worship another god, even at the price of their lives. During the time of the exile, evil king Nebuchadnezzar erects a gold statue of himself and commands all subjects to worship it. Three Jewish officials – Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego – who had been taken to Babylon as youths along with Daniel, refuse to bow to the statue. As they face being burned alive in a furnace, they communicate their faith as well as their resolve: "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up" [Daniel 3:17-18]. In the later reign of Darius, Daniel's refusal to give up a private prayer to God and pray to the king instead results in him receiving a death sentence: being thrown into the lions' den. According to the Book of Daniel, an angel comes and shuts the mouths of the lions so that Daniel is spared and rescued by the king himself the following morning [Daniel 6].

In Parshas Eikev, the Torah commands: "Burn their carved gods in the fire. Do not desire and obtain the silver or gold that is upon them, lest you become ensnared by it, for it is repugnant to Hashem your G-d. Nor shall you bring this abomination into your house; rather, you should ban it. Abhor it and revile it, for it is banned" (Devarim 7:25-26). This verse includes the following 'mitzvot' (divine commandments): 🌀 Burn their carved gods in fire. It commands us to destroy Avodah Zarah. 🌀 Do not desire and obtain the silver or gold that is upon them. It prohibits benefit even from the decorations on an idol. One may not own or sell idols, even if one thinks that they are the silliest things on earth since he gains financially or in other ways. 🌀 Nor shall you bring this abomination into your house. It bans bringing an idol into your house and also forbids benefiting from idolatry, since this is considered "bringing" the idol into your use and possession.

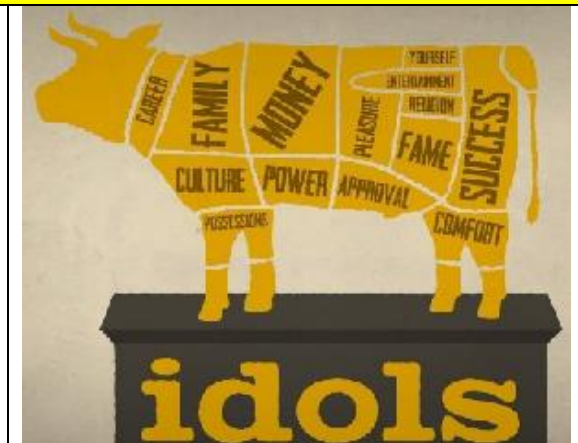
Furthermore, the Torah states 'al tifnu el ilolim', do not turn to idols. What is included in this proscription? Does it include looking at idols or images that represent idols? The Sifra quotes two interpretations of this verse. One prohibits studying idolatry, including its beliefs and how the idol is worshipped. A second approach understands the



verse to forbid even looking at idols. The 'poskim' (senior rabbis who have the power of legislating based on the Torah) rule that both approaches are accepted Halacha: the Torah thus prohibits studying idolatrous practices and beliefs, as well as looking at icons. The Gemara states one may not look at any portrait or image whatsoever. "Do not face figures created by man" (Shabbos 149a). Enjoying the artwork is considered benefiting from idolatry and is therefore forbidden especially icons manufactured for worship (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 142:15; Shach; Magen Avraham). If the statue was manufactured in a place [like India] where images of this nature are worshipped, we must assume that this icon is a bona fide idol (Rama, Yoreh Deah 141:3 and Shach ad loc. 17).

Rav Moshe Feinstein ruled that the prohibition of studying idolatry exists, regardless of what reason one studies the religion. This also prohibits reading mythology that includes idolatry, even as a study of ancient literature. The Rav said one may study something written by someone who scoffed at the religion, just as we see that even the Torah sometimes describes the way idolaters worshipped in order to ridicule the practice. Praiseworthy is he who stays far from idols and their modern substitutes and directs his heart to Hashem. The Jew may not hold onto a Hindu statue, even as art, or in order to mock it. There is a mitzvah to destroy idols. "Whosoever recognizes idols, has denied the entire Torah; and whosoever denies idols, has recognized the entire Torah" (Midrash Sifre, Deuteronomy 54). An entire tractate of the Talmud, the 'Avodah Zarah' ("strange worship") details practical guidelines for interacting with surrounding peoples so as to avoid practicing or even indirectly supporting such worship.

## Careful of Modern Day Idols



## Raigad

Advocate Herzl Levy Bhonkar



Alibaug and its surrounding villages are covered with the historic hinterland of Bene Israeli Jews.

Alibaug gets its name from a benevolent, rich Bene-Israel Jewish farmer by the name of Eli/ (locally pronounced Ali), who lived in the area some time during medieval periods (6<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century).

Eli/Ali owned large orchards and plantations in the area and dug number of wells, for public use, endearing himself to the locals. Soon people started calling the area Elich Baug (Eli's garden) or Alich Baug (Ali's garden), which eventually became Alibaug.

The link between the family names of the Bene-Israel's and the name of the village is well established. Going by the names of the Bene-Israel families then there were above hundred plus village in Raigad of Bene-Israel. However there are no family Bene-Israel names linked to Alibaug /Elibaug (like Alibaugkar / Elibaugkar) or Mumbai (Mumbaikar).

This shows Bene-Israel's were living in over hundred villages in Raigad and immigrated to Alibaug and later to Mumbai for job purposes. There were over 300 synagogues during Modern periods (after 16<sup>th</sup> century – details given our Oct. 2020 issue) in Raigad area during the peak of Bene-Israel population in Raigad.

### Major Bene-Israel Pilgrimage landmarks in Raigad

1. Beth El Synagouge –Panvel (1849)
2. Magen Aboth Sunagouge Alibaug(1840)
3. Ambepur Synagouge , Ambapur (1768)
4. Beth El Ashtami Synagogue, Ashtami village (1882)
5. Beth Rewdanda Synagogue, Rewdanda village (1842)
6. Beth Ha Elohim Synagogue, Pen (1893)
7. Hessed El Synagogue, Poynad village (1866)
8. Keneseth Israel Synagogue, Talla(1876)
9. Orle Israel Synagogue , Nandgoan Murad (1896)
10. Shaar Hathephilah Synagouge, Mhasla (1885)
11. Navgao Cemetery Bene-Israel Heritage Memorial
12. Eliahyohoo Hanavi Taap

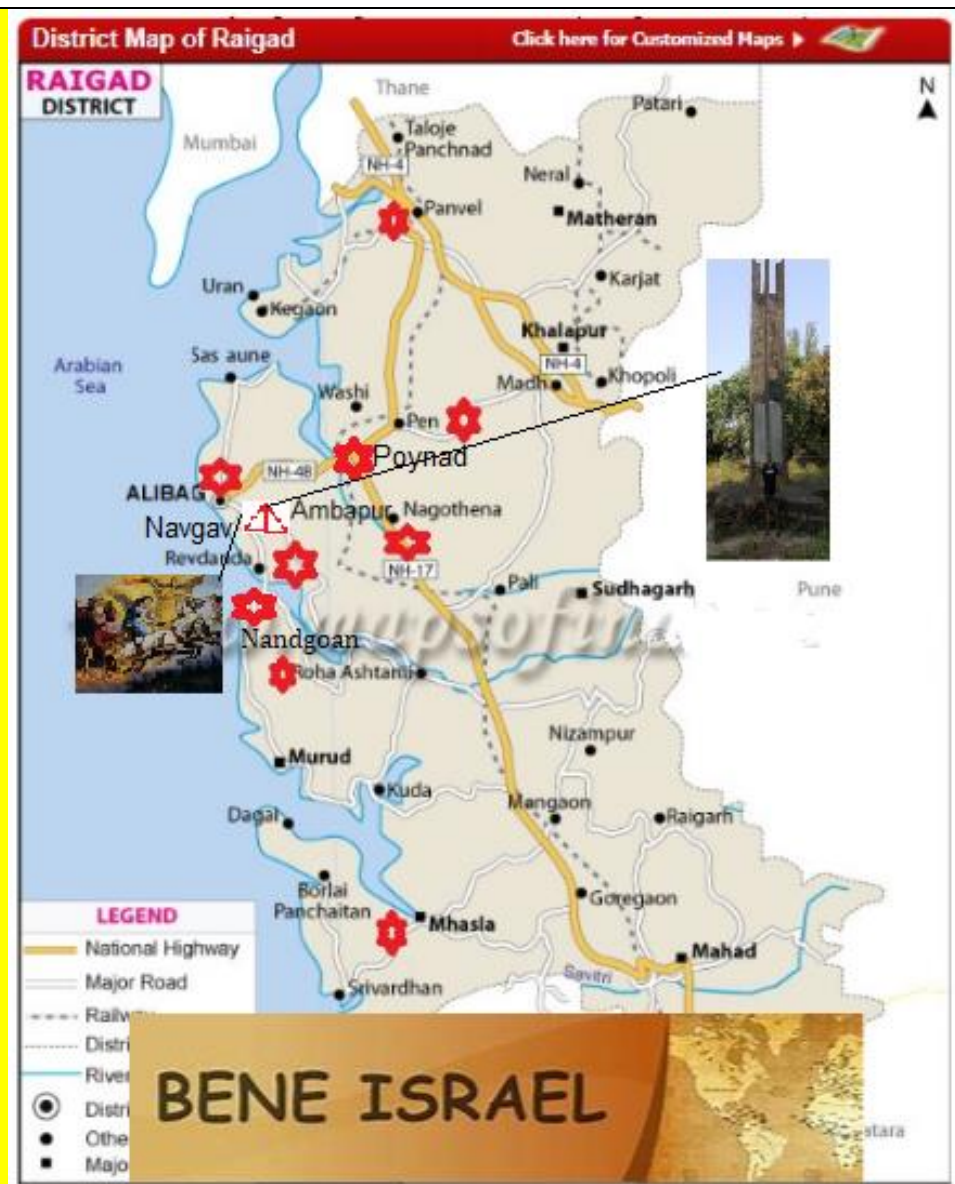


## Major Bene-Israel Pilgrimage landmarks in Raigad;

1. Magen Aboth Sunagouge Alibaug(1840)
2. Ner Israel Synagouge , Ambapur (1768)
3. Bet El Ashtami Synagogue, Ashtami village (1882)
4. Beth El Synagogue, Rewdanda village (1877)
5. Bet Ha Elochim Synagogue, Pen (1893)
6. Hessed El Synagogue, Poynad village (1866)
7. Kensset Israel Synagogue, Talla(1876)
8. Orle Israel Synagogue , Nandgoan Murad (1896)
9. Shaar Ha Tefillah Synagogue, Mhasla (1885)
10. Knesset Israel Synagogue, Malegaon
11. Shaar-Shalom Synagogue, Borlai
12. Navgao Cemetery Bene-Israel Heritage Memorial
13. Eliahyohoo Hanavi Taap

In the Raigad District exist all those villages that have adopted the 'Kar" (Ikar- famer in Hebrew) formant of naming their village.

During the peak of Bene-Israel population there is information that there existed over 300 synagogues and prayer halls in Raigad District.





# AJDC – India

The farewell letter of Mr. Elijah Jacob Ashtamkar as he retires from his position as Director  
(1993-2020)

(Editorial in Kol-Israel of .....)

Looking Back, Looking Forward .....

Dear Friends,

As I complete over three decades of my active association with AJDC-India and retire at the end of this year-2020, it is time for me to reflect on the wonderful moments and memories that I will cherish going forward.

My first experience with AJDC in India was with the Jewish Service Corp Fellows – Yossi and Hadas Chajes’ who were volunteering for a year in 1989. They helped in creating weekly events for the JRU youth group members. I still fondly remember Yossi playing the tune of “Yerushalayim Sheljahav” on his violin at the signing of the Ketubah during my marriage ceremony.

I was an active volunteer with AJDC – India till Ms. Evelyn Peters – JDC Country Director for India (1987 to 2001) asked me whether I would work full-time for the Community with AJDC. I did not take it seriously initially considering the fact that I had no experience in social work except helping the community and the local synagogues that I was involved with through the local youth movement. However, she persisted and I

decided that I should get out of my comfort zone and help strengthen the local Jewish community. There were many avenues open, but I accepted the challenge and was appointed Country Manager for AJDC – India in 1993.

It has been a long journey since then and an extremely satisfying one. In fulfilling AJDC’s mission statement- “In the service of the Jewish community and Indian society”, I was able to establish Bayiti- Old Age Home for Jewish elderly destitute in 1996 and the Jewish Community Centre in 1999. I was also able to strengthen the local communities’ Jewish human resource infrastructure by identifying appropriate individuals to be trained as Rabbis, Jewish educators, mohel, sofers, cantors and shochets (three of whom are still active in the community) under the aegis of AJDC. We were able to initiate new and creative Jewish programming for the Jewish communities in India viz. Limmud, Global day of Jewish Learning, Mitzvah day to name a few besides educational and Shabbaton camps for all age groups starting with children, teens, youth, family, women’s groups, welfare clients and senior citizens. In our outreach efforts, we were able to serve the smaller Jewish communities in the Konkan





villages, Pune, Ahmedabad, Cochin and Calcutta.

In the non-sectarian field, we were able to work with many local NGO's for the upliftment of the under privileged sections of Indian society. We worked with the Gabriel Project Mumbai in addressing the educational needs of the slum children in Kalwa and livelihood needs of specially challenged young adults through the Challah project with Om Creations trust. We provided immediate relief and rehabilitation measures during natural and manmade disasters like floods, earthquakes, cyclones and Tsunami not only to the affected population and states in India but also in neighbouring countries like Sri Lanka, Nepal and Philippines.

We are able to continue our regular JCC classes and youth activities online even during the present pandemic thanks to the foresight and innovative ideas of our present members of the staff. Monthly Cash assistance was delivered by bank transfers to all our welfare clients and emergency support was extended to 40 low and middle class individuals/families who lost their jobs and are without regular income during the last six months.

I owe a great sense of gratitude to all the overseas Country Directors with whom I worked starting with Evelyn Peters who was my mentor, Judy Amit, Antony Korenstein, Mandie Winston, Stefan Oscar and Moni Beniosev for their encouragement and guidance in my work with AJDC. I would like to specially thank Dr. Nathan Aston, the present Chairman of AJDC-India for his unstinting support and help throughout my tenure. I also thank Mr. Micah Joseph – Ex Chairman for his contribution and guidance in helping to strengthen AJDC's programmes and activities. Finally, my sincere appreciation to the present staff and team members- Nissim, David, Ashley, Maayan, Helen, Sinhora and Pandu without whose support we would not have been able to achieve what we have so far.

A special thanks to all our donors, patrons, platinum members and sponsors for various events for their support and cooperation extended to me during my tenure with AJDC. I am sure and confident that it will continue in the future.

Till we meet again, my best wishes and fondest regards,

Elijah Jacob,

Executive Director, AJDC India

<b>S No.</b>	<b>Milestones achieved during service with AJDC (1993-2020)</b>
1	Started Kol Bombay-Quarterly newsletter of AJDC in 1993, later renamed Kol India which reaches 650 Jewish households in India and abroad today
2	Started weekly Gan Katan classes for Jewish children (ages 5 to 12 years) in 1994 and continued till date
3	Introduced Jewish Youth Pioneers & Khai Fest in 1995
4	Trained 11 young adults as Shochets for the community in 1995-1996.
5	Started Bayiti-Old Age Home for Jewish Elderly Destitute in 1996
6	Started Golden Age Group for Senior Citizens in 1997

7	Started Women's Group "Hadassah Chaverot" now Orot Hatorah in 1998
8	Started Jewish Community Centre in Mumbai in 1999
9	Selected for Sherman Fellowship at Brandeis University, Boston in September'2000
10	Identified and sent four Jewish young women to be trained as Jewish Educators for the local community from 2000-2004 to Machon Gold and Shalem courses in Israel
11	Identified and sent Joshua Kolet for rabbinical training to Shehebar Sephardic centre, Jerusalem in 2001.
12	Set up Emergency Medical Fund for the Community from 2002
13	Selected for Ford Fellowship for emerging professionals in May'2003
14	Initiated formation of Indian Joint Trust in 2004 (presently Trustee)
15	Coordinated Nahum Goldman Fellows Conference for Jewish young adults in India in 2004
16	Identified and sent for Sofer training – Aaron Galsurkar in 2005
18	Identified and sent for Mohel course – Ariel Nagavkar in 2009
19	Compiled, edited and released the publication 'Jewish Landmarks in India" in 2011
20	Identified and sent for training in Cantorial course – Johnny Pingle in 2012 from the Ahmedabad Jewish community.
21	Initiated the yearly event - Global Day of Jewish Learning from 2012
22	Initiated the Sunday Funday educational outing programme for slum children of Kalwa in collaboration with the Gabriel Project Mumbai in 2013
23	Initiated the yearly event – Limmud India from 2014
24	Selected as AJJDC's representative for the Kolker Fellowship with the Baltimore Jewish Federation in September '2014
25	Initiated the Challah Project for the local Jewish community with specially challenged young adults of "Om Creations" from 2016
26	Represented India at the Beutel Seminar in Jerusalem, Israel in February' 2019 on behalf of the Jewish Religious Union, Mumbai
27	Initiated Emergency Support Welfare Fund to help low income and middle class Jewish individuals/ households to meet basic needs during pandemic in 2020.
28	Provided immediate relief and rehabilitation measures during Earthquake in Gujarat (2001)/Tsunami in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Orissa & Sri Lanka (2004)/ Earthquake in Nepal in 2017 /Floods in Kerala (2018) - under AJDC's-International Development programme.

Dear Leo,

I would like to share some farewell messages that I received from former overseas JDC directors and volunteers with whom I worked during my 28 years of service with AJDC during my official send off farewell meeting conducted on zoom yesterday by AJJDC. Today Mandie Winston is the Chief Executive of United Jewish Israel Appeal (UJIA) based in London, Rabbi Leon Morris is the President of Pardes Institute in Jerusalem,

Zvi Feine was the former JDC Regional Director for Asia-Africa region and Rabbi Dr. Asher Ostrin was the interim CEO of AJJDC, New York .

You may want to include some of these messages if space permits in your newsletter.

Warm regards,

Elijah.

Dec. 11, 2020 (see below)

## Messages to Elijah

Dear Elijah,

Can it be that you are going to retire so soon? I still see you as the lively young man bursting with enthusiasm for his new job in 1992 and in 1993! And, the few times I worked or visited AJDC since then, you still told me about the new programs and ideas you had for expanding the scope and depth of Jewish life in India.

Looking at it that way, you have earned kudos for all you've done and blessings for a retirement filled with satisfaction and joy in family and community.

With fond regards,

Linda

Linda Tobin: [lindia00@gmail.com](mailto:lindia00@gmail.com)

Dear Elijah,

Thank you for all you've done over the years for the community! When I look back at my time as a fellow I recall your patience, positivity and warmth! The Mumbai Jewish community was so blessed to have your leadership and I wish you only the best!

-Hannah Grossman

Hannah Grossman: [hannah.eve.grossman@gmail.com](mailto:hannah.eve.grossman@gmail.com)

Dear Elijah,

15 short yesterday years ago, I stepped into muggy, marvelous Mumbai, got in on wrong side of Manji's (sp) jeep, met you over spicy chai on a very rainy day, and my life changed forever.

Elijah, you taught me (and so many others) what it means to be a leader. You embody trust. warmth. compassion. wisdom. humor. deep love for family and community. The list goes on and on!

Thank you for teaching me what it means to be a leader -- there are so many others, just like me.

Thank you for welcoming me to a community that I still feel part of, so many years later.

Thank you for every single thing you have done, seen and unseen, for the so many community members whose lives you touched: from the gan-kattan to the beloved bayiti elders, to countless others, all over the world.

Thank you for showing us what it means to be a true leader. While this chapter may soon be closing, we know the book has many, many more pages and chapters in it yet!

Warmly,

Gila Ward Menda (JSC Fellow 2005-2006)

[gila.ward@gmail.com](mailto:gila.ward@gmail.com)

Dear Elijah,

I wish I could be there in person to say how much your leadership inspired me during the time we collaborated at JDC. You are smart, sensitive, friendly, and thoughtful. You earned the respect of so many different parts of the Indian community and beyond. And I am happy that we will continue to benefit from your role as a consultant.

Your generosity and willingness to open your house and heart set an example for me while I was at JDC. I fondly recall my first trip to India in January 2014 as a time of great joy and learning. Thank you for facilitating that and so much more.

I wish you and your family all the best as you enter this new phase in life.

Maya

Maya Kroitoru: [maya.kroitoru@gmail.com](mailto:maya.kroitoru@gmail.com)

***Elijah Jacob has earned our, Living Legend***

***KING'S CROWN***

**for Life time Devoted Service to the Bene-Israel**



community

**And chat messages.**

# Chat messages on the zoom call

Asher Ostrin

I need to go and apologize for that. My warm and best wishes to a wonderful colleague and his lovely family. I share the memories all of us have of great times with him

Mandie Winston

Elijah, you are one of the unsung heroes of the Jewish World. No one I know has done more for the care and enrichment of the Indian Jewish community than you and it is a great honour to have worked with you.

Everyone: 12:50 PM

Hi All. So many people. So many tributes. All so deeply deserved. I really don't believe that Elijah is retiring. He's a pillar of a community that he's devoted his life's work to building and sustaining. Bye for now, Elijah!!!

What a privilege to have worked with you and to be here to mark this occasion.

Sam Amiel

Dearest Elijah, I have always enjoyed working with you, a consummate gentleman and someone who has dedicated his life to the betterment of Indian Jewish life. I thank you for your years of service and wish you and your lovely family health and happiness.

Tahl Mayer

Elijah, Thank you for everything you have given to the JDC. It was the greatest honor of my career to work with you. I still look to our time together for inspiration on a daily basis. I strive to embody your kindness, warmth and generosity in my life. I wish you the best of luck in your new chapter. You will be greatly missed. thank you again for everything that you've done!

Zvi Feine

Elijah, you gave us important insights & connections with the Indian Jewish Community for many years. Your caring & leadership was a huge asset for AJDC. Please stay in touch with us & find ways to continue contributing your wise advice.

Sydney Switzer

Elijah, Thanks so much for everything! You truly had a huge impact on my time in India, and I can't imagine JDC India without you! We've had such amazing times, from the staff retreat shenanigans to my very first trip to Big Bazaar when you explained to me all the different uses of every type of lentils! Thanks for everything you've done, and best wishes for the future! Sydney

Leon Morris

Elijah, I am so grateful for the privilege of knowing you for 30 years, and seeing your work in the community again and again. You have brought so much light and warmth and insight to the Jewish community in India, and like the oil of the Hanukkah miracle, you have made so much happen with so little. Each time I returned to India, I saw your boundless energy, your drive and your effectiveness. It was always clear that this work was more than a job for you -- it was a calling. Dasee joins me in wishing you a heartfelt Mazal tov. Sending you our love from Jerusalem.

Gila Ward Menda

Elijah - Thank you for being a role model and mentor to me and countless others in the community and worldwide. You are an inspiration. Cheers to you on this milestone. Give my love to the family and to Bayiti! ANNIE and JENNIFER (and RONEL - we miss you) - CHEERS to you. With much gratitude, Gila

Lela Sadikario

Chag sameach! thank you Elijah for your inspiration

## Some Days in Elijah's office

Elijah Sir, there is a person at the door who wants to sell you an old age home.



Elijah sir, this is Sankar from Pen on phone. He says the tree you planted in 1993 need AJDC funds to grow.



Mr. Elijah, I am a Bene-Israel Jew Mabgaokar. You can see I am going bald. I would like you to agree to approve from AJDC funds to pay my medical bills for restoring my hair as your job is to help us poor Jews.



Please tell Elijah, the exclusive Director of American Joint Distribution Committee in India that we all are here to collect the money he distributes



## Prayer for Protection from the Evil Eye

From Rabbi Eliezer Papo, author of Pele Yo'etz.

### English Translation

May the Merit of Rabbi Meir Ba'al Ha-Ness protect us so that we may serve our Creator completely and fully, for a long time to come. May no evil befall us, nor any plague come near our dwelling. And in the merit of Rabbi Meir Ba'al Ha-Ness, may all my progeny be holy, of flawless character and conviction. God of Rabbi Meir answer me. Amen

## ॥ नजर न लागण्यासाठी प्रार्थना ॥

जेखूथ राब्बी मेईर बाआल हानेस यागेन बाआदेनू शेनाआव्होद एथ वोरएनू आव्होदा शेलेमा, आव्होदा ताम्मालेओरेख यामीम उशनोथ हाय्यीम. वेलो थेउन्ने एलेनू राआ वेनेगाअ लो यिकराव्ह बेआहोलेनू. उक्कीजखूथ राब्बी मेईर यिहये कोल जारई जेराअ कोदेश, जेराअ आनाशीम शेलेमीम बेमीदोथ, उव्हेदाओथ एलाहा देरिब्बी मेईर आनेनी. आमेन

**Israeli Green Salads:** <https://galileegreen.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Galilee-Green-Salad-Cookbook.pdf>

<https://galileegreen.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Galilee-Green-Salad-Cookbook.pdf>

GALILEE  
green

### Table of Contents



Welcome and Introduction...	4	Galilee Green Corn Salad...	19
Galilee Green Israeli Salad...	6	Galilee Green Fennel Salad...	20
Galilee Green Hummus.....	7	Galilee Green Bean Salad ...	22
No-Chickpea Hummus.....	8	Stay Cool Summer Salad.....	23
Israeli Beet Salad.....	10	Galilee Green Greek Salad..	24
Roasted Sliced Eggplant ....	11	Grain-Free "Pasta" Salad.....	26
Simple Eggplant Salad .....	12	Kale Salad with Fruit & Nuts.	27
Roasted Red Pepper Salad .	14	Galilee Green Quinoa Salad	28
Moroccan Carrot Salad .....	15	Israeli Cowboy Salad .....	30
Roasted Mushroom Salad... 16		Spicy Tuna Salad Supreme.	31
Purple Cabbage Coleslaw... 18		Buy Galilee Green Olive Oil	32

Penkar can you check if the indicators are working

Talkar  
Yes, No, Yes, No , Yes, No



## Israel 4th Election



Pezarkar: Nagaokar, why did you not come to the synagogue on Friday?

Nagaokar: I went to get the fous cut at by Kosher Baba and he was not home. So I had to wait until he came back home.

Pezarkar: But Kosher Baba has to cut the fous before sunset. So you should have been back before prayers??!!

Nagaokar: Yes, yes, that was the problem. I had to wait there until Sunday morning to get the fous cut for last Friday.

**Perhaps only in Bene-Israel  
943 Brits in 50 years in India**

**Mohel Mr. Moses Abraham  
Phansapurkar**

**CONGRATULATIONS!**

Mr. Moses Abraham Phansapurkar from Thane who has conducted 943 brits in 50 years in India.  
Per Year:  $943/50 = 19/\text{year}$

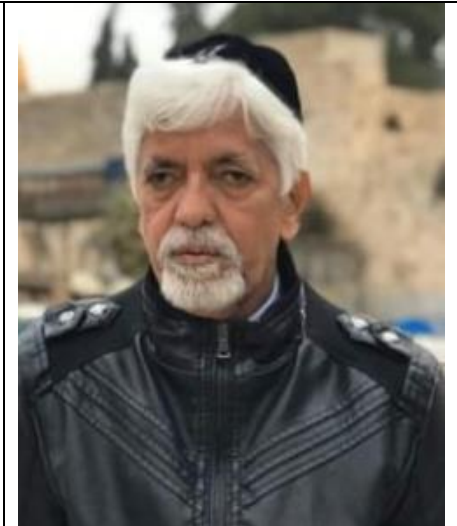
This could be perhaps a record for **“The Guinness World Records”**

We were always told the story of origin of Brit was when sacrifice of Isaac was stopped by God and Abraham decided to circumcise his son Isaac and every male child born in his family.

Official information on Brit:

Origin (Unknown): [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brit\\_milah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brit_milah)

The notion of Milah being linked to a covenant is generally believed to have originated in the 6th century BCE as a product of the Babylonian Exile; the practice almost certainly lacked this significance among Jews before the period.[1][2][3][4] The original version in Judaic history was either a ritual nick or cut to the acroposthion: the part of the foreskin that overhangs the glans penis. This form of genital nicking or cutting, known as simply Milah, became adopted among Jews by the Second Temple period and was the predominant form until the second century CE.[2][5][6][7][8]



Bhonkar: I understand some religions perform castration of their male sons at age 13.  
Talagaokar (shocked): Bhonkar!! It is not castration!! It is circumcision.  
Bhonkar: Castration Circumcision what does it matter as far as it is in another religion.

# Chabad Jewish Philosophy is *Different* than General Jewish Philosophy

Chabad follows the Holy Book "The Tanya (Hebrew: תניא) "

**(UNDERSTAND WELL THIS DIFFERENCE BEFORE YOU BLINDLY SUPPORT CHABAD)**

As an IVD (in-Vitro Diagnostics) expert one morning in Jerusalem, I finishing a meeting at Hadassah En-Keren Hospital I started driving towards Hadassah Mount Scopus Hospital. At the first crowded bus stop I noticed a religious bearded black dress religious man holding a placard saying Hadassah Mt. Scopus written in Hebrew. I stopped and offered him a lift. It must be during 1993.

During the drive he asked me many question on Bene-Israel Jews and finally he opened his briefcase and showed me a picture stuck in the cover of his briefcase. It was an image of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the leader of the Chabad movement. Then he asked me if I would like to convert to Chabad.



Surprised I asked him, but I am Jewish? His answer confused me. He said being Jewish does not mean you are a Chabad follower. We are extra pure Jews, more closer to God and when you join our movement we will take care of you and your family completely. By this time we had reached our destination and he got off giving me his business card and asked me to call him if I decide to convert.

During several visits to different countries in North America, Europe, South East Asia I noticed there is always a Chabad center. While in India last year Chabad excited not just in major cities but also in a place like "Pushkar" a pilgrimage place for Hindus. I once again wondered what really Chabad's mission was. I was surprised to understand that Chabad really was different religion. It followed the basics of Judaism but by a different holy book called as "Tanya"

On Internet I found few comments on Chabad, one of that said;

"Chabad is actively proselytizing non-Jews all over the world. Chabad has become a new religion, and is now competing with Christianity and Islam for world domination".

Is it really? I was told by our Bene-Israel's in India that Chabad does not really help Bene-Israel in any way. You could go there to have Kosher food or to attend prayers, but beyond that they don't want to get involved. Further there are also no rumors

that Chabad is converting people from other religion to Judaism or Chabad's (if they want to become a new religion).

In Wikipedia Chabad is (Chabad, also known as Lubavitch, Habad and Chabad-Lubavitch (Hebrew: חב"ד ), is an **Orthodox Jewish Hasidic dynasty**. Chabad is one of the world's best-known Hasidic movements, particularly for its outreach activities. It is one of the largest Hasidic groups and Jewish religious organizations in the world (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chabad>). In 1951, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson became the seventh Chabad Rabbi until his death in 1994.

### **Philosophy:**

Chabad Hasidic philosophy focuses on religious and spiritual concepts such as God, the soul, and the meaning of the Jewish commandments. Classical **Judaic writings** and **Jewish mysticism**, especially the **Zohar** and the **Kabbalah of Rabbi Isaac Luria**, are frequently cited in **Chabad works**. These texts are used both as sources of Chabad teachings and as material requiring interpretation by Chabad authors. ***Chabad philosophy is rooted in the teachings of Rabbis Yisroel ben Eliezer***, (the Baal Shem Tov, founder of Hasidism) and **Dovber ben Avraham, the "Maggid of Mezritch"** (Rabbi Yisroel's successor).[citation needed] **Rabbi Shneur Zalman's teachings formed the basis of Chabad philosophy**, as expanded by succeeding generations. Many Chabad activities today are understood as **applications of Shneur Zalman's teachings**.

### **Books:**

The **Tanya** (Hebrew: תניא) is a book written by **Rabbi Shneur Zalman** first published in 1797. It is the first schematic treatment of **Hasidic moral** philosophy and its metaphysical foundations. According to the Tanya, the intellect consists of three interconnected processes:

1. **Chochma** (wisdom),
  2. **Bina** (understanding),
- and
3. **Da'at** (knowledge).

### **The Tanya has five sections.**

"Sefer Shel Beinonim" /"Book of the Intermediates". (It is also known as Likutei Amarim ("Collected Sayings").

"Sefer Shel Beinonim" analyzes the **inner struggle** of the individual and the **path to resolution**. Citing the biblical verse ***"the matter is very near to you, in your mouth, your heart, to do"***, ***the philosophy is based on the notion that the***



***human is not inherently evil; rather, every individual has an inner conflict that is characterized by two different inclinations, the good and the bad."***

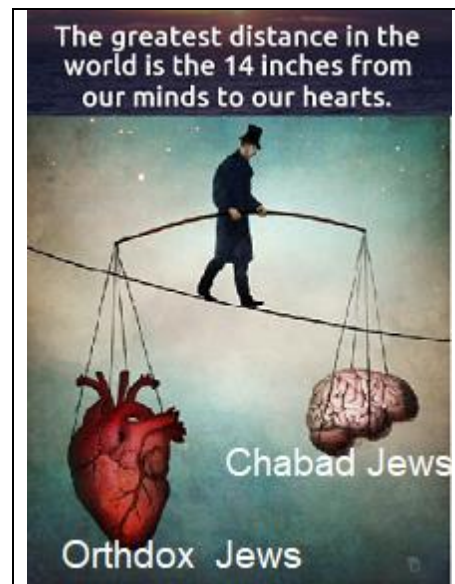
Chabad often contrasted itself with what is termed the **Chagat schools of Hasidism**. While all schools of Hasidism have a certain focus on the emotions, **Chagat saw emotions as a reaction to physical stimuli**, such as dancing, singing, or beauty. Rabbi Shneur Zalman, on the other hand, taught that the **emotions must be led by the mind**, and thus the **focus of Chabad thought was to be Torah study and prayer rather than esotericism and song**. As a Talmudist, Shneur Zalman endeavored to place Kabbalah and Hasidism on a rational basis. *In Tanya, he defines his approach as moach shalit al halev (Hebrew: מוח שליט על הלב, "the brain ruling the heart").*

#### **Presence:**

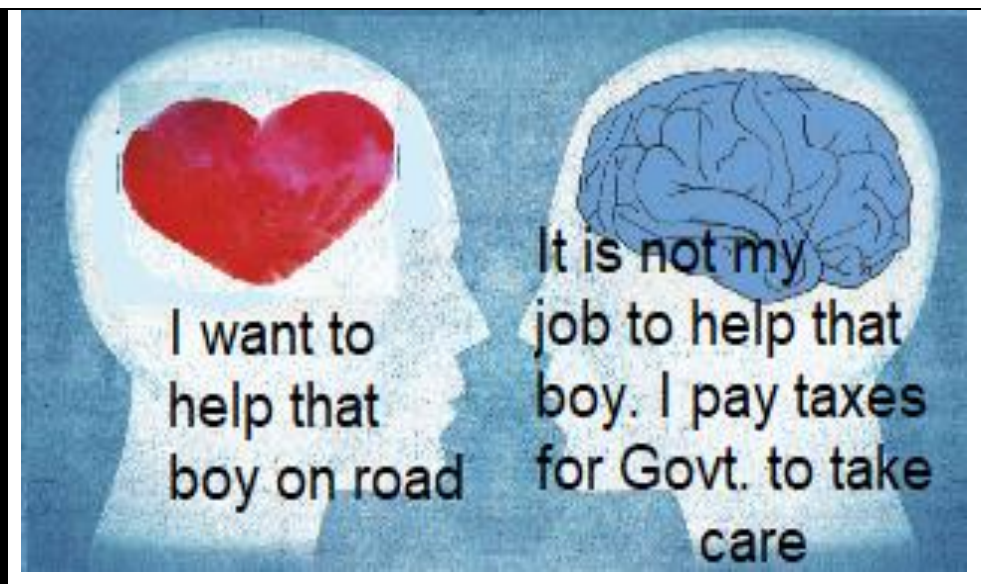
Today, over 3,500 Chabad institutions are located in more than 85 countries, with a new center opening on the average every ten days. In South Africa, South America, Russia, Australia, Asia, the UK, and many parts of the USA, Chabad has become the most dynamic and dominant force within the Jewish community.

#### **Major Differences:**

***While other branches of Hasidism focused primarily on the idea that "God desires the heart," Shneur Zalman argued that God also desires the mind, and that the mind is the "gateway" to the heart. With the Chabad philosophy he elevated the mind above the heart, arguing that "understanding is the mother of fear and love for God"***



**Your worst battle is between what you know and what you feel!**



Cap for Girls



Jewish Identity Confusion



Hasidic



Chabad



I just don't understand these Tanya followers!

Heart is more powerful



I just don't understand these Bible followers!!

Mind is more powerful



[Bene Israel \(Beni-Israel\) family in Mumbai, \(Bombay\) India, formerly Stock Photo - Alamy](#)

Bene Israel (Beni-Israel) family in Mumbai, (Bombay) India, formerly known as Shanvar Telis ('Saturday oil-pressers').





## Major Bene-Israel Pilgrimage landmarks in Raigad;

1. Bet El Synagogue –Panvel (1849)
2. Magen Aboth Sunagouge Alibaug(1840)
3. Ner Israel Synagouge , Ambapur (1768)
4. Bet El Ashtami Synagogue, Ashtami village (1882)
5. Beth El Synagogue, Rewdanda village (1842)
6. Bet Ha Elochim Synagogue, Pen (1893)
7. Hessed El Synagogue, Poynad village (1866)
8. Kensset Israel Synagogue, Talla(1876)
9. Orle Israel Synagogue , Nandgoan Murad (1896)
10. Shaar Ha Tefillah Synagogue, Mhasla (1885)
11. Knesset Israel Synagogue, Malegaon
12. Shaar-Shalom Synagogue, Borlai
13. Navgao Cemetery Bene-Israel Heritage Memorial
14. Eliahyohoo Hanavi Taap

In the Raigad District exist all those villages that have adopted the 'Kar" (Ikar- famer in Hebrew) formant of naming their village.

During the peak of Bene-Israel population there is information that there existed over 300 synagogues and prayer halls in Raigad District.



# How much do you know about Islam?

## Islam:

Root of the word Islam is from Hebrew word Shalom Aleichem (עֲלֵיכֶם שְׁלוֹם - peace be upon you) or aslama in Islam "he resigned, he surrendered, he submitted so Peace be upon him," causative conjunction of salima "he was safe," and related to salam (Shalom - שְׁלוֹם) "peace."Islam

## Allah / עלא

The word **Islam** means "submission", or the total surrender of one to God (Arabic: الله, Allāh) derived from “**Elah**”, the Hebrew and Aramaic words for God.

## Muslim

Followers of **Islam** are known as a **Muslims**, meaning "one who submits [to God] coming from the Hebrew word “**Mushlam**” (משלם).

## Muslim Greeting:

Salam wal-Iya Kum = Shalom Aleichem (עֲלֵיכֶם שְׁלוֹם)

## Muslim Major Divisions:

After the death of the Prophet Muhammad;

- the followers of his father’s brother Abu Bakr became **Sunni**
- the followers of his son-in-law Ali became **Shi’a**

## Sunni vs Shia:

Major difference in them is that **Sunni allows conversation** of people into their religion but **Shia doesn’t**. This is the reason most of the Muslim in the world are Sunni. Most of the Dalit population in India converted to Islam to escape the Hindu caste system. In Islam all were equal in front of God.



Turkish Muslims: Their first president of Turkey, **Kamāl Atatürk (1923-1938)** had declared that Turkey is not a Muslim country but Turkish country that followed the European customs. He converted all Turkish alphabets in to English and Turkish language was then on written in English alphabets (like using English alphabets to write Hindi). The whole country agreed with him therefore in Turkey women wear pants and have businesses. However the latest government is showing an increasing trend to be more Islamic.



### How Did Islam Spread:

As the Roman empire fell from 5 to 6 century, the Roman leaders and soldiers were looking for a way to rule over Middle-East, for which they needed constant flow of funds.

One of the major sources of constant flow of funds was religion. The remaining Romans leaders knew the Roman policy of “**One Religion One People**”. Romans had adopted Christianity to channel all donations in churches towards them.

The remaining in Middle-East Romans leaders found Islam a convenient source of funds by declaring Islam as their religion and directing all donations in the mosques towards them. They spread Islam by building Mosques all over the world.

### Five Pillars of Islam

Declaration of faith	Obligatory prayer	Compulsory giving	Fasting in the month of Ramadan	Pilgrimage to Mecca
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Well a UNIQUE ONE of Rabbi Ezekiel blessing the DALAI LAMA

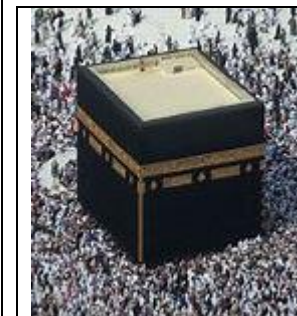


Example of King Being Humble  
Respecting all the religious



Below this is our  
First Temple of  
Solomon

Islam claims their Prophet Mohammad received the Quran just in the same place where Jewish first temple is located. Angel Gabriela (Jeberial) gave the Quran.



The word **Hajj** means "to attend a journey" to perform a series of rituals: each person walks counter-clockwise seven times around the **Kaaba** (a cube-shaped building and the **direction of prayer** for Muslims),

## Dr. KRANTI K FARIAS

Dr. KRANTI K FARIAS and HER WORK:

Dr. Kranti K. Farias is a former President of The Church History Association of India. Her doctoral work, entitled "The Christian Impact in South Kanara" was published in 1999; it is a work worth a read by all interested in the general of History of South Kanara.

(South Canara was a district of the Madras Presidency of British India, located at 13.00°N 75.40°E.[2] It covered the areas of the present-day districts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi of Karnataka and the Kasaragod District of Kerala. The district was one of the most heterogeneous of Madras Presidency with Tulu, Kannada, Konkani, Malayalam, Urdu and Beary being the principal languages spoken. It was succeeded by Dakshina Kannada in 1947.)

She has published several articles and papers on Indian **Nationalism, Indian Christians and Indian Jewish communities in India, Israel and Canada**. Dr. Kranti's current area of research is the history of the Jewish communities in India and the Diaspora with special focus on the **B'nei Menashe of North East India (Manipur & Mizoram States) and the Bene Ephraim (Telugu Jews of Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh State, South India)**. She is working on a book on cultural comparison of the Indian Jewish and Indian Christian Communities. This will be an interesting exposé of two Semitic communities living in harmony in India, knowledgeable about their roots and proud of their heritage.

<http://www.mangaloretoday.com/main/Historian-Dr-Kranti-Farias-to-speak-on-rsquo-Sarasvat-rsquo-roots-on-Jan-11.html>



<https://vimeo.com/18158482>

## Dvar for Noah (Genesis 6:9-11:32) Courtesy: Samuel & Erna Daniel

Parshat Noach contains the story of Noah and the flood, including the re-establishment of human civilization. Noah's first act upon resettling in the land was to grow a vineyard (9:20). Why did Noah grow grapes first, and not wheat or barley?

The Sforno explains that Noah mistakenly planted for enjoyment rather than for need, a misstep that would later cause him to curse one of his grandsons, Canaan (9:25). Rabbi Henach Leibowitz further explains that while planting a grapevine is necessary for the future service of G-d (Kiddush, Havdalah, b'ris, etc), the connotation and association of producing for pleasure rather than for necessity was inappropriate. This distinction is an essential early lesson in doing the right thing. Sometimes doing something is not technically wrong, yet it may still not be appropriate for the person or the moment.



# If Adam & Eve Were Bene-Israel

Darling the snake told me today that the fruit on the forbidden tree is called as apple and it has wonderful taste. Would you like to try it?



No dear. You know we Bene-Israel like Bananas

@Rabbi Sad Sack

**Awaskar:** Why is it so important for the groom at a Jewish wedding to stomp on a wine glass?

**Killeker:** Simple dear, because it's the last time he'll put his foot down.

**Palkar:** What does a Jewish husband call a waterbed?

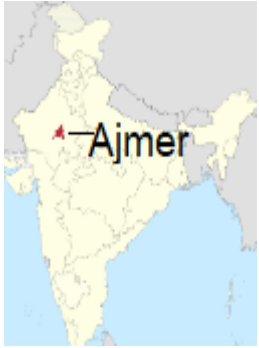
**Ashtamkar:** The Dead Sea!

Sankar boy comes home from school and tells his mother he has a part in the play. She asks: 'What part is it?'

The boy says: 'I play the part of the Bene-Israel husband.'

The mother scowls and says: 'Go back and tell the teacher you want a speaking part.'





## Bene-Israel from Ajmer, India

By Nathan Kurulkar

Today Ajmer pronounced is one of the major and oldest cities in the Indian state of Rajasthan Ajmer was originally known as *Ajayameru*. The 12th century text Prithviraja Vijaya states that the Shakambhari Chahamana king Ajayaraja II established the city of Ajayameru. Historian Dasharatha Sharma notes that the earliest mention of the city's name occurs in Palha's Pattavali, which was copied in 1113 CE at Dhara. This suggests that Ajmer was founded sometime before 1113 CE. A prashasti, issued by Vighraharaja IV and found at Adhai Din Ka Jhonpra, states Ajayadeva moved his residence to Ajmer.



### History of Bene-Israel's living in Ajmer, Rajasthan

During 1932 my father Solomon Ezekiel Kurulkar moved to Ajmer after his marriage as he worked for Railway. He was blessed with ten children. When my father arrived in Ajmer, there were a total of ten Bene-Israel families including us. The families were Jiradkar, Killeker, Banmolker, Ashtivkar, Nagavkar, Gosalkar, Nagaokar, Kurulkar. All of us ten siblings went to school where we were taught in Hindi.

As we were all religious my father formed a group and rented a place for Friday prayers and for celebrating festivals. For Rosh ha Shana sea prayers we went to the nearby lake Ana Sagar. All of us use to gather there as one family. After prayers all the children were distributed sweetmeat and adult's samosa and other snacks and drinks. All the families contributed for this function. We were ten different families but lived together as one. One of us, Isaac Ashtivkar had taken the kosher knife as use to cut fowls and lambs. Therefore we never use to eat non-Kosher meat as we followed out religion customs most faithfully.

All the ten families were employed by the Railways and some of them were in very senior positions. The place we had rented as prayer hall was surrounded by Hindu families who were very kind to us and we had excellent relationship with them.



You will be as surprised as I was when twenty years ago I had visited Ajmer, the Hindu families were happy to see us and said they still hear prayers coming from the home we had hired, as if there were people inside praying. May be now the place may not exist.

I would like to emphasize that we were not rich people but were very proud of our religion and faith and are still the same. This small history goes to show that no matter where we live we Bene-Israel don't give-up religion traditions & culture.

From this short true story of mine, you can understudy how we lived in Ajmer and we all were happy. Present all my siblings are in Israel and all are happy to be here.

Thank, Nathan Kurulkar

#### **Ajmer Jaipur and Pushkar is a very popular tourist route.**

- **Ajmer** for the grave of sufi saint, Moinuddin Chishti who blessed Mogul King Akbar, who was not blessed with a child, to have a son. It is believed Akbar was blessed with his son Jahagir after getting blessing Moinuddin Chishti. Thousands of devotees (irrespective of religion) visit his Darga / Grave to tie a thread knot for fulfillment of their personal wishes (and return when the wish is fulfilled).
- **Pushkar** for visiting the only temple of Brahma in the world. It is believed that when Brahma was creating the universe, he made a female deity known as Shatarupa (one with a hundred beautiful forms). Brahma became immediately infatuated with Her. Shatarupa moved in various directions to avoid the gaze of Brahmā. But wherever she went, Brahma developed a head. Thus, Brahma developed five heads, one on each side and one above the others. In order to control Brahma, Shiva cut off one of the heads. Also, Shiva felt that Shatarupa was Brahmā's daughter, having been created by Him. Therefore, Shiva determined, it was wrong for Brahmā to become obsessed with Her. He directed that there be no proper worship on earth for the "unholy" Brahmā. (setting definition of Father and Daughter relationship).



# Shaniwar Teli - Cooking

Ronith Allon Kandlekar



## Rasmalai

- ✓ FOR CHENNA/PANEER: 1 litre full fat milk, 2 tbsp lemon juice.
- ✓ FOR SUGAR SYRUP: 1½ cup sugar, 8 cups water.
- ✓ FOR RABRI/RABDI: 1 litre full fat milk, ¼th cup of sugar, ½ tsp cardamom powder, 2 tbsp of saffron milk, chopped pistachios, almonds
- ✓ and cashews.

◆ Directions: Firstly, boil milk in a deep pot. Then, add lemon juice and stir till milk curdles completely. Do not over boil, once curdled, switch off the flame and drain the curdled milk and squeeze off excess water. Leave to rest hanging for half n hr. After 30 minutes, start to knead the paneer for 8-10 minutes, until a dough ball is formed. Furthermore, make small balls and flatten. Keep aside and cover with damp cloth. Add sugar and water in a deep vessel. Boil the syrup for 10 minutes, making sure to stir and that the sugar does not stick to the bottom. Now drop the prepared paneer balls into the syrup carefully. Cover and boil for 15 minutes. Or pressure cook the balls, for 2 whistles on high flame and another 2 whistles on low flame. Once done, squeeze off the sugar syrup carefully from the cooked chenna and keep aside. Heat milk in a saucepan and get to a boil till milk reduces to one-third. Keep stirring and make sure that fat is not sticking to the bottom. Now add sugar, cardamom powder and saffron milk. Give it a good mix and get to a boil. Also scrape off the sides eventually and give a good stir. Add some of the chopped dry fruits, keep some for garnishing. Add the chenna balls to the rabdi and let it boil. Cool and refrigerate for approximately 1 hour. In a serving plate, add 2-3 rasmalai, pour over the rabdi on top of it and garnish with some chopped dry fruits.

!Happy Hanukkah to everyone



[\(1\) Ronith Benjamin | Facebook](#)





# The Abraham Accords, A Peace Deal with Biblically Prophetic Importance

*...and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. – (Isaiah 2:4)*

On 13th August, 2020 UAE and Israel signed an US-brokered agreement that has come to be known as the 'Abraham Accord', implying that the three parties represented the three Abrahamic religions Islam, Judaism and Christianity.



Israel and the United Arab Emirates will fully normalize their diplomatic relations. They will exchange embassies and ambassadors and begin cooperation across the board and on a broad range of areas including tourism, education, healthcare, trade and security', as per Donald Trump, US President and Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel.

Courtesy: Samuel & Erna Daniel

Isaiah 2:4

וְשָׁפַט בֵּין הַגּוֹיִם וְהוֹכִיחַ לְעַמִּים רַבִּים וְכָתְתוּ חַרְבֹתָם לְאֵתִים  
וְהִנְיִוְתִיהֶם לְמִזְמֵרוֹת לֹא יִשָּׂא גּוֹי אֶל־גּוֹי חֶרֶב וְלֹא יִלְקְדוּ עוֹד  
מִלְחָמָה: (פ)

Thus He will judge among the nations And arbitrate for the many peoples, And they shall beat their swords into plowshares And their spears into pruning hooks: Nation shall not take up Sword against nation; They shall never again know war.





# SHAVEI ISRAEL

<https://shavei.org/about-us/>

SHAVEI ISRAEL reaches out to **“lost”** and **“hidden”** Jews around the world. **From Poland to Peru, and Barcelona to Brazil,** Shavei Israel aims to help descendants of Jews reconnect with the people and State of Israel. We open the door to all who have decided that Judaism and a return to the Jewish people are central to their fate and their identity.

Shavei Israel was founded in 2002 by Michael Freund. While serving as the Deputy Communications Director under Israeli **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** in 1997, Freund opened an envelope that arrived in the mail one day. That simple action was to profoundly change his life as well as that of many others.

The letter was from a group in northeastern India called the **Bnei-Menashe**. They said they were descendants of the tribe of Menashe, one of the **Ten Lost Tribes of Israel**, and were pleading to return to the Promised Land. Their letter sent Freund on a mission to learn all he could about the **Lost Tribes of Israel**. In the process, he discovered that all across the world there are **“lost Jews”** dreaming of returning to their Jewish roots.



*One Evening at Borgaokar family*

*Mom I think I marked wrong answer*

*If Ambani was the richest family in the world? YES/NO I wrote No. Every one answered YES.*

*No Mom ther are not Jewish.*



*Why, what was the question*

*Hmm... are Ambanies Jewish?*

*Oh, so don't worry. You answer is correct.*

# Chanukah Completion Results Winner of \$ 100



Win \$ 100.00, If you would ask God for one miracle this Chanukah? What will be that?  
All answers with names will be published in the next 1.1.2021 Shaniwar Teli issue. The best answer will win \$ 100

\*Reply\* \*to\* :

[shaniwarteli@gmail.com](mailto:shaniwarteli@gmail.com)



**The judge is an anonymous person.**

**We could not contact Mr. Robin Samuel for judging the answers so we had to choose another judge who wants to be anonymous. The judge will decide the best answer and it is the last.**



Participants	Wish
Ronen Benjamin	This Chanukah I want peaceful life all over the world. People should live healthy, wealthy and prosperous life. Amen
Kinneret Aptekar	Rebuilding of the Third Temple - Beth Ha Mikdash
Julie Aptekar	Peace in the world Julie Aptekar
Karmiel Aptekar	Time travel
Shaul Aptekar	Transformation of man to be more humane such that he is more caring and sharing with each other.
Jeremiah Kolet	I would ask God to make me useful in His project in this world.
Benjamin Isaac	Peace on earth and goodwill mankind.
Joyce Kolatker	(Blank email)
Benjamin Isaac	Peace on earth and goodwill to mankind.
Tzedek Stella	I will ask G-D for purification of chosen people.
Rahel Ronen	I want this Chanukah, Mashiach to come and we all should get rid of Covid pandemic and all the negativity from the Universe and we all can live a happy, positive and peaceful life ☺ Amen
Susanna Isaac	I Would Ask God To Appear In Person To Show Us His, True Face Or Form, Hear God Speak In Person. (sent from Reuben Isaac email)
Avichai Bastekeer	A miracle for me to build the museum for the Bnei Yisrael community.
Rebecca Magaonkar	To free the entire world from COVID19
Rezina Daniels	World Peace
Joseph Moses	May the Almighty eradicate the Carona virus from the entire universe.
Leena Karkera	My only wish would be to take out Covid 19 from our lives.
Elijah Jacob	Eradicate corona virus and all diseases from the face of the earth.”
Ruth Samson	I will ask from God is to eradicate Corona virus completely from this world and keep everyone healthy and peaceful.

## Winner

**The Judge's statement:** Thank you to all those who took part in this interesting competition. Thank you also to the team of Shaniwar Teli to give me this opportunity to Judge this competition. I am only pleased to offer a present of US dollars 100 to the winner of this competition.

As you can read all the replies are of value and of concern to the public and for the benefit of masses. I personally think the most innovative reply as per my judgment is “Time Travel” by *Karmiel Aptekar*. I have no idea how old Karmiel is and what were the thoughts of Karmiel Aptekar wishing for Time Travel. For me, if the wish of “Time Travel” comes true then all the wishes of all the others will also come true. With the ability to travel in the past or in the future one could reach the world they want to be in; COVID free world and in to a Peaceful world.

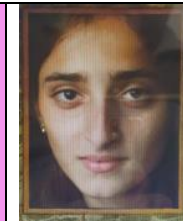
**Karimiel, CONGRULAIONS!!** Please contact the editor Shulmith at Shaniwar Teli to collect your award through the email [shaniwarteli@gmail.com](mailto:shaniwarteli@gmail.com)



# AJDC Khai Fest 2020 – Digital Edition

## (13 Dec, 2021)

Ms. Maayan Shapurkar, JDC India.

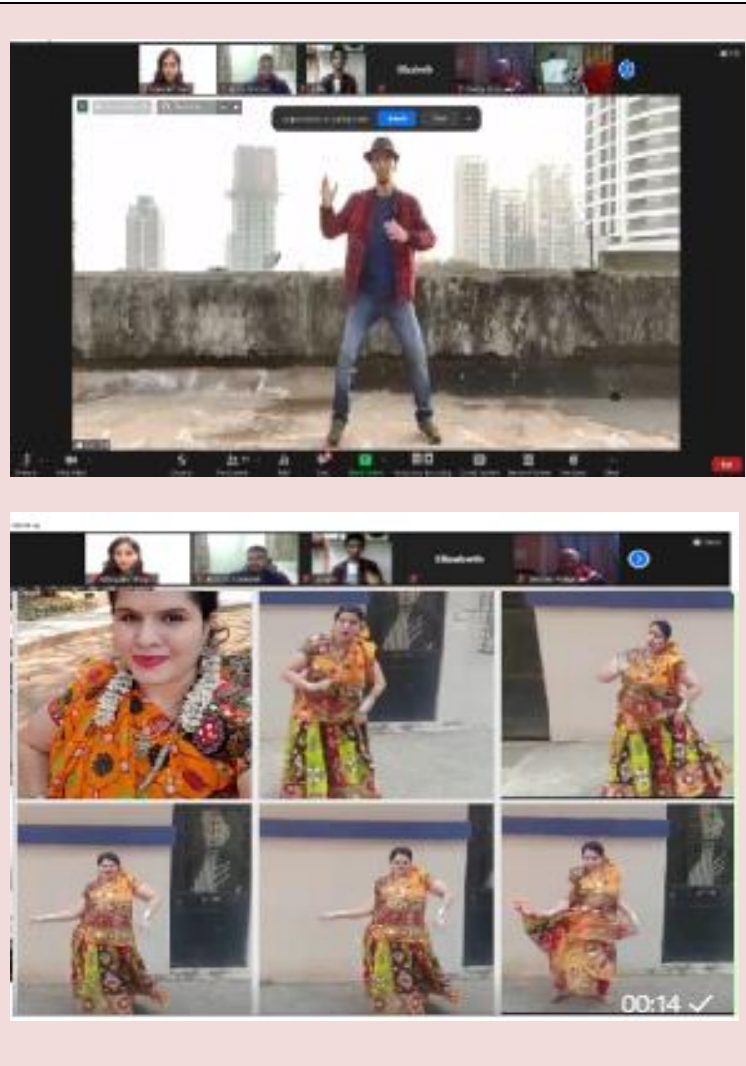


Sometimes it is during the time of an adversity that an opportunity comes knocking at our door. One such opportunity came to us, in the form of this year's Khai Fest 2020 – Digital Edition. With no possibility of hiring an auditorium or having any form of personal gathering, we hosted our event completely online on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December.

Every living room turned into a little stage and every wall a beautiful backdrop as community members of all ages with both hands grabbed this chance to express themselves and bring out the beauty of their talents. And as they performed, we had audiences pouring-in in great numbers from all around the world including Israel, Canada, USA, Germany, Latvia, Kuwait and Malaysia, making it a truly international event! Beautifully choreographed moves and melodious voices blended in with colour, emotion, passion and even romance, our phenomenal performers brought our screens to life! And to join our two very lovely hosts Kenan Samson and Judah Waskar, we also had with us the gorgeous Elena, our virtual host created using AI.

Back in history it was in the year 167 BC, during the rule of Antiochus that our Jewish practices were outlawed and our holy temple defiled, due to which our people were unable to pray in the house of the Lord, but they persisted and continued to pray and study the Torah.

And this year as the COVID-19 took over our world, locked us in our home and shut down the paths to our synagogues, once again our people have





persisted and continued to observe every Shabbat, every Chag and now even the Khai Fest.

The members of the JYP committee have kept alive the legacy of the Khai Fest, our very own Bene Israeli Jewish tradition that it has now become! And with more than 400 people joining in, this has been our biggest event of the year!

I would like to use this space to express my gratitude to our major partners, ORT India and Mr. David Birwadkar and also all our donors and well-wishers who even during these tormenting times have come forward to support our community. This year we have been able to raise a total of Rs 382,204/- of which 50% will be donated towards the Emergency medical Fund and the Bayiti. Also, a big thank you to our Chairman Dr. Nathan Aston and my JDC team for the constant encouragement they have been giving the JYP.

Rabbi Yakov Yosef a student of the Baal Shem Tov after complex calculations once determined that “the night of the Hanukkah victory and the re-lighting of the Menorah was precisely the longest night of the year. This deepest darkness set the stage for the greatest possible revelation of light.” May the darkness that we have witnessed this year set the stage for a better, brighter and a happier new year for us all! Chag Sameach!!





Oren Benjamin

# Aliyah to Israel

**(The printed part of this message is printed as received. No changes are made)**

*Jewish Agency Official representatives Shirley Palkar & Oren Benjamin  
via WhatsApp +972-54-760-9799.*



Shirley Palkar

Dear Community members,

As 2020 comes to end, Oren and myself would like to take the opportunity to thank each and every one for your support, patience and understanding. 2020 has been a special year and every one of us has learnt a valuable lesson that we will remember for rest of our lives. Before ending 2020 we thought to update our community with our volunteer work with Jewish Agency and Aliyah throughout this year.

Since Oren and I started volunteering with Jewish Agency since May 2019 around forty-three (43) people (Bene Israel) from India are already in Israel and getting adjusted to the new country. We are in constant touch with few of them. It gives us extreme pleasure to know that each one of the new immigrants are getting settled in their new journey.

The last group of sixteen (16) new Olim (immigrants) started their journey to Israel from Mumbai India on 21.10.2020. Among the olims were youngsters, teenagers, elderly people and students. This is the largest group of olims who came to Israel from India since last many years. Till now either we had individuals Aliyah or family Aliyah.

This task was not easy. Israel was under second full lock down since Rosh Hashanah till Sunday (18.10.2020) for almost a month. Still this couldn't stop us! With continuous communication and co-operation with Jewish Agency despite the corona virus crisis we and Jewish Agency, were able to fulfill the dreams of these sixteen new immigrants who are in Israel now. All sixteen new immigrants were in quarantine for two weeks, as per guideline by the State of Israel.

We are now working continuously with Jewish agency officials for next bringing the next Aliyah group. Last few months we have conducted many Zoom Aliyah interviews, got files approved from JA even those with missing birth certificates, special medical cases and few files even on urgent basis and also have opened new files. Now we are proceeding to the next step of Aliyah.

The Aliyah is approved and in past too also was approved only by Jewish Agency and we are just the bridge to make the process smooth, steady and faster. The reason we request people to contact us or directly the Jewish Agency Global Center is as immigration is a confidential matter and it will be wise if it is handled by official representative.

We request you to please contact us if you know of any of your friends or family member needs help with Aliyah, we are here to help them. During the current Covid-19 situation Jewish Agency and we will continue to help potential olims to bring them to Israel under the global constraints and limitations, and subject to the strict guidelines of the Israeli Government.

Other than our volunteering with Jewish agency, we always take time to help elderly people in Israel, those who need any assistance with different organizations in Israel. These elderly people contact us and we try our best to help them all according to our reach and possibility.

A young Bene Israeli from Mumbai was Covid-19 positive and needed immediate help, Oren from Israel used his personal political contacts and was able to arrange a bed in one of the best hospital in Mumbai. The person got best treatment and his life was saved. He and his family thanked us for our help by sending various messages and notes of thanks. This is one of the several ways we help our community.

It is not just the Jews we help. Oren has being helping without differentiating in religion. When Covid19 struck the world several people were jobless especially those daily wages workers in India. Oren immediately provided groceries for 3 months to several families in Pune city.

Several students from Maharashtra were stranded in Delhi and wanted to return to their native place and few contacted Oren for assistance. Due to Oren's proper coordination between elected members in India and these students were able to reach home safely.

Several dialysis patients in Mumbai were having trouble for getting treated as no transportation was available due to lockdown. Few who knew Oren approached for help and immediately with the help of local elected MP these patients got transportation and were taken for their weekly treatment, free of cost. During November 2020 Oren and I with common friend from Mumbai were able to donate sanitary napkins for one year to several girls from the remote villages of Maharashtra.

***It is our honor to serve the community and we do our job in full transparency, dedication and with respect to each and every one. Thank you once again to all those who are always with us with their kind words, support, blessings and motivation.***

***Wishing everyone a healthy safe, positive bright and good 2021.***

Best Regards, Shirley and Oren. Official Representatives of Jewish Agency for India.

**ORT**  
(Organization for Rehabilitation through Training)  
Johnny Jhirad



Dear Jewish community members,

Let me introduce you to the managing committee and staff team.

The renowned lawyer Mr. Levi Rubens is serving as the **Chairman**. After a successful career also as a director of Ort India, Mr. Benny Isaac is the **Hon. Secretary**.

Myself Johnny Jhirad, a graduate of IIT Bombay and ex Reliance Industries for Chemical plant projects. I am serving as a member and **Chairman of the Education subcommittee** of Ort India.

Dr. Alice Aviva Isaac is practicing as well as helping honorary to look after the health of **AJDC cash assisters** and others.

Mrs. Sivanah David Ashtamkar, after a long career in Air India is serving as the **Director of Ort India**.

Mr. Elkan Palkar is serving as **Project Manager** of Ort India also keeps the electronics and website running.

Mrs. Judith is the **Database Administrator** is always ready to help.

Mr. Solomon Charikar known in the community as Solly ensures the **Security** and is an all rounder.

Mr. Sandesh and Mr. Bahadur and the **security men** are the efficient support staff of Ort India The Managing committee and staff of Ort India is dedicated to serve the **Cause of Education** among the members of the Jewish community of India. Please contact any of us depending on the nature of need.

**Ort India is glad to announce its  
Scholarship scheme for the year  
2020-2021.**

**Scholarship is available for school, college and professional studies. It will cover fees for entrance exams, tuitions, extracurricular studies etc. It is also available for online studies to students as well as for employed people to enhance their careers.**

**To avail scholarship please visit our  
Website: [www.ortindia.org](http://www.ortindia.org)**

(Some applications have been already received and disbursements will soon start.)

**Aptitude / Ability/ Talent/ Skill Test**

Students can also take aptitude tests at Thane sponsored by Ort India. Please contact Ort India office during 11 am to 2.30 pm on any workday. Mondays and Thursdays till the pandemic continue.



# Raigad Jewish Association (RJA)

Herzl Bhonkar



RJA managing committee trust consists of all Bene-Israel community members living in Raigad. This has a great advantage as all members are easy to reach and take decisions.

**Lawyer Herzl Bhonkar – President**  
**Shalom Penkar – Vice President**  
**Noel Chincholkar – Secretary**  
**Benjamin Waskar – Joint Secretary**  
**Abraham Awaskar- Treasure**  
**Keren Chaulkar- Joint Treasure**

## How does RJA handle donation

Those who are interested in donation should contact RJA by email.

Based on the donations you want to make, we will discuss the projects we have in our plan. You will decide what project you want to donate for. You could pay the bills directly or through RJA. As you may please.

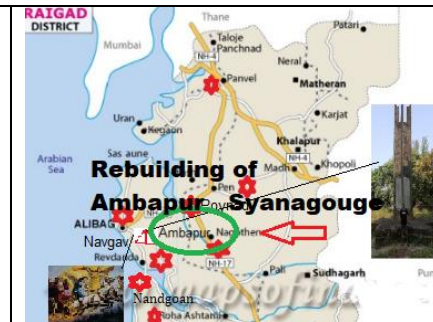
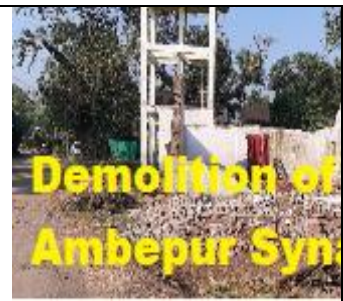
[herzlbhonkar@gmail.com](mailto:herzlbhonkar@gmail.com)

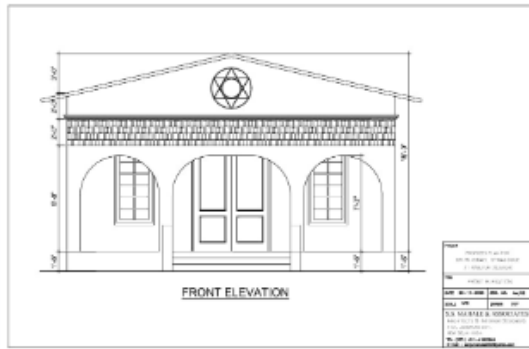


Raigad Jewish Association (RAJ) established a monsoon proof memorial candle lighting cabinet at the stone where chariots of Elijah left its marks on the rock. It was inaugurated during Oct. 2020.

For years the place had no such arrangement and devotees lit candles covering them with tin and solid sheets so the wind does not blow of the light of the candle.

## RJA is now Re-building Ambapur Synagogue that has been closed down some 50+ years ago.





**New Plan for the Synagogue**



As of Dec. 25, 2020 the foundation of the new Ambepur Synagogue is being laid as see in the pictures.

## IJHC

Indian Jewish Heritage Center

Ruth Greenfield is a founding member of the Indian Jewish Heritage Center in Israel. Ruth presented the life achievements of her father, Mr. Joshua Moses Benjamin ז"ר. As the Chief Architect of India, he designed the annex to the existing parliament building as well as designing many other buildings in India and worldwide. He was also instrumental in passing many laws in environmental protection and land usage. Ruth spoke about him and his contributions to the world of architecture as well as to the heritage of the Indian Jews during two zoom meetings. Shaniwar Teli eNewsletter has published details of all achievements of Mr. Joshua Benjamin in the previous issue.

Mr. Benjamin also designed the memorial at Bene-Israel cemetery in Navgao.

(IJHC have other activities dealing with other Jewish communities from India, but in this newsletter we cover only activity related to Bene-Israel community).



**Ramrajkar:** In this COVID I now plan to go to Amritsar to live their peacefully ever after in the Golden Temple.

**Awaskar:** Oh... so you will convert to Guru Nanak's religion.

**Ramrajkar:** No, why ... I am a Bene-Israel so I will remain a Bene-Israel.

**Awaskar:** (Thoughtfully ) Then why go to Amritsar? Immigrate to Israel and live in Jerusalem peacefully.

**Ramrajkar:** Are you crazy? In Israel to eat boiled chicken and white cheese?!! I will go to Amritsar sit in Golden Temple sleep in Golden Temple Eat in Golden

**At Golden temple all for is free.**

**Awaskar:** Oh... and what about whiskey? You love Gold Label! At Golden Temple you will also get Gold Label free??

**Ramrajkar:** Oh .... I didn't think of this .... It is a very serious problem.

**Awaskar:** So what will you do now.....

**Ramarajkar:** Well .... We all will have to learn to live with COVID after all .... and if not the Gold Temple, Gold Label will always help us.

**Awaskar:** Then, let us have a few pegs in celebration of you staying back!

## BJP's Jewish Minority Leader in Maharashtra

Sassoon Phanspurkar  
Shiffron Pezarkar (for Pune)



BJP BI group has been very busy last three months

1. With Shaniwar Teli we have helped many needy BI families under "Adopt a Needy Family" program launched by Shaniwar Teli where BI from out side India are helping financially many families for 4 to 6 months.
2. We arranged a Kosher Butcher to travel to Puna before festivals as there is no one in Pune to do this job.
3. In Corona environment we have been busy helping people and even getting back from hospitals bodies of our BI community members to have a respectable Jewish burial.

## Canada

Abraham Samson Mabgaokar



Mr. Mabgaokar reported there were no activities due to COVID

## New Zealand,

Yoel Reuben Samson Killeker



No report was made perhaps due to COVID

## IOBI



IOBI has issued their Winter 2020 e-newsletter with various interview and articles and giving details of their zoom meetings. The interview with the Indian Ambassador is interesting. (expect one issue). What most attracted our attention was a beautiful poem by Kavita Ezekiel Mendonca on "Alibaug" that is worth reading.

See Kol-Bene Israel at : <https://www.iobeneisrael.org/ezone-winter-2020>

**Australia**  
**Solomon Eurlkar**



Life is getting back to normal after a few months of lockdown and hopefully things are getting better in Israel and around the world.

We in Melbourne have enjoyed the Hannukah festival with our families and lighting the candle every day in our homes has helped us come together. It was also great that our local Sephardi Synagogue sent its members a token Hannukah gift which has also helped us sweeten the days of the Jewish festival.

It's been a busy few months for myself and hopefully I can get back to spending more time looking into my Eurlkar family tree. I have been able to track down a lot of information over the last few months.

With 2021 just around the corner this is a good opportunity to wish you all a good year to stay safe.  
Hopefully we can visit Israel soon.



**Thane**  
**Samson David Awasker**



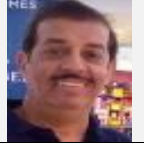
No report received due to COVID



# Pune

Dr. Reuben Daniels Pezarkar

Special initiative by Lt. General Russell J Mordechai PVSM, AVSM (Borgaonkar)



## Deplorable State of Bene Israeli Cemeteries in India

The Bene-Israeli community in India specially those living in the western parts of India like Mumbai, Pune and Raigad districts have for time immemorial, neglected their cemeteries which have been the resting place of their ancestors.

Case in point being the Worli Cemetery which was encroached upon by slum dwellers and after a few graves were lost the community woke up and constructed a wall and presently it is one of the most nicely maintained cemeteries in Mumbai.

Other places like Thane, Raigad and Pune are facing some problems or the other. The BI community members of many places like Raigad Mumbai and Pune have now woken from their slumber and have formed committees to look after the cemeteries which house the graves of their beloved family members.

The Jewish Cemetery at Koregaon Park was a classic example of one most important but neglected part in the lives of the Pune Jewish community members, the only available resting place for the Jews.

After monsoons thick growth of grass and shrubs as high as five to six feet makes it impossible to access the graves for saying Haskhaba. Further Also the a neighboring slum dwellers time and break the cemetery wall and used the place to throw garbage and as a shortcut to access the main road. Vagabonds sit on graves gambling and drinking alcohol with empty bottles strewn around the place. All member of the community complained but nobody ever came forward to take initiative and do something about it.

**New Initiative :** Where there is a will there is a way, **Lt. General Russell J Mordechai PVSM, AVSM (Borgaonkar)** along with **Dr. Zimra Israel** decided that enough is enough and something has to be done to rectify this situation They took up the responsibility of setting matters right.



Jewish Cemetery at  
Koregaon Park



- 1.As a first step they employed workers to clean the cemetery using their own funds.
- 2.Next step will be to get water line, electricity, repairing of taps making a shed, spraying of chemicals so that the grass does not grow so vigorously in the next monsoon.
- 3.Help has been sought from the local politician from Koregaon Park to stop slum dwellers from encroaching on the cemetery. Many members of the BI community from Pune and overseas have appreciated the initiative. Hopefully in the next few months the face of the Cemetery in Pune will change.

In this initiative Secretary of the ***Succath Shelomo*** Synagogue **Mr. Yosef Daniel Nowgaokar** his wife **Mrs Joycee Nawgaokar** and **myself Dr. Reuben Daniel Pezarkar** have volunteered to be a part of this noble cause and I am sure many more volunteers will come forward to lend their hand and help in this initiative.

For such scale of work funds are needed and I am sure many BI community members who have migrated to Israel and other countries have their ancestors in Pune Cemetery. Even other community members from India and abroad can help in this noble cause by donating generously so that the cemetery in Pune will set an example on community service to rest of the world. For donation for Pune Jewish Cemetery please contact;

**Dr. Reuben Daniel at email: [reuben\\_daniel@rediffmail.com](mailto:reuben_daniel@rediffmail.com) WhatsApp:+9197655-13838**



Dad, don't we Bene-Israel Die ?

Everyone dies son.

Dad, then why don't we have a Bene-Israel Cemetery in Pune?

Dead drunk Mr. Pingle one night entered the Bene-Israel cemetery. In darkness he fell in to a freshly dug grave. He tried to climb out but he could not without some help. In some time he saw dead drunk Mr. Ashtamkar coming close to the grave.

Pingle: "Ashtamkar Astamkar, help me out. It is very cold in here."

Ashtamkar: "Oh..my friend (hic, Hic), of course you are cold (hic). I will just fill the grave up so you can be warm (hic)." Saying so he started filling the grave with mud (hic).

## Eilat Moshe Digodkar



At our Shaare Ha Shalom Synagogue, our chief organizer Mr. David Nir has found an innovative way of lighting Hanukkah.

There is Hanukkah candle lighting every day in the synagogue with limited people. Every day a different family is invited to the candles lighting. This type of gathering are been done so every day you can say 12, 13 people are attending the Hanukkah festival.

The families who are not invited in Hanukkah are not allowed to go to Synagogue on that day without any reason. This is Just to keep regulations.



## IJF – Indian Jewish Federation Advocate David Talegaonkar



Due to health issues of Mr. Talegaonkar this matter got delayed. We wish David fast and full recovery and quickly.



# Bene Ephraim community (From Assam)

SASI KIRAN



Insignificant But Adherent to Faith in an Unknown far east land for ages with ancient halakhic customs

In the far east and an unknown land to their own brothers, like Joseph in the Egypt who was never recognized by his own brothers, living in a pit, believed to be dead, a small insignificant Jews living alone. Only hope is their God nothing beyond that.

In the year 2010 when I was discussing with my Rabbi Shmuel about how I can take up issues about my community through Indian Embassy in Israel and my relationship with officers there, he just made me shut. He said if God wants at His appointed time, our brothers will recognize us and we will live in Haretz Israel.

This perplexed my basic cognition and I thought of him as a helpless fanatic religious guy. Though I was from the same community, being highly educated and making a remarkable career and enjoying respectable social status, I was neglecting the idea of my Jewishness. This incident chased my thoughts and my mind took special attention to my Jewishness. I visited Israel twice and started dwelling on my Jewish story which is lying under torn out papers of the forgotten famous books.

My search led me to the very interaction of our community with Christian missionaries in south coastal Andhra Pradesh. Initially Mr. Clough started his missionary work from Madras (Chennai) and moved to Nellore district. Only place in the global Christian missionaries experienced a mythical musing of approaching local monotheists and seeking their help to re-establish their faith on monotheism and ten commandments. Surprisingly this tribe is well aware of Jewish practices because a Jewish sage named Nazari ( locally he is Nazariah ) who has



🕎 אברהם אבינו 🕎  
ಜ್ಞಾನಮುನಿ ಕು ವಚನಾಲಯ



ಸುರೇಶ್, ಅನುಬಂಧ:  
ಶ್ರೀಮತಿ. ಮಿರಿಯಮ್, ಯಾತ್ರಿಕೆ



mystic powers worked among this Madiga tribe and enlightened about their duty to cling to monotheism. Local rulers understood of him as Muslim prophet. He recruited twelve disciples and each twelve makes another twelve and they preach to only Madiga tribe and protect them from idols influence.

The monotheistic teachings of Christian missionary Mr. Clough has become more attractive to Mr. Peraiah one of rich herd's trader in that region belong to Madiga tribe. He approached missionaries to accept Baptism along with 2222 people in a single day at a river bank called Gundlakamma. This has given birth to a new social group called Telugu Baptist Mission. In the book written by Mrs. Clough who is a historian by profession tells that she was astonished to see this tribe gave their lands and money to missionaries to establish institutes just to strengthen their monotheistic faith.

Subsequently this missionary establishment gave shelter to many other communities too. Unless G\_D has a plan to move His lost children to their original Israeli family through these missionaries and eventually recognize their practices and traits to Israeli families, this kind of moment would not have happened says Rabbi Yacobbi ( local leader).

### **Traditions:**

There are several oral traditions practiced by this tribe that surprised Christian missionaries. In a heathen land far distant than their imagination they found common names like Maramma ( Miriam), El iah, Peraiah and treat these names as their ancestors. There among Bnei-Ephraim: traditions known as Cavilah Traditions. There are about 450 ancient halakhic customs, habits and Hebrew Cultural Elements among them that continued since prehistoric times and Exodus. They shared some of those elements with the Telugu people in Andhra Pradesh. There are several traditions and customs similar in both Telugu and Hebrew cultures i.e. burying the dead, eating kosher animal meat, marriage under chuppah, burial customs, 7 day purification, bar/ bath mitzvah, Hebrew words, sayings and many other usages. The Telugu people re- made Amaravati as their capital today and the Bnei-Ephraim are hopeful to find their hidden Torah Scrolls, Hebrew literature and ancient valuables when the Government digs out during constructing the new capital for Andhra Pradesh State.



### **DNA and Biological correlations:**

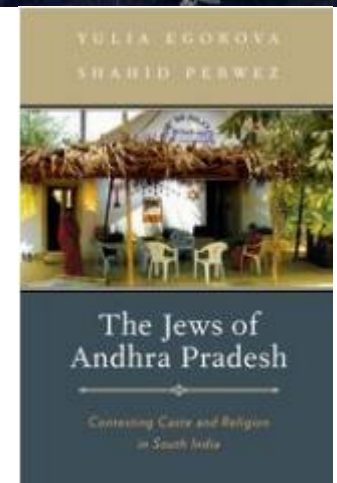
In the absence of archaeological evidence and with the available records CCMB has taken up some genetic study on this group. There is one common genetic feature specific to Y-chromosome (Haplogroup J2) between the Jews and the Madigas. The colour complex of this tribe who especially live among the Gudlakamma river basin is pink with brown eyes and have middle eastern body built. They are experts in linguistic skills, blowing SOFER and playing drums is one of the inherited skills. A Sub caste of Madiga called KOMMU (meaning SOFER) are designated to generate music and tell stories of local kings called Katama Raju Kathalu (stories of king Katam).

This is an astonishing fact that enthrals me because in a country where Hindu mythology dictates for the shankha ( sea conch ) that is a sacred emblem and blowing this instrument during religious ceremonies. How this community remember their SOFER and its sanctity. They believe the blowing of SOFER shall cast away devils and it is close to the voice of GOD on mountain. What is this belief and who taught them? They have made it popular among the Kings in these areas.

### **Remnant of faith:**

Today there are two Jewish synagogues in Andhra Pradesh region. One in Kottareddy Palem other in Machilipattanam. However there are several Jewish groups who claim their Jewishness but do not want to leave their Christian faith. This created many Messianic Synagogues and different faith groups. The Kottareddy Palem synagogue have strict orthodox practices and live a strict Jewish life. The non-acceptance of Jewish brothers in Israel made many Madigas to identify themselves as Christians and migrated to USA , Australia, and other greener pastures.

Even in my family many relatives who migrated to western world are forgetting their Jewish practices which were maintained for ages in spite of difficulties. Obviously the economic progress dominates the religion and cultural identities. Post Independent India has given affirmative benefits to the Madigas who can convert to Hinduism. Madigas who embraced Christianity got early English education even before independence of India. Most unfortunate Madiga Jews lost both affirmative benefits and English education. Though Christian and Jewish



Madigas intermarry, the struggle prevails in identity of there cultural issues. As my Rabbi Shmuel says to look at the grace of God to open the eyes of brothers to recognize Bene Ephraim. Someday G\_D shall surely pave the way to join back my forefathers.

(Follow the link <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/27736659/download-pdf-asian-jewish-life>)

AUTHOR :SASI KIRAN LECE., MA(Lit), MBA., BCS.,LLB., LLM(Labor Law)., (PhD)  
Founder and Gen Secretary JJ Group of Educational Institution, Director KanSoft (I) Pvt Ltd



## History of how Jews reached Andhra Pradesh (AP) Bene-Ephraim

**DNA Findings: CCMB a government research center DNA test found Y-Chromosome haplogroup J2 is common with Jews of Israel.**

(In human genetics, Haplogroup J-M172 or J2 is a Y-chromosome haplogroup which is a subclade (branch) of haplogroup J-M304. Haplogroup J-M172 is common in modern populations in Western Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, Europe and North Africa. It is thought that J-M172 may have originated between the Caucasus Mountains, Mesopotamia and the Levant.)



### Arrival of Jews in Andre-Pradesh (AP):

Turmeric was the most in demand preservative in the ancient times. Jewish traders from ancient “Ophir Jewish Traders “ had discovered the spice route to trade in Turmeric for India to Ophir (Ophir, unidentified region famous in Old Testament times for its fine gold. The geographic list of Genesis 10 apparently places it in Arabia, but in the time of Solomon (c. 920 BC), Ophir was thought of as being overseas. Gold, almug (or algum) wood i.e., sandalwood), ivory, monkeys, and peacocks were procured there. Many areas of the Arabian Peninsula have been proposed as the site of Ophir; the principal alternative locations overseas are East Africa and India). Today the place is known as Chebrole where the Jews started trading from 1100AD.



Turmeric demand drastically diminished with the invention of refrigeration (Artificial refrigeration began in the mid-1750s, and developed in the early 1800s. In 1834, the first working vapor-compression refrigeration system was built. The first commercial ice-making machine was invented in 1854. In 1913, refrigerators for home use were invented.)






With time the Jewish community in Chebrole lost contact with their ancestors land.



*Mr. Prasanth Ponugoti, without turmeric the immune system of the world has become so weak. May be you can go back to your ancestor's profession of trading in Turmeric as the world becomes awareness of the value of Turmeric in health?*



**Jewish population found in various places in the world**  
<https://kulanu.org/wp-content/uploads/magazines/2020-spring.pdf>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ghana, p17</b></p>  <p>Sefwi Wiawso, home of the Jewish community</p> <p>Accra, capital</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Portugal, p10</b></p>  <p>Belmonte</p> <p>Lisbon, capital</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Philippines, p6</b></p>  <p>Manila, capital</p> <p>General Santos City</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Brazil, p6</b></p>  <p>Recife</p> <p>Brasilia, capital</p> <p>Rio de Janeiro</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>India, pp 3, 12</b></p>  <p>New Delhi, capital</p> <p>Andhra Pradesh, home of the Bene Ephraim community</p> <p>Erode, Tamil Nadu, home to Zion Torah Center</p>





# History of Jews from Bangladesh's *Two* Communities

## First Community: ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_the\\_Jews\\_in\\_Bangladesh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Bangladesh))

The **history of the Jews in Bangladesh** refers to the history of a tiny Jewish community in **Bangladesh**, previously known as **East Pakistan**. Jewish history in the country can be traced to the 18th and 19th centuries.

The Jews of **British India** and **Pakistan** had a small community in what is now Bangladesh, particularly in the city of **Dhaka**. Jewish residents were also reported in **Rajshahi**.<sup>[1]</sup> The Jews of Bangladesh are reported to have been **Baghdadi Jews** and the **Bene Israel**. Most of these Jews emigrated by the 1960s. Now only a few Jewish families live in Bangladesh very quietly (practice Judaism in hidden) because of govt. policy with the Israel and afraid to so called religious fundamentalist as well as political instability in the country.

Jews have been linked to the modern history of Bangladesh. Some of the prominent Jewish residents included Mordechai Cohen, a former television newsreader and actor;<sup>[2]</sup> and Alex Aronson, an academic who taught at Dhaka University.<sup>[3]</sup> Some foreign Jews who are prominently associated with the country include the American architect **Louis Kahn**, who designed **Bangladesh's parliament**; and **J. F. R. Jacob**, an Indian army general who served in the **Bangladesh Liberation War**.



## Second Community: The extraordinary story of the Bangladesh Jews

(<https://www.thejc.com/lifestyle/features/the-extraordinary-story-of-the-bangladesh-jews-1.58433>) A piece on Jews in Bangladesh may raise some eyebrows. Bangladesh is officially a parliamentary democracy, but 90 per cent of the population is Muslim. There are no diplomatic relations with Israel, and Bangladesh has discouraged Jews from remaining there, wiping out remembrance of almost everything Jewish, including the synagogue. Yet once it was different, and East Pakistan - today Bangladesh - boasted a thriving, if small, Jewish community.



The East Bengal Jewish community was established by Shalom Cohen (1762-1836), the founder of the Calcutta (today Kolkata) Jewish community in West Bengal, who migrated from Surat to India in 1798.

Cohen came to Dacca (today Dhaka) to trade in cloths, silks and muslins, and established business with Jewish employees in the capital. In 1817, Moses Duek, a businessman married to Cohen's eldest daughter, Lunah, left Calcutta to reside for five years in Dacca, during which time he established a prayer hall there.

Throughout the 19th century and first part of the 20th, Baghdadi Jews continued to run businesses in Dacca, but most resided in Calcutta. They traded textiles, pearls and opium, on which they became rich.

At the time of Partition of Bengal and India in 1947, there were some 4,000 Jews in West Bengal, primarily in Calcutta but only about 135 Jews were actually residing in East Bengal. East Bengal later became East Pakistan, a part of the new nation of Pakistan, but separated geographically from it by 1,600 kilometers of Indian territory.

Ironically, a Jewish architect from Philadelphia, Louis Kahn, designed the most important building in East Pakistan, the Jatiyo Sangsad Bhaban, the National Assembly building. Ranked as the world's largest legislative complex, this National Assembly was begun in 1961 and was only completed in 1982, eight years after Kahn's death.

In 1971, the Bangladesh Liberation War took place. Interestingly, it was another famous Jew, Lieutenant General J F R Jacob, who liberated East Pakistan during this war. General Jacob, as he is known, was formerly governor of the Punjab and Goa; today he resides in New Delhi. He was born into a Baghdadi Jewish family in Calcutta, and never hid his Jewish ancestry. On the contrary, when I first reached India in the late 1970s, Lt General Jacob was an active member of the well-known New Delhi prayer hall, the Judah Hyam Synagogue, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in January 2007. He reached the highest ranks in India, which traditionally promoted co-existence and lived in harmony with its Indian Jewish minority. His finest hour was in 1971 when, as Chief of Staff of the Indian Army's Eastern Command, he defeated Pakistan during the Indo-Pakistani War in two weeks, and successfully liberated East Pakistan. As fighting raged, he flew to Dhaka and negotiated with Pakistan's military commander an unconditional surrender of 90,000 Pakistani soldiers to the Indian Army. This public surrender, enacted under the auspices of the United Nations, is the only one in history. East Pakistan then became the independent state of Bangladesh.

There is no synagogue today in Bangladesh, although a few expatriates do meet up on the eve of the Jewish New Year and on the Day of Atonement. A posting on Trip Advisor by a tourist asking where the synagogue is in Dhaka for Yom Kippur received

no serious response and a few months later, the blog was closed by the Trip Advisor staff "due to inactivity". On a blog relating to the Jews of Bangladesh, one blogger writing from Brooklyn, New York, told that he was of mixed ancestry, his father being Yemenite Jewish and his mother Bangladeshi; he himself went through a full Orthodox conversion. Other people have written into the same blog saying they do business with Bangladesh, visit there, and a few even stay for a while. As one person wrote: "The only Jews you will find in Bangladesh are those merchants with extensive business reasons to stay in Bangladesh."

Joseph Edward of Ontario, Canada, wrote to me the history of his family and gave me permission to quote him. Joseph was born in Chittagong, Bangladesh, and moved to Canada in 1986. In Chittagong, there is a Second World War British and Commonwealth cemetery, the War Cemetery. There one can find the grave of an RAF sergeant from England with the Star of David on it. Joseph Edward's father, Rahamim David Barook and his older brother Ezra Barook, were born in Calcutta, and moved to what was then East Pakistan. They adopted the surname Edward; his brother Ezra was known as Eddy Edward. Rahamim David Edward (formerly Barook), Joseph's father, worked in the shipping industry, and married a Catholic of Portuguese descent, who was a school teacher. His uncle married a tribal Chakma king's daughter from the Chittagong Hill Tracts. She died during childbirth and Joseph Edward's uncle gave his son up to a Muslim family for adoption.

Joseph Edward's great-grandfather, Ezra Barook or Hacham Reuben (pictured left), came from a distinguished Rabbinic family from Baghdad; he was buried in the cemetery in Calcutta in 1900. In recent years, Joseph Edward has been in contact with Jewish cousins living in Arad and Beersheba, Israel. Other members of the family live in Sydney, Australia, in the UK and in Toronto, Canada.

Not all the Jews in Bangladesh were of "Baghdadi" origin. Members of the Bene Israel community from Bombay (today Mumbai) also resided there in the 1960s. One of these was Mr George Reuben, my neighbour in Lod, Israel, when I was carrying out fieldwork in the 1970s, who lived in Dhaka with his wife, Dina, and three children, when he worked as sales manager with Pakistan Oxygen Ltd.

Another family who lived in Bangladesh were the Cohen brothers, whose ancestors came from Iran and Iraq and settled in Bangladesh. Mordy went to school in Rajshahi, where his father ran a general store that sold liquor. Mordy was one of the pioneers of Bangladeshi television, established in 1964, but he was forced out of Bangladesh after the Six Day War, and moved to Calcutta in 1968, where he is one of the remaining Jews there. Mordy Cohen and his wife, Aline, returned to Dhaka in

December 2014, as guests of the state-run Dhaka Television, which celebrated its Golden Jubilee.

While the Jews in West Bengal managed to create a full community, the Jews of East Bengal largely lived there for commercial reasons. They were never numerous. Nevertheless, documentation of the Jews of Bangladesh provides an unusual insight into an extinct community in a Muslim country.

Dr. Shalva Weil, a specialist on India's Jews, is a Senior Researcher at the Research Institute for Innovation in Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem

### Origin of “Thanks Giving” Celebration for Fall Harvest in the USA is from “Tu BiShvat” harvest celebration of Jews.



History Lessons for Dummy's

Ladies & Gentleman,

During last year 1771 I had visited India and attended a Jewish Bene-Israel ceremony called “**Tu BiShvat**” with ancestors of the family of Mr Nissim Moses Talkar’.

This celebration is for “**Thanking giving to God**” for the winter Harvest by offering season fruits through “Malida” prayers.

From this year our country shall also celebrate “**Thanksgiving**”.

President George Washington.

(This is how Thanks Giving started in the USA & Canada.  
Prove me wrong if you can)



**Please Mail All Your Old Marathi Prayer Books to us. Don't throw them.**

**Please mail all old prayers  
books to the address below:**

**Avihay Bastekar  
137/3 Harav Zvi Yehud Kook  
Street  
Mailbox 2044  
Kiryat Arba 9010000  
Israel  
bastekeer@gmail.com**

<https://www.facebook.com/Bastekeer>



**אביחי בסטקר (שימור מנהגי הודו)**

Shalom,

I am Avihai Bastekar from Kiryat Arba. My parents, Rachamim Avraham Bastiker and Rosy Yaakov Penker immigrated from India to Israel in the early 1970s. I grew up in a mixed community of Moroccans and Caucasians in Mitzpe Ramon. Regretfully my Bene Israel tradition had been blurred.

After 4 years in an environmental yeshiva in Mitzpe Rimon, I studied for an additional 2 years in Yeshivat Nir in Kiryat Arba and then served in the IDF as a combat soldier. After my army service I studied for an additional 5 years in the yeshiva.



During 2015, I married Leora David Bedein and together we now have 4 beautiful children: Avraham, Yisca Emunah, Dovid Yitzchak and Tuvia.

I am in my fourth year of biotechnology studies at the Hadassah Academic College in Jerusalem. During the past five years my affinity and interest in our tradition has greatly grown. I have reached out to people from our Indian community living in Canada, England, Australia and Israel. I have opened a WhatsApp group consisting of cantors, researchers, elderly Indian Jews, students and people wanting to return to our tradition. We share information, songs and Piyutim (Jewish odes) in Marathi and Hebrew.

To date we have already gathered and publicized 3000 songs in the Bene Israel tradition. Our group is working on a number of projects such as putting out discs on the topic of:

- Women's songs (Kirtan and Psalms)
- Shabbat and Festivals in the Bene Israel tradition
- Lamentations for the 9th of Av
- Recordings of all the Portions of the Week for Bar Mitzvah preparations

In addition, we are searching for and researching books about the Bene Israel tradition. We have already collected 400 books on these topics.

We aim to open soon a museum that will serve as the Indian Bene Israel Jewish Heritage Center. We welcome donations to promote efforts in gathering material for our various projects. We would appreciate your assistance in sharing your books or booklets in Marathi or Hebrew. Also copies of your marriage documents, tapes, videos and other general documents relating to our tradition. We want to publicize research papers and books on the topic of the Bene Israel Jewry. This is all to promote the preservation of our tradition for future generations.

We are looking for small and large donations. Note that every shekel will help for the preservation of poetry prayers and customs of India our Bene-Israel community.

<p>Avihay Bastekar: Bank Hapolim No. 52, Branch 186, Account No. 789380 בנק פועלי אגודת ישראל בנק 52 סניף אשדוד 186 מס חשבון 789380 אגודת אליהו הנביא וינן. <b>IBAN: IL350521860000007893804438290</b> <b>Or by paypal:</b> paypal.me/TraditionalBneIsrael</p>	<p>To send materials address: To : Avihay Bastekar 137/3,Harav Zvi Yehuda kook street, Mail box 2044, Kiryat Arba 9010000, Israel. <a href="mailto:bastekeer@gmail.com">bastekeer@gmail.com</a></p>
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# Gabriel Project Mumbai

Jacob Sztokman

[jacob@gabrielpjectmumbai.org](mailto:jacob@gabrielpjectmumbai.org)



Dear Leo,

How do we keep all patients, medical personnel and visitors safe in hospitals? Well, the first step is to provide hand-washing stations to stop the spread of germs! Our **COVID-19 Heroes** at GPM built handwashing stations in **four rural hospitals** treating COVID-19 patients! Now everyone who enters these hospitals with mandatory face-masks are actively stopping the spread of the disease!

We at GPM are fortunate to be part of a community that includes **hundreds of heroes**, women and men on the frontlines who are **dedicating their lives** to ensuring that people in COVID-19 effected communities are able to survive and even thrive. The heroes are our teachers, medical professionals, women's economic collectives, nutrition workers and community volunteers.

**You can support these heroes!**

As the year comes to a close, please help ensure that our heroes are able to continue their vital work of protecting, sustaining, healing and educating our communities.

[Please support the GPM heroes on the frontlines of the pandemic in India.](#) Your support helps save lives today.

With much thanks and gratitude and **wishing you all good health,**

Jacob Sztokman

[jacob@gabrielpjectmumbai.org](mailto:jacob@gabrielpjectmumbai.org)

[GPM Webinar: "COVID-19 in the slums and villages: An update from the field" 29th November 2020 - YouTube](#)



**Heroes  
Build  
Handwashing  
Stations.**

Our health officers built handwashing stations in four rural COVID-19 treatment hospitals catering to thousands of medical personnel, patients and visitors.





Bene-Israel Jokes

Mrs. Ashitiver : (complaining to her husband) Josh you see my breasts are sagging, my skin is wrinkly my her butt is too big. So now give me a compliment to cheer me up.  
Mr. Ashitvkar :“Well dear, at least there’s nothing wrong with your vision!”

Mr, & Mrs Corley were trying to set up a password on their computer. Mr. Corley entered the password “MYPENIS”.  
Soon Mrs. Corley wife fell down on the ground laughing as an error message popped up saying “ERROR: Not long enough!”

Young Jiradkar had just started working in Fridays restaurant as a waiter.  
Owner: Jiradkar remember to inform the kitchen if the guests are sitting near the window.  
Jiradkar (Puzzled) : But why sir?  
Owner: Guests at the window get larger steaks  
Because you can see them from the window...

As the day proceeded with waiter Jiradkar;  
Guest: I am not that hungry, can I get just half a plate?  
Jiradkar: Sure! We never throw anything away.  
Guest: Excuse me, can I have a tooth pick?  
Jiradkar: Unfortunately they are all occupied right now. Can you wait a minute?

Dandekar: No one really knows why did Hitler commit suicide except me?  
Galsurkar: Why?  
Dandekar: He saw the gas bill after gassing the Jews.

Young Palkar (All excited): You saw that beautiful girls who just joint our high school. Wow man, I have fallen in love with her at one sight. God, the way she walks, the way she smiles, her hair in that band.... my God, she can kill me.  
Young Bhoropkar: Yes yes Palkar, we all saw her.  
Young Palkar: I think I will tell her tomorrow, If you are a Bene-Israel, then I am the answer to your prayers! Or should I say Hello! The voices in my head told me that you wanted to speak to me!

Dandekar: No one really knows why did Hitler commit suicide except me?  
Galsurkar: Why?  
Dandekar: He saw the gas bill after gassing the Jews.

Little Jetikar boy was looking through the girl’s key hole.  
Mrs Jetikar walks by and says with a grin: “Why are you so concerned with what the girl is doing?”  
The little boy replies: “I am not... I am just wondering what dad is doing in there”.

*I don't understand. I am a Jew born in Canada and You are a Jew born in Israel so why do we have to dress and perform Mehendi like Indians ???!*



*Can you shut up. You are not carrying 20 kg of weight of this sari and ornaments?? Our parents are Bene-Israel Jews. You can't do without this ceremony. It is very important for our parents as this is the only thing they understand.*



**We are looking for help in Hebrew and Marathi articles. More writers are also welcome.**

**Thank you to all who sent us the matter to make this issue possible**

### ***To Our Readers***

1. Please send us your letters and articles to email: [shaniwartali@gmail.com](mailto:shaniwartali@gmail.com)
2. Write to us about any BI business you run and would like to advertise free
3. Please send us matrimonial to add to the classified poems and stories (Marathi English Hebrew)
4. All your suggestions are welcome
5. Not every letter or articles or other items received by us can be printed.
6. We are BI Family e-newsletters. No criticism please. We only appreciate work of all BI.
7. No disputes. If there are differences of opinion, that will always remain and respected.
8. Please excuse us if you find any mistakes. We tried our best.

### **Disclaimer**

No one of us who are offering this voluntary service in creating this Bene-Israel Family Newsletter is responsible for any wrong or misleading information. All has been done only with good intention. No money is involved. This is only for private circulation. Only purpose of creating this newsletter is to increase communications between Bene-Israel's in the world.

**Coming Dead Line to submit matter for next issue:  
15<sup>th</sup> Feb. Monday 2021**