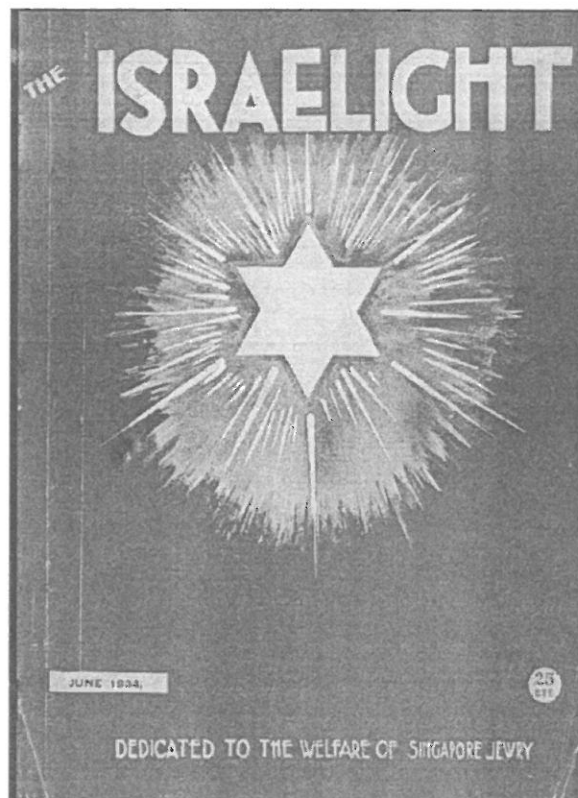


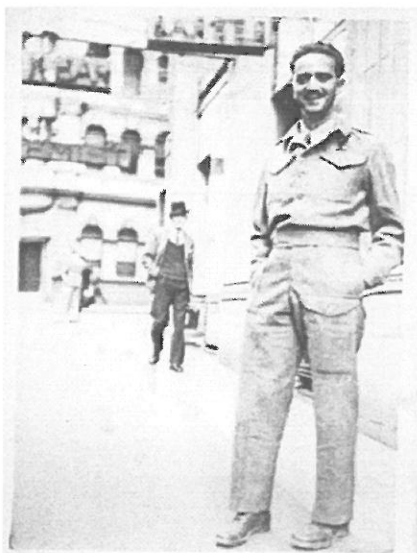


Figures 8 and 9. THE ISRAELIGHT magazine, edited by David Saul Marshall, was published in Singapore between 1934 and 1937. Courtesy of the ISEAS Library, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore: David Marshall Private Archives Collection.

By that time, according to World Jewish Congress statistics, Singapore's Jewish population had peaked at about 1,500 individuals, many of whom were refugees from Europe and other parts of Asia. Although Singapore was overrun by the Japanese shortly thereafter and many of its Jews either dispersed or were interned, after World War II, the Jewish community and its religious and Zionist institutions rebounded. In 1946, when Singapore's Jewish population numbered about 1,000 residents, British Royal Air Force Squadron Leader and Chaplain S. M. "Sonnie" Bloch taught youngsters in the city's Hebrew school (*Talmud Torah*). He also helped Singapore's Jewish Forces Club organize a local chapter of the Zionist youth movement "Habonim," which in turn published a newsletter, *Kadima* ("Forward"). The presence of Habonim, with its strong socialist orientation, is testimony to the ideological pluralism and toleration within a community that contained many followers of traditional rabbinic Judaism. Several years later, a local affiliate of another secular Zionist group, the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO), was founded in the city.²²

Perhaps the fullest expression of the integration of Baghdadi Jewry into the public life of Singapore is the career of the aforementioned David Saul Marshall, who was born in 1908 and raised in the city's overwhelmingly Baghdadi, and impoverished, *mahallah* neighborhood (see Figures 10 and 11). Marshall spoke only Arabic until he entered an English school at the age of six. In 1955, after legal training in England, service in the British-led Singaporean military, and imprisonment by the Japanese on Hokkaido during World War II, he was elected Singapore's first Chief Minister. In that capacity, he gave

Singapore its first measure of internal self-governance and set the colony on its path to complete independence, which was achieved shortly after he left office. Throughout his career Marshall maintained his affiliation with Singapore's Baghdadi Jewish community, took on numerous leadership positions, and is buried in its cemetery.²³



Figures 10 and 11. Left: The young David Saul Marshall (1908-1995). Right: Marshall as a young lawyer in Singapore. Both Photos courtesy of the ISEAS Library, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore: Davi Marshall Private Archives Collection.

Once Singapore attained full independence from Britain in a series of stages in the 1950s and 1960s, the new country's Jewish community, which then consisted of about 800 individuals, was assured full equality. Judaism became one of the multiethnic nation's eight officially recognized religions. In 1977 *Israel Report* expressed what it saw as a commercial rationale behind this equality: "The regime of Lee Kuan Yew [the ethnically Chinese (Hakka or Kejia) long-term leader of independent Singapore], which makes a point of displaying openness both internally and externally, is considerably interested in having Jews live in Singapore. For this country, which is a crossroads and commercial centre (*sic*), there is a clear advantage in the existence of a synagogue alongside temples, mosques, and churches."²⁴

Simultaneous with Singapore's maintenance of equality for its Jewish population, many Jewish and non-Jewish residents saw that there was much to be learned from the newly established State of Israel. In 1956, in one of the earliest expressions of that awareness, Minister for Communications and Works Francis Thomas argued that Singapore, "now on the threshold of independence, could learn a lot from the spirit which has turned the small State of Israel from a desert into a garden."²⁵ Singapore's Jews worked diligently to cultivate such ties. A 1953 visit by *Jerusalem Post* founding editor and future Jerusalem mayor Gershon Agron resulted in contributions of US\$6,740 to the United Israel Appeal and a simultaneously communal commitment to assist Singaporeans wishing to immigrate to Israel. An internal community assessment of the results of Agron's visit includes the comment that

...during Mr. Agron's visit, steps were taken to assist the immigration to Israel of five young Jewish girls and a woman of sixty years. They travelled to Bombay with funds provided by various donors, whose generosity deserves our appreciation. This should

be an encouragement both to our youth, who really feel they could do better in Israel, as well as to our donors, who will have the satisfaction of knowing that the money was well spent.²⁶

An *Israel Today* photographic exhibit in 1956 was, according to the *Singapore Standard*, "the biggest postwar public event organized by the Colony's 900-strong Jewish community."²⁷ In that same year, outgoing Israeli Foreign Minister and former Prime Minister Moshe Sharett remarked, after a visit to Singapore, that "the gathered people's thirst to listen and understand is endless."²⁸ A March 1962 visit and lecture by Keren Hayesod Director Shlomo Temkin netted contributions of US\$2,443 to assist new immigrants in Israel. Temkin's visit was followed by a series of trade and technical aid agreements between Singapore and Israel and ongoing visits by ministers, public figures, military officers, and other senior officials.

In 1969, these overtures and initiatives culminated in the establishment of full diplomatic relations between an independent Singapore and the reborn Jewish state. There was a brief disruption in the bilateral relationship in the summer of 1974, when Malaysian Prime Minister Abdul Razak held a twenty-nine nation Islamic conference in Kuala Lumpur. Immediately thereafter, Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew expelled Israeli experts from the country, retaining only the embassy. Singapore's Jewish community was edgy, with David Saul Marshall confiding to a reporter that "Singapore has gone over to the Moslems."²⁹

Because of the long-term strategic interests that Singapore and Israel share, including a mutual concern over the potential radicalization of their Muslim populations, within a few years the Israeli experts were back. Many were involved in training the Singaporean armed forces and in equipping them with hi-tech weaponry. Some of these experts, including a cousin of this author who worked for the Israeli hi-tech firm Elta, were popularly (and covertly) referred to as "Mexicans." David Marshall's widow quipped to this author that once the "Mexicans" started coming in large numbers she had to keep the traditional Israeli delicacies of *hummus* and *techina* in her refrigerator on a regular basis.

In November 1986 Israeli President Chaim Herzog visited Singapore. He met President Wee Kim Wee for one hour under heavy security to discuss Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian issues and especially bilateral trade. Brunei, Indonesia, and Malaysia withdrew their ambassadors "for consultation," but only for a few days. There were also loud threats in Malaysia "to cut off Singapore's water supply." Muslims demonstrated in Malaysia throughout the two days of Herzog's visit. Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew refused to succumb to these pressures from the opposite side of the Strait of Johor. As already noted, Singapore and Israel both face antagonistic Muslim populations. This may explain why Lee was willing to "take the heat" from Arab and Muslim states. According to Herzog, "thanks to Israel and its military mission in Singapore, the country was well equipped to defend itself and to deter Malaysia."³⁰

As of 2013, relations between Singapore and Israel are extensive on multiple levels. Charities founded by such Singapore Baghdadi as the Ballases, Benjamins, Eliases, Isaacses, Mashaals, Meyers, Sassoons, and Shookers continue to fund major activities in Israel. This is especially true in areas of Israel with dense Iraqi-Jewish populations, such as the central and lower Galilee. This long-term philanthropic concern once again exemplifies the transnational interconnectedness of the far-flung Baghdadi Jewish diaspora.

Ironically, these ties evolved simultaneously with the almost complete disintegration of Jewish communal life in Iraq. Jacob Ballas and his mother returned briefly to Iraq from Singapore in the 1940s. He was barely able to avoid being drafted into the Iraqi army. In 1950-1951 over 120,000 Iraqi Jews were airlifted en masse to Israel in "Operation Ezra and Nehemiah." Because of their comparatively higher educational level and prominence in business, law, and government in Iraq, these immigrants integrated more successfully into the overwhelmingly Ashkenazi Jewish state than did other Oriental Jewish refugees. Their leadership positions included Speaker of the Knesset (parliament) and Police (1969-1977) and Internal Affairs (1977) Minister Shlomo Hillel (b. Baghdad 1923); Defense Minister,

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Trade and Labor, and Labor Party chief Binyamin Fuad Ben-Eliezer (b. Basra, 1936); the twelfth Israeli Army Chief of Staff and the first of *Mizrahi*, or Oriental Jewish, origin, Moshe Levi (b. Tel Aviv to Iraqi parents, 1936-2008); and Minister of Defense Yitzhak Mordechai (b. Iraq 1944). Other prominent Israelis of Iraqi origin include Knesset member Shoshana Arbeli-Almoznino, author Eli Amir, academicians Sasson Somekh and Sami Smooha, and Ambassador Zvi Gabbay, who in 2003 served as Deputy Director General of Israel's Foreign Ministry. A Babylonian Heritage Center in Yehud, in suburban Tel Aviv, is under the directorship of former Parliamentarian and Minister Without Portfolio, Mordechai Ben-Porat (b. Baghdad 1923). It commemorates the transnational nature of the Baghdadi Jewish diaspora and the contributions of Iraqi Jews to many old and new homelands.³¹

At precisely the same time that Jewish communal life was disintegrating in Iraq and Iraqi Jews were integrating into Israeli society, another phenomenon was occurring among Singapore Baghdadis: a multi-institutional Jewish community was being preserved under the protective umbrella of Singaporean society and its political and religious tolerance. As of 2013 Rabbi Mordecai Abergel leads Baghdadi congregation Maghain Aboth. The indefatigable Felice Isaacs maintains Manasseh Meyer's Chesed El synagogue, which holds weekly services and breakfasts for the entire community. The Manasseh Meyer Trust funds the Manasseh Meyer School, which began in 1996 as Ganenu, founded in the home of Rabbi Abergel and his wife, Rebbetzin Simcha (Sylviane). She continues to be a strong force in the school, working as Curriculum Coordinator of Judaic Studies. The school is located opposite Chesed El synagogue on land owned by the Manasseh Meyer Foundation. In addition to Maghain Aboth and Chesed El, there were two additional Jewish High Holiday services held in Singapore in 2009. Ashkenazi Jews prayed in traditional American Conservative fashion in a chapel in the newly built Jacob Ballas Community Centre. Approximately 150 Reform Jews of Singapore's United Hebrew Congregation worshipped in rented space under the leadership of American Rabbi Lennard R. Thal. In 2010 Rabbi Thal once again conducted Reform services, this time with several hundred participants.³²

Thus, if one wishes to see a functioning Baghdadi Jewish community, one only needs to visit Singapore. The community consists of about 180 people. An American academic, Joan Bieder, attended a Sabbath service in Maghain Aboth in 2000 and observed the following:

On the right side sit the old-timers, the men of Baghdadi origin who lived through the Japanese occupation. On the left side sit the wealthier members of the community and the younger generation of Jews...When Frank Benjamin, President of the Jewish Welfare Board, stepped down from participating in the Torah service, he walked the room and wished *Shabbat shalom* in Hebrew: Sabbath peace) to all. The gesture was heartfelt and inclusive, consistent with his determination to bring all Jews living in Singapore together...Frank Benjamin and others are determined to keep their community vibrant and alive without sacrificing the basic orthodox traditions that inspired Singapore's first Baghdadi Jews over 160 years ago.³³

In October 2010 the Singapore Baghdadi community as well as Baghdadis worldwide observed the wedding in Israel of the children of two of the community's most active leaders and benefactors: the marriage of Frank Benjamin's son to Victor Sassoon's daughter. When viewed in historical perspective, this community's survival over time, its transnational identity, its current prosperity, and its future prospects are the product of the dynamic secular leadership of individuals such as Frank Benjamin, Harry Elias, Singapore Supreme Court Judge Joseph Grimberg, Felice Isaacs, Saul Mashaal, Victor Sassoon, and the late Jacob Ballas, David Marshall, Manasseh Meyer, and Moselle Nissim; the spiritual guidance going back to Ben Ish Hai and Rabbi 'Abd Allah (Ovadiah) Somekh, and continuing with Rabbi Mordechai and Rebbetzin Simcha Abergel; and, significantly, the ongoing mediative

skills of David Marshall's widow Jean Gray Marshall, a non-Jew. For nearly two centuries Singaporean Jews have enjoyed political, economic, and religious toleration, conducted a commercial exchange of major proportions across the Indian Ocean, and have employed and heeded a vigorous ecclesiastical leadership. They have thus been able to sustain their millennial-long traditions and more recent transnational identity.

Notes

This article is copyrighted by Jonathan Goldstein 2013 and is used with permission. An earlier version was delivered as a paper at the conference "Global Crossroads: The Port Clusters of Southeast Asia and the Middle East," held at the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, on July 29, 2010. The author is especially grateful to Professors Anthony Reid and Geoffrey Wade for comments made at that conference. For additional research assistance, the author would like to thank Rabbi Mordecai Abergel, Frank Benjamin, Felice Isaacs, Jean Gray Marshall, Saul Mashaal, and Victor Sassoon, all of Singapore; Meron Medzini of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Suzanne Rutland of the University of Sydney; Rabbi Marvin Tokayer of Great Neck, NY; Rivka Ulmer of Bucknell University; and Mel Johnson and Andrei Strukov of the University of Maine. Final responsibility is, of course, the author's alone.

¹ Joan Roland, "Baghdadi Jews in India and China in the Nineteenth Century: A Comparison of Economic Roles" in Jonathan Goldstein, ed., *The Jews of China*, Vol. 1, *Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1999), pp. 141-42.

² Rabbi Ezekiel Musleah, in conversations with this author in Philadelphia between 1977 and 1980 at Congregation Mikveh Israel, of which Musleah was the rabbi and this author was a member. On Baghdadi Jewish settlement in Bengal and Bihar, see Rabbi Musleah's *On the Banks of the Ganges* (North Quincy, MA: Christopher, 1975), esp. pp. 533-35 on Bhagalpur, Ghazipur, and Dinapur. On the distinctive theology and practices of Baghdadi Jews, see his *Read After Me* (Pittsboro, NC: Town House, 1990). Over and beyond Rabbi Musleah's writings, primary sources for South and Southeast Asian Baghdadi Jewish communities include manuscripts, photographs, newspapers, and other printed, often mimeographed, reports and documents in the Hartley Library of the University of Southampton, U.K. (hereinafter referred to as "HL"), which contains key financial records and correspondence of British Commonwealth Jewish communities; Jerusalem's Central Zionist Archives hereinafter "CZA"); and Singapore's Institute, notably the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, which houses the David Marshall Private Archives Collection. Many documents, including rare editions of *Shalom Singapore* magazine, are in the private collections of Singapore's Jean Gray Marshall and former Tokyo Rabbi Marvin Tokayer, presently of Great Neck, N.Y. Published and unpublished memoirs include Flower Elias and Judith E. Cooper, *The Jews of Calcutta: The Autobiography of a Community, 1798-1972* (Calcutta: Jewish Association of Calcutta, 1974); Mavis Hyman, *Jews of the Raj* (London: Hyman, 1995); Violette Shamash, *Memoirs of Eden* (Surrey, UK: Forum, 2008); Ellis Sofaer, "Gaya, His Childhood" (unpublished, 1987); and Sally Solomon, *Hooghly Tales: Stories of Growing Up in Calcutta Under the Raj* (London: Ashley, 1998).

Secondary sources on Baghdadi Jewry in South, Southeast, and East Asia include Sarah Abrevaya Stein's seminal work "Protected Persons? The Baghdadi Jewish Diaspora, the British State, and the Persistence of Empire," *American Historical Review* 116, no. 1 (February 2011): 80-108; Nathan Katz, *Who Are the Jews of India?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), especially pp. 130-33, on the development of the Baghdadi opium trade in India; Isaac S. Abraham, *Origin and History of the Calcutta Jews* (Calcutta: Daw Sen, 1969); Chiara Betta, "The Baghdadi Jewish Diaspora in Shanghai: Community, Commerce, and Identities," *Sino-Judaica: Occasional Papers of the Sino-Judaic Institute* 4

(2003): 81-84 (this entire issue dealt with Baghdadi Jews—ed.); Betta, "From Orientals to Imagined Britons: Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai," *Modern Asian Studies* (Cambridge, UK) 37, no. 4 (2003), pp. 999-1023; Betta, "Marginal Westerners in Shanghai: The Baghdadi Jewish Community, 1845-1931" in Robert Bickers and Christian Heriot, eds., *New Frontiers: Imperialism's New Communities in East Asia, 1842-1953* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Betta, "Silas Aaron Hardoon and Cross-Cultural Adaptation in Shanghai" in Jonathan Goldstein, ed., *The Jews of China*, Vol. 1 (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), pp. 216-29; Ruth Fredman Cernea, *Almost Englishmen: Baghdadi Jews in British Burma* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007); Stanley Jackson, *The Sassoons* (London: Heineman, 1968); Esmond Ezra, *Turning Back the Pages: A Chronicle of Calcutta Jewry*, 3 vols. (London: Brookside Press, 1986); Maruyama Naoki, "The Shanghai Zionist Association and the International Politics of East Asia Until 1936" in Goldstein, ed., *Jews*, Vol. 1, pp. 251-66; Maisie J. Meyer, *From the Rivers of Babylon to the Whangpoo: A Century of Sephardic Jewish Life in Shanghai* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2003); Marcia R. Ristaino, "Reflections on the Sephardi Trade Diaspora in South, Southeast, and East Asia," *Sino-Judaica: Occasional Papers of the Sino-Judaic Institute* 4 (2003): 105-24; Joan Roland, *Jews in British India: Identity in a Colonial Era* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1989); Cecil Roth, *The Sassoon Dynasty* (London: Robert Hale, 1941); Jael Silliman, *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames: Women's Narratives from a Diaspora of Hope* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2001); Orpa Slapak, ed., *The Jews of India* (Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 2003); Thomas A. Timberg, "Baghdadi Jews in Indian Port Cities" in Timberg, ed., *Jews in India* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1986), pp. 273-281; Shalva Weil, ed., *India's Jewish Heritage* (Mumbai: Marg, 2002); Meron Medzini, *Betsel Hashemesh Ha-ola: Yapan Vehayehudim Bitkufat Hashoa* (Hebrew: In the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Japan and the Jews during the Holocaust Years) (Ben Shemen, Israel: Modan, 2012), with a chapter on Singapore on pp. 111-15; and other works cited in these footnotes.

Published histories specifically about the Jewish community in Singapore include communal historian Eze Nathan's *History of Jews in Singapore* (Singapore: HERBILU, 1986); Joan Bieder, "Jewish Identity in Singapore: Cohesion, Dispersion, Survival," *Sino-Judaica* (Menlo Park, CA) 4 (2003): 29-55; Bieder and Aileen Lau, *The Jews of Singapore* (Singapore: Suntree Media, 2007); and Moshe Yegar, *Le-Toldot Ha-Kehillah Ha-Yehudit Be-Singapoor* (Hebrew: On the history of the Jewish community of Singapore) *Gesher* 1, no. 78 (1974): 50-65.

³ Hong Liu, "Looking Forward, Looking Back: An Interview with Wang Gungwu," in *Diasporic Chinese Ventures: The Life and Work of Wang Gungwu* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), p. 18; Caroline Golab, *Immigrant Destinations* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977). Wang prefers the terms "settlers" and "sojourners" to Golab's "immigrants" and "migrants."

⁴ Roland, "Baghdadi," in Goldstein, *Jews*, Vol. 1, p. 142.

⁵ Timberg, "Baghdadi," pp. 274-75.

⁶ On the status of Jewish immigrants in South, Southeast, and East Asia under British, French, Ottoman, and Iraqi law, see Stein, "Protected Persons?," pp. 80-108. The Singapore merchant W. G. Gulland asserted by 1883 that "the opium trade...is wholly in the hands of Jews and Armenians...and forms an important part of the Native trade of this city, as of almost all other eastern settlements." *LEGCO 1883 Straits Settlements*. "Straits Settlements Legislative Council Proceedings." (Singapore: Government Printing Office, 1883), p. 8; Carl Trocki, *Opium, Empire, and the Global Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 117. Singapore community historian Nathan described the opium trade of Singapore Jews as "a legitimate short cut to wealth." Nathan, *History*, pp. 8-9; Roland, "Baghdadi," in Goldstein, *Jews*, Vol. 1, p. 142.

⁷ Ya'akov Saphir-Halevy, *Even Saphir* (Hebrew=the sapphire stone) (Lusk, Russian Poland: *Hevrat Mekitzey Nirdamim*, 1866), quoted in Nathan, *History*, p. 3

⁸ Phyllis Funke, "Singapore," *Hadassah Magazine* 76, no. 3 (November 1987): 22-23; Tudor Parfitt, *The Thirteenth Gate: Travels Among the Lost Tribes of Israel* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), p. 72; Bieder, "Jewish," *Sino-Judaica*, p. 35.

⁹ "The Jews of Singapore: Special Interview with John Solomon," *Israel's Messenger (sic)/Mevasser Yisrael* (Shanghai) (April 2, 1926), p. 21.

¹⁰ Simmonds, "An Asian," p. 16. On Manasseh Meyer's benevolence to the Singapore Jewish community, particularly his building of the Chesed El Synagogue, see Edmund W. K. Lim and Koh Ee Moi, *The Chesed-El (sic) Synagogue: Its History & People* (Singapore: Trustees of Chesed-El Synagogue, 2005).

¹¹ Joan Bieder, "Jewish Identity in Singapore: Cohesion, Dispersion, Survival," unpub. paper, 2002, p. 11. Private Portuguese merchants in Macao also competed in the shipment of opium to China, as well as formidable American family firms. Carl T. Smith and Paul A. Van Dyke, "Armenian Footprints in Macau," *Review of Culture*, International Edition no. 8 (October 2003): 20-39; Carl T. Smith and Paul A. Van Dyke, "Muslims in the Pearl River Delta, 1700 to 1930," *Review of Culture*, International Edition No. 10 (April 2004): 6-15; and George Bryan Souza, *The Survival of Empire: Portuguese Trade and Society in China and the South China Sea, 1630-1754* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

¹² Cohen, *Journal*, p. 199; David Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis, & Jews: The Jewish Refugee Community of Shanghai, 1938-1945* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1976), p. 45; Mendel Brown, "The Jews of Modern China;" Roth, *Sassoon Dynasty*, p. 47; Jackson, *Sassoons*, p. 23; Roland, "Baghdadi," in Goldstein, *Jews*, Vol. 1, pp. 145-46; Bieder and Lau, *Jews*, pp. 37-39; Funke, "Singapore," p. 22; Parfitt, *Thirteenth*, p. 72.

¹³ Simmonds, "An Asian," p. 16; Warren Freedman, "The Jews of South-East Asia," *Jewish Post* (September 20, 1979), p. 74; Bieder, "Jewish," pp. 11-18. There is some confusion as to the date of Manasseh's knighthood. Joan Bieder writes that "for Meyer's in participation in civic affairs and his generosity to the colony, King Edward VII awarded him a British knighthood in 1906." Bieder, "Jewish Identity," p. 34. In an email to the author of July 20, 2010, Jean Marshall writes that "the source of the date of M. Meyer's knighthood is the *British Gazette* or Court Circular for a date in March 1929 or the *Straits Times* in which it was a news item. In Mary Rayner's final 2008 revised edition of her history of Singapore she has corrected her earlier statement and so has the National Library, Singapore, in its information summary about Sir Manasseh. Joan Bieder is also aware of the earlier error but I don't think any date at all is given in her book...(there is no doubt that the later date is correct!)."

¹⁴ Jael Silliman, "Crossing Borders, Maintaining Boundaries: The Life and Times of Farha, a Woman of the Baghdadi Jewish Diaspora, 1870-1958," *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1998): 58.

¹⁵ Zvi Yehuda, "Iraqi Jewry and Social Change," in Harvey Goldberg, ed., *Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 141-42; Norman A. Stillman, *Sephardic Religious Responses to Modernity* (Luxembourg: Harwood, 1995), pp. 21-22. See also the memoir of the Ben Ish Hai's great granddaughter Violette Shamash and Nathan Katz, *Who Are the Jews of India?*, p. 132. The Ben Ish Hai's book on Jewish law, also entitled *Ben Ish Hai*, and its supplement *Odh Yosef Hai*, were popular in Oriental Jewish communities and published in many editions. Among his other well-known works are *Ben Yehoyad'a*, five volumes which featured commentaries on legends of the Babylonian Talmud, and *Rav Pe'alim*, a four-volume compilation of rabbinic responsa (see Figure 7). He is well known for his liberal rulings on Jews frequenting non-Jewish coffee houses on the Sabbath and on a pharmacist not having to wear a mini-prayer shawl, or *tallit qatan*, beneath his medical garb. On the other hand the Ben Ish Hai did not hesitate to

confront Alliance representatives in Baghdad when he found that their school practices were detrimental to the customs and traditions of the community. See letter from him to the directorate of the Alliance Israelite Universelle (Paris), 4 Adar 5667 (1907), Alliance Archive (Paris), Irak II E8; Joseph Hayyim, *Sefer Ben Ish Hai* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Ha-sefer, 1986, first published 1898); and Shmuel Hiley, trans., *The Halachot of the Ben Ish Hai*, 4 vols. (Jerusalem: Yeshivat Hevrath Ahavat Shalom, 1989-95) (in English). Some of the Ben Ish Hai's books exist in manuscript form in Hebrew Union College Library in Cincinnati, Ohio. See also Shalom Wallach, "Rabbi Joseph Hayyim Ben Elijah," brochure of the Israel Postal Authority Philatelic Service (Tel Aviv/Yafo: Philatelic Service, 1992), which refers to Israeli postage stamp Scott Catalog #1111 (2011) (see illustration reproduced in Figure 2).

¹⁶ Part Three of the Ben Ish Hai's *Rav Pe'alim* acknowledges that "all expenses for the publication of this part were granted and disbursed from personal capital accounts of the precious master, the elevated Menasseh Meyer, inhabitant of Singapore" (see Figure 7). The Ben Ish Hai also composed a special dedication, or *derasha*, for the opening of Meyer's Maghain Aboth synagogue in Singapore in 1905 (see Figure 5). David Sassoon writes in his *History of the Jews in Baghdad* (Letchworth, UK: S. D. Sassoon, 1949), p. 217, that "in the time of Hakham Joseph [sic] Hayyim a great longing for visiting and dwelling in the Holy Land took hold of the pious among the Baghdadi Jews. Many left their native city for Palestine [where] they are known as *Wa'ad 'Adath ha-Bablim*." One member of the Baghdadi community writes that "unquestioningly, the community would follow the Hakham's [i.e., the Ben Ish Hai's—ed.] interpretations, for the law was a muddle to the community," Shamash, p. 132. See also Letter: J.J. [Isaac b. Isaac] Aaron to the Zionist Secretariat, Berlin, September 13, 1913, CZA file Z 3/981; Louis Rabinovitz, *Far Eastern Mission* (Johannesburg: Eagle Press, 1952), p. 158; Hiley, *Halachot*, Vol. 1, pp. xlviii-xli; "The Jews of Singapore" in *Israel's Messenger*, p. 21; Orly Baher, "The Baghdadi Jewish Community in Shanghai and Singapore," *Points East* (Menlo Park, Calif.) 17, no. 2 (July 2002), p. 15; Bieder and Lau, *Jews*, p. 37; Roland, *Jews in British India*, p. 82; Maruyama, "Shanghai Zionist Association," pp. 251-52; and Lim and Koh, *The Chesed-El*, pp. 124-30.

¹⁷ Freedman, "Jews," p. 74.

¹⁸ Joan Bieder and Hanoch Gutfreund, "Einstein in Singapore: A Genius Abroad," *The Straits Times* (*The Sunday Plus Times Section*) (January 2, 2000), p. 20; Bieder, "Jewish," unpub. paper, pp. 1-2, 22-23; Bieder and Lau, *Jews*, pp. 58-63; Baher, "The Baghdadi Jewish Community," p. 15. There were approximately 600 Jews in Singapore at the time of Einstein's visit, so approximately one third of the community may have participated in the reception. Bieder, "Jewish," *Sino-Judaica*, p. 29.

¹⁹ Letters: A. Goldstein, Kandy, Ceylon, to the Zionist Executive, Jerusalem, January 7, 1927, KH4 9610; Dr A. Bension, Singapore, to Leo Herrmann, Jerusalem, April ?, 1929, KH4 12347; M. Nissim, Singapore, to Keren Hayesod, Jerusalem, April 9, 1929, CZA KH4 12347; Zvi Herman, Jerusalem, to Mrs. S. Nissim, Singapore, October 14, 1952, KH4 12347, all in CZA; Cohen, *Journal*, pp. 195-212; Baher, "Baghdadi," p. 15.

²⁰ Letter: Montague Ezekiel, Singapore, to Jewish Agency, Jerusalem, October 1, 1936, 56 3797 CZA. *THE ISRAELIGHT* was published from 1934 to 1937. See Figures 8 and 9. Bieder and Lau, *Jews*, pp. 86-89.

²¹ Copy of Last Will of Flora Shooker, Singapore, 4 April 1941, KH4 12421, CZA.

²² For Singapore Jewish population statistics see mimeographed report of the World Jewish Congress entitled "The Rise and Decline of Jewish Communities in the Far East and Southeast Asia," HL, December 15, 1957, p. 9. On Singapore in general during the Japanese occupation, see George M. Kahin, *Governments and Politics of Southeast Asia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1969), pp. 288-89. On the fate of Jews in particular, see personal account by Nathan, *History*, p. 109; Moshe Yegar, "Rapid and

Recent Rise and Fall," *Sephardi World* (Jerusalem) no. 3 (July-August 1984): 10; and Beider, "Jewish," unpub. paper, p. 24, and "Jewish," *Sino-Judaica*, pp. 42-44. A South African rabbi who spoke with Mozelle Nissim after the war recorded that she had "harrowing tales" about her travels before she reached the safety of India. Rabinovitz, *Far Eastern*, p. 158. Similar tales were told by Singapore Jews who had suffered in forced labor camps in Japan (e.g., David Saul Marshall, a POW in Hokkaido) and in Thailand (e.g., Charles Simon, who worked on the infamous Thailand-to-Burma "Death Railway"). Bieder and Lau, *Jews*, pp. 91-107. On Habonim, see Ralph Sassoon, "Habonim in Singapore," *Shalom Singapore* no. 12 (April 1999), p. 3, and Bieder and Lau, *Jews*, pp. 109, 114-18. On Rev. Bloch, see *Jewish Chronicle* (London) (September 14, 1945), p. 11; (September 6, 1946), p. 9; and (April 25, 1947), p. 10, which describe Bloch's activities when he was still in the Far East; and Bieder and Lau, *Jews*, pp. 108-9. On WIZO, see CZA file F49 634/1, which contains approximately one hundred letters between Fay Grove, chairperson, and other officials of WIZO and Alice Blitz and other Singapore Jewish women, concerning the formation of a WIZO chapter in Singapore between the years 1956 and 1970, and Yegar, "A Rapid," p. 9.

²³ In yet another instance of the transnational identity of Singapore's Baghdadi Jews, Marshall's mother ultimately moved to and is buried in Israel in the vicinity of Tiberias. Efforts by this author to locate the grave have been unsuccessful. On Marshall's life and career, see Letters: David Marshall, Singapore, to Charles S. Spencer, London, May 6, 1955; Michael Cohen, Singapore, to Charles Spencer, London, August 15, 1955, HL; "Bulletin of Jewish Welfare Board, Singapore" (mimeographed), 1962, passim, in HL; "Profile: David Marshall," *Sunday Times* (London), n.d., ca. 1956, in HL; Heng Chee Chan, *A Sensation of Independence: A Political Biography of David Marshall* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1984); Terrys Glick, "Jews in Southeast Asia," *Chronicle Review*, December 1970, p. 103; Denis D. Gray, "Conscience of Singapore speaks out fearlessly," *Atlanta Constitution* (May 1, 1994), p. C6; Gray, "Jewish lawyer is Singapore's crusading conscience," *Jerusalem Post* (May 1, 1994): 3; Bieder and Lau, *Jews*, pp. 35, 86-89, 124-34; Rabinovitz, *Far Eastern*, p. 157; Cowen, *Jews*, pp. 146-47; and Nathan, *History*, pp. 69, 80-81. On David Marshall's intercession with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai to secure the release of the remnant of Jews still stranded in China in the mid-1950s, see Josef and Lynn Silverstein, "David Marshall and Jewish Emigration from China," *China Quarterly* 75 (September 1978): 647-54 and Marshall's own correspondence on the subject.

²⁴ "Jews in Singapore," *Israel Report* no. 5 (March 5, 1977).

²⁵ Francis Thomas quoted in *Singapore Standard* (February 20, 1956).

²⁶ "Report and Accounts of the Jewish Welfare Board [Singapore], January to December 1953," HL.

²⁷ *Singapore Standard*, February 20, 1956.

²⁸ Moshe Sharett, *Mi-shut be-Asyah: Yoman masa* (Hebrew: From Travelling in Asia: A Travel Diary) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1964), p. 87.

²⁹ Terrys Glick, "Bleak Future for Jews," *The Jewish Digest* (Los Angeles) (October 1975), p. 31. See also *Bulletin of Jewish Welfare Board, Singapore* (March 14, 1962), mimeographed, File MS 137,A5/95/76, HL; *Encyclopedia Judaica* 14 (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971), pp. 1608-10; and Bieder and Lau, *Jews*, pp. 112, 239-40;

³⁰ Chaim Herzog, *Living History* (London: Phoenix, 1998), p. 308; "Muslims Protest Visit by Herzog to Singapore," *Los Angeles Times*, November 19, 1986; Michael Leifer, "Israel's President in Singapore: Political Catalysis and Transnational Politics," *The Pacific Review* 1, no. 4 (1988): 341-52; Singapore interview with Jean Marshall, January 19, 2006.

³¹ Phone interview with Rabbi Leonard L. Thal, New York City, April 23, 2010. Interviews with Rabbi Mordechai Abergel, Felice Isaacs, and Jean Marshall, Singapore, July 27, 2010. On the disintegration of the Jewish community of Baghdad and the exodus of Baghdadi Jewry, see Shamash, *Memories*, passim, and Sasson Somekh, *Baghdad, Yesterday: The*

Making of an Arab Jew (Jerusalem: Ibis, 20097). See Knesset website for biographies of Israelis of Iraqi origin: www.knesset.gov.il

³² <http://www.manassehmeyer.edu.sg/about-us.html>

³³ Bieder, "Jewish," unpub. paper, pp. 46-48. See also Bieder, "Jewish Identity," *Sino-Judaica*, pp. 54-55. This information was confirmed in my Singapore interviews with Jean Marshall, January 29, 2006, and with Frank Benjamin, January 31, 2006.