

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To: The Editor,
The Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies, Vol. 3, April 2000

Dear Sir,

I was happy to read Dr. Joan G. Roland's article "Religious Observances of Bene Israel; Persistence and Refashioning." Her effort to record Bene Israel traditions is commendable.

The Bene Israel strongly believed in Rabbi Akiva's thinking that tradition is the hedge that not only beautifies but also safeguards the garden of the principles of the Torah. These traditions have been passed on from generation to generation over centuries. Most of the observations in the article are factual but a few points need to be clarified.

- 1) Page 30, the last paragraph regarding the "Eliyahoo Ha-Navi ceremony." It is not obligatory to have an Asara of ten adult males for this ceremony unless the host desires to say *Mincha* or *Maariv* prayers in his house before the ceremony.
- 2) Page 29, second paragraph and also page 40, first paragraph, regarding Cynthia Guy's reference to the partaking of Malida. It is considered by most of the Bene Israel as a spill over of the temple grain/fruit offering in Jerusalem. The Talmud mentions that every Jewish home is considered to be a sanctuary and every table an altar. That's what we were told to believe. The offering is made to the Almighty but as Eliyahoo Ha-Navi is still supposed to help people in need, the Bene Israel consider him to be the one who at the command of G-d would intercede on their behalf. The leader of those present—as was done in temple times by the high priest—later distributes the offering made to G-d.
- 3) Page 39, first paragraph, regarding *hadi boshi* (kiss of peace) should actually read, "the Bene Israel had a traditional way of greeting each other by touching the tips of another person's hands and then by touching their own lips with palms held together."

As an active member of the Bene Israel community, I would appreciate if these corrections are brought to the notice of your readers.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Noreen Daniel
Rego Park, NY