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Preface

Among the tens of thousands of publications about the Holocaust, including memoirs, diaries, official documents, research papers, and historical volumes, comparatively few are devoted to the history of the Jews in East Asia during that era, and even fewer deal specifically with Japan's attitude, policies, and behavior toward Jews in the years 1933-1945. Most of the works dealing with the fate of the Jewish communities in East Asia are devoted to the history of the two largest Jewish communities in the region, those of Harbin and Shanghai, which had been growing since the late 1930s. Other communities, including the tiny one in the Japanese home islands, are nearly completely neglected.

This dearth of material derives perhaps from the fact that the number of Jews who found themselves living within the Japanese Empire in East and Southeast Asia in the years preceding and during World War II was very small. Another reason may be that most of these Jews, who numbered some 40,000 in all, survived the war and were treated by the Japanese in a somewhat more humane manner than European Jews were by Nazi Germany during the Holocaust. The Jews of East and South East Asia, like other foreign settlers who were not nationals of Germany and Italy, were put in detention and even concentration camps, prisons, and prisoner-of-war camps, but apart from several thousand Jews in Shanghai, none of them were put in ghettoes. The Japanese never built or operated extermination camps and crematoria, nor did they murder Jews because of their race or religion. The idea of genocide against this group of foreigners never crossed their minds.

Another reason for the near-total lack of research has to do with the fact that until recently, Israeli scholars and laymen had very little interest in the fate of Jews in Asia during the war. For most Israelis, the Holocaust took place in Europe. Most did not even hear of what happened to Jewish communities in Asia. There were no tales of feats of heroism and resistance, nothing like the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising or the Jewish involvement in anti-Nazi partisan warfare in Poland and other parts of Eastern Europe. In fact, the Jews of Asia do not appear to have displayed any resistance to the Japanese forces at all. Nor did they suffer from death marches. Virtually all of the Jews who survived the war in Asia emigrated at its conclusion to the United States, Canada, Britain, or Australia. Some went back to the countries

from whence they came—Holland, France, or even Germany. Few of them immigrated to Israel, and thus few Israelis were available to perpertuate the memory of their brethren who fell under the Japanese occupation of the countries in which they resided.

In Japan too there was an attempt to dissociate from Nazi Germany, and certainly Japan wanted no part of blame for the Holocaust, in which they had not been involved. The Japanese government claimed—and rightly so, as will be discussed later in this volume—that Japan never adopted Nazi-style antisemitism and that it did not take part in the implementation of Hitler's Final Solution; rather, it tried to behave humanely toward the Jews under its rule.

The present study attempts to trace the experience of the Jews under Japanese rule in the 1930's and 1940's. It raises and aims to address some of the following questions: What was the general attitude of the Japanese people towards the Jews, and what did they know about them? Why did they ignore repeated demands by Nazi Germany, their ally, that they harm the Jews? What was their policy toward the Jews living in the territories they captured during the Pacific War (Dec. 7 1941-Aug. 15 1945)?

At the outset of this work, it can be stated that although many Jews did experience Japanese brutality in the occupied areas, they were not persecuted because of their religion, and the fact that they were Jews did not single them out from other Western aliens under the Japanese occupation.

After the Second World War, as will be discussed, the Japanese people and even its government displayed no knowledge of the Nazi-perpetrated Holocaust that exterminated six million Jews. The Japanese did not display any special interest in the Holocaust, mainly because they were busy with adjusting to the results of their own "Shoah"—their crushing defeat in the war and the horrific results of the two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. As Germany's allies during the war, they preferred not to delve into the terrible crimes committed by the Nazis.

The actions of a single Japanese official, Sugihara Chiune, who issued over two and a half thousand transit visas to Polish and Lithuanian Jews allowing them and their families to travel to Japan in the summer of 1940, thus saving them from extermination, won him the title of Righteous Gentile, a title bestowed by the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Authority in Jerusalem. He is the only Japanese person to date who has received this unique honor and recognition.

Despite the virtual silence on this subject in literature, as strange as it may seem, there was antisemitism in Japan, a country with barely a thousand

Jews, at the beginning of the twentieth century, and it raised its ugly head once again toward the closing decades of that century. It may also have influenced the evolution of Israel-Japan relations, which were established in 1952.

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Introduction

During the most horrific time in the recent history of the Jewish people, the destruction of European Jewry in what became known as the Holocaust, several nations stood out as bright rays in the darkest nightmare. The world witnessed the murder of some six million Jews by the German Nazi state and its collaborators in various European countries, and some brave nations tried to intervene. One was German-occupied Denmark, whose people prevented some seven thousand Jews from being sent to death camps in October 1943 by helping them escape by sea to neighboring Sweden, a neutral country that granted them shelter. Another country was Bulgaria: although its government collaborated with Nazi Germany, its leaders and people opposed the dispatching of some fifty thousand Bulgarian Jews to the death camps. A third country, Spain, was also a collaborator of Nazi Germany, but for various reasons its fascist government allowed some forty thousand Jews, mainly from the German-occupied parts of France and Vichy-ruled France, to pass through on their way to safer places. True, it was recently discovered that Franco's Spain provided the German government with the names of the six thousand members of the Jewish community living in that country during the war, but at the time the Spanish government took no action against those Jews living in its territory.

Japan—a country that was one of the three members of the Axis Alliance, with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy—neither went out of its way either to rescue Jews from the European inferno nor sought out and destroyed those Jews who came under its rule from 1931 to 1945. It could have been assumed that Japan would agree to carry out the Final Solution ordered by Hitler against the Jewish people, but for a variety of reasons that will be discussed later, Japan basically ignored repeated German demands that it exterminate the Jews living in the Japanese home islands, the territories Japan had occupied since 1931, and those areas under its control during the Second World War. As was mentioned in the introduction, there was even one Japanese official—Sugihara Chiune—who granted over 2600 Japanese transit visas to Polish and Lithuanian Jews who were ostensibly on their way to the Caribbean Island of Curacao, then a Dutch colony. By doing so he enabled some six thousand Jews to escape incarceration in Soviet prisons or almost certain death at the hands of the Nazis. Some of

those Jews remained in Japan even after the December 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor, and many were sent by the Japanese authorities to Shanghai, where almost all survived the war in the Shanghai Jewish ghetto. Sugihara's role in saving Jews is still contested and will be examined in Chapter 10 in greater detail.

Until the early 1960's, not much was known about Japan's attitude to the Jews. Research at that time barely touched on issues dealing with the Jewish community in Japan: its human composition; the number of Jews who lived in Japan before the war; their impact (if any) on the Japanese social, political, cultural, and economic environments; what Japanese society knew about Jews; Japan's policy toward Jewish refugees escaping from Europe; the nature of the antisemitic literature that flourished in Japan beginning in the 1920's; or the reason it flourished in a country whose Jewish community numbered less than a thousand people (out of a population of some 74 million). What were the origins of antisemitism in Japan, and why didn't the Japanese government and military adopt any measures to harm the Jews? Why, furthermore, did it enable thousands of Jews to survive while millions of their brethren in Europe were being systematically exterminated in death camps? What was the nature and what were the dimensions of this anti-Jewish sentiment in a country that hardly had any Jews, and the majority of whose people had never seen or met a Jew in their lives?

Until the early 1960's, there was little attempt to perform an in-depth study of the nature of Japanese antisemitism and its dimensions in comparison to the enormous respect and appreciation many Japanese people had for Jews and Judaism, evidenced by the fairly large number of publications that sought to understand the roots of Jewish power and why the Jews had earned a name as movers and shakers in international politics and finance. Thus, the theme of fear, envy, and hatred of Jews coupled with curiosity and an admiration for and awe of Jewish power is one that will run throughout this study.

In 2012, Israel and Japan marked the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, relations that today form a major asset in Israel's presence and standing in East Asia. The time is ripe to pose, once again, such questions as what Japan's policy toward the Jews was; whether the Jews living in Japan since the Meiji Restoration had any influence on Japanese political, economic, social, and cultural life; and above all, why Japan, rejecting repeated appeals by its Nazi allies, allowed some 40,000 Jews in the territories under its control since 1931 to remain alive.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in Japan, Germany, and Israel regarding the topic of Japan's attitude toward the Jews during the Holocaust era. Inevitably, this has led to interest in the Japanese attitude toward the Jews since the opening of Japan in 1853. Two leading Israeli scholars have devoted considerable time and effort to the study of Japanese antisemitism. Professor Ben-Ami Shillony of the Asian studies department of the Hebrew University published a book on the subject.[1] He and Professor Rotem Kowner of the department of Asian studies at the University of Haifa have also produced many essays on this theme.[2] Yad Vashem has yet to undertake an in-depth study of Japan and the Jews during the Holocaust.

Interestingly, a number of studies written by German scholars have appeared in recent years, based on extensive use of German and Japanese diplomatic and consular documents as well as the protocols of the International Military Tribunals both in Germany and in Japan.[3] There is also extensive literature dealing with the history of the Jews of Shanghai beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century and mainly during the Second World War.[4] There are also a growing number of studies by Japanese scholars on this subject.[5]

The research undertaken so far points in various directions. Some scholars believe that Japanese antisemitism was in fact disguised anti-foreignism in general, and that after the Second World War it was a way to express anti-Americanism at a time when it was not politically expedient to be explicitly anti-American in Japan. Another theory is that Japan received its antisemitism from Nazi Germany, which some Japanese leaders sought to emulate. However, as we shall discuss, the origins of Japanese antisemitism predate Nazi Germany and appear to derive from White Russian exiles after the 1917 Russian Revolution, which some exiles claimed was inspired and led by Jews. Still another theory is that the attitude of the Japanese toward the Jews was no different than their general attitude toward foreigners (*gaijin*) at a time when the Japanese were trying to demonstrate their own uniqueness to the world. There are researchers who are convinced that antisemitic outbursts in Japan prior to World War II and even in the 1980's were due to the great admiration and respect of most Japanese people for the achievements of the Jews—in other words, they were manifestations of envy. Professor Ben-Ami Shillony feels that the fact that the Japanese and the Jews were the epitomes of "successful outsiders"—two non-Western, non-Christian people who successfully competed with the West in various fields of endeavor—was responsible for creating that sense of envy.[6]

At the outset of this study, it must be made clear that although antisemitic feelings did exist in this country with virtually no Jews, antisemitism was marginal among the average Japanese populace, mainly because the Jews were marginal in Japanese society. To the extent that it existed, it was mostly present among the educated strata in society, who sought to exploit antisemitic sentiments to promote radical right-wing, nationalist, and anti-Western ideologies to justify preparations for war against the United States and Britain, and even to justify some of the crimes committed against Chinese citizens during the second Sino-Japanese war (1937-1945). Antisemitic texts, starting with the forgery known as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and extending to various books and essays written in the 1980s, have played a minor but at times influential role during the twentieth century.

Chapter 1

Early Jewish Settlers in Japan

Prior to the arrival in Japan of Jewish merchants from Europe and America in the second half of the 1850's, there is no evidence of Jewish presence in that country. Some writers conjecture that during the era known as Japan's Christian Century (1549-1638), Jewish seamen and merchants may have arrived in Japan either as crew members or as traders, mainly on board Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese ships that called in Japan and anchored mainly off Nagasaki. A number of sources indicate that two Portuguese Conversos (Jews who had converted, whether forcibly or not, to Christianity) visited Japan in the sixteenth century. One of these two apparent Conversos was Mendes Pinto, a trader who came to Japan in 1537 and then proceeded to write a book about that country which became a major sourcebook for knowledge about Japan. The second, Dr. Luis Almeida, arrived in Japan in 1552 and was reported to have built the first European-style hospital there. He too produced a memoir. However, there is no mention of Jews in Japanese history books or memoirs of that era, nor are there Japanese Jewish graves or synagogues dating back to that period. Even in the Dutch history books that were translated to Japanese during the early part of the Tokugawa era (1600-1867), also known as the Edo period, there is no special mention or information about Jews.

Following the advent of the Tokugawa regime that took over Japan in 1600, the new ruling dynasty decided to close Japan to foreigners and to expel all of them—especially Christians—from their borders. The intention of this ruling was primarily to ensure the wellbeing and survival of the new regime and to prevent foreign intervention in domestic Japanese politics, which had been a serious problem in the years before Japan was reunited by the Tokugawa family. Trade with the West was permitted only via ships belonging to the Dutch East Indies Company, which were allowed to dock at an artificial island called Deshima in Nagasaki's harbor. Beginning in the the early eighteenth century, the Tokugawa regime permitted the translation from Dutch into Japanese of books dealing with science, medicine, geography, astronomy, military matters and warfare, navigation, coastal

fortifications, and gunnery. However, it specifically forbade the translation of the New Testament and other works dealing with the Christian religion. The consequence of this rule was that even those few Japanese people who were exposed to the Dutch Learning School (*Rangakusha*) knew nothing about the Jewish origins of Christianity, Jewish history, or the connection between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel. Needless to say, there was no mention of Jews and Judaism in the Buddhist and Shinto texts more easily accessible.

Japan was formally opened to foreigners following the visit of an American flotilla commanded by Commodore Mathew C. Perry (1794-1858) in 1853. A treaty signed between Japan and the United States in 1854 specified that five Japanese port cities would be opened for trade and the settlement of foreigners, who would enjoy consular protection as well as the protection of the physical presence of their own troops. Among the ports to be opened in 1859 were those of Yokohama and Nagasaki. These soon attracted a number of Jews, the majority of whom initially came from South East Asia, China, the countries of Western Europe, and later from Eastern Europe and the United States.

The Nagasaki Community[1]

Jewish interest in the port of Nagasaki and its commercial potential originated among Middle Eastern Jews. It followed the growth and flourishing of the Jewish community in Shanghai after the first Opium War (1839-1842) and the opening of five treaty ports on the China coast. In 1842, shortly after the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing, which opened Shanghai to foreign trade, a number of Baghdadi Jewish merchants arrived in that port city. Among them were the Sassoon, Yehuda, Ezra, Kadoorie, and Hardoon families. The Kadoorie family is well known in modern Israel, having bequeathed money in the 1920's for the establishment of the Kadoorie agriculture school on the foothills of Mt. Tabor. Among its early graduates were three well-known Israeli figures: Israel Defense Forces chief of staff and later prime minister Yitzhak Rabin (1922-1995), general and later minister for foreign affairs Yigal Allon (1918-1980), and the writer-poet Chaim Guri (1923-).

The Kadoories and other merchants in Shanghai, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, heard of new business opportunities in Japan and decided to open branch offices for their companies in Nagasaki.[2] In February 1859, the David Sassoon and Sons Co. sent both cargo and an agent to Nagasaki

to see if it could establish offices and warehouses in that port city. Its agent, M. Yehezkel, asked the local Japanese authorities for permission to obtain a site on Pier 4. Apparently that request was granted, but for reasons not specified the family decided not to station a permanent representative in Nagasaki and instead preferred to use the services of other companies. Perhaps the family sensed that Yokohama, nearer to Tokyo (then still called Edo), would become the central port for Japan and was thus the better place on which to focus their operations.[3]

Jewish presence and activity in Nagasaki started after the implementation of unequal treaties imposed by foreign powers on Japan. The first Japanese-American treaty was signed in 1854, and was followed by another in 1858. These led to a considerable growth in the number of foreigners in the Japanese port cities of Nagasaki and Yokohama. By 1860, an American Jewish trader by the name of Elias Tollman was active in Nagasaki. By the end of the decade, there already existed a Jewish section in the Nagasaki cemetery. The first Jew to be buried there was an American Jewish sailor by the name of Solomon Keeler. In the 1870's, a number of Jewish merchants who came from Eastern Europe by way of Shanghai and Harbin settled in Nagasaki. They focused on men's clothing and opened shops for the sale of hardware and construction material. Some opened inns which included taverns. At this stage, Jewish communal or social organizations and institutions were not yet established. The few Jews in Nagasaki were not wealthy enough to support communal institutions and activity, unlike some of their counterparts in Shanghai.

Soon there developed a communal leadership, made up of a certain number of people with means who were prepared to establish institutions and represent the community to the authorities. In the 1880's, two families that would play an important role in the Nagasaki community arrived in that port city: the Lassner family, headed by Sigmund David, who held Austro-Hungarian citizenship, and the Ginzburg family, whose ancestor Morris, a Russian Jew, escaped Tsarist Russia to avoid being conscripted into the army. In 1883 the latter family established the Ginzburg & Co. firm and began to trade with the Russian government.

Ginzburg & Co. helped the Russian government obtain Japanese coal for the Russian East Asian fleet, part of which anchored off Nagasaki during the winter because the waters of its home base in Vladivostok froze regularly. Soon the Ginzburg family obtained a concession to supply goods and services to the entire Russian fleet in East Asia, both the navy and merchant vessels. For his endeavors on behalf of Russia, Morris won three important

things: amnesty for avoiding military service; a medal from the Tsar; and the right to trade inside Siberia. In 1892, Ginzburg purchased a plot in the Nagasaki international cemetery for the use of the Jewish community, and in September 1896 the community inaugurated its first synagogue, which was named *Beit Israel* (The House of Israel). The community continued to flourish, and soon a Jewish club and a welfare organization were established. By 1903, about a hundred Jews resided in Nagasaki, and their future looked bright.

However, a year later the Russo-Japanese war broke out, and since most of the Nagasaki Jews were Russian citizens and their main business was with the Russian fleet or non-governmental Russian companies, their fortune changed abruptly. As the war progressed, the Ginzburg family closed its business and left town. Nagasaki's Jewish communal leadership shifted to the Lassner family, Austro-Hungarian nationals, and it prospered. This era of prosperity was also short-lived. When the First World War broke out in August 1914 and Japan joined the Allies, Sigmund David Lassner—who held an Austrian passport—became an enemy national and was denied the right to conduct business, and his property was confiscated by the Japanese government.

Several Russian Jewish refugees arrived in Nagasaki after the Russian Revolution of 1905, and their numbers increased after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Most of these new arrivals made their way to Yokohama and Kobe, which had now become Japan's two major ports. The Nagasaki community slowly dwindled, and by 1922 the remaining Jews there authorized the Shanghai Zionist Association to sell their communal property. Beit Israel synagogue was sold for $2,600 dollars (some half-million dollars today), and the check was sent to Nissim Benjamin Ezra, the president of the Shanghai Zionist Association. The synagogue's Torah scroll was given as a gift to the Kobe Jewish community. As of 1923, organized Jewish life in Nagasaki ceased to exist. When Japan and the Soviet Union established diplomatic and trade relations in 1925, the few remaining Nagasaki Jews were no longer involved in this trade. The decline and slow disappearance of the Nagasaki Jewish community paralleled the growth and strengthening of the Yokohama and Kobe communities.

The Yokohama Community[4]

The first Jews who settled in Yokohama were the Marks brothers, who arrived from Britain in 1861. One of them, Alexander Marks, even wrote

articles about Japan for the London Jewish Chronicle. He became involved in importing wood from Australia, and apparently represented that country as an honorary consul. They were followed that year by the Baltimore-born Raphael Schoyer (1800-1865), who was a merchant and also established the first English language daily in Japan—*Japan Express*. The newspaper focused on shipping news and economic topics, and did not deal with Japanese politics and social issues. Schoyer also owned a printing press that printed Christian tracts in Yokohama. *Japan Express* barely mentioned one the greatest events in modern Japanese history, the 1868 Meiji Restoration, and continued to stick to the safer grounds of business and shipping news. Another American Jew introduced horse racing to Yokohama. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a family named Luria arrived from Russia, and its members became influential members of the community. More Jews arrived from America, Britain, and Russia.

The Meiji Restoration transformed Japan, through a series of reforms, from essentially an agrarian semi- feudal society to a major industrial and military regional and later a world power. By 1885, Yokohama had become the most important and largest port city of modern Japan, as it was situated next to Edo, now the newly renamed capital, Tokyo. Yokohama was thus attractive to foreigners in general as well as to Jews. Among the 16,000 foreigners who settled in Japan during the Restoration era were a number of Jews and the Jewish community of Yokohama grew and flourished. The community could now turn its attention to the establishment of communal institutions such as a synagogue, cemetery, and burial society. There is a Jewish grave in Yokohama dating to 1865, and the synagogue was inaugurated in 1892. By the 1870's, the community numbered some 70 families, who were seen by their Japanese neighbors as part of the Christian community, albeit one with its own unique religious rites that differed from those practiced by the Christians. The most important of these differences noticed by Japanese society was their observance of the Sabbath on Saturday instead of Sunday, their placement of mezuzot on their doorways, and the fact that they had their male children circumsized.

Another well-known Jew who lived in Yokohama was Benjamin Fleisher, who settled there in 1908. A scion of a wealthy Jewish family from Philadelphia, he bought and edited the *Japan Advertizer-Japan Times*, which he developed into the leading English newspaper in Japan. He also wrote for the *New York Times* and acted as a reporter for *United Press*.

Two German Jews played an important role in the development of the Japanese constitution and laws. The first was Albert Mosse (1846-1925),

who arrived in Japan in 1886 and stayed for four years, advising the Japanese government on the development of a written constitution and on administrative law. He is well-remembered in Japan as a key member of the team that eventually wrote the Meiji Constitution, promulgated in 1889. During the Nazi era, the Japanese embassy in Berlin, aware that there was some discrimination against Jews in Germany, requested that the German government not discriminate against members of the Mosse family. Due to this intervention, the Mosse family was protected. The second prominent name is that of Ludwig Riess (1861-1928), who was invited to teach history at Tokyo University and stayed there from 1887 to 1902. The *Japan Biographical Encyclopedia* credits Riess with being the father of modern Japanese historiography. Mosse and Riess did not stress their Judaism and were not involved in the affairs of the Jewish community in Yokohama.

American-Jewish Capitalists and Russian-Jewish Soldiers

The 1905 Russo-Japanese War and the 1905 Revolution in Russia brought to Japan several hundred Russian Jews who escaped Tsarist Russia by way of Siberia and Manchuria, making their way east on the Trans-Siberian Railway that was completed after the Russo-Japanese War and facilitated their travel. The Russo-Japanese war also brought to Japan an awareness that Jews were different than Christians, even though many of them resided in Christian nations.

This process of slowly learning more about Jews occurred partly because the Russo-Japanese war also brought to Japan some 1,300 Russian Jews as prisoners of war, all of whom had been captured in Manchuria. This group was different from the Jews who already lived in Japan. They were soldiers, which was not an occupation the Japanese associated with Jews. The most outstanding among them was Lieutenant Yosef Trumpeldor (1880-1920), who had lost an arm in Port Arthur and set up a Zionist cell where Hebrew and the Bible were taught. The Jewish prisoners were placed in a prisoner-of-war camp at Hamadera near Osaka. The Jewish prisoners were divided into two groups: those who preferred to assimilate and join in with the non-Jewish Russian prisoners, and those, numbering several hundred, who were Zionist and were involved in Zionist activities under Trumpeldor's charismatic leadership. The religious needs of the Jewish prisoners were attended to by the Nagasaki, Kobe, and Yokohama Jewish

communities, as well as by American Jewish organizations. It appears that the Japanese guards were quite impressed with the behavior of the Jewish prisoners, who preferred Hebrew and Bible studies to vodka and cards.[5]

The Russo-Japanese War caused Japan's leaders to take note for the first time of the economic capability and financial power of wealthy Jews in America and Britain and their influence on their respective governments. Shortly after the outbreak of the war, Japan's leaders realized that they would soon find themselves in a major financial crisis and would require massive international credit and loans to purchase weapons and ammunition, fuel, and food to continue waging the war. The deputy governor of the Bank of Japan, Takahashi Korekiyo (1854-1936) was sent to London in order to secure such loans. At a dinner party in London, he met the American Jewish millionaire Jacob Schiff (1847-1920), who was involved in business in Russia and had become interested in supporting liberal causes in that empire, hoping that the liberalization of the Tsarist regime would help Russian Jews. Schiff was a supporter of the more liberal policies of Finance Minister Sergey Witte (1849-1915), who espoused reforms and opposed the policies of Interior Minister Viacheslav Pleve (1846-1904).[6] Schiff was deeply affected by the anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia in 1903-1904, and was determined to help Japan defeat Russia in any way he could. Schiff's biographer, Cyrus Adler, explains that Schiff wanted to take vengeance for the pogroms and thought that if Japan won the war it would lead to greater social and political reforms, or even a revolution, in Russia, putting an end to the persecution of Jews. He undertook personally to help Japan win the war by securing her three loans from Jewish and non-Jewish bankers in London and New York. He responded to Takahashi's request for credit by setting up a consortium that mobilized a loan of £52 million sterling through having Schiff's own company, Kuhn, Loeb and Co., and others guarantee half that sum. Another £30 million sterling loan was granted by a group of Jewish bankers in London and New York, among them the Kassel and Warburg families. These loans helped Japan survive financially, even when Japan failed to win war restitution from the Russians in the Portsmouth Peace Treaty of September 1905.

Schiff was influential enough in Washington to intervene with President Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) and ask him to mediate between Russia and Japan, which led to peace negotiations in Portsmouth. He also helped members of the Japanese embassy in Washington reach the American media. Schiff's name became well-known among Japan's leaders. He visited that country after the war as a guest of the Meiji Emperor, who awarded

him the Medal of the Rising Sun—the first time it was awarded to a non-Japanese person. The emperor even hosted Schiff in the imperial palace in Tokyo.

Years later, when Takahashi, who became the governor of the Bank of Japan and later finance minister and then prime minister of the country, sent his daughter to study in America, she lived with the Schiff family in New York City. This episode marks the beginning of the understanding (or myth) among Japan's political and economic elites that world Jewry is a tight-knit, powerful, and influential group with connections around the world—mainly in key western powers—and that when one needs to secure large sums of money, one should turn to them.[7]

The Russo-Japanese War and Japan's military victory over Russia had a major impact on Jews in Tsarist Russia and elsewhere, not to mention their impact on growing Asian and even Arab nationalism. Naftali Herz Imber, the author of "Hatikvah," the poem that became Israel's national anthem, even dedicated a book of his poetry to the Emperor of Japan. The Japanese victory, especially the naval victory in the battle of Tsushima shortly after the 1903-1904 pogroms, was seen as an omen. In his memoirs, Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952), the future first president of Israel, wrote that in 1905, while he was teaching chemistry at the University of Manchester, a Japanese student thought that he would be upset over the defeat of the Russian fleet by the Japanese navy in the battle of Tsushima Straits. The student kindly attempted to cheer him up, not realizing that Weizmann was in fact quite pleased by Russia's defeat.[8] The 1905 Revolution in Russia drove hundreds of thousands of Jews from the country. The majority of them immigrated to the United States, a few thousand went to Palestine, which was then part of the Ottoman Empire, and a few thousand more traveled to Siberia. Eventually, many of this last group settled in Harbin, some others in Shanghai, and a few in Japan.

Chapter 2

Jewish Settlers in Japan at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century

After the 1905 Russian revolution, the next major migration of Jews from Russia began in late 1917, when thousands of Jews fled after the October 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and the ensuing civil war. A large portion of these new refugees sought safety in Japan. Some five thousand of them made their way there, mainly through Yokohama, that being Japan's major port of entry. The majority of these then attempted to immigrate to the United States, and some even secured entry visas. Those lucky enough to do so departed alone, leaving their families in Japan until they would be ready to travel to America and join them. Many families in this situation found themselves destitute and sought help from the Yokohama Jewish community. In 1919, matters grew worse when American immigration laws were revised and became far more restrictive. Hundreds of families were stranded in Yokohama with no one but the local Jewish community members to provide for their basic needs. Some financial aid came from the American Jewish organization HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Association), whose major benefactor was Jacob Schiff, whose actions previously have been discussed in Chapter 1. HIAS sent a special emissary by the name of Samuel Mason to Asia to open offices in Manchuria, Kobe, and even Vladivostok to help Jewish refugees make their way to America. He was provided with an introductory letter from Jacob Schiff, which helped open Japanese government office doors for him. That in turn enabled many of the refugees to relocate to Kobe. From there, hundreds eventually left for America, some went to Shanghai, and hundreds settled in Harbin and other cities in Manchuria. A handful decided to travel to Palestine. Among the last group was Moshe Medzini, the father of the present writer.[1]

Some 1,700 Jewish refugees were stranded in Japan at the beginning of this period, but they were eventually able to either settle there or to use it as a transit point on their way to other destinations.

The Kobe Community[2]

The third-largest Jewish community in Japan was in Kobe. It grew mainly as a result of the decline of Nagasaki and the arrival in 1923, following the great Kanto earthquake which destroyed much of Tokyo and Yokohama, of many Jews who had previously lived in those two cities. In the 1920's and 1930's, Kobe became the largest and most important Jewish community in Japan. The original Jewish settlers in that port city, which had been opened to trade and settlement of foreigners in 1868, were Iraqi and Iranian, in addition to a few Russians. On the eve of the Second World War, there were some hundred Jewish families in Kobe, about half of them Ashkenazim (of European origins) and the other half Sephardim (of Middle East origins). They were prosperous enough to establish and maintain communal institutions, among them two separate synagogues and a ritual slaughterer who provided kosher meat. This community would play an important role in helping European Jews find temporary shelter in Kobe in the late 1930's until 1941. Being a port city, situated some thirty kilometers northwest of Osaka, Japan's second-largest city, Kobe also served as an exit port for those who sailed to America.

Prior to discussing the core issues relating to the prevailing Japanese attitude toward the Jews, it is useful to expand the discussion to when, and under what circumstances, ordinary Japanese people and their rulers might encounter Jews. We have already noted that Jews played no role in Japan before, during, or immediately after the Meiji Restoration. There is no evidence that Japan's future leaders who were sent to the United States and Europe with the Iwakura Mission (1871-1872) to study government, education, industry, economics, and law met American or European Jews in their travels. One Jew did have an impact on the development of the Meiji constitution: the German-Jewish law professor Albert Mosse, who was invited by Prince Ito Hirobumi (1841-1909) to come to Japan to help write it. Mosse, however, was viewed by the Japanese as a German and not as a Jew, and apparently made no mention of his Jewish origins.

Curiously enough, many Japanese people made their first indirect acquaintance with Jews through Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, which was first translated and staged in Osaka in 1885 and then became part of the English-language curriculum in Japanese schools. Therefore, many Japanese readers thought that the typical Jew was Shylock-like: clever, sly, untrustworthy, and given to devious intrigues and manipulations. This stereotype of the Jew as a super-manipulator will reappear again and in greater