



SHANIWAR TELI

שניוואר תלי e-Newsletter מוסטות שמן שאינן עובדות בשבת

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

Contact us at:

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To,
Kurla Bene-Israel Prayer Hall
kurlabeneisraelprayerhall@gmail.com

Atte: Dr. Joel Peres Ashtamkar
Hon. Sec.

Oct. 19, 2025

Dear Dr. Ashtamkar,

It is amazing that your prayer hall, founded in 1946 by Mr. Jiradkar has been so smoothly running for almost 80 years without ever being involved in any kind of scandals, that is very common with all our Bene-Israel institutions; may it be schools synagogues cemeteries or holiday homes. I would like to congratulate you and your full managing committee members for their clean and voluntary work.

We displayed on the Shaniwar-Teli e-Newsletter WhatsApp group and on our face book the beautiful renovations work has been done recently in your hall. I have been only once in your prayer hall in the 1970's when I was a teenager. Now we are in Israel for forty years.

As you know we had only one leader who dedicated his life for the Bene-Israel people; Mr. Haeem Samuel Kehimkar (1830-1908). He was the British Post Mater at GPO, at the same GPO which is still near the VT (Shivaji) train station. As Bene-Israelis were not Indians, Kehimkar got an approval from the British that all the Bene-Israel working for British Government should be paid as European's and not as Indian. This increased Bene-Israel salaries ten times higher than Indian worker. It benefited especially, hundreds of our people in the army. He started the Israelite school along with a synagogue, for Bene-Israel girls when girls were deprived of education. The same school is celebrating now 150 years; Sir Eli Kadoori School. His book "The Bene-Israel of India" was published 50 years after he wrote it and 31 years after his death, introduced Bene-Israel community to the world. This was the book that gave Bene-Israel traditions so much in details that the Jewish Agency and Israeli Rabbinate accepted the Bene-Israel as Jews and allowed them to immigrate to Israel as Jews.

The tragedy is that as his book was written in English, that was never read by his own Bene-Israel people, as most of them were educated only in Marathi. Ninety percent immigrants came directly from villages to Israel and had no idea who Kehimkar was and what he had done for them.

The English educated Bene-Israel from Bombay did know about Kehimkar and many bought his book when it was sold in Mumbai, like my Dad, Yacob Ezikel Daniels Walwatkar. This book is still with me and I have read it.

When we started the Shaniwar-Teli eNewsletter in 2020, we were surprised that most of the Israeli Bene-Israel did not know any thing about Kehimkar, leave alone their children. Those days we spoke to some Israeli Bene-Israeli groups about contributions of Kehimkar, the origination of Indian Khajan's in Israel took the initiative and translated the book of

Kehimkar into Hebrew by 2021/22. This made it possible for many 2^{nds} 3rd and 4th generation Israeli Bene-Israel Israelis to discover their roots and visit India with their parents.

We are continuing our effort to respect Mr. Kehimkar. For this purpose, we have produced graphics of a poster on Mr. Kehimkar.

Size: 1.5 x 1 meter

It contains major information on Mr. Kehimkar in English, Marathi, and Hebrew.

We had received a donation of 1000 NIS to prepare the graphic work from Mr. Moses Dighorkar from Greece. We had to hire a professional graphologist who had experience in making posters of history for Museums. This file is now ready in PDF format for printing.

The printing can be done on canvas, synthetic paper, vinyl, satin that may require a frame. However we have been printing them in Israel on white PVC to get the best effects. This printing cost NIS 500 per poster. This 500 NIS is paid by the synagogue buyer / doner to the printer. However, due to its large size of 1.5 mt x 1 mt it is not practical to print it in Israel and send it to India.

The request of Shaniwar Teli management is that you please consider placing this poster in your prayer hall. We have attached a copy with this message for the review of the management committee.

If your committee approves this request, we will send you the PDF file by email. You will have to get it printed at one of the poster printers (there are many poster printers in Mumbai). The price will depend on the material you will choose but they are much cheaper than in Israel. There are also many that offer on-line service with free delivery.

Please let us know your management decision.

Sincerely,

Leo Daniels Walwatkar
Dr. Shulamith Charikar