The Edinburgh Star

Journal of the Edinburgh Jewish Community

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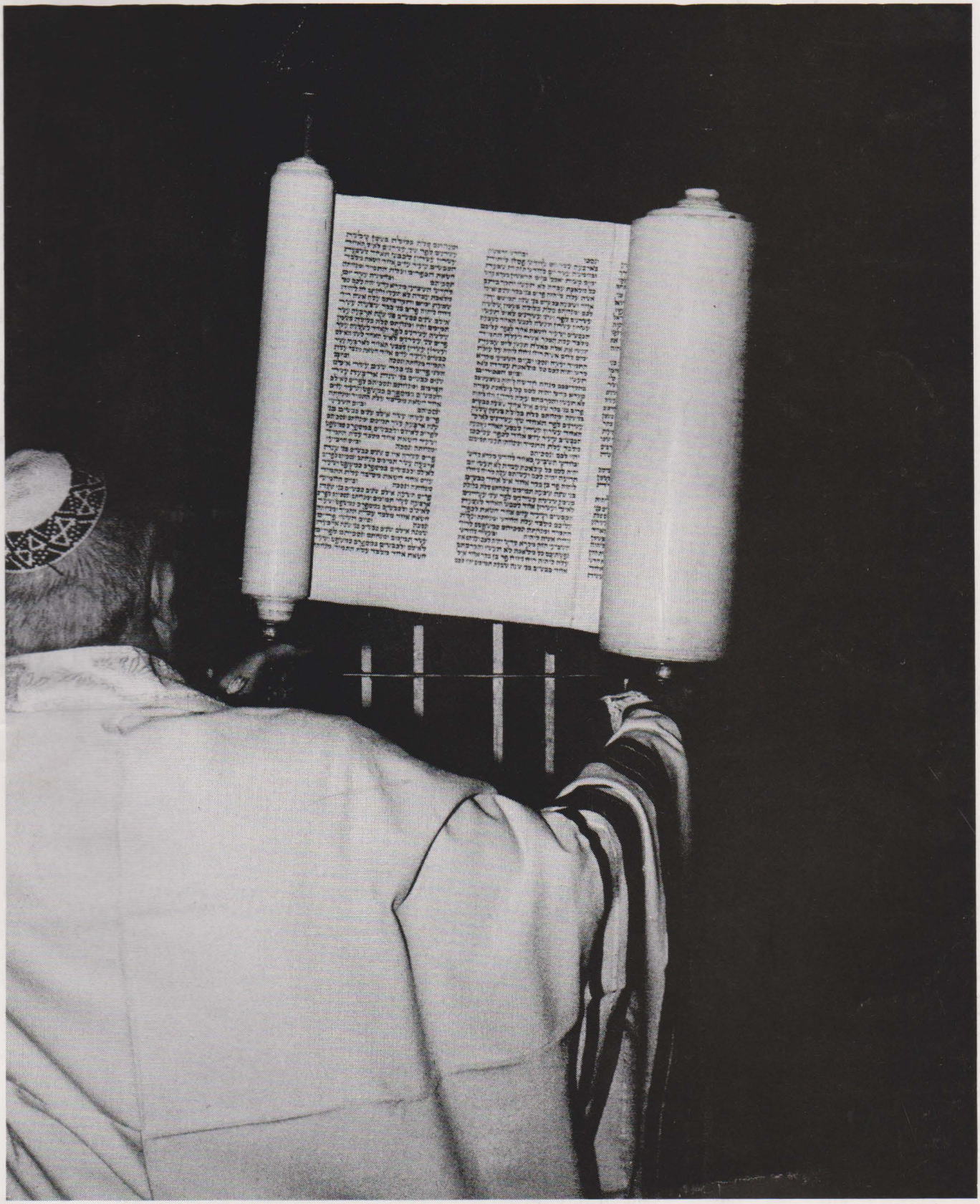

The Edinburgh Star

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Editorial

Sometimes editorial writing feels like 'the icing on the cake', at others it is more like the proverbial 'last straw'. On the one hand, what could be nicer than the freedom to express your views on the subject of your choice to a semi-captive audience? On the other hand, it is hard to think of anything more humiliating than being given such an audience and having nothing to say, or at least nothing that has not already been said elsewhere in a far more impressive and informed way. Perhaps the answer lies in not taking yourself too seriously and in realising that most exhortations, sermons and critiques either fall on deaf ears or involve preaching to the converted. It is this ability to take an honest, light-hearted look at one's self which is the abiding strength of the film Leon the Pig Farmer currently showing in Edinburgh.

The plot is quite absurd. Leon, a nice Jewish boy from NW London discovers that he came into the world through an IVF programme and that by some terrible error, his natural father is a Yorkshire pig farmer. He sets off 'to find his roots' and his so-called Yorkshire family do their best to make him feel at home - studying Jewish cooking and The Joys of Yiddish. Somewhere in all of this Leon inevitably has an affair with a non-Jewish artist and in one of the film's more tasteless scenes, poses for her on a crucifix.

The film contains most of the cliches of British (and American?) Jewish communal life. The 'over-the-top' simchas (Leon's mother is a kosher caterer); the pre-occupation with wheeling and dealing (Leon comes to grief in his attempt to be a scrupulously honest estate agent); the rivalry between the orthodox and the liberal; the all too frequent application of money as the main criterion of success and the endless attempts at match- making. The Edinburgh audiences (unlike those in NW London I understand) were clearly not sure whether it was quite polite to laugh and some of the most raucous laughs came from members of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation spotted in the crowd. I couldn't help hoping and wishing that this was not the way that the wider community views its Jewish members, but I had to admit that there was more than a grain of truth in it and that if the film achieved nothing else, it provided a healthy opportunity to laugh at ourselves and to take a long hard look at one or two of our less appealing characteristics. Of course the end was sheer delight. Leon found the perfect partner: attractive, politically correct and ... Jewish!

★ ★ ★ ★

We are pleased to announce that there is to be a Guest Editor for the Rosh Hashanah Star. Julia Merrick has kindly agreed to edit the next issue and has already started working on it. The copy date will be 2 August.

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ABE RABSTAFF : AN APPRECIATION

by Abe Goldberg

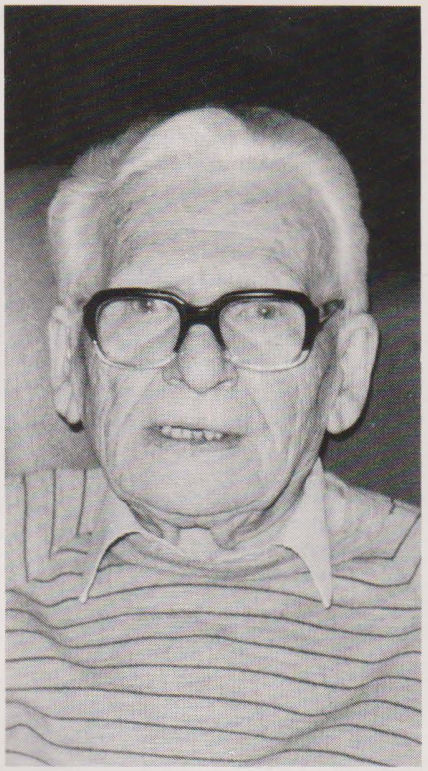
Abe Rabstaff, one of the most loved and respected members of the Edinburgh Jewish Community, died on 6 February 1993. He was born in London on 11 February 1900. His paternal grandfather, Shneur Zalman Repsov, a master tailor from Suraz, Belorussia, just north of Ukraine, had been attracted to London by the prospect of making uniforms for troops going to the Boer War. He also brought over Aaron, Abe's father, who had married Sarah Machlah Varanovski, an older sister of my own mother. When the Boer War ended in 1902 Abe's grandfather, looking for work for himself and his staff, a number of whom had come over with him from Russia, moved up to Edinburgh.

Abe's mother and father followed later with him to live in the heart of the 'ghetto' at No. 3 East Richmond Street. As he put it, 'You could get a minyan in your own tenement at any time' and they went to the 'greener' (Greenhorn) shul in North Richmond Street. Abe was the eldest of six children - four boys and two girls. In London he had gone to the London Jewish Free School in Bayswater. After schooling in Edinburgh he was apprenticed at the age of 13 to a tailor from Warsaw, with whom he learned the skills of the trade, particularly cutting, an important beginning for his life's work as a master tailor.

In 1916 he joined the Royal Scots having added two years to his age. He fought in France, as a corporal, with the Second Battalion of the Highland Light Infantry, taking part in some of the fiercest battles of the Somme. At Cambrai he was badly gassed, which affected him for the rest of his life. At the bidding of his father he wrote home in Yiddish, 'to prevent him forgetting he was a Jew'. After the war he returned to his tailoring in Edinburgh and became a cutter for a number of workshops. In 1921 he married Dolly Grosberg of Manchester, also born in 1900, and for a short period he lived in Manchester returning later to Edinburgh. Abe and Dolly had three children Hannah, Deborah and Cyril. An important point in his career came when he received a letter in 1932 from R W Forsyth of Princes Street, inviting him to join their tailoring section and he ended up as chief designer and cutter, a most prestigious post in the tailoring trade. He came in contact with professional classes and members of the aristocracy and nobility, experiences which he savoured. His work provided his family with a comfortable lifestyle and he would at times, in philosophical mood, contrast this with his own father trained as a 'baal sofer', to write script for the Torah, who 'went about looking for mitzvahs - sitting with the dead, burying the dead, writing on tombstones' - all good work but insufficient to support a large family.

From his youth he was a clubbable man. As a teenager he had helped form the Jewish Lads Club. The group rented a property in Drummond Street, bought a piano and organised a barbershop quartet. They also got a boxing instructor to train themselves in the art of self-defence, for it was not uncommon for Jewish boys to get attacked. This was a forerunner of his masonic achievements in Lodge Solomon No. 1209. He was initiated on 4 November 1935, at an initiation fee of 10 guineas, proposed by H Vinestock and seconded by R Vinestock. He took his second degree in 1936, third in 1937 and the mark degree in 1938. In 1943 he became Master of the Lodge and was granted honorary Grand Rank in 1970. He also took an active part in the Jewish ex-Servicemen's Association, the Royal British Legion and the Council of Christians and Jews.

Abe was very much a family man. He was happily married to Dolly for 64 years. Sadly all three children predeceased them. Their elder daughter Hannah (Nan), whose personality so reflected that of her father, was severely wounded when she was a gunner at Dollis Hill,



London, in 1944, but survived courageously to get married and rear a fine family. Deborah died shortly after childbirth in 1953; Cyril died in 1984 a year before Dolly died.

After his retiral Abe and Dolly left their home in Forest Road to live in Aberdour, Fife. They enjoyed the village life there, but missed their friends in Edinburgh. Dolly became quite unwell at this time after a stroke and for her remaining years Abe was loving husband, nurse and constant support. The memory of that cottage in Aberdour remains with me - enjoying a meal with them on an Autumn evening and warming to the glow of the obvious love between them. They returned to Edinburgh to live in Corstorphine until Dolly's death in 1985. Then Abe took sheltered accommodation in a neat little newly-built home in Salisbury Road, conveniently opposite the shul. He was happy in these surroundings - taking an interest in cooking, always reading, enjoying frequent visits by his grandchildren, in conversation with all about him, regularly attending shul and taking an active part in the communal

meetings. The sadness of losing his children and his wife stirred his spirit and gratitude for the blessing of his five grandchildren and eight great grandchildren, a source of joy to him. As he put it, 'The good Lord not only takes away, he also gives'. He suffered arterial insufficiency of his legs, making it difficult for him to walk and at 92 he felt that it was wise for him to retire to Newark Lodge in Glasgow, where he spent the last seven months of his life. His remarkable personality shone in Newark, forever happy and giving happiness to his fellows.

He was a good-looking, debonair man, always well-dressed, his suits and coats usually made by himself. As a speaker he was outstanding, his natural communicative skills were further developed in Masonic meetings and countless simchahs, for which he prepared himself diligently. Abe's formal education may have stopped at 13, but his drive to learn and his love of scholarship was with him for the rest of his life. I had fallen under his spell as a medical student enjoying the late night discussions in his Forest Road home, in the same way as, a generation later, Stefan Reif describes below. Forty years later, I had the great luxury of having many long talks with him over several weeks, when he was a patient in a Glasgow hospital. I marvelled at his memory, his wisdom - mellowed and matured, his optimism, his all-pervading kindly humour - this from a man nearly 90 who had endured repeated family loss.

How can we assess him? To his grandchildren and great grandchildren he was a hero. He defined himself as a survivor, but he was more than that, for one can just survive and still be worn down by adversity. He was a triumphant survivor, his life an inspiration to all around him.

Professor Sir Abraham Goldberg was born and brought up in Edinburgh. He is now retired having held the post of Regius Professor of the Practice of Medicine in Glasgow.

ABE RABSTAFF 1900-1993 : AN APPRECIATION

by Stefan Reif

My warmest memories of my mother's brother, 'Uncle Abey', are of long evenings spent with him at his home in Forest Road some thirty years ago. I was a student of Rabbinics and Semitics in London, spending the vacation with my parents, full of fiery ideals and optimistic plans; he was a mature man of retirement age who had been educated by life and its varied experiences. As he designed, cut and sewed a gent's suit with apparent ease but with loving care and undoubted skill, we would exchange views on a vast number of topics and he never failed to amaze me with the breadth of his knowledge and the depth of his understanding, qualities achieved without the benefit of any formal education.

In an arrangement that was more acceptable then than now, 'Auntie Dolly' would sit quietly at her sewing or would be busy in the kitchen, interrupting only to bring tea and her renowned strudel biscuit, eventually retiring to bed and leaving us to our self-indulgent philosophising. The welter of ideas that occupied us ranged over religion, politics, literature and romance. We shared an intense desire to set against each other the concepts of divine power and human liberty, a suspicion of hyper-institutionalised religion, a love of reading and recounting, and a passion for the centrality of family life. We shared, too, a radicalism and a faith in humble folk and their values but my ideology was still angry, extreme and aggressive while his was humorous, balanced and subdued. If the atmosphere ever threatened to become overly serious, Abe would call on his remarkable powers as a raconteur and sweeten the flavour of the evening with one of his innumerable stories.

As a small child I had come to love these stories with their sprinklings of Scottish Yiddishisms, their wry humour, and their insights into people and places, particularly as they related to first generation immigrants from Eastern Europe and their struggles to surmount without bitterness the impossible challenges of what was often a bitter life. I had known my uncle as a proud and patient father and grandfather, a First World War veteran, a keen freemason, and an accomplished player of card-games imported by Jews from Russia and Poland, But it was only during these personal encounters in later years in Forest Road, rarely ending before 1.00 or 2.00 a.m., that I came to appreciate what made this remarkable man tick.

Like his father, Aaron Rapstoff, he loved witty conversation and always preferred peace to controversy; like his mother, Sarah Machlah (neé Varanovski), he enjoyed a high degree of intelligence and a determination to do the best for his family. Deeply aware as he was of the difficulties that his parents had encountered and never really overcome throughout their lives, he looked back to the powerful figure of his grandfather, Shneur Zalman, for inspiration and, together with Dolly, built solid foundations of love and security on which his three children could construct their own lives. Though normally demonstrating more of an empathy with his mother than his father, he certainly followed the latter's example in the degree of patience he could exercise when the need arose. I recall only one occasion when I saw that patience threaten to run out. At his own insistence, he had been discharged from the Royal Infirmary a matter of a few hours after a major operation and as I sat by his bedside at home trying to bring some comfort, I was regaled with a welter of choice epithets about the barbaric butchery of the surgical profession.

In the course of our intimate exchanges in the 1960s I learned to laugh at the vicissitudes of immigrant life in London's East End in the early years of the century; I heard how he had taken up his needle and thread as a wage-earner

from the age of ten; and I marvelled at the fact that he had volunteered at the age of sixteen, presenting himself as two years older, for service against the Germans in France. It never failed to astonish me that while he was fighting for the British my father's father, a conscript with the Austrian army on the other side, lost his life in Northern Italy. Abe survived but only just, suffering twice from the results of gassing and being reported missing. He often recalled the mixture of pain and joy on his mother's face when he appeared at her door in a dreadful physical state but at least in the land of the living.

A spell in Manchester and marriage to Dolly seem to have brought him greater stability and on his return to Edinburgh he joined the outfitters R W Forsyth and ultimately rose to be manager of its tailoring workshop. At work he never missed the opportunity of sharpening his wits against the trained and professional minds of some of his customers. In the community he acted as the secretary to the Yiddish-speaking groups that still determinedly ran their own congregations not, on his own admission, because he was so orthodox but because he was one of the few who could read and write English! At the masonic lodge meetings he developed an outstanding reputation as a speaker who could educate, amuse and move his audiences with what appeared to be little effort but was in fact based on meticulous preparation.

In his later years he not only continued to excel in public speaking and bonhommie but was also able to devote greater attention to synagogue life, whether social, religious or Zionist. For Edinburgh he became something of an elder statesman, a position that he first found amusing given his natural tendency towards iconoclasm and radicalism but one which he soon came to relish. For different generations, in different ways, throughout the Edinburgh Jewish community, his absence will be deeply felt.

Abe took a particular pride in the achievements of those in the family who had been fortunate enough to enjoy the formal education denied him and lost no opportunity of assailing whatever company he was in with accounts of their latest honours and successes, whether in commerce, the professions, medicine or academe. He saw it as his pleasure to encourage their efforts and claimed that he was merely basking in their reflected glory. The truth is that as a man of industry, wit, integrity and charm, he set the finest example for them all to emulate.

Dr Stefan Reif was born in Edinburgh and recently held the post of President of the Jewish Historical Society. He is Director of the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit at the University of Cambridge.

COMING EVENTS

May		
16 Sunday	Friendship Club	3.00 p.m.
20 Thursday	Students' Meeting (Speaker)	7.30 p.m.
23 Sunday	'Women in Community' Meeting	3.00 p.m.
26 Wednesday	1st Day Shavuoth	
28 Friday	Students' Shabbas Evening Meal	
30 Sunday	Friendship Club	3.00 p.m.
June		
6 Sunday	WIZO Annual Summer Lunch at 2 Ettrick Road	12.30 p.m.
9 Wednesday	Friendship Club Outing to Largs	10.00 a.m.
27 Sunday	Cheder Prize Giving Friendship Club	3.00 p.m.
30 Wednesday	Annual General Meeting Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation	7.30 p.m.
July		
11 Sunday	Friendship Club	3.00 p.m.
25 Sunday	Friendship Club	3.00 p.m.

Maccabi meets every alternate Sunday from 1.00 - 3.00 p.m. For further information contact Jonathan Mason (445 3437)

Senior Maccabi meets on Sunday evenings in members' homes

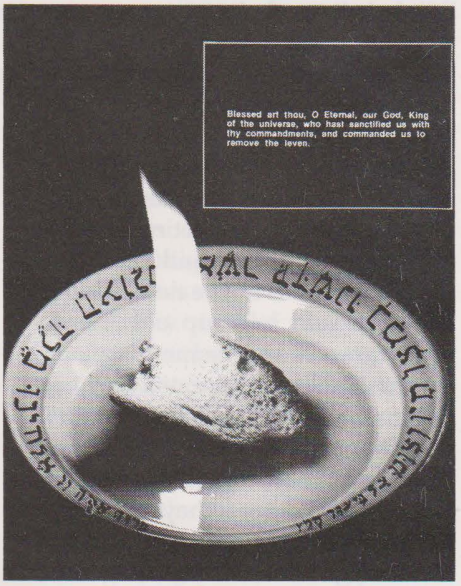
The Jewish Philosophical Society meets every alternate Saturday afternoon in the Succah

The Luncheon Club meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 12 noon

The above events, unless otherwise stated, take place in the Community Centre, Salisbury Road.

SEDER NIGHT OR THE MIRACLE OF THE MATZO AND THE CHICKENS

by Judy Gilbert



The initial response to the annual Seder night was disappointing but typical of the laid back attitude of 'Yiden'. It seems we had a bad attack of the 'Let's wait and see who else is going'. It was thought that two chickens would probably suffice judging by the number of people who actually made their reservation by the appointed day ... but in true Jewish style, two weeks before Pesach, panic set in and poor Vicky Lowrie was at the receiving end of a telephone that would not stop ringing. Two chickens and a box of matzo were hardly going to feed 100 hungry participants.

Seder night by any standards was an enormous success with Rabbi Shapira and Rachel at the helm, together with their daughter Efrat, who made a surprise appearance all the way from Israel armed with a massive Shemura Matzo. Thanks must go to all the ladies who helped in various ways and to the 'Lads' who peeled the potatoes, not to mention Harold Abrahams and the Ladies Committee who prepared a tasty traditional Seder meal.

The Rabbi had cunningly left little messages inside certain Haggadot for unsuspecting victims to contribute towards the evening's readings. We are still not sure if they were intended as privileges or punishments for good or bad Shabbat attendances! The youngest guests were lifted from the assembled company and gave a delightful rendering of Ma Nishtanah. We are still puzzling as to which of these delightful angels stole the Afikoman!

In the end the ritual cleaning of the kitchen, the gradual roller coaster heading towards frenetic activity and stage nerves were all worth it and whatever Vicky said in her shattered state, this will certainly not be the last supper!

Tubishvat in Edinburgh

by Judy Gilbert

With the commencement of Tubishvat, Lesley Danzig, the teacher of class Kita Alef decided to involve the whole Cheder in a tree planting ceremony to mark this lovely festival. Philip Mason was the man to provide us with the necessary equipment, namely the trees. Some people never do things by halves - Philip procured fifty saplings of the Cyprus, Pine and Cedar variety and with a typically noisy response the smallest Cheder members set to with great enthusiasm followed by the equally keen older members. There were enough trees for everyone to get their hands dirty and to crown it all the sun shone brightly!

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

PIANO RECITAL

by

Kathleen Dyne and Jo Barlow

Sunday, 13 June, at 3.00 p.m.

in the hall of the

Edinburgh Society of Musicians

3 Belford Road

to raise funds for the children of Alyn Hospital in Jerusalem. Tickets and further details will be available nearer the time from Dorothe Kaufmann (443 3827) and Val Simpson (447 4191)

THE HOMECOMING *by Mark Fenajec*

Edinburgh and its Congregation were left behind in 1948 when I left to marry and seek my fortune in foreign fields; well England is foreign is it not? Who am I? Some will already know; the name is an anagram, sort it out yourself.

Apart from a few fleeting visits to see my parents, Sam and Lena, and my sister Sonia, I have not had time to revisit and look up old friends until now. It was something of a planned military operation. Phone calls first, one day with him, another with her, not so many days with them (sad to say) but then again I am also a him and not a they any more, having lost my darling Nita 15 months ago after 43½ years together. Still, I have my two married children and four grandchildren within 4 miles of me back in Essex, and a blessing they are too. I'm trying to work out why, having retired from the rat race, I decided to come back to my home town and look up those with whom I grew up and whom I then left to do five years in the Royal Navy, came back to for only a year and disappeared again, this time almost for good.

I may have discovered why. Approaching three score years and ten, one has far more to look back on than to look forward to. Besides, Norman Dorfman never did repay the five bob he once borrowed from me, and I've had some sleepness nights about it, so I came back to collect. But neither of us can work out the compound interest over 45 years, so like Barclays, it's been written off as a bad investment. It was good to see him though - he's hardly changed. Sammy Latter, my dad's old friend, was looking extremely spry at the Luncheon Club and soon remembered my family. Then there was Betty Franklin (eat! eat!) doing her perpetual motion imitation in the kitchen.

Arthur Kleinberg, King of the Flooded Kitchen, has promised to take a basic course in plumbing (and how to remember to turn the taps off) and will no doubt now take swimming lessons. Rosa Massie (Katz) with the ever beaming welcome smile remembered the good old days too and so she should. May Brown (Dick) 'Oi a Klog', was as lively and as forthright as she always was. Don't change May! And then there was David Goldberg. Quite a chap is David; we hear he's had an approach from the British Medical Council to assist them into discovering what causes laryngitis; they're hoping he'll catch it.

We were invited here, there and olla molla yon. The oh so lively Norma Benjamin (Cudlitz) threw a lovely lunch for my sister and me, which was much appreciated (Have no fear Norma, your secret is safe with me), even by Barney Adelman, King of the 5p bet, who looked as well as I hope I'll be at his age. Babette Shulfein came up from Dumfries (there's a friend for you). When she left Edinburgh, it was the city's loss. I hope her future is rosy and that good health remains with her; it is THE most important thing. Good people are the jewels in the Crown of life.

The highlight of my eight day trip was my initiation into the Friday Shleppers Society, the Jewish version of the Last of the Summer Wine. It will be remembered with affection for its whimsy and sheer illogicality. It happened like this. Ian Shein, my late cousin Joyce's husband (and mine host for the trip), said to me:

'You must come and meet the boys this Friday for coffee'.

Me 'Sounds OK'.

Ian 'We meet every Friday at 10.30 outside Marks and Sparks and go into Jenners for coffee'.

Me 'Why do you not meet outside Jenners?'

Ian 'We feel more Jewish outside Marks and Sparks'.

Me 'Shtum'.

Boys? boys? Their total ages added up to around 450 years.

Andrew Kaye: the wry humorist; Pinky Dick: small but beautifully formed; Bill Sinclair: a lovely quiet man - I don't care if you are a vegetarian, at least you don't have to shlep to the Communal Hall to pick up your meat by mail order. What a chore that is! Norman Dorfman: allright, you get two mentions. 'It's only a once a week giggle, and not a walking stick between us'. Up to Jenners we went to be greeted by the staff like long lost pools winners, coffee and mootle. Over to the gardens opposite for a wee while and then off we went for lunch in the University and coffee in the crypt. They left me at Chambers Street museum where I went to press a few buttons like I was a big kid again. Lovely.

Changes? Plenty of them. What did I miss? The clatter of the trams, Caledonian station, NB Hotel (renamed), James Clark school, Portobello power station and open air swimming pool, Leith Street Terrace, Duncan Street Hall, Empire and Theatre Royal and lots more.

What hasn't changed? The diehard community few who keep things ticking along, the one or two who insist on things being done like they always were and won't accept change. There is nothing wrong with change if it's for the better. After all, with communities getting smaller, is it not better to ride to Shabbas service and be there than not go because it's too far to walk there and back? Why cannot families go to Shul and sit and worship together? We lay importance on the family unit, yet 'they who decree' seek to keep the family separated. It should be a pleasure to go, as well as a duty. It is my honest belief that time for a serious rethink of religious and rabbinical law and practice is upon us. If a law is a bad one, change it. All it needs is honesty and a realisation of modern living. One loses no dignity by admitting change is required. After all it is the year 5793.

In accepting Ian's invitation to write this piece, I'd like to place on record my thanks for his hospitality and kindness. He need not thank me for shlepping him miles around Edinburgh on foot and up the 145 steps of Nelson's Column. Just send me the chiropodist's bill. I walked him silly.

Solved the anagram? Jack Freeman?

FROM JERUSALEM TO EDINBURGH AND BACK :
MY EXPERIENCES AS AN ISRAELI STUDENT IN EDINBURGH

by Ilana Kadmon

Writing for 'The Star' provides a great opportunity for reflecting on my experiences in Edinburgh. Being an Israeli abroad is not a unique phenomenon, as you might well know. Nevertheless, what each of us who have spent time away from home experiences, is unique and deserves special attention.

My first encounter with Scottish friendliness will never be forgotten. I arrived on a train with all my luggage, and took a taxi to the University Student House to which I was allocated. After a while, as I was still unpacking my belongings, there was a knock on my door - the taxi driver who took me from the Station stood outside holding the bag with all my photography equipment. I had left it in his car. He remembered where he dropped me off and bothered to come back to give me what I had carelessly left behind. Well, to you it may not seem so special, but for me it was a most wonderful introduction to Edinburgh. At this point life in Scotland began.

I am a nurse by profession. I received the basic training and took my first degree in Nursing at the Hadassah Medical Centre in Jerusalem. Academisation in nursing is new in Israel, and the Hadassah School of Nursing is proud to have been the first one to introduce, together with the Hebrew University, a degree course for nurses. After completing my studies, I worked for two years as a staff nurse at a General Surgical Ward in Hadassah Mount Scopus. I always knew, though, that sooner rather than later, I would like to continue my studies. Edinburgh became my preferred choice straightaway. The first reason was my family's special affection for Scotland. We all spent a lovely year in Glasgow . (my parents, my older brother and sister and myself) back in 1967 when my father did his Masters course there. Good memories and stories of that time always stuck in my mind. The other reason was the reputation of the Department of Nursing Studies. It has a long and outstanding record of being one of Europe's leading places in the field. As early as 1956 the University of Edinburgh opened a Department of Nursing Studies. This was the first degree course in Nursing in Europe. I was lucky to receive a grant from the Hadassah Hospital and came over to Edinburgh in October 1989 to start a postgraduate PhD course in nursing.

The area I chose to work in for my research was oncology, more specifically the psychological aspects of breast cancer. Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in the Western World, and Scotland's incidence of the disease is known to be particularly high. Israel unfortunately also has a high rate of breast cancer. It is listed as number fourteen in the world's statistics of the disease.

My research involved interviewing women about the experience of decision-making concerning their therapy. The encounter with these courageous Scottish women who were willing to talk about such a sensitive matter has left a profound impact on me. Looking back, it was probably one of the most significant experiences of my studies and my life in Edinburgh as a whole. Through talking to these women, I was confronted myself with the topic of having a life-threatening disease and with issues of femininity, body image and sexuality. This was a direct consequence of the research area and the specific type of research approach. The women I encountered were generally open and direct in their talk and possessed an extremely positive attitude to life. They provided me with an understanding of the role of nurse counselling which contributed to my research in a very special way.

The interview process also enabled me to get an insight into Scottish culture, its people and their values. When the interview took place at the woman's home, I was often welcomed into the kitchen to have some freshly made scones. Additionally, all the women were extremely interested to learn that I came from Israel. They asked a great deal of questions and wanted to know more about the place I came from and about my culture. Many of the interviews took place at the time of the Gulf War and the women expressed much sympathy with Israel and were concerned about my family and friends. All throughout my stay in Edinburgh, I could always say with no hesitation that I came from Israel, and a positive response would follow. It was only once that the response at an introduction was: 'Israel is a country of which I don't

approve at all'. However, this comment was an exception. Still, it stimulated further interesting discussions about the political situation in Israel.

Being a student here provided an opportunity to meet people from a wide variety of backgrounds. The university gives Edinburgh an international character. In 1991 I was appointed as a warden of one of the university student houses. Through this position I also encountered people from all over the world. Here again, my experiences as an Israeli were nothing but positive. Perhaps worth special mention is that one of the students who lived in the house, with whom I had a particularly friendly relationship, was from Jordan. I can therefore conclude and say that being an Israeli in this international community was overall a pleasant experience.

All the impressions of life in Edinburgh, and the insight gained through my work, I hope to take back to my future work at Hadassah Hospital. I feel extremely privileged and thankful for having the opportunity to do such a study in the most appropriate place. After all, Edinburgh has been the centre for much research of breast cancer in the last decades. It is now my aim to go back home and find out more about the attitudes, beliefs and motives which characterise Israeli women when confronted with the diagnosis of breast cancer. It is well known that the Israeli mentality is open and direct. However, I expect the Israeli women to be generally more reserved and closed when talking about such sensitive issues than what I have experienced here. There is, after all, the prickly outside which characterises the 'Sabra'.

BETTY SCHULBERG : AN APPRECIATION

by Eve Oppenheim

Elizabeth Myers, as she then was, came from Leeds to marry Ellis Schulberg, in March 1945 and immediately became an integral part of the Edinburgh community. Always known as 'Betty' she was a devoted wife, loving mother, adoring grandmother and friend to the entire congregation. Her untimely passing on 10 February 1993 left us all unprepared and deeply saddened.

Betty was a true homemaker and excellent mother as well as a caring daughter to her own mother who lived with her for several years. In addition, she managed to find time to take an active part in the family business which she found both challenging and enjoyable.

Her lovely personality, great sense of humour, overwhelming loyalty and welcoming smile were all attributes which ensured that she had a wide circle of friends. Her hospitality was renowned and her culinary expertise was expended to great effect, not only for her family and friends but also for the various organisations to which she belonged. Her home reflected her hobbies which included the collection of Wedgwood china and petit point embroidery. But her greatest pleasure was always found in her close association with her family. She also maintained an interest in Jewish Child's Day and generously supported many charities.

In spite of the recent tragic losses of her son and oldest grandson, which she faced with her own brand of courage and great fortitude, Betty coped well with her day-to-day life, always caring for others, keeping up appearances and minimising as much as possible her own problems. We, who were privileged to be her close friends, realised the effort this entailed and latterly drew even closer to her in an attempt to give support and companionship in such troubled times.

Betty's Leeds family background was very important to her and she

spoke with respect and love of her late grandparents during her early life in that city. She particularly took pride in being 'a real Yorkshire lass'. She was also an enthusiastic reader and an ardent royalist - despite much teasing.

We are all impoverished by the loss of a dear friend. She will indeed be missed but fondly remembered by the entire Edinburgh Community.

THE LOWRIE REPORT

The Sinclair Wedding *

At 3.00 p.m. on 13 December 1992 William Sinclair and Susan Conroy met beneath the Chuppah to be married by Rabbi Shalom Shapira; assisting were Rabbi Rosen representing Glasgow Beth Din, Rabbi Stein of Gateshead and Rabbi Pruim of Glasgow representing the Kollel. Groomsman was Norman Dorfman and Matron of Honour was Vicky Lowrie.

Rabbi Shapira in his address to Bill and Susie beneath the Chuppah said that when a Jewish marriage was performed, the Seven Benedictions of Marriage were recited. He pointed out that the first three were universal without reference to the Jewish people not so the remaining four. The structure of the Sheva Berachot marked the progression from universalism to Judaism and this would serve as a symbolic parallel for them in their own very courageous progress from universalism to Judasim over the past three years, culminating in their Jewish wedding ceremony in accordance with the Law of Moses and Israel. He went on to emphasise that their standing under the Chuppah before the Ark celebrated not only their marriage but also their accomplishment of conversion to Judaism and in doing so becoming full members of a unique people - the people of the Book - the people of Israel. Rabbi Shapira reminded them that although the Jewish people were the smallest and most persecuted of the nations it never encouraged conversion but that the few genuine and sincere converts had been welcomed, becoming an integral part of the Jewish community and contributing immensely to Jewish life. He went on to say that this celebration became something more than a private individual event and that not only the Edinburgh Jewish community but Jews everywhere were, in effect, celebrating their Jewish marriage and conversion. Rabbi Shapira concluded by saying that he joined with relatives and friends in this celebration and he wished them both Long Life and Good Health.

The assembled company then enjoyed a superb meal prepared by Betty Franklin, Rachel Shapira, Rose Orgel and Vicky Lowrie; the delicious Challah and Bulkies were baked and supplied by that Master of Bakers - Arthur Kleinberg - the magnificent cake was supplied and baked by Valerie Simpson and iced by Judy Gilbert. The beautiful and highly individual decorations were by Sinora Judah.

Rabbi Rosin spoke of his great pleasure in being present to welcome the Bride and Bridegroom into the Jewish community as a Jewish couple and wished them well to carry on in Jewish life going from strength to strength.

Rabbi Stein reminisced with obvious warmth about his and his wife's first meeting with Bill and Susie, their subsequent friendship and many welcome visits to Gateshead.

Rabbi Pruim also spoke of their initial meeting and went on to comment on the changes in their lives ending by quoting the next Shabbat reading 'Vayashev' meaning 'and he sat down' - which he promptly did to the great amusement of the guests. It was only so that Bill should do something other than merely sit around looking decorative which he did by thanking the Rabbis and friends who had helped to make this such a memorable day for Susie and himself and for their families.

Perhaps what made it just that bit more memorable was the fact that not only were the good-looking members of Bill's generation of Sinclairs present - sister Jean with her husband Bob Hill and brother George with his wife Morag, so were their bonnie daughter Alison, son Douglas and his fiancée Kathlyn. In a very witty speech, Douglas, on behalf of the family, opened in Ivrit on speaking of Mother, Father and Family and having pointed out how he was most appropriately a lecturer at the English College of 'Dewsbury', went on to say how wonderful it was to have the unique circumstance of making a speech at his parents' wedding! His affectionate and humourous words brought a great burst of appreciative applause from all present. The Parnas, Malcolm Cowan, in his address said that he thoroughly endorsed all that Rabbi Shapira had said and on behalf of the Synagogue Council presented the Bride and Bridegroom with a Siddur and Silver Becher. Most fittingly the celebrations ended with the Rabbis starting to dance around the Bridegroom.

** Bill and Susie Sinclair were interviewed in the last issue of the Edinburgh Star.*

OPERATION SOLOMON AND MESERET SHIBRU

The realities of life in present day Ethiopia were brought home forcibly by the poignant account of the Jews living there and of their arduous and hazardous journey to Israel, in particular by the personal story of Meseret Shibru, her sister and their Mother.

Meseret Shibru came to Edinburgh on Tuesday, 9 March, and told us how in 1985 she and her sister made aliyah on Operation Moses - a Child Rescue Operation; their Mother, a volunteer for the Jewish Agency, had to be ransomed from prison.

On video, we saw Operation Solomon, the means by which 14,500 Ethiopian Jews were brought to Tel Aviv over a weekend. Extremely observant, these most orthodox Jews lived on the land and it was a masterpiece of organisation to gather them from their remote villages, most walking hundreds of miles to the pick-up point before being taken on by road to the airfield, Israel having to pay a head tax, i.e. ransom before they were allowed to take off. The continuing effort was also shown, as there are still many Jews in Ethiopia's most remote villages.

Meseret Shibru, who graduated at Haifa University, is now a social worker working with the Ethiopian immigrants who, in addition to all the problems that normally beset the immigrant, also have to come to terms with the twentieth century just beefore it becomes the twenty first.

Avner Barnea, Regional Director of the JIA, had opened the meeting opened by giving us an update on the overall immigration problem. He told us that 450,000 Jews had been brought from the USSR in the last four years and that every month more than 5,000 people were absorbed into Israel. Among the fascinating facts behind these figures he told us that 50% of these immigrants have academic degrees and that 4,000 musicians were among them, many of whom now played with the 18 Philharmonic Orchestras in Israel. He also said that there are many high level Scientists among them who are being paid for two years whilst working on projects seeking new products and industrial techniques. Israel had created 90,000 new jobs last year but they will have to create many more as there are still 1.8 million Jews to be rescued from the wreckage of what was the USSR and it is possible that as many as 1 million could make aliyah. Avner Barnea further pointed out that peace was paramount for the economic survival of Israel, for without it investment, Jewish and non-Jewish, would dry up; he thought he could be optimistic about peace because of the flood of immigration and because of the discussions with the Palestinians on the possibility of autonomy.

The Rabbi in The Royal Mile

On Sunday evening, 28 February, the Rabbi and Rachel attended a Reception hosted by the Lord Provost at the City Chambers on the occasion of the Butler Trust Annual Prison Service Awards to Prison Staff. On arrival the Rabbi and Rachel were introduced by the Lord and Lady Provost to Lord Woolf, Lord Justice of Appeal, who said that he had a special connection with Edinburgh having had a measure of education in the capital. The Lord Provost made a short speech welcoming the guests on behalf of the city and Lord Woolf spoke welcoming them on behalf of the Trust.

The following day at 12 noon, found the Rabbi and Rachel a bit further down the Royal Mile for they were in the Picture Gallery of Holyrood Palace seated near the Lord and Lady Provost and other dignitaries for the presentation of the awards by HRH The Princess Royal. The Princess Royal addressed the gathering saying that everybody was most appreciative of the work that the Prison Staff did in a not very pleasant setting. Luncheon was served in the State Apartments to the guests and award winners.

Report on 'WOMEN IN THE COMMUNITY'

by Rose Orgel

After sending out a notification to all the women in the community, 35 attended the introductory meeting on 24 January 1993. On outlining the purpose of the Review, initiated by Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, all present were most enthusiastic and an animated discussion followed. This enthusiasm has continued and to date we have discussed some of the issues: Intermarriage, Kashrut, single women in the community, divorce (including the difficulty which a divorced woman may experience on wishing to remarry) adoption and child care. Valerie Simpson gave us an insight into what was entailed in conversion. It was strongly felt that women in small communities such as Edinburgh do not have the benefit of the range of social services available in larger Jewish communities. The overriding question asked by all was 'Would the Chief Rabbi change anything?' Certainly any changes could only be made within Halachic limitations. Hoever, if nothing else, women getting together and talking is proving a very worthwhile and enjoyable experience in itself. It has been suggested that this should continue even after the Review is completed.

DELVING INTO THE SHUL RECORDS

The minutes are taken from the records of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation for the year 1945.

by Ian Shein

As the Annual General Meeting of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation is shortly due to take place, we look back to the AGM of 48 years ago which took place as the war was drawing to its close.

1945

The meeting was tinged with sadness at the recent untimely death of Rabbi Dr Silas Daiches, spiritual leader of the community since 1919. Included in the Annual Report was a tribute from *The Scotsman* which stated:

> 'In Dr Daiches, the Edinburgh Jewish Community had a distinguished Rabbi born of an illustrious family of sages and scholars. In him Edinbugh had a notable citizen who made a not unworthy contribution to the enrichment of the spiritual life of the city. A saintly character, a philosophic and scholarly mind, eloquence in preaching and speaking, and a clear and forceful literary style, these were the endowments that he brought to the task of leading the Jewish community of a city which for its population, contains possibly the greatest number of eminent scholars and divines, and a high proportion of cultivated and spiritually minded men and women. This was an ideal field for such a man to work in. He devoted much of his life to the task of promoting a good understanding between Jew and non Jew, for none understands better than he the extent to which ignorance breeds prejudice'.

At the Annual General Meeting, the Council expressed the deepest sense of gratitude to Rev Dr I K Cosgrove of Glasgow for the many services he has rendered to the Edinburgh community since the passing of Rabbi Dr Daiches.

After a great deal of discussion at previous Council and general meetings, it was finally decided to proceed with an approach to Lodge Solomon for permission to use their premises at Duncan Street on two evenings per week as a temporary Communal Hall for the community. It was agreed to accept the rental of £150 per annum. Members of the Communal Hall committee included Messrs L J Cohen, M Levy, V Brown, J Penn, H Chernack, A Seftor, I Lucas and Mrs J Lucas.

Comments had been made regarding the lack of space in the gentlemen's cloakroom. It was agreed to enlarge this to meet the large number of worshippers attending the Synagogue on the Holy Days. Comment was also made that the front rows of the gentlemen's seats were too close together for comfort. The Succah also required to be made larger.

Twenty names were proposed for the 12 seats on the Council. Mr Reuben Cohen was re-elected unopposed to the position of President for the eighth successive year (he was to remain President for a total of 23 years). Mr L J Cohen was re-elected unopposed to the position of Hon. Treasurer for the seventh successive year. Also re-elected unopposed were senior warden Mr C Rifkind and junior warden Mr L Lurie.

The Hon. Treasurer reported that there were almost 520 members of the Congregation but he anticipated that this number will be greatly increased when the war ended and servicemen and women returned to civilian life. He added that 1944 was the first year since the Synagogue was built (in 1932) that all liabilities had been met and a cash balance carried forward.

Congratulations were extended to Mr Reginald Levitt on his being awarded the MBE.

The Council also congratulated Mr J L Lucas on his appointment as a Justice of the Peace for the Couty of the City of Edinburgh.

The Council was delighted to appoint Mr D Leigh as Chosan Torah and Mr E Sagman as Chosan Bereishith.

The Council also expressed pleasure that the study of the Talmud (Chevra Shass) was continuing under Mr C Rifkind's guidance in the library of the Beth Hamedrash before the evening service throughout the week.

Since the passing of Rabbi Dr Daiches, the Hebrew School has been under the supervision of Rev M B Ordman. The Council will shortly review the organisation of these classes. Average attendance during the previous year has been 50.

Gratitude was expressed for the work carried out by Rev Dr I K Cosgrove in his capacity as Senior Chaplain to the Forces in Scotland. His onerous duties have been conducted with an energy and enthusiasm which have commanded the admiration of all those associated with him.

The community was asked to encourage post-Barmitzvah boys to attend a boys' service in the Beth Hamedrash on Sunday mornings which was conducted by Mr S Rubenstein.

(At a subsequent Council meeting, Mr A Phillips was reappointed Hon. Secretary for the 21st successive year. The following year, Mr Philips was elected Hon. Treasurer after the sudden death of Mr L J Cohen.)

REPORT ON 1993 EDINBURGH PEACE FESTIVAL

by Rose Orgel

John Cosgrove took part in the Inter-Faith Service held in the Cathedral on 7 March as representative of the Jewish Commnity. In addition, as part of the Peace Festival, a Festival of Faiths on the theme of Harmony and Hope was held in the Eric Liddell Centre at Bruntsfield on Sunday, 14 March. The Jewish contribution consisted of 'Rachel's Choir' singing a medley of Hebrew songs. The Choir itself is trained by Rabbi Shapira and, in this instance, was conducted by Shirley Bennett. We were very well received with the audience joining in the singing of Hava Nagilah.

Others taking part in the celebration were members of the Ba Hai faith, Buddhists, Brahma Kumaris and Christians.

Shirley Bennett conducting Rachel's Choir at the Eric Liddell Centre

Approximately two to three hundred people were present and the afternoon ended with everyone singing two specially chosen songs, one of which came from Isaiah 43:1-4.

IT STARTED WITH SIGNING A CARD

From Stephen Gellaitry's account of Jews in Russia, given at a meeting of the Edinburgh Council for Christians and Jews, March 1993. Reported by Julia Merrick

History

Russia after the Holocaust was a very different place from before, since many of the Jewish communities which had existed were destroyed. In the years after the war the remaining Jews mostly became assimilated, a process aided by the Soviet regime which tried to obliterate traces of Jewish history. Most people only knew that having a stamp on their passport which said Jew meant they were second class citizens. However, in spite of that many did very well and reached the top of their professions.

Revival

1967 was a very eventful year in the world's history, the year of the six day war in Israel. For many Jews in Russia this was the first time they came to see themselves in a positive light. They realised that something quite spectacular had happened. They were very excited at this tremendous victory of the Israeli army and a lot of them began to try to discover what it meant to be Jewish. They realised there was a state, 'the land of Israel' and somehow they were connected with it, although a lot of them really did not know why. In the late '60s and in the '70s Jews, particularly those in the large cities, tried to find out and, with the help of various Jewish organisations outside Russia, they began to educate themselves. By the early 1970s there was the first of the Jewish exodus movements. People began to make application to leave the Soviet Union to get to Israel. In the 1970s and 1980s the Jewish community was able to have contact with Israel and Jews in other parts of the world. For many of them it took them along the road from seeing that having Jew on your passport meant being a second class citizen to being proud to be Jewish and to work out what it meant for each of them. Quite a lot were atheists and did not want a religious belief, but somehow the pull of their roots and their background made them want to find out, to visit a synagogue.

They began to realise that something quite awful had happened to their people during the Holocaust. Many were not fully aware of the extent of the destruction. Though by our standards it might seem odd, a paper bag was printed for the anniversary of Babi Yar. For years the Soviet Union had denied the death of so many thousands of Jews at Babi Yar and there was no official monument to them. Jews that went there to recite Kaddish were often arrested. In the '70s and '80s people started to push at the frontiers and to go to places like Babi Yar. They also went to Rumboli in Latvia in an attempt to reclaim the past and make it come alive for themselves.

Quite a number did leave for Israel but for the majority who wanted to leave it was very, very difficult and the '70s and '80s were the years of refusal. They were branded Zionists, enemies of the state, arrested and imprisoned. This was the era of Sheransky, Ida Nudel, Joseph Mendeleevitch, the Shlepak family and others. Hebrew teachers were

were arrested. These were very difficult years. After 1980 it was almost impossible to get exit visas. Now, in the 1990s, it is much easier but there are still refuseniks and there are still prisoners in the CCS. Quite a number of the people leaving now do not have the same ideals of commitment to Israel. They are leaving Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union for different reasons. They are genuinely afraid, afraid of the uncertain future. In my personal view and from what I have experienced the relationship between the Christian community and the Jewish community is not good. It never really has been and the church history of Russia is in fact very anti-Semitic. To a large extent it has not changed. However, on an individual basis there are some very good things that have been forged between the various Christian communities and the Jewish community in Russia and in some of the other countries of the old Soviet Union.

My Personal Involvement

My father was a Baptist minister so I was brought up to always respect the Jewish people. Since a boy I have always been interested in Jewish history. I also became fascinated by Russia and I have a picture of the Czarina, kept from when I was 11 or 12, which shows my romantic idea of the country and how its history fascinated me. Then in the early '70s when we began to hear about the whole situation (I knew a lot of what was happening to Christians) a speaker came to the synagogue, Aviva Gendon, and her husband was a refusenik. She was in Jerusalem and her husband was in Russia. She asked the audience to write to him, which I did. It started with signing a card and sending it off, then I thought here are my two great interests Jewish history and Russian history, so I started to learn and started to study. Lots of people all over the world were involved. My mother and my family have been very supportive.

SOME PERSONAL STORIES BEHIND THE STATISTICS

I would like you to imagine the centre of Moscow. It is the beginning of April and the long Russian winter is almost over but it is still very cold and it is quite dark. It is about 7.30 in the evening and two figures are wandering around the large open space of the Sverldovsk square in front of the Bolshoi theatre. They get into a rather bashed-in taxi. After driving miles from the centre past row upon row of Soviet housing blocks, each one identical, the taxi leaves them and after ten to fifteen minutes of wandering around they find a door. Immediately on opening that door in contrast with the crisp night air, the central heating, the smell of stale cabbage and beetroot and of Papirosi (the Russian cigarettes) hits your nostrils. Up four flights of stairs to a rough padded door and the doorbell is rung. The door is flung open to warm shouts of 'shalom, shalom, chaditye, chaditye' - come in, come in. That was the first meeting I had face to face with Russian Jewish friends Galina and Misha Kremen with my mother in 1985. They had been refused, that is they were Jews who had applied for an exit visa to leave the Soviet Union to join their family in Israel. They had been refused since 1974. They had two sons who had grown up in refusal. In 1989 they were finally given permission to emigrate. The family is now in Haifa. Life is not easy but now, having learnt Hebrew, they are eager to contribute to their new country.

Many refuseniks did not have such a happy story as the Kremens. Some of them were given exit visas and others were not. Spouses were split up and parents from their children. Many families were separated; some of people died without being reunited with their families. Every family has a story to tell of quite a lot of suffering, of personal distress as they had to say good-bye to a relative never knowing if they were going to meet them again, and some never did.

Take this Puppet and Tell People our Story

One couple my mother and I became very friendly with in Russia was Vladimir and Izolde Tufeld. In 1977 the Tufeld's only son Igor was granted permission to go to Israel but his parents were refused. Both of them were 'categoroy 1' invalids (that is severe) and in many ways they typified a different kind of refusenik. They were not in some terms, you might say, the valiant, courageous refusenik that many of us were used to seeing on the television, although they had participated in many demonstrations. Their lives had become very broken down, their house was not well looked after. They were demanding, they were caught up with their own difficult situation but they became very good friends of ours. I had known their son for a number of years before we visited them in Russia.

Going to visit the Tufelds was a heart-breaking affair; there they were in this broken down flat, both very ill and not really able to look after themselves and each time you went to the house you were given a puppet show. This was a puppet show like no other. They would appear with these puppets and using them and Izolde's limited English they would explain their story of refusal. They would tell the story of their family, and it was heart-breaking to see grown adults reduced to telling their story with puppets. She said take this puppet and tell people our story. Both became increasingly disabled. She developed a brain tumour. World-wide appeals took place asking the Soviet Union to show mercy to the couple and to give them exit visas. Finally in December 1987 Izolde, who was by this time half dead was allowed to come to London. Her husband was not allowed to leave. In London she was reunited with her son and they were looked after by the Jewish community there. They went to America for her to have an operation. Eventually after further campaigns to release her husband,

Vladimr, they were reunited, went to Israel and met the grandchildren whom they had never seen. Sadly Ysolde is now dead but Vladimir is in good health and works in Jerusalem.

Simchahs

The festivals everybody did seem to keep were Simchat Torah, and Succoth. Many young people who had never been to a synagogue in their lives would go there and dance and sing and the streets had to be cordoned off. Sometimes the singing and dancing was broken up, other times they were able to get away with it. As the years went on gatherings got bigger. People began to celebrate Purim and have a 'Purim Spiel' and people would dress up and tell again the story of Esther and they would have picnics in the forest even though it was still cold at that time of year.

The first year I went to Russia was at Passover time and people had kept it as best they could. Some had Haggadoth printed on thin paper that had been given by the Campaign for Soviet Jewry in Scotland. We had wondered if they had arrived safely but here they were in Moscow. We felt it was all worthwhile. I remember saying 'next year in Jerusalem' and the look that came over people's faces was 'perhaps next year, maybe five years, maybe ten years, perhaps ...' and you learnt that it was a very nice thing to wish people, but the meaning of it became very real; here were people who wanted next year in Jerusalem but could not have it.

A family with whom we became very friendly was called Shlomovitch. They live in Leningrad. On our first visit with them we found they were a very intimidated family. They were refuseniks, they had a young son called Yuri and they kept very much on the fringes of the Jewish community, frightened to become involved. They had some nasty experiences with the KGB. They arranged for their son's Bar Mitzvah to be twinned with Jonathan Raab's. When Jonathan was Bar Mitzvah in Glasgow, so was Yuri but his was not celebrated in a synagogue but in a house and his grandfather helped him to read the portion.

Gifts for the Yeshiva

In the years that my mother and I used to visit the Soviet Union, we used to spend weeks actually packing suitcases that were to go to Russia. What were we to take? The minimum of stuff for ourselves. We used to fill them up with clothes, with medical supplies, all sorts of things. I used to lose weight the week we used to spend in Russia. It was nerve racking. You were off the beaten track, street names disappeared, door numbers disappeared. It is a country that is falling to pieces. Telephones do not work, trams do not go where they are supposed to. Going through customs was always terrifying because we had all this stuff in our suitcases.

Our last visit to the Soviet Union was in 1989 and this marked a lot of changes that have taken place from the early years. I think any rabbi would have been proud of the stuff that was in the suitcase we took to Russia with us. We had copies of The Encyclopaedia Judaica; we had prayer books; we had prayer shawls and tephillin; there was kosher food, candles, candlesticks, Hebrew teaching books, videos. It was all in there. Even a few days before we went someone would say could you take this to somebody, so that the suitcases were literally bulging. The big question was how were we going to explain all this to customs? The story we had was that there was a very well known Soviet colonel, Colonel Sokov. He was a Jewish soldier, with a chest full of medals. He had opened a Jewish cultural centre in Moscow. If we were stopped we were to call him and he would take us away with all the things. Well fortunately we were not stopped at the customs.

Of this material, one lot was going to Moscow and one lot was going to St Petersburg. In Moscow we were directed to our contact who was at the Yeshiva and I imagined it would be down a side street and up some rickety stairs and there would be a handful of men sitting round a book. When we got there it really was quite different. This was one of the first yeshivas to be opened in Moscow for so many years. It was not in some back street but in a former hunting lodge of the mayor of Moscow. When the taxi driver arrived and he saw these men with beards and hats he swore in Russian about these Jews, looked us up and down and sort of tossed us out of the taxi. It was during Succoth and there in the grounds of the mayor of Moscow's former hunting lodge was a Succah.

Stephen and Joan Gellaitry with Shelly and Oskar Mendeleev who now live in Jerusalem

It was large with benches inside. There we had kasha and tea and met our friend and we handed over our stuff in the holdall. He assured us all of this would be used. He took us inside. In one room men were walking up and down, arguing and discussing. In another women were learning. And this was Moscow! They explained to us that a lot of people were bypassing the official synagogue. They were not very happy there and did not trust what was going on, so they were coming here to learn. In Leningrad the books went to a cultural centre. There also people were learning and studying, wanting to find out more and speaking fluent Hebrew. The younger generation are less afraid than their parents and are eager to learn.

A Very Special Time

I feel privileged to have known all these people. Their lives touched mine very deeply. When my mother and I said we were not Jewish their eyes went wide. One person said 'This is a miracle - imagine non-Jews coming all the way to Russia to be involved with Jews'. One said, 'This is not normal, it does not happen'. When we introduced ourselves we said that we represented many people, Jews, Christians and people of no particular faith, just people who care. They were wonderful people to know. They were full of life, very spontaneous, very, very generous. It was brilliant for me to eat matzo with people in Moscow. There were never any barriers. It was great just to be part of their lives and to try and understand what they were going through, and to try and tell them about life outside Russia. Finally it was good to see many of them having made it to Israel, especially the prisoners who have been released. It was a very special time.

What is the future? I want to be positive but I cannot be optimistic. There are still refuseniks. For the Jewish people the future in Russia, I think, is bleak. The nationalism, which is part of the Russian and Ukrainian soul, is very anti-Semitic. It is in the upper echelons of society and it is certainly there among the common people. I have personally seen, in Leningrad, the black shirts. I have seen the shaven heads of the skinheads in Moscow. Also with the demise of communism has come the rise of militant Islam in the old eastern countries. They have said there is no place in their countries for Jews or for Christians. Jews are fleeing.

Stephen Gellaitry is a teacher of Modern Languages in Musselburgh Grammar School, with a long-standing interest in both Russian and Jewish History.

EDINBURGH FRIENDS OF ISRAEL

by Sue Barratt

Dr Bernard C. Walker addressed an audience of 28 at the last meeting of 1992.

His talk was entitled 'The Magic Carpet' and he spoke of his experiences among the Yemeni people and the airlift of the Yemeni Jews to Israel.

There were 5,000 Jews in Sana. The Jewish quarter was very small. The houses were made of stone; the Arabs were allowed to build up to seven storeys, the Jews were limited to two. The city was a walled city and locked at night. The Jewish homes were comfortable and clean and every kitchen had its own water. The men and boys all attended the synagogue, but women were not allowed. The men wore long garments; the women dressed cheerfully in the home but drably in the street. Silver and gold filigree work was the men's speciality; the women did beautiful embroidery.

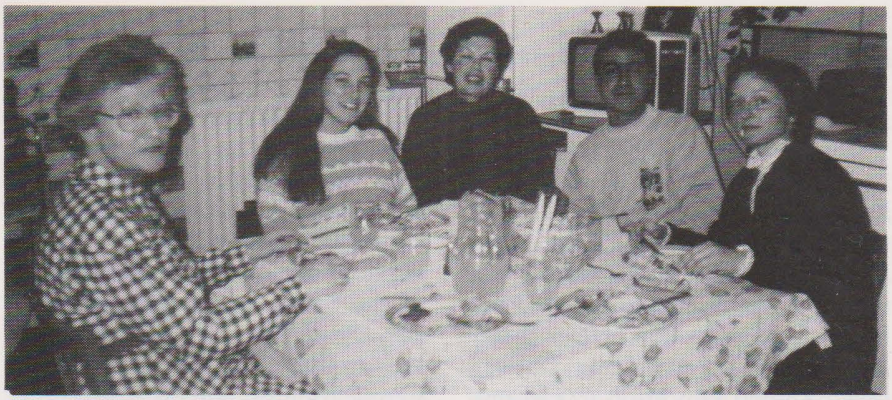
There were 4,000 Yemeni Jews in a camp in Aden who had been there for four years. The Israelis required a medical certificate for every one of them - a job carried out by Dr Walker. These Jews spoke Arabic and wrote Arabic in Hebrew script. They were all airlifted to Israel. Soon after this exodus a new influx of 46,000 Jews from all over Yemen made a spontaneous exit - they were not driven out by the Arabs. These people too were airlifted to Israel.

Catherine Myles, who has visited the Yemen, gave the vote of thanks.

Twenty eight people attended the 'Israeli Evening' on 10 February which began with a drink and delicious dips provided by Rachel Shapira. Two videos were shown, the first of which was about Israel's Natural World. We were treated to wonderful pictures of animals and birds, among them the Sand Monitor (the biggest lizard in Israel), the Desert Lynx (rediscovered 30 years ago), the Dorcas Gazelle (feeds on acacia leaves and does not need to drink), the Pale Iguana, the Woodlouse, Desert Snails and Locusts, Scorpions, Centipedes, the Carpet Viper (the most poisonous snake in Israel), Geckos and the Common Shrew. Among the many birds were Storks, Griffon Vultures (69 pairs left in the whole country), Sand Grouse, Desert Larks, Pied Wagtails, Hoopoes, Blackcaps, Pippits, Black Kite and Egyptian Vultures. We saw too some of the beautiful flowers that thrive in the desert: like the Rose of Jericho which swells and opens after rain, releases its seeds and then dies. We were shown how clouds over the desert sometimes bring rains causing flash floods which kill and destroy but also regenerate. There were pictures of Avdat and the ancient run-off system of farming. It was a wonderful exposition of some of Israel's Flora and Fauna.

Rabbi Shapira, Dr Walker and John Eivan

The second video was a Biblical Production about a mosaic floor unearthed by archaeologists. The main design, very well preserved, is of a beautiful face which has become known as the Mona Lisa of the Galilee and is 1,800 years old. Excavation work by archaeology staff and students from Duke University in America and from the Universty of Jerusalem has produced numerous and unexpected finds - a broken oil lamp, a bronze statue, a statue of Pan and pottery marked with a cross. A metal detector led to the discovery of a hoard of coins dating back to 310 and 321 AD. We saw the successful but very complicated transfer of the Mona Lisa mosaic from the excavation site to the Jerusalem Museum where it will in due course be on show. A fascinating and impressive piece of work.



Naama Fisch and Maamun Hussisy at supper with Rachel and members of Friends of Israel

The meeting on 10 March, attended by 25 people, was addressed by this year's Young Ambassadors, Naama Fisch and Maamun Hussisy. They arrived in Edinbugh on Tuesday, 9 March, after a stay in Stornoway where they visited Harris and Benbecula and left for Leeds on Sunday. They stayed with the Rabbi and Rachel Shapira and visited several Edinburgh schools. The object of their visit was to help our youngsters to understand something of Israel's way of life and some of her problems. Naama lives in Herzlya with her mother and father and attends school there. She speaks exceptionally good English - her father, a gynaecologist, did his PhD in London where the family spent three years. Maamun is Druse and lives in a Druse village where he attends school. He comes from a family of five children. Their first language is Arabic, the second is Hebrew.*

**Jonathan Mason reports in full below.*

The Israeli Ambassadors

by Jonathan Mason

Naama Fisch and Maamun Hussisy were chosen from many Israeli High School students to take part in the Ambassadors' Scheme with around 60 others. The aim of the scheme is to send the students in pairs (one boy and one girl) to countries of Europe and to the USA to speak to school pupils about Israel and related issues.

Naama and Maamun arrived in Edinburgh on Tuesday, 9 March, after touring the north of Scotland, to face a busy schedule visiting several schools. They also gave a very informative talk to the 'Friends of Israel' and answered all the questions which were asked.

During their visit several interesting issues arose. Firstly there was the point that Maamun was of the Druse faith. When he was asked to explain what the Druse religion was about, his reply was simply 'No'. The reason for this is that the Druse religion is secretive which means that only those that are of the faith may know about it. It is not even permitted to convert to the religion. The faith is confined to those born solely of Druse parents. Maamun explained that if he married a girl of a different faith he would be thrown out of his village and lose his Druse identity. The Druse originated in Egypt as a breakaway from Islam.

One issue that Naama spoke about was also very intriguing. When asked about her religious feelings she explained that she was a secular Jew and felt more Israeli than Jewish. She felt that living in Israel and speaking Hebrew was enough to show that she was Jewish. Naama also explained that Jews in the Diaspora had more need to be religious, to keep them together, whereas Jews in Israel did not because they all live in one country and share a national 'togetherness'.

The two also spoke about service in the Israeli Defence Forces. Naama was very sure of her feelings and felt that it was her duty to serve her country. Maamun was less confident. If he was given a choice he felt that he would rather pursue his career than spend three years in the forces. Although since 1986 Druse men have been obliged to do service, the more religious Druse, as with the Jews, may be exempt.

They clearly both had a very enjoyable time which was just as valuable an experience for me as it was for them. Hearing the views of Israelis of the same age as myself enabled me to understand more about Israel and its culture. It made me realise the importance of my Jewish identity.

SPINOZA ON GOD AND NATURE

This text formed the basis of a talk to the Lit on 31 January 1993

by Timothy Sprigge

Baruch Spinoza was born in 1632 in Amsterdam. Both his parents were Marrano immigrants from Portugal who, like many others, had fled the increasing persecution of Jews there. Bento, that is, Baruch Spinoza was given a good education in Hebrew and in the scriptures and Jewish learning. Among those under whom he studied were Saul Morteira, the senior Rabbi of Amsterdam, who later presided over the court of rabbis that excommunicated him from the synagogue. A more important influence among his teachers was Rabbi Manasseh ben Israel, the author of numerous philosophical and theological works, and a man of wide culture who may inadvertently have encouraged Spinoza in reading outside Jewish literature in books which sewed the seeds of his heterodoxy. (When Spinoza was excommunicated, ben Israel was away negotiating with Oliver Cromwell for the admission of Jews to England. It has been suggested that, if he had been present, he might have influenced the court to a happier outcome.) Spinoza also studied Latin with Frances van Ende, an ex-Jesuit physician, who had a stormy life, and was eventually executed in Paris for involvement in a plot against Louis XIV. He probably played a more provocative part in alienating Spinoza from Jewish orthodoxy. It may be that Spinoza first encountered the Cartesian philosophy through van Ende. (Commentators on Spinoza's philosophy tend to divide into those who most emphasise the Jewish background of his thought and those who see his philosophy as essentially a more logical development of aspects of Cartesianism, i.e. the philosophy of Descartes. Not surprisingly the former are usually Jewish and the latter usually French.)

Spinoza's father died when he, the philosopher, was 22 (his mother had died when he was six). For a shortish time thereafter Spinoza and his brother Gabriel ran a fruit import and export business. Meanwhile he continued as a respectable member of the Synagogue paying his dues properly. However, it became known that he had expressed highly heretical views, and on 27 July 1656, when he was 24 (after his failure to comply with a request for public repentance) he was formally cursed and excommunicated from the Synagogue. The excommunication or *herem* includes the following words. 'By the decree of the Angels and the word of the Saints we ban, cut off, curse and anathematise Baruch d'Espinoza ... We warn that none may contact him orally or in writing, nor do him any favour, nor stay under the same roof with him, nor read any paper he wrote'. Spinoza wrote a defence of his views which has not survived, though it doubtless included anticipations of those famous doctrines which soon reached a fairly stable form in his mind.

There have been periodic attempts in modern times to have the ban posthumously lifted. In the 1950s David Ben-Gurion, for one, campaigned for this. This has not yet happened but in 1953 there was a formal judgment by the Chief Rabbi of Israel, Yizhak Herzog, that the prohibition on reading Spinoza's books should be deemed only to have held during his lifetime, and was thus no longer in force.

There is much controversy among scholars as to the circumstances which led up to the excommunication or *herem*. Why was such strong action taken against him? One view is that the Jewish community needed to show the wider Christian community that they shared the same basic form of theism, and were as down on scepticism as it was. Another view is that the Jewish community in Amsterdam, being largely composed of Marrano immigrants, had difficulty in maintaining a cohesive Jewish

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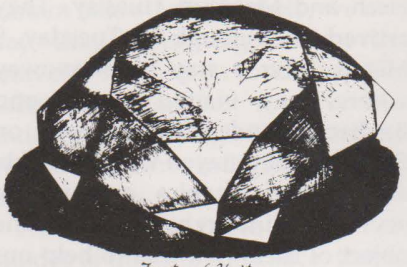


Facets of Unity

God and Nature in the Philosophy of Spinoza

Professor Timothy Sprigge

(Edinburgh University Philosophy Department)

on Sunday 31st January at 8.00 p.m.

in the New Jewish Community Centre

practice, since all sorts of irregularities had grown up when Judaism could only be practised in secret.

It is significant at any rate that there were several other such excommunications during this period.

The most famous case occurred in 1640 when Spinoza was eight. Uriel da Costa had been a (perhaps genuine) Marrano convert to Catholicism in Spain; indeed, he had even been a church treasurer. However, he turned against Catholicism, and believed that he could find the word of God in its original purity in the Old Testament, returning thus to Judaism. This inspired him to leave Portugal for Amsterdam where he could practice Judaism. However, he was very dissatisfied with the Judaism he found there, believing that it, as much as Christianity, had betrayed the truths revealed by God. This led to his being excommunicated after which he lived in Amsterdam in unhappy isolation. Finally he repented and recanted, at least outwardly. However, he again voiced his heretical opinions and was excommunicated a second time in 1640. Seven years later he recanted again, but was required to confess his sin and receive 39 lashes and to prostrate himself on the doorstep of the synagogue while the members of the congregation trod over his body.(1) Shortly after this he shot

himself after writing an account of his life and reflections on religion.

Although Da Costa died when Spinoza was only eight, some historians think his life and ideas had an influence on him, but the extent of this is controversial. Among Da Costa's ideas was the denial of personal immortality. This was not Spinoza's mature position, since he expressly contends that something of the human mind is eternal and survives death. However, he may have expressed doubts about it at an earlier stage, which, combining with that identification of God and Nature which was to be so central to his mature work, were certainly heretical enough to explain the ban, to the extent that this was doctrinally motivated rather than political.

Another significant ban was that of Juan de Prado, who suffered a *herem* about the same time as Spinoza. Prado was another Marrano who fled persecution in Spain but, after settling in Amsterdam in 1655, rebelled against many features of Judaism as he found it practiced there. Unlike Spinoza, who set about making himself a life outside the Jewish community, Juan de Prado fought long and hard in a vain attempt to have it lifted.

After the *herem*, Spinoza stayed in Amsterdam for four years, though the family business was soon sold up. At this time he became associated with an undogmatic Christian sect called Collegiants. It was presumably during this period that he had himself trained as an optical lens grinder (preparing lenses for spectacles, microscopes and telescopes) as a source of income.

In early 1660 Spinoza moved to lodgings in Rijnsburg near Leiden, a centre of the Collegiants. By this time he had a circle of intimate friends, almost of disciples, many of them merchants with strong religious and philosophical interests, who met regularly to discuss Spinoza's ideas. (This says a lot for the intellectual culture of the Dutch bourgeoisie.)

Four years later Spinoza moved to Voorburg and then to the Hague, living in modest lodgings. (The houses at Rijnsburg and the Hague now contain the libary and offices of the Dutch Spinoza society, the *Vereniging Het Spinozahuis*.) His income was derived partly from his lens grinding, partly perhaps from some small financial support from his followers (though there is evidence of his reluctance to accept more than an absolute minimum of financial assistance). At one stage he had a small pension from the state in recognition of his support for the republican politics of Johann de Witt, the Grand Councillor Pensionary of Holland and his brother Cornelius.

Spinoza lived very humbly but was renowned for his courteous manners and had many distinguished philosophical, scientific and artistic friends. He carried on an extensive correspondence on scientific and philosophic matters with a varied range of people, perhaps most notably Henry Oldenburg, secretary to the Royal Society in London, who had become his friend on a visit to the Netherlands in 1661. He was also somewhat involved in Dutch politics as a supporter of the De Witt brothers, though it is unclear whether he knew them personally or not. The De Witt brothers represented republicanism as against Calvinist domination and the aspirations to royalty of the House of Orange. At any rate, though he sought long periods of solitude, Spinoza was by no means detached from social and public life. He also painted portraits and a self portrait (none of which have survived).

It is interesting to reflect on which languages were most natural to him. The language mainly spoken in his childhood home and with neighbours must have been Portuguese; presumably he later spoke Dutch for his ordinary affairs and with his Dutch friends, but spoke Latin to the various distinguished scholars from other countries, including, when Spinoza was near his death, Leibniz, who visited him on occasion; certainly all his philosophical works and most of his correspondence were written in Latin; finally he was a considerable Hebrew scholar and reflects a good deal on the peculiarities of the Hebrew language in his great biblical study, the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. Indeed, one of his last works was a Hebrew grammar.

The only book Spinoza published in his life under his own name was an account of Descartes's philosophy written initially for a private pupil, which his friends persuaded him to publish. He also wrote a work on *God, Man and his Being* for his followers, which only came to light again in the 19th century and an epistemological treatise, only published posthumously, called *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*. The famous prologue to the latter gives an account of the ethical motivation of his philosophy, that of finding a permanently satisfying good.

The only book besides the Cartesian treatise that he published in his lifetime was his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. This often puzzling work, part biblical study, part political treatise, was published anonymously at Amsterdam in 1670. It was deemed so explosive that the publishers only issued it under a false cover and frontispiece, giving the title and author of different works and the place of publication as Hamburg, though it seems that Spinoza himself was not out to shock but to persuade. It combines an examination of the Bible, speculating on the circumstances in which its various books were written and their true purport, with a dissertation on religious tolerance and the relations between Church and State.

The work is partly motivated by the political situation in the Netherlands at the time. The De Witt republican government was in difficulties, partly as a result of failures in the current war with Sweden and England, and the Calvinist clergy were taking the opportunity to challenge its policy of religious toleration. One of the aims of Spinoza's work is to argue that a proper understanding of the Bible cannot justify religious intolerance. He does this by a mixture of considerations, chief of which is a firm attempt to abstract what he regards as the eternal moral truths,

expressed by the prophets in an imaginative way, suitable for the ordinary non-intellectual person, from a mass of outdated beliefs and no longer relevant precepts in which they are embedded, and which neither Jews nor Christians need see as binding on a modern community. (The reader of this work, who did not know its author, must have been puzzled as to his religious affiliations. Certainly Spinoza never became a Christian, regarding Jesus as at most the last of the great prophets.)

The work's overriding goal is to recommend complete freedom of thought and religious practice, subject to behavioural conformity with the laws of the land. As virtually the first examination of the scriptures (primarily the Pentateuch) as historical documents, reflecting the intellectual limitations of their time, and of problematic authorship, it opened the so- called higher criticism. What is important, claims Spinoza, is the Bible's moral message; its implied science and metaphysics can stand only as imaginative adjuncts for teaching ethics to the multitude. Though Spinoza unobtrusively identifies God and Nature, one of the major themes of his *magnum opus* the *Ethics,* he writes in a seemingly more orthodox vein, even while denying the genuinely supernatural character of reported miracles. It is much debated whether this shows that those who now read the *Ethics* in too secular a way are misunderstanding it, or whether Spinoza was adapting his presentation, not indeed to the masses, but to conventionally religious intellectuals of his time among whom he wished to promote tolerant liberal ideals.

Spinoza's support for the De Witt brothers took a dramatic form some years after the publication of the *Tractatus.* In 1672 John De Witt was forced to resign his post as Grand Pensionary of Holland while his brother Cornelius had been arrested on a charge of conspiring against the Prince of Orange, who was planning to re-establish the House of Orange as effectively a monarchy. When John visited his brother in prison a mob broke in, seized on the two brothers, and tore them to pieces. When Spinoza heard of this he prepared a placard on which he wrote 'the very lowest of the barbarians' and planned to parade the streets with it. To save him from a likely death at the hands of an irate mob, his landlord managed to lock Spinoza up until the riots were over.

In 1673 Spinoza was invited by the Elector Palatine, Karl Ludwig, to hold the chair of pilosophy in Heidelberg. However, Spinoza declined, because although promised complete freedom of expression he felt that in fact he would be pushed into insincerity about his beliefs.

Spinoza died in 1677 (on 21 February) at the age of 44 from tuberculosis, partly due to the inhalation of glass dust. After his death his friends published a volume called *Opera Postuma* in which the *Ethics* was published for the first time. The author's name is only given as BDS, partly out of respect for Spinoza's own expressed wish, partly probably from caution, as his name had become very notorious.

The *Ethics*, Spinoza's masterpiece which places him among the greatest of the great in philosophy, is presented as a deductive system in the manner of Euclid. Each of its five parts (Concerning God; On the nature and origin of the mind; Concerning the origin and nature of the emotions; Of human bondage, or the strength of the emotions; Of the power of the intellect or of human freedom) opens with a set of definitions and axioms and is followed by a series of theorems proved upon the basis of what precedes them, with more informal remarks in scholia (or notes) and appendices.

In part one Spinoza sets out to prove that there is only one substance (or genuinely individual thing) and that this answers both to the traditional meanings of 'God' (for example, its existence follows from its essence) and of 'Nature' (that of which the laws of nature are the operations). Spinoza moves to his claim that there is only one substance by pushing the traditional notions of an individual substance to its limit in a complex argument we cannot follow here. Loosely, we may say that everything, except the universe itself, is so conditioned by other things as not to have that independent intelligibility which our notion of an individual thing requires.

All ordinary finite things are modes of this one substance, that is, they stand to it as, say, an emotion pertains to a person or a movement to a moving thing. Thus the existence of a person consists in the one substance, being in a certain state, just as the existence of my anger consists in my being in a certain state.

Although Spinoza identified God and Nature, God, for him, is certainly not merely the physical universe; extension (that is - spatial spread-out- ness) is just one of his attributes and the physical world only his body. The cosmos as a Whole is both an infinite extended substance and an infinite thinking substance or consciousness. As such it delights in its own creativity and the highest good for man is to have a sense of himself as in union with this divine creativity as one of its finite manifestations.

Spinoza claims that extension and thought are two distinct attributes of God or Nature, defining an attribute 'as that which the intellect perceives of substance as constituting its essence'. There is much controversy as to just how this is to be understood. I take him to mean that these are two alternative ways in which the Universe can be conceived, each of them genuinely illuminating its true nature, and complementary to, rather than contradictory of the other. The first is to conceive it as infinite physical whole (and all its components as extended physical things or processes) the second as an infinite mind (with all its components somehow psychical in character). Qua infinite mind God is the idea of consciousness of Himself qua physical universe.
So qua system of thought God or

Nature is the idea of itself qua physical system, and every finite thing, as mode of the one substance, is both a physical thing and the idea of that physical thing, that is, that component of God's mind which is his awareness of it. Thus every genuine unit in physical nature, animal, plant, or ultimate particle, has its mental counterpart, that is, may be conceived, not as a physical thing but as the idea of a physical thing. Here again commentators interpret Spinoza somewhat divergently, but most agree that this implies that every physical thing has some kind of sentience. However, it is only insofar as a physical thing has a certain wholeness to it that its mental counterpart constitutes a mind with much distinctness from the rest of cosmic mentality.

Thus a human being, as a physical organism, is a fragment of God or Nature conceived as the one infinite physical substance, while as a mind he or she is that fragment of God's or Nature's mind which constitutes His awareness of that bit of the physical world which is our body (His idea, that is, of how it functions as a whole, rather than of its every detail).

Every finite thing has a built in *conatus* (striving or endeavour) to persist in its own being, that is, to keep its own essence actualised (in fact, the *conatus* simply is the essence with its own tendency to persist) until it is defeated in so doing by external causes. This produces self preserving behaviour suited, to the extent that it can internally register them, to current circumstances. The human mind/body is especially apt in such registration, which constitutes its own ideas of its current environment. (Its ideas of its environment are part of God's current idea of it as affected by this.) Pleasure and pain are the mental analogues of an increase or decrease in the effectiveness of its *conatus*, differing in character with the thing's essence. Spinoza defines all the emotions in terms of pleasure, pain and the basic *conatus* they manifest. He aims to study human psychology dispassionately 'just as if it were an investigation into lines, planes, or bodies' in contrast to those 'who prefer to abuse or deride the emotions and actions of men rather than to understand them'. For only by understanding ourselves can we win freedom in Spinoza's sense.

Spinoza is an uncompromising determinist. There is no human 'freedom of indifference', that is, free will of a type which implies a break in the rigid law of cause and effect, but it is possible to be more or less free in a more meaningful sense. For though all behaviour has its causes, some behaviour is under the control of what Spinoza calls adequate ideas, that is, of emotions associated with rational insight into our circumstances and needs, some under the influence rather of inadequate ideas, that is of emotions which occur in us without our understanding why.

The God of the *Ethics* may not be merely the physical universe but He, or should I have been saying It, (it would certainly be wildly anacronistic to say She), is certainly a somewhat impersonal being. Quite how Spinoza's very abstract claims should be understood in more concrete terms is a matter of continuing dispute.

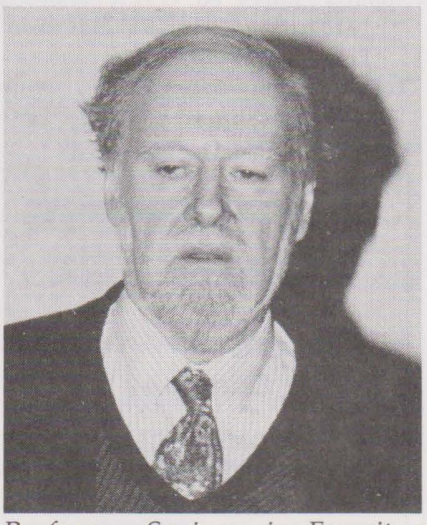
In the *Tractatus,* while he does quietly identify God and Nature, he seems to speak of God as though He were a rather more personal being than He seems to be in the *Ethics*. Is this a concession to the ordinary reader whom he hopes to educate in the need for religious tolerance without too much offence to his feelings? Or is it a sign that we misread the *Ethics*, if we take it as denying of God almost everything humanly appealing in orthodox theism?

The truth would seem to be that Spinoza was seeking a synthesis of the emerging purely scientific view of the world with the more traditional Jewish or Christian conception of it, and it is misleading to neglect his commitment to either.

But how far is Spinoza really committed to what one might call a religious view of the world?

Well he was certainly against all those forms of religion which he regarded as life-denying and which view the present life as a mere preparation for a life to come; rather our primary aim should be joyous living in the here and now. This, however, should ideally culminate in a quasi-mystical grasp of our eternal place in the scheme of things and oneness with God or Nature as the peak of this, which he calls the intellectual love of God. Love of God, in this sense, should be the focal aim of the wise man's life.

So far as religion, as most people conceive it, goes, he clearly thought that a good deal of it was mere superstition, fomenting intolerance and in many ways unhelpful as a basis for a genuinely good life. But he also thought that for the mass of people, who are incapable of the philosopher's intellectual love of God, a good popular religon could act as a morally worthy substitute, providing a less complete form of salvation available to all who live morally and loved God, as they conceived him, appropriately, provided only that their love of God is of a type which promotes obedience to the basic commands of morality.



Professor Sprigge is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh.

Footnotes :

(1) See Yirmiyahu Yovel's *Spinoza and Other Heretics,* Vol.1. The Marrano of Reason (Princeton University

Press, 1989) p.44. I have relied heavily on this fascinating controversial book in the historical part of this article, especially on the *herems*. Among other commentaries on Spinoza's philosophy which also contain useful biolgraphical information are:

Leon Roth : *Spinoza,* George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1929 and 1954.

Alan Donagan : *Spinoza,* Harvester Press, 1988.

Henry E Allison, *Benedict de Spinoza* : An Introduction 1987, Yale University Press.

An interesting article for Jewish readers is:

Ze'an Levy, 'On some early responses to Spinoza's philosophy in Jewish thought', *Studia Spinozana,* Vol.6, 1990.

There are two short 17th century biographies of Spinoza, one by an unreliable follower, the other by a Lutheran clergyman, who became interested in Spinoza when he moved into his old lodgings in the Hague.

The main translations of Spinoza's works into English are:

Baruch Spinoza : *The Ethics and Selected Letters,* transl. by Samuel Shirley, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, 1982.

The Collected Works of Spinoza, ed. and transl. by Edwin Curley, Princeton University Press, 1985.

Spinoza : Ethics, ed. G H R Parkinson, J M Dent and Sons Ltd., Everyman's Library, 1989.

Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, transl. Samuel Shirley, E J Brill, Leiden/New York, 1991.

PRIMO LEVI : PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

This text formed the basis of a talk to the Lit on 21 February 1993
by Erica Newbury

In April 1987 I was in Cambridge on maternity leave when my husband rang one evening from Italy to tell me that Primo Levi had died. He had committed suicide. I felt devastated. All Italy mourned in shock. I cried most of that night and the next day.

It was not only the great writer, the great moral figure, the family friend, for whom I was grieving, it was an important part of my life which had suddenly been taken away from me. I could not stop going back to my younger years, most of all to the summer of 1957, nearly thirty years earlier.

It was a particularly happy summer because my dearest friend Lisa and her family were spending six weeks in a cottage next to ours in the Waldensian Valleys, my homeland, in the Cottian Alps, 35 miles South West of Turin. We were both eight, we both attended the Jewish Primary School of Turin and the few moments when we were not together we spent the time calling each other from our balconies and chatting in very loud voices. Lisa's father, who was a scientist and liked inventing things for us to play with, created a sort of cable tray with a rope and a sweet tray. At each end he put a bell, so we could send and receive messages without deafening the adults and the neighbourhood with our voices. Needless to say the bells never stopped ringing.

During that happy sunny holiday we used to take long walks, the two families together: Lisa and I the big ones, with our fathers ahead, my little sister and Lisa's baby brother Renzo, with our mothers and Lisa's granny, behind. One afternoon in the middle of a gorgeous mountain wood I found myself facing a rather deep and wide stream: I stopped to ponder whether I could jump over,

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Primo Levi - this was a man

A Personal Memory of Primo Levi
Erica Newbury

on Sunday 21st February at 8.00 p.m.
in the New Jewish Community Centre

but already Lisa's dad was offering me his hand from the other side. That moment changed my life for ever: on his forearm I saw a greyish number and asked what it was. 'A souvenir from the Germans' answered Lisa's dad, with an embarrassed smile which I will never forget, along with the embarrassment of my father, who a few steps ahead had followed what was going on.

In spite of my young age I was not satisfied with that answer and with the lack of shame and tact characteristic of innocence, I started firing questions at my father and at Primo Levi, for he was my friend Lisa's dad.

I already knew that before my birth a horrible war had been fought. I had grown up listening to my parents' memories, to ex-partisans' discussions and celebrations. Attending the Jewish Schol had made me aware that something even more awful had happened. I knew that Lisa's father had been a prisoner in a place from which very few had come back and that he had written a book which my parents described as a masterpiece, but everything sounded remote, like a terrifying story, full of evil and monsters, but still a tale. Suddenly everything was confused in face of the dramatic reality of that sinister number marking forever the arm of my little friend's gentle father.

I felt a sense of wild rebellion and

what offended me most was the idea that the mark was indelible. Everything sooner or later ends: wars, persecutions, plagues, famines. How could someone be so evil as to brand a human being for life?

That afternoon I learned a bit about the concentration camps and I wanted to know more, mainly looking for an answer to the initial question 'why?' to which nobody seemed able to reply. Primo's double reaction is vivid in my memory. On the one hand, almost happy in the face of my interest and on the other reluctant to give a child such traumatic information. Nothing would stop me, though, and I kept on pestering my parents at supper, before going to bed. Why the Jews? All the Jews? Also the children? That meant that only a few years back most of my school friends could have ended up in a 'lager'? What did happen to the children in a lager?

The following days I did not enjoy playing as much as I used to and every time an adult, especially Primo Levi was around, I started again with my questions. I suppose the adults took a decision and the first time Primo went to Turin he came back with his personal copy of 'If this is a man', which was then out of print and had anyway been published by a minor publisher and soon forgotten.

Every evening my mother read me a chapter as a bedtime story and we often burst into tears; each time my mother asked me if I really wanted to carry on. I always chose to know. Before falling asleep each night with all my strength I prayed to the Lord that nothihng like that would ever happen again. I imagine that my mother's reading included some cuts and censorship. What I know is that we soon reached the end of the book.

My attitude towards Primo Levi had now totally changed: not only did I stop pestering him with questions, but when he was around I even managed to calm down my noisy disposition. I sat quietly beside him, adoring, I contemplated him as a special being. He seemed to me altogether fragile and indestructible, helpless and immortal. He became my hero and I often dreamed that I was a partisan fighting against the 'baddies' who had invented the concentration camps and wanted to destroy the Jews, who were good and were my friends. I also started having nightmares about the coming back of such dreadful times and in a way that beautiful summer full of sun, enjoyment and playfulness marked also the end of my childhood.

Only when Primo Levi died did I realise that my life was profoundly changed in that summer and that so many stands of mine, so many attitudes are not the result of studies of political awareness, but go back to what I felt and sensed then in seeing that horrible number. So is the fact that as soon as I started teaching I imposed on my classes the compulsory reading of Anna Frank's diary, 'If this is a man' and 'The Truce'. So is my tremendously partial attitude towards Israel, which for me will be for ever the land built by the brothers in persecution of Primo Levi - fully free himself together with other survivors to criticise it. Nobody else, though, in my opinion has the right to do so and nobody ought to dare to.

Now it is maybe time I explained what a non-Jewish girl like myself was doing at Scuola Israelitica 'Colonna e Finzi'. I belong to a small Christian community, the Waldensian Church, which has a great deal in common with the Italian Jewish communities. The 'Chiesa Valdese' takes its name after Valdo (Waldo in English), a rich merchant from Lyon, who in 1170 decided to become a real Christian, gave his riches to the poor and started preaching the Gospel in the streets. He and his followers (The Poor Men of Lyon) were soon excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church and persecuted as heretics. From the eighteenth century the story of this People-Church, also known as the Israel of the Alps (mainly for their attachment to the Bible, to their homeland and for being a persecuted faith as well as a 'race'), parallels that of the Jewish communities in what was then the Duchy of Savoy. Neither had any civil or religious rights, they were both liberal and free communities in the darkness of the post-Counter Reformation era (the Jews of Piedmont always claimed to be the most open and enlightened community, truly faithful to the Spinozian spirit of their tradition). Indeed both communities were always ready to embrace a new cause when it seemed to coincide with their ideals. Every member of their communities, even the very poor ones could read and write at times when 95% of the Italian population was totally illiterate and both put education very high in their priorities: building a church or a synagogue came second to building a school.

From the French Revolution onwards the emancipation of the Jews and the Waldensians became an issue fought for by liberal and progressive minds. Furthermore liberal and progressive sects and societies and parties had a high disproportionate number of Jews and Waldensians. Resistance started in the Waldensian Valleys where the local population had a long tradition of surviving and fighting and the number of Jewish and Waldensian names in the lists of the 'fallen' in the fight against Fascism and Nazism is remarkable.

When Italy withdrew from the war and the Nazis invaded Italy, the search for Jews started. In Piedmont there was an old tradition of reciprocal friendship (many Jews from Turin, including Primo Levi's family, would spend their winter and summer holidays in the Waldensian Valleys while many Waldensians in Turin would send their children to the Nursery, Primary and Middle Jewish school, and many Jewish families would send their older children to the only Protestant boarding school in Italy, the Collegio Valdese of Torre Pellice, in the Valleys). It was natural for many Jews to seek refuge in what seemed, and was, an outpost of freedom and a shelter. In the winter of 1944, to give one example, in the village of Rora 3,000 feet up in the

mountains 10% of the population were Jews in hiding. There was a high price on the head of each Jew denounced and the starving population was also supporting a band of Partisans fighting above. Nevertheless everyone who sought shelter managed to see the day of Liberation unharmed.

I was born and brought up in a mountain village of my Valleys. When I was six we moved to Turin to join my father who was a painter and a Professor of Fine Art and used to come home mainly during the weekends. I first attended the Roman Catholic School where I was subjected to considerable humilation. Some of the children called me a non-Christian and a Jew and I was surprised because that was the first time in my life that I had heard another faith used as an insult. I loved the Jews because in the Sunday sermons they were always called the 'People of God' and in the Bible, the New Testament included, there was nothing but the history of the Jews. In my eyes they were the grandparents of all Christians. Eventually I went to the Jewish School of Turin which was (and is) a very good academic liberal school open to everyone wishing to attend it. It was then the only school in Turin for boys and girls (only from 14 onwards, at Liceo, State schools were 'mixed') and Jewish boys did not wear a 'kippah'. Less than three quarters of the children were Jewish, followed by nearly a quarter of Waldensians and there were a few from agnostic and free thinker families. The Jewish children had extra religious tuition outside the normal school hours, we all prayed to the Lord in Hebrew, we had Saturday and Sunday free, we enjoyed Christian and Jewish holidays. At school we celebrated all the Jewish festivals and I will always remember the special atmosphere of that strict but happy and progressive place for learning.

In Turin the synagogue and the Waldensian temple are a few yards from each other and the two communities often use each other's facilities, such as the Jewish schools or the Waldensian Hospital. Intermarriages are not infrequent often ending up with the predominance of the faith of the strongest believer. The most famous offspring of a Jewish-Waldensian marriage was Adriano Olivetti, founder of Olivetti.

After a few years my family moved and for a spell I did not see much of Lisa, but we met again when we both enrolled at the Classical State Liceo d'Azeglio, famous for its academic record and for bringing up in the thirties a generation of brave antifascist intellectuals. We were both very active in school politics.

At d'Azeglio Lisa and I were not in the same class because I studied English, while Lisa did German. This was typical of Primo Levi who did not like stereotypes and generalisations. Although he judged the Germans guilty of hiding their heads and not wanting to know the truth, he was against the demonisation of a whole nation. He liked the language and the culture and often said that Goethe and Bach, Beethoven and Kant had nothing to do with Nazism. He would then add that Hitler was a devil and managed to bring out the worst in the German character, bewitching millions of people into doing evil.

Primo Levi was a small gentle man with a great sense of humour and the sweetest smile. In Italy he was universally admired, but in Turin he was a local hero. From 1977 he had a weekly column in the Turin daily paper, 'La Stampa'. He published most of his poems in it, but he would also comment on political events both national and international and on other issues which interested him. For example he once translated a letter from a Roman centurion stationed in Britain to his Mama.

More serious issues were debated in his articles too, a famous one being his strong belief that there is no such thing as neutral science. 'A scientist knows whether the egg he is hatching will produce a dove, a corbra, a chimera or just nothing'. Another one was the opinion that Begin's Israel was not true to its founders and the only possibility for a good future was that Israel regain its original European-based ideals.

The Waldensian church of Angrogna had invited him to talk about 'The Saved and the Drowned' and they were expecting him for 12 April. On the 11th he committed suicide. He was severely depressed for two reasons: first the historical wave of revisionism, historians like Nolte and Hillgruber in Germany and Italy were trying to say that the Nazi 'lager' were like the Soviet 'gulags' in some way classifying the Holocaust as another episode of war. He often said that what has happened once can always happen again and was pessimistic. Second, he was losing his memory and he felt that without it he could no longer be a witness which in his mind was the only justification for being a survivor.

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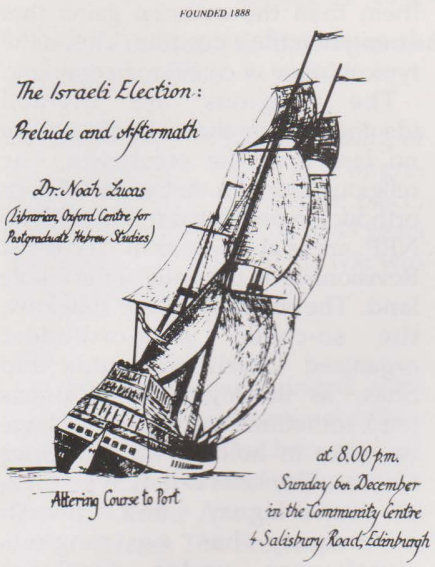
Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society



The Israeli Election of 1992 and its Aftermath

This text formed the basis of a talk to the Lit on 6 December 1992

by Noah Lucas

In Israel it used to be said that whoever won an election, the government always got in. Such was the stability and continuity of politics that government seemed to be merely a game of musical chairs. It was also commonly said that whoever won an election, the religious parties would choose the government. These facetious verities no longer hold.

The general election of 1992 registered change. But what change and how much? The change was perhaps less than meets the eye. The upheaval was certainly not of 1977 proportions. Since 1949 until the election of 1977 and before the state since the mid-1930s, Labour had dominated politics. Multi-party politics had produced something like one-party rule. But when Likud was elected to govern in 1977, it was on an electoral shoestring. It had won by default owing to the defection of the Democratic Movement for Change from the Labour ranks. One-party dominance was not inherited by Likud. In 1977 the change was, in effect, from a one-party system to a two- party system, from a system based on a broad underlying consensus across the centre ground of politics, to a polarised system in which the centre did not hold. Indeed a major change, but Likud did not succeed in all its years in power in establishing itself as a dominant party. It even had to share power with Labour from 1984-1990.

Does the convincing victory of Labour over Likud in June 1992 mean that Labour has now restored its position as the dominant party? Not necessarily, and not likely. The two-party system continues under the cover of a multi-party form. Labour still has a long way to go to recover its position as a dominant force, and it seems unlikely that it ever will. It is more probable that the two-party system, with alternating power, is here to stay a while.

And what of the religious? If from 1977 until 1992 they seemed to exert a controlling influence on the formation of coalitions, this was because the two major parties were evenly matched in deadlock. The religious by throwing their weight to the advantage of one side or the other could indeed determine the shape of the government. They could play off one against the other to advance material religious interests, because they held the balance of power between the big two.

Labour has not totally escaped the high-priced religious embrace, although for the time being this has been limited to the blandishments of the Shas party. But Labour itself is on a political tightrope. With the help of the Arab parties it commands a blocking majority of 61 in the Knesset, with which it can prevent the formation of a Likud-led government. But the Labour bloc as a whole, which would not wish to depend on the Arab parties' vote for its survival in government, has only 56 votes compared to Likud, its right-wing allies and the religious parties' total of 59. Not that the religious parties are exclusively available as partners to the right wing. Shas has shown that it is neutral about the ideological tendency of its bedmates. The Aguda non-Zionist orthodox party was of a similar hue, but it now shows a marked preference for the right which it shares with the religious Zionists of the NRP.

With the two camps so evenly balanced it can be seen that the election of 1992 was not an upheaval of the order of 1977. Pundits in Israel, and political elites and the press in the West, eager for peace in the Middle East, tended to exaggerate the Labour victory as a harbinger of change. The basic fact is the country is still more or less evenly divided on the issues of peace so far as they involve territory. The present government will need to broaden its base and extend consensus considerably if it is to carry through a deal with the Arabs that involves parting with territory. Rabin personally is trusted by the public on issues of security, but most of his colleagues to his left are not.

If Rabin wants to make a peace deal stick he will have to draw in support from the dwindling middle ground of Israeli politics, and that means from the Likud leadership as well as its rank and file. He will need to conduct a referendum, if not a general election, to ratify any settlement with the Arabs that involves significant withdrawal from occupied territories.

Deadlock and Immobilism

Understanding Israeli politics requires an appreciation of its delicate equilibrium of diametrically opposed forces. The followers of ideological Zionism in the Revisionist (Jabotinskian) territorial tradition are ranged against the pragmatic proponents of security, while, cutting across this issue, secularists face religious in a sometimes rancorous confrontation. The two issues, territory versus security, and individual liberty versus public favour to religion and obligatory conformity, are irreconcilable. They cannot be rendered compatible since in the one case territory is an absolute, and in the other democracy cannot be reconciled with theocracy, also an absolute. Let us look more closely at these two issues in turn, for they are at the heart of the struggle for the fixing of the Israeli national identity.

The territorial issue is often, mistakenly and misleadingly, presented as a battle between hawks and doves. This familiar ornithological imagery is appropriate to describe

two different strategies for winning a war, whether by all-out main force or by less draconian means. It is not an appropriate metaphor to describe the Israeli conflict, because the issue there is not about how to win such a war, whether by a hard-line or soft approach. It is about the desired territorial shape of Israel, that is an ideological determination of Israel's fixed contours as a nation and state, and within each of the two respective views of this matter there are hardliners and softliners.

Those who believe, in the Jabotinsky tradition, that Israel's claim to the whole land west of the River Jordan is absolute, and minimal, who did not and do not accept the partition of the land which resulted from the Israel-Arab war of 1948, and who regard the occupied territories as an integral and inalienable part of Israel, when they speak of security are referring to the whole land including these territories. Those who accepted partition and are willing to restore the partition or some modified version of the partition that prevailed before 1967, are concerned about the security of the pre-1967 Israel. They look upon the territories as a negotiable asset which can be used to enhance the security of the old green line, which for them is a valid point of reference.

It is important to stress this ideological basis of difference, because only then can the ultimate incompatibility of the two views be grasped. Moreover, only then can it be seen that the so-called 'doves' argue from security, not from a kind of vegetarianism which is attributed to them by their opponents. The doves are not chickens, they are traditional Zionists whose distinguishing mark was always pragmatism. Willingness to compromise was the doctrine of such Zionists, and moreover, they always placed international law, legal legitimacy, at the centre of the Zionist quest. The Revisionists thought otherwise and assumed, correctly or not only history will tell, that Israel's territorial configuration was legitimised by history and determined by force of arms, and that international law was at best a secondary consideration unless it underwrote Israel's absolute rights.

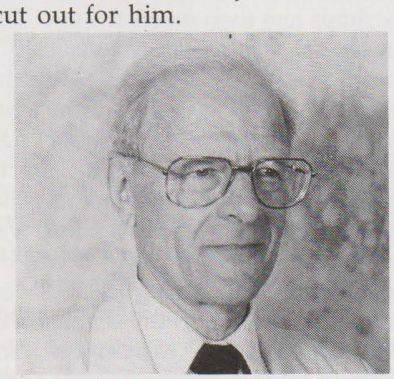
The Revisionists' view was that of an ineffective minority until 1967. After the Israeli victory and occupation of territory in 1967, the Labour pragmatists did not know their own minds. They were confused by the extension of Israeli space and the apparent passivity of the Arabs under occupation. They were muddled and uncertain, especially as between hawks and particular agrarian hawks, and doves. As a result the view of the original Revisionists, advocated effectively by Menahem Begin and incorporated into the Likud platform, grew and grew in its appeal, until the tentative crystallisatiron of the two-party system in 1977, and its firm establishment in the election of 1981. Hence the deadlock and the impasse, which has persisted since then and which has not been resolved by the 1992 election.

As for the religious issue, the secularists are the great majority, with the ultra-orthodox numbering no more than a probable 15-20% of the population. Zionism originated in a Jewish consciousness formed by religious education, a residue of which prevails amongst a large portion of the population in the form of an affinity for tradition. This takes the bitter edge off the conflict. The fact that the secularists largely favour tradition, and this is a fact which has been reinforced by the growth of the oriental population, makes it possible to reduce the abrasiveness of the religious-secular confrontation.

The religious exploit the political system to obtain material gain for their yeshivot, schools, synagogues and the like. They are not waging a war for theocracy at present, but merely engaging in clerical politics. They will not undertake a war for theocracy until their position is strengthened. To this end they concentrate on materal gains. The secularisits can accommodate many of their demands, unreasonable or excessive as these sometimes appear to Jews of liberal persuasion, because the secularists hold other issues, economic issues and social policy as well as foreign policy higher in the scale of priorities. The religious give their support on these policies, because they are less important for them than the material gains that strengthen their position. This is the typical frame of coalition bargaining.

The religious are divided ideologically on the issue of territory no less than the secularists. The religious Zionists, that is the modern orthodox represented in the main by NRP, are as absolute as the secularist Revisionists on the issue of the whole land. The majority of the religious, the so-called ultra-orthodox, organised loosely in Aguda and Shas, as ideological non-Zionists (and sometimes anti-Zionists) have no stake in holding the territories forever. The land is holy regardless of sovereignty and Jewish sovereignty has no religious significance under secularist auspices. They would be willing to compromise and trade on territory if that could be shown to save life, that is, if peace would follow.

The upshot is that Rabin represents change to the extent that he has an opportunity to pursue the diplomacy of peace, after years of Likud rule in which the country was in fact pursuing war in order to tighten Israel's hold on the territories. But to succeed Rabin and his governmnt will need to attract the support of the soft non-ideological following of Likud, as represented by David Levy and many oriental voters who have no Revisionist background or commitment, and he will need to persuade the orthodox that the peace on offer is a valid one in respect of long-term reduction of conflict and violence. He certainly has his work cut out for him.



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CZELADZ, BERLIN AND WHITECHAPEL : The World of Avrom-Nokhem Stencl

by Heather Valencia

The tenth *yortsayt* of the London Yiddish poet Avrom Nokhem Stencl was on 24 January 1993, and the time seems appropriate to attempt assessment of the work of a writer who has been largely ignored in literary criticism and indeed in anthologies of twentieth century Yiddish poetry. Stencl was an extraordinarily prolific poet and it is true that some of his verse could bear comparison with our own McGonagall, but there is more than enough in the large corpus to justify S S Prawer's assessment of him as 'a great and complex modern poet'.(1)

Stencl's biography too is of great interest to the literary critic, the historian, and the general reader. The autobiographical writings appeared month by month in the journal *Loshn un Lebn* ('Language and Life') which he published in London from 1940 almost until his death. In this article I should like to give a short account of his life and an introduction to his poetry, relating it to three main geographic areas which are central themes in his work: Poland, Berlin and London.

Stencl was born in Czeladz near Sosnoviec in Poland in 1897. His father, a religious and learned man, was a formative influence and Stencl received a traditional education: he speaks of himself as a youth in Poland with his traditional clothing and *peyot*, but with his pockets stuffed full of poems: an image which pinpoints two often warring sides of the personality of many Yiddish poets, which are frequently reflected in their work: the traditional religious consciousness, and the 'secular' literary personality. The pocket full of papers is the image which epitomised Stencl throughout his life: he never ceased to be a nomad - in the Berlin years, in fact, often not having any fixed abode - but the bundle of poems in his pocket gave him a sense of identity, the 'address' which Bashevis Singer said every writer needs. From his early years, his need to write poetry was the central impulse to his life. With typical gentle self-ironic humour he quotes the words of a friend in 1918: 'You haven't changed! Worlds are being turned upside down, thrones are lying with their legs in the air, and you still stand there with your little beard and your *peyot* and your "I must just read you something" ...' Ironically, the upside down worlds did change his life that very day. When he arrived home his military call-up papers were waiting. His father decided that he should emigrate and that night he left his home for good. The abruptness of his departure undoubtedly contributed to the importance which Poland and the figures of his parents have as constant motifs in his work.

After a period in Holland, Stencl went to Berlin in 1921, where he remained until 1936. The picture he gives us of life in Berlin and elsewhere in Germany is a vivid one: the reader gains a lively impression of Weimar Germany, especially the Berlin made familiar by Kästner, Isherwood, and the art of George Grosz and the German Expressionists. Secondly, the less well documented life of the Jewish artists and intellectuals in Berlin emerges dramatically from his writings: the focal point of this constantly changing and drifting group was the *Romanische Cafe*, where Stencl spent a great deal of time. The style of his writing reflects his life during this period: like the irregularity of his bohemian, hand-to-mouth, spontaneous existence, the writing jumps about impressionistically. Often he dwells lovingly for several pages on a small incident: a German hiker reading the Communist Manifesto out loud to him in the merry chaos of a night train journey, with German *Wandervögel* singing, drinking, and making love all round them; often he gives an ironic sketch of an eccentric Berlin character: his encounter, for example, with the establishment of a cheap draper - a figure reminiscent of the paintings of George Grosz: 'Herr Viktor, an obese little fellow with a double chin, shaved till the blood spurted, was sitting at the cash-desk; with one side of his large jowls he was chewing a cigar and with the other side spluttered and raged: "One penny, no less, there's no haggling with Viktor and Son!"' At other times Stencl leaps across several years, often introducing characters and places in which the writer finds himself without any prior motivation or explanation.

Stencl describes the frenetic atmosphere of a country racked by inflation, where money earned had to be spent immediately, but where 'a foreigner with a London pound, a Dutch guilder, an American dollar could wander from cabaret to cabaret ... and saunter after midnight along the garishly lit Kurfürstendamm, ending up in a hotel with not one woman, but one in each arm'. Extraordinarily, he appears to have existed for fifteen years on fees paid for the translations of his poems which appeared in German literary journals, and, when 'day began to dawn in the pocket' as he put it, he resorted to casual jobs such as working on farms, and at one point stamping down earth on newly filled graves and 'entrepreneurial' activities - hawking offcuts of cheap material, manufacturing compost, or selling straw hats on a market stall. Sometimes he lived in a temporary night shelter, or stayed all night in a workers' bar or on a park bench; at times he slept in the rooms of other poor Jewish artists, and occasionally had the luxury of a rented room. Always he carried his bundles of poems in his pocket.

Stencl was often seized by a horror of the aimless bohemian life; his love for the countryside, which permeates his poetry, drew him to escape Berlin

(1) S. S. Prawer, *A. N. Stencl, Poet of Whitechaptel* (Oxford, 1984) p. 21.

into casual jobs in villages and on farms. These episodes give rise to humorous and self-ironical writing: the period he spent, for example, as an agricultural labourer on an estate furnishes a wonderful sketch of an archetypal Prussian *Junker*; Stencl's attempt at 'tattie-howking' was so disastrous that he was transferred to pasturing cattle - he used this opportunity to sit dreaming and writing poetry all day and when to his horror the cattle all wandered into the cornfield, this Yiddish Little Boy Blue was unmercifully chased off the estate by the irate landowner. The sting in the tail of this incident, however, which might be seen as having prophetic significance, is that the aristocratic landowner, on discovering that Stencl had written a poem about Waldi, one of the estate dogs, shot the unfortunate animal.

Always Stencl was drawn back to Berlin, to the world of the artists and intellectuals, where the atmosphere of uncertainty and turmoil reflected that of the economic and social life of the city. As Stencl describes it: 'Berlin 1921, the streets were full of cocottes and of artists of all abilities, fighting to the death with each other. There was inflation not just of the gold mark, but of all sorts of 'isms' in literature and painting, which were born at night in an artist's studio, (. . .) and died two days later in an attic somewhere'. Stencl graphically describes the *Romanische Cafe*, focal point of Jewish artistic life: 'From those fleeing from the pogroms in the Jewish-Ukrainian *shtetls*, from the famine in the Russian cities, and from the Revolution, a kind of Jewish colony formed itself in the west of Berlin, and the *Romanische Cafe* was its parliament. It was buzzing with famous Jewish intellectuals and activists, well known Jewish lawyers from Moscow and Petersburg, Yiddish writers from Kiev and Odessa, with flying party-leaders from the extreme left to the extreme right wing - it buzzed as in a beehive'. Apart from the regular clientele, famous Yiddish writers from America and elsewhere, passing through, would spend time in the cafe: Joseph Opatoshu and Sholem Ash, for example. It was there that Stencl met Else Lasker-Schüler, with whom he formed a lasting, though, as with all her relationships, somewhat strange friendship.

The Jewish writers appear to have been a very self-contained group: there is no evidence in Stencl's writing of much contact between them and the German artists in Berlin: it is striking, for example, that Stencl, writing of the period between 1921 and 1936, does not once mention the name of Brecht. At the same time, there is evidence that both contemporary and classical German writers were read by these Yiddish-speaking intellectuals: Salman Schneur, for example, talks to Stencl of Richard Dehmel, and Stencl himself feels embarrassed that he has not read anything of Goethe. What is remarkable is that many of Stencl's poems appeared in German translation in periodicals at that time, often before they were published in the original Yiddish. This fact is due mainly to two translators, Dr Suhl, a Jewish writer from Leipzig, and Elizabeth Woehler, an art teacher in Berlin.

The latter is one of the most interesting figures in Stencl's memoirs. She taught in the *Freie Weltliche Deutsche Schule* in Reinickendorf, a school in which most of the teachers were Socialists, and the pupils from poor famiies. A propos of the worsening political situation in Germany in the early thirties, Stencl says of this school: 'the teaching of the Freie Weltliche Schule ... made one think that the world was going forward; that finally the good in the human being would triumph'. It is clear both from Stencl's memoirs and from the letters which Elisabeth Woehler wrote him from 1960 onward that the relationship between them was one of deep affection, lasting till her death in 1974: her letters, usually written on postcards of paintings they had loved together, reveal a sensitive and humourous personality; her loving concern for her old friend shines through them, and an almost undecipherable note writtten on her death bed is headed 'beloved Stencl'. It seems likely that she taught herself Yiddish after having met him, perhaps in order to translate his poetry. It was she who organised his escape from Germany, with the help of an English visitor to the 1936 Berlin Olympics, Christabel Fowler, who invited him to come to London to write an article on English art (Stencl also published many articles on contemporary European art). In later years Elisabeth Woehler visited him in Whitechapel, where they read his poetry together, and she left him money in her will. After her death Stencl planted 100 trees in her memory in Israel. It would be illuminating to find out how a woman with her interests, courage and political beliefs managed to survive in Germany, mentally and physically, through the Hitler years; unfortunately it seems as if no testimony from her exists, for her will contained the request that a box containing all her personal papers (including, presumably, letters from Stencl), should be burnt, unopened.

Stencl's life in London is less fully documented by him, but friends who are still alive have vivid memories of this humorous, charismatic, always interesting man. He remained till his death in Whitechapel: after he arrived in Britain he boarded briefly with a well-to-do Jewish family in Hampstead, but when one morning he found the Times open at a report of a pogrom in Brisk where this family had come from, but discoverd that after reading it, they showed complete indifference in their secure new existence, he left in disgust, asking a taxi driver to take him anywhere in Whitechapel. Jewish Whitechapel was his *shtetl d'Britain*, and his passionate campaign to preserve Yiddish as a vibrant language bordered on the obsessional: he refused to speak English,(2) and it is said that he addressed London bus-conductors in

(2) Stencl's inability to speak English is however, in my opinion, something of a myth: there is evidence in letters in the Stencl archive in London that he had a very close friendship with a young woman who, in her letters written in English to him, alludes to her complete lack of Yiddish. He clearly, with a stubbornness which seems to have been typical of him, refused to acknowledge the language!

Yiddish, and that the waitresses in his favourite Lyons Corner House eventually learned some Yiddish themselves, through his insistence on addressing them *mame-loshn!*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Poland, Germany (especially Berlin and Stencl's 'fishing village' on the Island of Wolin) and London, especially his beloved Whitechapel - provide the focus of Stencl's most impressive work. It was not until the beginning of his new life in London that he attempted to come to terms with the significance of Poland and his family for him and produced some delicate and moving poetry on this theme. In his Berlin period he absorbed influences from all around - from the city and the German countryside, from the literary currents, especially Expressionism, and from Jewish intellectual life - and all this was constantly infused with his sense of being an outsider, a wanderer. Inevitably his early poetry manifests the tensions between these spheres. In the collection *Un du bist got* (And you are God) published in Leipzig in 1924, the poet struggles with his inner turmoil: uncertainty about his Jewish identity, traditional religion, and his feeling of isolation. The self is a drifting boat:

Where shall I anchor?
As I am afraid of rocks,
As I am afraid of waves,
And my sails are torn ...

My oars,
Two black extinguished
Torah-candles,
Are caught in the black
turmoil of the wild waves,
And my little boat rocks and
rocks ... (3)

His Jewish religious tradition - the *Torah*-oars - will not master this wild sea. In this cycle of poems the world is a dangerous suffocating monster, a heap of skulls; the poet sometimes sees himself as a clown, a madman; there are affinities with Moyshe Leyb Halpern, with Francois Villon, or with the young Brecht, for example in the prevalence of drifting boat imagery ('What's to be done with life,/When the mast is made from a gallows/And the fluttering white sail/is sewn by drunkards?') and in the defiant embracing of life with all its horrors. This turbulent cycle ends, however, in harmony and reconciliation; in the last poem the poet sees his years as milestones which mark the path to God:

On the path
Under my last white stone
My heart will leap
With everyone who passes
On his way to you.

A different side of Stencl's poetic personality is seen in the best known of the collections of poetry published in the Berlin years, *Fisherdorf* (Fishing village), published in 1933. Stencl called these poems stillebns (still-lifes), and the poems are indeed a series of moments caught in time, impressionistic but meticulously accurate images which capture both the beauty and toil of rural life and Stencl's gentle humour: there are depictions of animals and men, the land and sea and the work of the farmyard. Stencl's other great love was art and many of these poems are paintings in words: in the monumentality and sensuality of some of the scenes one senses Gauguin, in the movement and rhythm of others, and in the uncompromising depiction of the old fishermen or the ploughman, one imagines a Van Gogh painting translated into the written word.

Side by side with this celebration of lives and occupations close to the earth, we see the other side of 1930s Germany: Stencl's painful awareness of the darkening political atmosphere and his unease are revealed in a little-known long poem from 1935, *Oyfn rog* (On the corner). Here, in the disturbing vision of the *ikh* wandering through the streets of the city, with its brooding atmosphere of threat, in the imagery of blood, death and decay, and the feeling of the barely suppressed scream, Stencl has created a vivid evocation of the almost surreal nightmare city of Expresionist poetry:

At daybreak there is such horror
in the blood
Dripping out between shadowed
corners,
Every strange, hard step outside
Echoes in my temples, wildly
racing.

At dusk such terror surrounds me
Every corner is a scattered heap of
stones.
And the heart is a child with
shaky gait,
Trying to flee from its own
shadow.

The poem echoes the existential themes of Expressionist poetry, but here they evoke the very specific unease of a Jewish poet in Berlin in 1935: significantly Stencl notes that he wrote the poem in 'Berlin, in the three weeks 1935' - the three weeks traditionally associated with mourning between the Fast of Tammuz and Tishe b'Av.

The inspiration of Poland emerges most eloquently in a book of poems entitled *Epl* (Apples), published in 1937, the year after Stencl arrived in London. It seems as if he tried to cope with the disorientation of immigration by turning his mind back to Poland, which must have been an unfinished chapter, partly because of the suddenness of his departure. Now, in London, he relives his inner conflict about his homeland, but also views the darkening political situation there. All this is reflected in the book *Epl*, which he held in particular affection.

Through the unifying motif of the apple and the apple tree, Stencl evokes a whole spectrum of Jewish life in Poland. The nature and function of the apple motif changes from poem to poem: it is a real remembered apple with juice and sweetness, evoking incidents from family life, or it is metaphorical, surreal, ambiguous, macabre, symbolising different aspects of Jewish experience. Three of the ballads are stories revolving around incidents with apples, which depict the exploitation of impoverished Jews by the uncaring *porets* (land-

(3) Stencl's poetry, with its dense and idiosyncratic syntax, is difficult to translate. All the provisional, too literal translations in this article are my own.

owner), but also their role as scapegoat for the downtrodden Polish peasant. One ballad, with delightful irony, depicts *Moshiakh ben Dovid* visiting a market with Elijah: they are beaten by the peasants for undercutting market rates by selling their 'himlishe epl' at give-away prices, and the naive Messiah returns to heaven, crestfallen, injured by a sickle which he hangs up in the sky as a reminder to himself of man's unreadiness for the *geule!*

The first poem, 'Heylik iz mir di pylishe erd' (Holy to me is the earth of Poland), sets the basis for the cycle: the image of Poland is linked with the poet's father and mother, and the apple which his mother peeled for him when he was a child. The father is the central figure of the poem, representing the archetypal holy Jew, a god-like figure even to the peasants. The final stanza switches sharply to the other main theme: figures like his parents were the guardians, in a sense, of the 'poylishe erd': who will protect it now? In a transference typical of Stencl, the threatening knife which he sees hanging over the country is at the same time his mother's knife, lovingly preparing his apple. Thus he leaves a glimmer of hope at the end of the poem:

Who will protect it now, who will
save it?
Before my eyes, hours without
end, trembles
The sharp knife ... which lovingly
peeled
That first, never-to-be-forgotten
apple.

The final poem takes a traditional image: the seed which contains within it the tree, its blossom and its fruit, for future generations. The Jews in Poland are the seed of 'a tree hung with red appels' which will endure. The cycle began with the personal memory of the individual and expanded to encompass the Jewish people in Poland; it began in pain and doubt, and, having reached depths of despair, worked its way through to a final vision of harmony and beauty.

This little book *Epl* does indeed merit its author's warm affection: with great originality Stencl has taken a fairly conventional nature image, and developed its potential to create a group of poems which have great economy and lyrical beauty, and powerfully evoke the ambiguities and paradoxes in the relationship of the Jew to Poland. The book can perhaps also be seen as a catharsis or watershed in Stencl's creativity: after publishing this collection he was 'free' to focus on the present and the world around him and become one of the twentieth-century 'metropolis poets'.

★ ★ ★ ★

In Whitechapel Stencl found his first permanent home and his finest poetry from then on celebrates both the *shtetl* and the metropolis: Jewish Whitechapel, on the one hand, the wider London scene on the other: the foggy streets of London, the beauties of Kew Gardens, the bustle of the docks. One of the best examples of his Whitechapel poems was the cycle of 41 poems entitled 'Vaytshelp' (Whitechapel) which appeared in a celebratory volume (Yoyvl-Almanakh) published in 1956 by Stencl to mark 300 years of continuous Jewish life in England.(4) The keynote of the cycle is again the idea of the Jew 'in two worlds': Stencl interweaves pictures of 1950s life in London with images which evoke thousands of years of Jewish tradition which lives on in this corner of London life. One of the most striking examples of this fusion is the poem 'Der Reshtlakh Ramsher' (The Remnant Seller). The market trader's father was a learned Talmudic scholar in the old country: flying pieces of brightly coloured material on the trader's stall evoke in the poet's mind the father's fluttering scrolls and commentaries; the trader's market stall becomes his father's *bima*, his market 'patter' evokes the father's voice holding a learned disputation, and in the tearing of material which the son is selling in Whitechapel, the crowd seems to hear the traditional 'rending of Satan' in the old synagogue. Thus the two worlds are fused, the old traditions living on in Jewish Whitechapel life.

Indeed, the devil also wanders through Whitechapel, sometimes terrifying, but more often lightheartedly or ironically portrayed. In the 'Fish and Chips Sonnet', the poet, glimpsing the fish-and-chip shop owner stirring his huge vats of fat, imagines him as a lesser devil *(lapitut)* whom Satan has punished by sending him to toil in Whitechapel.

Stencl combines the urban environment with nature: the close relationship to the earth which inspired the *Fisherdorf* cycle is a central strand of Stencl's work, and in the beautiful poem 'Der Shemiramis-gortn fun Vaytshepl' (The Hanging Gardens of Whitechapel), Stencl compares the Babylonian Gardens with the garden created by a Whitechapel baker from herring boxes and car tyres. The baker *shleps* the soil and plants from wherever he can get them (characteristically Stencl uses in this context the Biblical phrase *arbe pines oylem* - from the four corners of the earth). This garden is a greater wonder than that of the ancient world: the fiery red of the roses is combined with the glow of the baker's oven, and a little bird which has strayed into Whitechapel sings its heart out when it sees this blossoming. As in the poem of the remnant seller, Stencl unites various spheres: the ancient world, the eternity of nature, and the toil and creativity of the poor Jews of Whitechapel, ennobling the latter by equating its status with the two other elements.

This cycle started with a poem in which Whitechapel was described as a shore from which people embarked for further destinations or waited hopelessly to die: as a Jewish *shtetl* it was just awaiting its end. But during his depiction of multifaceted

(4) These poems have been brilliantly analysed by S S Prawer (see footnote 1 page 27)

Jewish life, a great change took place in the poet's viewpoint: the last poem is called 'Whitechapel, the Jerusalem of Britain'. This is an allusion to Vilna, called the Jerusalem of Lithuania. Stencl begins with a sonorous list of the famous centres of Jewish cultural life throughout the ages:

Pumbedita, Cordoba, Cracow,
Amsterdam,
Lublin, Volozhin, Vilna,
Berditchev and Kotsk.

and ranks Whitechapel too as an immortal city: it will survive, as an ember glows under ashes. He is confident that, as in all great centres of the Jewish spirit, even the humblest Jew from Aldgate would be willing to sacrifice himself ('tsu geyn oyf kidush-hashem') for its survival. The cycle which began in despair ends in the triumph of the spirit.

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THE NEW TESTAMENT AND ANTI-SEMITISM

A paper given to the Council of Christians and Jews in Edinburgh

by Rev. Alastair Lamont

Anti-semitism can be traced back to ancient Egypt of the Pharoahs and to Persia in the days of Esther. It seems to have been around for as long as the children of Abraham have carried the burden of being the people of God. But the most intense and consistent source of anti-semitism in the last two thousand years is to be found in the teaching of the Christian Church. I presume that one of the main reasons why we meet in such groups as these, as Christians and Jews, is to try to understand why the relationship between these two faiths has been such a bitter one - and to try to ensure that the future is different from the past.

For the Jews the main problem is the practical one of survival in an anti-semitic world. For Christians it raises a searching moral issue. It should force us back to understand where things went wrong. Until we understand where we went wrong we shall never put things right.

How could it be that the Christian faith, which owes everything we value most to Israel, have such a long record of antipathy towards the very roots from which our faith sprang?

Both Christians and Jewish scholars, in tracing this poisonous paradox to its source, have been drawn back to a study of the basic documents of Christianity. Can anti-semitism be traced back to the New Testament itself? Is the New Testament an anti-semitic book? The first time I encountered this suggestion I found it deeply shocking. I still do. But the question has to be faced. The very name, 'New Testament' as compared with 'Old Testament' can, in the minds of some, have certain implications.

The Old Testament is of course older than the New Testament. Christians certainly believe that in the person of Jesus something new and important has come - though, according to Jesus, he did not come to displace or devalue what had gone before.

However, in Christian practice the very terms 'Old' and 'New' Testaments are often used to put across an anti-Judaistic message. The implication is made that the basis of Christianity is the rejection of Judaism; that Judaism belongs to the past and the future to Christianity. Those who take this view are teaching in all kinds of ways that Judaism served its purpose in preparing the way for Christianity; that Judaism is therefore now a spent force, a hangover from the past, an interesting fossil which has somehow survived, like the Loch Ness monster, from a previous age.

Christians need to become sharply aware of the implications and dangers that may be inherent in the terms 'Old' and 'New' Testaments. Do you think I exaggerate?

A senior ministerial colleague in a previous charge once declared to me with pride that he had never yet preached from the Old Testament - only from the New Testament. Apart from the enormous impoverishment of a lifetime's neglect of such a large portion of the Scriptures, there is the appalling implication that the New Testament is somehow enhanced by the denigration of the Old. But my senior colleague was not alone. In an article published by the same Presbytery in March 1986 I read the following extract: 'Our faith is so often of the shallow sort to be found in the Old Testament ... the New Testament is much more blunt and honest'. More blunt and honest than the Psalms, Amos or Isaiah? In a booklet published by SCM in 1984 *'Introducing the Christian Faith'* there is a sentence on page 9 'If it be said that the Old Testament contains a number of things which strike us as un-Christian, we should remember that a progressive revelation must have primitive beginnings just as the finest roses have dung about their roots'!

This process of setting the New Testament against the Old Testament is already beginning the process of dispossessing the Jewish people from their place in the purpose of G-d - which sets the scene for anti-semitism. Like some other ministers I have taken to referring to the 'Old Testament' as the Hebrew Scriptures and to the New Testament as the Greek Scriptures. Another factor, however, is in the translation of the New Testament from Greek into English. Inevitably a translation reflects the attitudes and theology of the translator.

In Second Corinthians chapter 3 verse 14, Paul speaks of Moses who wore a veil over his face at Mount Sinai so that the Israelites might not be blinded by the reflected glory from one who had stood face to face with G-d. 'But now', says Paul, 'in Christ, it (the veil) is taken away'. Every translator whatever the wording gives the same meaning. But the New English Bible translates it to mean that the covenant is taken away. It reads, 'In Christ the old covenant is abrogated'. This gives a startling change in the meaning of the whole passage. It tells us not that in Christ the old covenant is extended to include Gentiles (which is what the first Church believed) but that God has now, in Christ, abrogated, annulled His covenant. He has gone back on His word - which the Scriptures say will stand forever. If this were true it would cut the foundations not only from Judaism but from Christianity as well. Both Christians and Jews depend utterly on the faithfulness of God. Even when we are unfaithful He remains faithful. He cannot deny himself. Those who teach that God has cast off His covenanted people dishonour the Creator himself.

In William Barclay's Commentary on Acts 9 verses 32-43 he states the following: 'Israel failed in her destiny. She was disobedient and rebelled against God. By her actions she lost her privileges and the Church became the true Israel'. This is displacement theology at its simplest. However academic such points may seem, the practical effect of such teaching is (in my view) to misrepresent the New Testament itself and thereby lay the foundations for attitudes of contempt and enmity towards Judaism and the Jews.

The process unfolds in this way - first, dismissal of the covenant with Abraham and the children of Israel. That covenant is now 'abrogated'. Then comes disparagement of the Jewish faith and, by implication, the Jewish people. Then having consigned them to a negative role in history, their fall from grace is supposed to bring about enhancement of the Christian Church as the 'new Israel'. Slowly but surely we are moving towards reducing God's ancient people to a mere scapegoat; what Martin Luther called 'a damned rejected race'. And from there it is only a futher step or two to the fires of the Inquisition, and of Auschwitz.

Just as the Nazi guards first had to divest their victims of their clothes, their hair, their dignity, their human personhood, and only then score them off like figures in a ledger, so there is a kind of theological murder that starts in small ways by the use of ideas and language which progressively divests the people of Israel of the covenant, of the promises, of their own Scriptures, of the unique dignity with which God has invested them - until they are stripped, shaved and reduced as a people to something very like candidates for a Final Theological Solution.

So far we have looked at the Church's attitude and use of the New Testament by translators, commentators, theologians and preachers. We are at least free to say that we disavow such teachings as an abuse of the Christian Scriptures by distortion of their meaning. But now we must move to the even more thorny ground of the text of the New Testament itself.

Is it possible that there are elements of antagonism to the Jewish people really present or latent in the body of the New Testament itself? This question has been the subject of many studies by both Jews and Christian writers. It is an extremely complex question and requires from Christians great sensitivity and painful honesty. The knife of enquiry is coming very close to the quick - and perhaps into it!

Preliminary general observations -

1. The New Testament was written almost entirely by Jews (with the exception of Luke's Gospel and Acts)
2. It was written mostly about Jews - the context is that of Jewish Society, life and religion
3. The central figure is Jesus, a Jew by birth, by faith and by practice. His person, teachings, work, life, death and resurrection can only be understood in the context of His Jewishness
4. The first Christians were all Jews. The first missionaries were all Jews. The first Church was Jewish.

So how can anyone expect to find such a book anti-semitic? It is vital to remember that the New Testament was written in a time of intense controversy and conflict and violence. Inevitably the writings reflect that. In order to understand the New Testament we need to understand the nature of that controversy.

Matthews Gospel has been described as at the same time the most Jewish and the most anti-Jewish of the first three Gospels. It was written by a Jew and addressed primarily to Jewish people who were followers of Jesus, so it lays much emphasis on the messianic claims of Jesus. Verses from the Hebrew scriptures are frequently quoted to show that Jesus is the one referred to by the prophets. At the same time it was written against the background of the rejection of these claims by the Temple and Synagogue authorities. This tension between the Christian Community (then Jewish) and the mainstream Jewish Establishment is reflected in the gospel. We can sense a very human feeling of exasperation in the infant Church against the Jewish authorities. The feeling was no doubt mutual.

Several elements in particular have been remarked on by Jewish readers today.

1.
The characterisation of the Pharisees: Jesus' controversies with Pharisees delineate them variously as 'blind leaders of the blind', as 'the leaven' (i.e. the evil element in society) and above all as 'hypocrites', people who preach one thing and practice another. It is significant that, in Christian cultures, the very word 'Pharisee' has become in itself a term of abuse. In fact we know from Jewish history that the Pharisees were not all hypocrites or unspiritual, or wicked. On the contrary they represented the best of their people and their faith. When the Temple was destroyed and its ritual ended it was the Pharisees who had the spiritual vitality that kept Judaism a living faith in the most difficult circumstances. We know that much of what Jesus taught and stood for was shared by the Pharisees and their great teachers. There were of course very important areas of difference. Perhaps understandably it is these areas of difference which the gospels stress in emphasising the negative relation of Jesus to the Pharisees and neglecting to show how much they had in common. A Jewish reader today might reasonably suggest that the overall effect is less than fair. When Jesus condemns particular attitudes of particular Pharisees the impression we get is of a wholesale condemnation of people who were in fact the flower of Judaism and with whom Jesus had very much in common.

I suppose that when you are engaged (as was the early Church) in a dispute with a rival group, you tend to select your material with the purpose of demolishing your opponents' position. The result may be more tendentious than balanced or fair. One thing to remember is that all the controversy reflected in Matthew and the rest of the New Testament was basically a family quarrel within the house of Israel - brother arguing with brother, Jew with Jew. We can often say very harsh things in a family quarrel for feelings run deep. We may have fewer inhibitions than in a dispute with a neighbour, because we know each other well enough to let ourselves go further than we might with a stranger. We know, in spite of deep feelings and high words, that behind our differences there is an unspoken awareness that the things that bind us together are far stronger than the argument of the moment.

But that situation changes drastically when an outsider enters the dispute. When the stranger takes sides in a family quarrel, without the love, without the family feeling, then the family quarrel takes on a different character.

So, as the Church became more and more made up of Gentiles, the disputes and tensions reflected in the gospels assumed for the Gentile Church the character of a quarrel with the Jewish people as such - a dispute without love, without understanding, without limit.

Some of the sayings in Matthew's gospel must have sounded powerful on the lips of Jesus the Jew. But how much more devastating they sound on the lips of the Gentile Church with generations of persecuting the Jews behind them.

2.
Another big factor was in the account of the trial and death of Jesus. The responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus - was it principally the Jewish or the Roman authorities who bear the blame? You can argue over that if you like, but the fact is that in the mind of most Christians (and for the past 2,000 years that means the whole of the non-Jewish population of Europe) - the Jews as such have been made to bear the guilt.

The name of 'Christ Killers', or even 'God Killers' has been branded on the image of the Jews. When we read the Passion story in the gospels today we can perhaps see how, in the Middle Ages when the Church was all-powerful, the beleaguered Jewish communities lived in fear of their lives during the season of Lent. It was then, having heard the death of Jesus read or preached, that the Christian mob streamed out of Churches to attack the Jewish ghetto.

With that background in mind read Matthew 27, where Pilate says 'I am innocent of this man's death', and all the people (i.e. the Jews then present) replied 'His blood be on us and on our children'. Think how these words must sound today to a Jew reading or hearing them. 'So this is how Christians see the Jewish people' he would think. Yet even today in many Christian Churches it is still being implied that Jews, simply by being Jews, bear a blood-guilt for a wrong committed by a courtyard full of a few dozen people - and that 2,000 years before any of us today were born. A Jewish man told me himself how on a plane a British woman said to him in conversation, 'There's one thing I will never understand. Why did you kill Jesus?'

When we read or use the New Testament today we have got to become far more aware of how dangerous certain passages can be if taken at face value by the thoughtless. We have to make absolutely sure in our sermons, our Sunday School lessons, our Bible Study groups and conversations that we spell out clearly what the story means and what it does not mean.

Equally in the passage telling of the destruction of the Temple we have the responsibility to kill the lie taught and repeated by the Church in so many ways - the lie that the Jews deserve all the suffering that has been heaped on them; that they are simply being punished for their sins as a race; that because they have not become Christians they deserve all they get.

If my words seem too strong let it be said that in a prominent Scottish pulpit a preacher was heard to quote the words 'His blood be on us and on our children' with the pungent comment, 'No wonder they have suffered so much ever since'. This in the presence of a survivor of the Holocaust.

How easily the Gentile Church has forgotten that even if some Jews bore some responsibility for what

happened, there is neither sense nor justice in extending that supposed guilt to generations centuries removed.

Christian Prayer books for use on Good Friday still pray that God would remove the veil from Jewish hearts. A fair reading of Christian-Jewish history might lead us to pray that God might remove the veil from Christian hearts. For if the Church had truly seen Jesus as he is could we really have treated his own people in the way we have? It is Christian blindness which has been the chief reason why the name of Jewus has such bitter associations for his own people today.

3.

Another major area of concern in the New Testament is the Gospel of St John called by Christians the most beautiful book of the New Testament, yet to Jewish readers it is the most disturbing of all.

Most prominent is John's use of the phrase 'the Jews', which occurs 71 times in his gospel, and in all but a few instances it means simply 'the enemies of Jesus'. We know that John himself was a Jew. So were the disciples. So was Jesus. So why on earth did he employ this phrase 'the Jews', as shorthand for Jesus' opponents, thus creating a scenario of 'Jesus *versus* the Jews?' He is not always consistent. In chapter 4, verse 22, he says, 'Salvation is of the Jews'. Yet in John 8 verse 44, Jesus is quoted as saying to some of his opponents, 'Your father is the devil'. What are we to make of that? I would respectfully suggest that this is the language of hyperbole. One Jew argues with other Jews and in the heat of the argument uses the kind of forceful overstatement that is intended to be arresting but not to be taken literally. Jesus could talk about squeezing a camel through the eye of a needle without being taken literally.

Unfortunately, this passage in John 8, v.44, read by a Gentile Church bitterly resenting the Jewish community which they could not convert, readily gave apparent sanction to their image of the Jews as the enemies of God. Many Christians literally classified the entire Jewish race as the Devil's children. Mediaeval Art in painting and stained glass regularly portrays the Jew as having horns - the mark of their father the devil!

It has been suggested that John used 'The Jews' as shorthand for the Jewish Establishment. So we used to talk of 'the Russians' - meaning not the Russian people but the Kremlin. We speak of 'the Americans' - meaning the White House or the CIA. Or does John's usage reflect the state of affairs by the time he wrote his gospel? By then the final break between the Church and Judaism had become bitter and entrenched on both sides. If it genuinely did reflect the state of Christian- Jewish attitudes at the time then it is most unfortunate to put it mildly. We can only be aware of it and try to counterbalance its effect in stereotyping the image of the Jews in Christian eyes. Personally, when I read these passages now I replace 'The Jews' with some phrase like 'the people' or 'the opponents of Jesus'. I believe in so doing I am being true to the intentions and meaning of John.

4.

Finally, we must look at the writings of Paul: it is clear that Paul has a very high view of the Jewish people and their enduring part in the calling of God. Romans is a key letter - especially chapters 9-11. There is the beautiful and powerful image of the Church as a branch grafted on to the ancient olive tree of Israel and the Covenant. The branch does not replace the original stock or roots. On the contrary it draws its life from them. The Church is the Church only insofar as, in Christ, we are grafted into Israel and so inherit the promises. There is no hint here of any final rejection of the Jewish people or abrogation of the everlasting covenant with them. I cannot pretend to be able to follow his reasoning that somehow the rejection of Jesus as Messiah by the bulk of the Jewish people has worked to the advantage of the Gentiles.

Several of Paul's letters deal with controversy over the 'Judaising Party'. This was a group within the Church who sought to reverse the decision taken at the Council of Jerusalem. The early Church (predominantly Jewish at that stage) decided not to require Gentile converts to live under Jewish law as regards food and circumcision. Those Christians called Judaisers (who may well have not themselves been born Jews) wanted to insist on circumcision as a requirement for Gentile Christians. Paul's argument with these people is a theological argument, on the grounds that these 'Judaisers' have misunderstood the nature of the Church. But remember that this was an argument internal to the Church. Unfortunately, in the generations after Paul, the theological argument aimed at the Judaising party within the Church was redirected towards a bitter antagonism against Judaism itself, and finally into a poisonous attack on the Jewish people as such.

The term 'Judaisers' to describe the pro-circumcision party within the Church can be dangerously misleading - perhaps suggesting that some Jewish-born Christians sought to force upon Gentile Christians some elements of their own specifically Jewish lifestyle. But it has been pointed out that the Judaisers were more probably Gentile Christians who hankered for some trappings of Judaism. Had they really been Jews trying to make Jews out of all Christians they would not have isolated circumcision from all the other commandments of the Torah and considered it a substitute for the entire Law. Paul's rhetoric is therefore directed against pagan-born distorters of the Christian message. He was not directing himself against the Jewish people or even Jewish Christians.

There are some passages in Paul which might be interpreted as anti-Jewish. In I Thessalonians 2, verses 14-16 he speaks of 'the Jews who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets and drove us out and displeased God ... God's wrath has

come upon them.'. Again we should remember that this is a Jew speaking of his own people and may therefore be held to stand in the tradition of the prophets who spoke many hard things to their own people. They spoke from a heavy heart, not in the spirit of cold and final rejection, but in aching love and sorrow and a firm hope that as God is faithful so Israel shall yet be restored. Such language was not anti-Semitic in Jeremiah and neither is it in Paul.

The purpose of the prophets was always that their Jewish hearers should take such judgment to themselves, discerning the grace that lay behind it, and the loyalty of God, despite all, to his people and his promises and covenant. The later Gentile Church has, however, largely refused to see such judgments as applying also to it, in the spirit of honest self-critical examination. Instead the Church has regularly selected all the promises for itself and smugly assigned the judgments to the Jewish community as a whole. In fact Paul specifically boasts of his Jewishness if only to show up those who only want to play at being Jews. He never suggests that Judaism represents false worship of God. When speaking of the Schism between Church and Israel it is the language of the broken heart. In the end he expresses an inextinguishable hope for the salvation of all Israel (Romans 11, verse 26).

The problem of the relationship between anti-Semitism and the New Testament is far-reaching, complex and demanding. I can only claim to have indicated some of the most sensitive areas to which the Church needs to apply itself, deeply, honestly and with heart-searching. If we Christians are to understand our own Scriptures and purge ourselves from the kind of distortion, imbalance and misunderstanding which have produced such disastrous effects upon our Jewish brothers and sisters, then we must be prepared both to learn and to unlearn.

We must reach for a deeper understanding of the context and background to the New Testament in order to get a full and balanced picture of the society in which it was written and the forces then at play in both Church and Israel. Until Jesus himself is fully reintegrated in our understanding into the Jewish community of his day in a positive way, the New Testament will remain a potentially deadly source for conscious and unconscious anti- Semitic attitudes. The Christian Scriptures were written at a time of tension and struggle, of controversy and debate, often between those who differed sincerely and deeply. Both sides spoke from an honest concern for the truth as they perceived it. I do not suppose that the authors of the Scriptures ever dreamed for one moment that the white heat of their passion for God's truth and God's love would harden into the cold steel of a deadly weapon to be turned against the very people in whom and through whom God's truth and love were first declared to the world.

When, if ever, the Church becomes more concerned to live the love of God which we profess, and to show that love by the way she seeks to understand others instead of trying to impose hereself on others; when the Church shows a genuine desire to face up and repent of her own sins and to unlearn her arrogance and prejudice, then perhaps both Christians and Jews may both be set free to take a fresh look at that Jewish man Jesus whose face we have so long masked both from the Jewish people and from ourselves by the mask of our own Gentile, anti-Jewish prejudice.

It is in a real understanding of the Jew, Jesus, that I look in hope for reconciliation between Church and Israel.

May that day of reconciliation under God come soon.

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BLUE NOTES ON THE BLACK KEYS by Ruzena Wood

How to Get Up When Life Gets You Down, A comparison and guide, Lionel Blue and Jonathan Magonet Harper Collins, Religious, London, 1992. Hardback £14.99.

It was the songwriter Vivian Ellis who first invited us to *Spread a Little Happiness* in a real twenties twinkle-toes number which comes sparkling through the pages of a now forgotten musical. Ellis drafted his accompaniment during a viral illness with a temperature of 103° with two friends fielding him glasses of water. Probably he never felt less like writing anything. Yet something of value emerged. We all know stories like that, all about life being an effort, absurd, painful, joyous and downright awful. Now two rabbis have ventured into the uncharted territory of life's raw deals: Lionel Blue and Jonathan Magonet. Considering these aspects at all takes sensitivity and honesty. The authors have both.

How to Get Up When Life Gets You Down is a misleading title. This is not a book seriously intended for emergency use: it would not, for example, index satisfactorily. The title suggests the kind of spiritual self-improvement instruction manual which has been pioneered in America since the fifties. *How to Get Up* is rather recommended reading for when you feel (reasonably) secure, with some resilience to assimilate it. Read along with a mug of bedtime cocoa, or after a business or committee meeting - whenever you need to refuel. Lionel Blue and Jonathan Magonet have produced an anthology from wide-ranging Jewish sources interspersed with personal reflections. They emphasise survival and attitudes to survival. At a time when politicians are wringing their hands over public morality *How to Get Up* reminds us that unselfconscious nobility can occur in unlikely places and in apparently unlikely people. Spiritual awareness can derive from human hurt and confusion - given a bit of help at the right time.

In his selection of prose and poetry Jonathan Magonet casts his net wide. He includes one of his own poems, describing a flight to New York when a talkative passenger got on his nerves. Among the contributors to the anthology there are familiar names: Nathan Sparansky, Erich Fromm and (my favourite contributor) Viktor Frankl. There is plenty of variety with Lorenz Hart, Lilli Palmer and Sammy Davis Jr., a convert to Judaism who has a lot of wise things to say about 'The difference between love and hate is understanding'. Natalia Ginzburg provides an under-the-microscope dissection of incompatibility in marriage; sad but love is still there, and her writing is veined with compassion. Scholarship blinded with thoughtfulness characterise the pieces written by Jonathan Magonet. He quotes a couplet by the German Jewish poet, Mascha Kaleko:

> 'When the waves break over me
> I dive deep down and look for pearls'.

There are those who dismiss Lionel Blue's writings as merely 'light pieces'. Let me tell you: anybody who dismisses a light creation has not ever cooked a successful soufflé. Of course some people are always anxious to convince you of their own intellectual superiority. But do they ever do anything? Write anything? There is a deliberate honesty which overcomes reticence in Lionel Blue's style and in the context of pastoral psychiatry it is essential. In the cafeteria where I regularly lunch, Jews, Christians and Agnostics have told me they listen to Lionel Blue's broadcasts because they recognise a brand of realism they can trust. Some of Lionel Blue's most perceptive remarks are one-liners, over in a flash. Read quickly you can miss the implications altogether. This is typical:

> 'Prayer works when you don't get greedy and treat G-d like a department store'.

Take on board an idea like that and you avert a monumental misunderstanding.

Have you ever noticed when you go on holiday there is always a couple who insist on telling you they went somewhere better last year? They recite the details of their previous trip in case they catch you enjoying something *this year*, making the best of wherever you are. Contrast this with Lionel's down-to-earth encouragement:

> 'In the departure lounge, search inside yourself and locate the happiness you're looking for in your own heart. If you do, you'll have a much better time. You'll relax, be less demanding and make more friends'.

I can vouch for the validity of that prescription. Travelling these days, particularly travelling alone, takes courage. And not just because of the hefty supplements hoteliers slap on a single room the size of an estate car.

When he wants to Lionel Blue gets down to brass tacks and hands it to you straight:

> 'If you want to locate G-d ... (ask) ''WHAT is G-d?''
> That's the question you encounter in the depths, whenever you're really shaken ... I suddenly remember how I used to pick unexpected flowers that grew among the ruins of the blitz, and I put my trust again in that silent Power, that like a midwife struggles to bring a new world to birth, from human folly and the pangs of death and war'.

Adversity comes in a myriad forms. We know that. At the same time something changes whenever G-d is offered His rightful place at the centre of any pain, suffering or captivity. The Lord is our source of hope. He displaces suffering. Evil and despair are not allowed to have the last word. Spiritual surrender to the Lord of all Creation can transform human lives beyond recognition. How to Get Up does not have a formal conclusion, but a common denominator along those lines is implied. There is a real need for the searching, mature communication of Lionel Blue and Jonathan Magonet, for we are not being insulted by the pulp of wishful thinking or 'politically correct' window dressing. A quotation from the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius sums up the tone of this book:

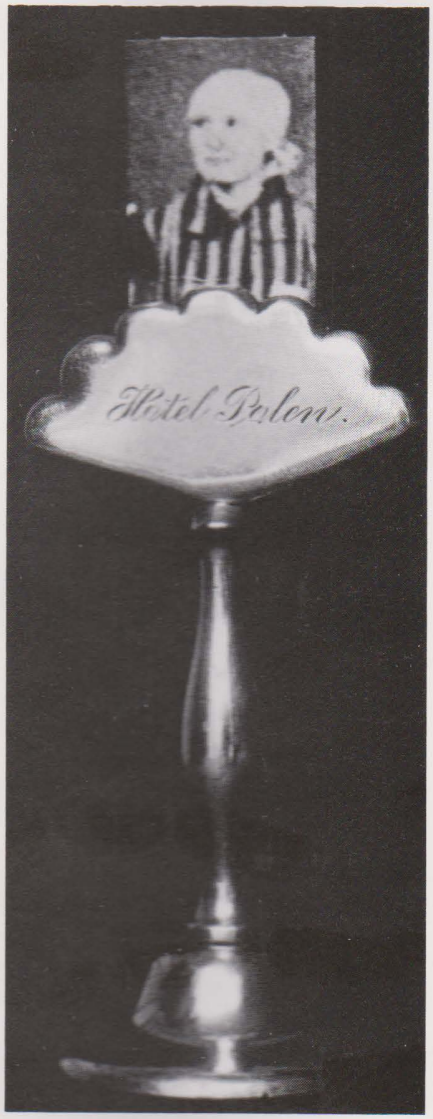
> 'If God exists, follow Him. And if he doesn't, try to be like Him'.

That, Lionel Blue points out, is the bridge between all of us. Marcus Aurelius would have made a good Jew.

I-D NATIONALE AT THE 369 GALLERY, COWGATE

8 December 1992 - 16 January 1993

by Maria Chamberlain (neé Jurand)



At a time when the heads of state were debating the future of a united Europe, the photographic work of 12 European artists spoke silently using powerful imagery to raise the issues of national identity, historical legacy, memory, displacement, loss.

Ania Bien's exhibit *Hotel Polen* celebrates post-war Jewish identity. Common to each photograph is the central image of a silver menu stand salvaged from the burnt out Hotel Polen in Amsterdam. As the viewer moves round the room the 'menu' in the stand changes and, as in a novel without words, the story unfolds. It is a story of a family, first shown self-consciously posing for a group photograph. The images tell of dispersal, humiliation, of travels to destinations unknown. These powerful images are interspersed with the ordinary detail of life: a child's drawing, so special to the mother, a familiar piece of wallpaper or fabric. Identical bleak, vacant landscapes follow identity shots of concentration camp victims whose unsmiling faces express helpless incredulity. Does the image of the dog portray a family pet or a concentration camp foe? The distinction between victim and perpetrator is blurred, for the truth of it is that one could be the other. So as the viewer engages in silent dialogue with each image he becomes unconsciously drawn within himself to become part of and integral to the whole.

There are other memorable statements on the Jewish theme. Astrid Klein's mountain of skulls as a buttress or landfill of the Brandenburg Gate reminds us that contemporary Europe is built on the bedrock of history. Indeed, it is heartening to see that the Jewish contribution to 20th century Europe is so well expressed.

The theme of suffering is common to several of the exhibits. The beautiful work of Cristina Garcia Rodero depicts the pilgrimages and piety of catholicism. Although here the sorrow is for Christ, one can empathise with their statement of suffering and their spirituality. The work of Wahner offers a sharp contrast. Is it not ironic that great European masters like Apollo, Spinoza and Shakespeare should be portrayed on banknotes? Here twelve of them are gathered together in an ironic parody of the Last Supper.

These are powerful images which we must not be allowed to forget. The regrettable events of the Holocaust are behind us now, but the words 'ethnic cleansing', 'racial struggles', 'religious unrest' ring in our ears. May the lessons of history make it possible for all of us to join in spirit to become citizens of a greater Europe and maybe eventually true Citizens of the World.

CBF MOVES TOWARD THE LONG HORIZON

'The financial position is very hard but the communities must be maintained. They will have to carry on when the young people have left'.

(German Jewish communal leader, Dr Otto Hirsch, addressing a London audience, 1937)

In 1992, Mr Ivica Ceresnjes, President of the Sarajevo Jewish community, repeated the message at CBF World Jewish Relief public rallies throughout the UK, but for Germany, read Bosnia.

A new publication, *The Long Horizon : 60 Years of CBF World Jewish Relief* marks not only the CBF's 60th Anniversary year, but also the organisation's return to its original purpose: the rescue and maintenance of European Jews in distress.

The Long Horizon is full of unique insights into the plight of refugees, negotiations with successive British governments and the work of three generations of philanthropic fund-raisers. A moving story of triumph over adversity and brotherhood in the face of overwhelming trauma, *The Long Horizon* is a miniature history of the Jewish people.

This accessible, candid book, whose author Barry Turner wrote *And The Policeman Smiled,* Bloomsbury's well-received history of Kindertransporte, is essential reading to anyone interested in the benevolence of Anglo-Jewry and its commitment to saving Jewish lives.

The Long Horizon : 60 Years of CBF World Jewish Relief is available from: CBF World Jewish Relief, Drayton House, 30 Gordon Street, London WC1H OAN (Tel 081 387 3925) priced £12.50 + £2.00 post and packaging. (Review copy available on request).