

THE EDINBURGH

# STAR

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Sivan 5766



- Rabbi Rose takes us on a trip down the Danube
- Non-Jewish perspectives of being married to a Jew
- Education in 'Klezmerology'
- It really is fun going kosher... it is... Really!

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE EDINBURGH JEWISH COMMUNITY



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**The Edinburgh Star**  
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Israeli birds of paradise

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# From the Editor

Since the last edition of the Star we have been exposed to the ups and downs, the comings and goings of the two Middle East peoples most in our minds. Following the election of the Palestinian Hamas party, its leaders made eager representations as to their sincerity, but it was not long before further aggression was shown, with Mahmoud Abbas effectively justifying the terrorist act by declaring that it was not surprising, given all that has happened in the past. One of our Israeli readers and past contributors observed, *'Hamas could be expected to show a friendly attitude; this is only a tactic. The real strategy remains; to wipe out the State of Israel'*

Sadly this cynical view appears to have some validity, but the necessary strength to defy such stated Palestinian objectives, will hopefully come from the more enlightened youth in Israel and Palestine. This can be seen so vividly in the West East Divan Orchestra, guided by its inspirational leader, Daniel Barenboim.

These young people, brought up in an atmosphere of simmering and often more blatant animosity towards each other, have succeeded in finding an area of commonality; they seem far more able to see beyond the warring instinct of their elders. I also see this on a personal level. My own son delights in belonging to a football team in America, which could be fairly described as comprising the League of Nations. It includes a whole spectrum of nationalities and religions, including Muslims and Jews. My wish is that our correspondent, and indeed all of our readers, will feel there may yet be a glimmer of hope.

In an effort to bring the concept of cultural harmony and inclusiveness into this edition, we asked three representatives of mixed marriages to share their thoughts on their own experience of living with a Jewish partner. Read how this relationship has shaped their family dynamics.

And whilst still in the realm of harmony, Simon Carlyle will give you some important facts about the essentials you may hitherto have rashly omitted in your Klezmer education.

David Kaplan writes about what he perceives to be Edinburgh Star's obsession with trying to define 'who is a Jew' Whilst levels of orthodoxy have certainly been explored in the past, in truth, the topic in question has only once before been aired. But to shy away from anyone's personal views is not within the ethos of this publication and so despite his rather uncomfortable assertions, it is not the Star's objective to be censorial.

On a more positive note, his father Morris writes refreshingly about the Jewish way forward. He outlines his own personal contribution, in which he has successfully encouraged families to feel comfortable and to participate regularly in his monthly Shabbat service.

Still on the theme of seeing things from various points of view, we have a scholarly discussion about 'The Jewish perception of Jesus', the last part of which will be continued in the next edition.

With the passing of one of Scotland's most highly respected modern novelists, the 'Star' has invited Michael Lister to pay tribute to the literary achievements of Muriel Spark. That is not to say that we fail to acknowledge a son's loss of his mother, which might be inferred from the apparent lack of a more personal tribute. There is, however, every expectation for this omission to be rectified, as Robin, despite his sad estrangement with his mother, has generously agreed to write a personal account of her life in the next edition, by which time his more immediate emotions will have lessened.

As ever, community news is the consolidating factor for all readers. This is an important component of the magazine; many will say the most important component, so please help by keeping us informed.

With Shavuot nearly behind us and Rosh Hashanah on the way, it is timely to acknowledge Arnold Rifkind's quiet and efficient organisation of the flyers and greetings list for the Yom Teruah page, not forgetting the subsequent moneys it raises for both the Community and the Star.

Our grateful thanks are also due to Norman Berger, Norman Dorfman and Ian Shein for the effort they have put into taking care of the delivery side of the magazine for so many years. The new method of dispatch, having proved successful, means the same manpower is no longer required so now we would like to express our appreciation for all their hard work.

Shavuot Tov.

Judy Gilbert



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# Troubled Danube: Reflections on Hungary

Rabbi David Rose

Balagan! That is the word that comes to mind when one thinks of modern Hungary, in both a positive and negative sense. The country itself is a mixture of styles and people, the nation's relation to its history is confused and the Jewish community is possibly the biggest mess of all. This, of course, makes Hungary a fascinating and worthwhile place to visit, as I found out when I spent eleven days there in January.

The first balagan is in the physical make up of the country itself and especially Budapest. Unlike Prague or Vienna, the city is a hotchpotch of differing architectural styles, reflecting Hungary's varied history. One can gaze across from the stunning neo-Gothic Parliament, (surely the most beautiful in the world and with free entry to EU citizens to boot), to the late Medieval castle area. This area itself contains a medieval palace (with excellent museums), the 19th century gothic style Fisherman's Bastion, and a medieval church with 19th accrements. This is just a taste of the feast for the eyes that Budapest's architectural balagan offers. Yet, perhaps the best thing about Budapest is the fact that these treasures are not concentrated in one area. Rather, they are often dispersed among normal drab looking buildings. For example, walking down Rakoczi Ut, the main shopping boulevard, one's eye is suddenly caught by a wonderfully decorated building that looks like a museum or church, but is in fact simply a cinema. This is also true outside the city. Visiting the picturesque tourist trap of Szentendre, one notices that many of the buildings need a coat of paint, but occasionally you come across a structure that appears to have been recently restored.

In between the churches and monuments you will even find a small synagogue. This town also houses a Marzipan museum, which is well worth a visit, even if you don't wish to eat a replica of Michael Jackson!

**“Hungary is of course a European country but with non-European genes. Its people look and speak like no one else in Europe.”**

Possibly the most interesting thing about Hungary is its people. Here also we have anomalies and paradoxes. Hungary is of course a European country but with non-European genes. Its people look and speak like no one else in Europe. It is a country occupied for a century and a half by the Ottomans but with a negligible Muslim minority. Its national Protestant church only comprises a minority of its mainly Catholic people. This people, of course, speak a language different to all their neighbours. Related, but unintelligible, to Finnish and Estonian, the unique nature of Hungarian gives Hungary a somewhat insular character; despite being located in the heart of Europe. If you wonder why Hungarians often do not speak English, try learning Hungarian!

**“The role of the Hungarian army, police and ordinary informers are conveniently swept under the carpet.”**

However, the most disturbing thing about Hungary is its relationship to its past. Other than casual references to Hungary's 'lost territories', (Croatia, Transylvania etc...) the best illustration of this is the Terror House. This institution, part museum, part memorial, was set up by the last right-wing government. They appear to have learnt a lot about propaganda from the communists. Overdone, over-dramatised displays, greet you at every turn, with their selective take on history. Jews especially have much to be disturbed about. The Nazi 'Occupation' is juxtaposed everywhere with the Soviet 'Occupation'. The crimes of the Arrow Cross are dealt with briefly, the crimes of the communists at length and the crimes of the Horthy regime under which the majority of Hungary's Jews were allowed to be murdered, not dealt with at all. And then there is the peculiar statement that, owing to the war, the loyalty of Hungary's Jews was weakened and this allowed the communist regime to conduct campaigns against Zionism, in which 'innocent' Jews were also caught up; Comrade Stalin would be pleased!



But the most disturbing thing about the place comes at the end; and has nothing to do with Jews. After being transported to the memorial in the cellars, while a former warder describes how he hanged people, you come to the wall of the 'victimizers'.

These fifty or so names are of people, many of who are still alive, who are held guilty of the crimes of the communist regime. Not only were none of them ever tried or convicted in a court of law but also the assertion that these were the guilty ones, effectively exonerates everyone else. Hungarian society is thus absolved of the blame for forty years of its history, which was seemingly imposed upon it by a handful of individuals; this in a country that has still not opened up the secret service files to the general public. The role of the Hungarian army, police and ordinary informers are conveniently swept under the carpet. A society that cannot face its past cannot truly move on to face the future, and in this regard, Hungary has a long way to go.

So what about the Jewish Community? This appears to be the biggest balagan of all. Firstly, Hungarian Jewry must be the most assimilated in the world. Of the estimated 100,000 Jews in Hungary today, only about 8,000 are in some way connected to organised Jewish life. The community appears to be run by an oligarchy, accountable only to itself. As in Hungary, religious organisations are by law exempt from financial scrutiny, no one knows what is really going on. There is a kosher butcher, but I was told that something ordered in

June might come by February. The three-hour trip to shop in Vienna is more reliable. The main Orthodox synagogue is strange indeed, if stunningly beautiful. While they appear to pray according to the normal Ashkenazi liturgy; the style of prayer is Hassidic. A special feature of Hungary is the Neologies movement. This, a 19th century version of Modern Orthodoxy, is today an eclectic mix. Many of the synagogues are indistinguishable from our own; while the main, world famous, Dohany synagogue has an organ and a more Conservative-type service. Women, however, are kept firmly in their place. No synagogue has mixed seating and women are not able to vote on community matters, let alone participate in a service. The English tour of the Dohany synagogue, full of both historical and religious inaccuracies, seemed mainly to be concerned with who gave them money, and who didn't.

Lest it all seem depressing, this is not the whole story. There appear to be a couple of excellent Jewish schools and the most dynamic body in Hungarian Jewry: the Pesti Shule. This synagogue was taken over by a group of young professionals and academics, who in the last few years have turned it into a dynamic spiritual and intellectual centre. On a Wednesday night, for example, lawyers, doctors and students come to learn Hebrew for three hours! Lectures, Shabbat lunches and a friendly atmosphere make it a must to visit. Indeed Budapest as a whole, and its eclectic Jewish community are themselves well worth a visit.

## The Triumph of Military Zionism

Colin Shindler

Inevitably, therefore, the question must arise of 'transferring' those Arabs elsewhere so as to make at least some room for Jewish newcomers. But it must be hateful for any Jew to think that the rebirth of a Jewish State should ever be linked with such an odious suggestion as the removal of non-Jewish citizens.

So wrote Vladimir Jabotinsky, the founder of the Revisionist Zionist movement, in his preparatory notes for his speech in Dublin in January 1938. Such a categorical opinion would surprise many in Israel today – from the belligerent far Right, who quote Jabotinsky at their rallies, to those on the unthinking section of the Left, who believe that Jabotinsky was a dyed-in-the-wool Fascist. He was a far more sophisticated and complex figure than such spitting imagery conveys. In part, the vision of Jabotinsky that comes down to us 65 years after his death was constructed by both David Ben-Gurion and Menachem Begin, a product of the internecine war between the Right and the Left in Israel. But it was undoubtedly the product of Menachem Begin's determined attempt to seek and maintain the leadership of the national camp in Israel in 1948. It was also part of a wider desire to retroactively reinterpret Revisionist Zionism through the prism of the Irgun and its political successors.

Menachem Begin always regarded himself as a disciple of Jabotinsky, but this was based on a selective reading of Jabotinsky's canon of writings. It is significant that Begin always referred to

the Jabotinsky movement, but rarely to the Revisionist movement. Both men were influenced by nineteenth century Romantic nationalism, the Italian Risorgimento and the Polish struggle for independence. Yet Jabotinsky had condemned the Easter Uprising whereas the Irgun enthusiastically embraced Irish Republicanism. Although undoubtedly inspired by Jabotinsky, Begin was also profoundly influenced by intellectuals in the Yishuv such as Abba Achimeir from the Maximalist camp of the Revisionists.

Abba Achimeir taught at the school for the Betar madrichim. In part, this had been deliberately established to define the evolving identity of Betar. Was it a pioneering youth movement similar to those in other Zionist parties? Or was it an embryonic military organization? The school followed an increasingly radical line. Military training was seen not as preparation for a new Jewish Legion, as Jabotinsky had envisaged, but as the means of establishing the military wing of a national liberation movement. The preference of the school's cadets for direct action provided the nucleus for the Maximalist tendency in the Revisionist movement.

Achimeir truly believed that 'whoever has the youth – has the state' and thereby directed all his intellectual and organisational energies towards influencing the youth.

Achimeir joined the Revisionists from the labour movement in 1927. His revolutionary zeal was an implant from the Left. Achimeir spoke about

preparing and training for 'our own 1917' and facilitating an 'October Revolution' in Zionism. Achimeir was highly influenced by the writings of Oswald Spengler and the work of Robert Michels, a German sociologist and socialist who had followed Mussolini into fascism. Abba Achimeir's nom de plume in Revisionist publications was often Abba Sikra whom the Babylonian Talmud refers to as the head of the zealots, the biryoni. Assassination of public figures could therefore be justified for national reasons.

**“The Maximalists initially viewed the wave of idealism that swept through German youth with a certain sense of vindication.”**

Throughout 1932, Jabotinsky attempted in several articles to apply 'corrections' to the growing exuberance of the Maximalists and their adherents in Betar in the Diaspora. 'When to press the accelerator, when to use the brake'. The electoral breakthrough of Hitler in July 1932 convinced Jabotinsky that it was important that his movement should not be contaminated by acts and accusations of extremism. The Maximalists initially viewed the wave of idealism that swept through German youth with a certain sense of vindication. Germany, they reasoned, now had a direction and a determined leadership. It was a return to the era of Bismarck and Prussian values. The

pernicious influence of the Marxists had been halted. In the eyes of the Maximalists, Nazi anti-Semitism was deemed to be unreal and thereby assumed a secondary importance. Jabotinsky's fury, however, knew no limits. He angrily complained that such articles about Hitler were 'a stab in the back for me personally and for all of us.' He ridiculed those who found elements of 'a national liberation' movement in Nazism.

Events in Germany quickly educated Achimeir and his supporters, yet Maximalism was not extinguished. Instead it became increasingly influential and dominant within Betar. While pro-fascist inclinations declined, it did not alter the general approach of the Maximalists. In Poland in the early 1930s, many members of Betar supported the Maximalists including the local commander in Brest-Litovsk, Menachem Begin. In 'A Legend in His Lifetime', Begin praised Achimeir as 'a brilliant journalist' whose articles came from within the genre of 'spiritual literature that incites the blood'. Begin significantly wrote this article in August 1935 on the eve of the founding conference of the New Zionist Organisation. It was an implicit criticism that Revisionism had not evolved into a body embracing direct action – and ultimately the armed struggle.

Jabotinsky faced the impossible task of bridging the gap between Maximalists, with their reliance on direct action, fuelled by neo-Bolshevik ardour, and his colleagues on the Revisionist Executive who wished to

remain within the Zionist Organisation and pursue diplomatic initiatives with Britain. Jabotinsky was no longer able to maintain the distinction between encouraging youth to be militant and defiant with their increasing desire to take up arms and retaliate. Maximalism therefore found its time and place because events – the rise of Nazism, the Arab Revolt, increasing Polish anti-Semitism and Jewish degradation, the inability of the British to live up to Zionist aspirations, the powerlessness of the mainstream Zionist organisation – proceeded to overwhelm normative Jewish responses.

Following the Irgun's retaliation against Arab targets in November 1937, Menachem Begin and others in Poland published the manifesto of the 'Activist-Revisionist Front', an unequivocal attack on Jabotinsky's policies. Yet Jabotinsky was not disavowed, but was selectively endorsed. His inspiration rather, than his policies, was embraced.

In September 1938, the famous confrontation between Begin and Jabotinsky took place at a Betar conference in Warsaw. Begin proposed an amendment to the Betar oath which Jabotinsky had formulated in 1934. Instead of 'I will train to fight in the defence of my people, and I will only use my strength for defence.', Begin proposed 'I will train to fight in the defence of my people and to conquer the homeland'. This change displaced the interpretation from a primarily defensive understanding to one which entertained the idea of offensive action. Although this effectively reversed

Jabotinsky's understanding of the Iron Wall, Begin's speech was greeted by tumultuous applause. Jabotinsky, however, was considerably irritated and had interrupted Begin several times during his speech. He said that 'there is no place in Betar for this kind of nonsense' and compared Begin's speech and its reception to the sound of the squeaking of a door. The Betar leadership still voted for the change and thereby moved away from the Revisionists towards the Irgun, from diplomacy to armed struggle, from belief in England to fighting her. As Prime Minister of Israel in 1980, Begin denied that he was ever in any serious dispute with Jabotinsky and that there had been a misunderstanding.

Would Jabotinsky have embraced military Zionism if he had lived? It all remains in the realm of speculation, but his determination to outmanoeuvre his radical acolytes, including Abba Achimeir and Menachem Begin, is a matter of recorded fact. As the Begin era recedes, a more rounded appreciation of Jabotinsky will certainly emerge to the benefit of all students of Zionist history.

Colin Shindler's latest book 'The Triumph of Military Zionism: Nationalism and the Origins of the Israeli Right' has just been published by I. B. Tauris.

Colin Shindler is an expert on the history and politics of Israel. Ploughshares into Swords? Is just one of his many publications on Middle-East matters.

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# A Day of Jewish Culture

Janet Mundy

Sunday 5th March was proof that Jewish cultural events in Scotland are like buses – you wait ages then three come along at once. Glasgow’s Jewish Book Day fortunately finished early enough for a dash back to Edinburgh, where I had to make a choice, between Colin Shindler’s talk to the Lit, and Ladino songstress Yasmin Levy – the latter a temptation I found irresistible.

Decisions made and tickets purchased, I was one of several who headed through to Glasgow to discover that I had left the ice and snow of Edinburgh behind for a sunny West of Scotland early spring day. The Jewish Book Day took place in the pleasant surroundings of Eastwood House in delightful parkland. Jeremy Isaacs was the initial speaker, renowned as a television producer throughout the country, but still, as he was once described, “a small dark Glasgow Jew” (he only took exception to the “small”). He has recently published his memoir “Look Me In The Eye”, which provided him with an excellent opportunity to talk about his personal and professional life. The title of the book was inspired by the words of Lord Reith (founder of the BBC) at a Glasgow Academy prize giving. No doubt “the terrifying presence” of Lord Reith left an impression on all the schoolboy recipients, but only Isaacs among them would have been inspired to have such a distinguished broadcasting career of his own. Isaacs spoke eloquently of his professional achievements, particularly “World at War”, including the research necessary to track down former SS officers and persuade them to be interviewed for the programme. However, he was equally keen to talk about his personal landmarks, most notably the tragic death of his brother and sister-in-law at the hands of a PLO bomber in 1975.

For the second and third sessions of the afternoon, there were once again agonising choices to be made, each time between works set in Britain and Israel. As interested as I am in politics, music and, in this case, literature, always win out, and I found myself in the audience for two fascinating authors, both daughters of famous fathers, with a clear mutual admiration. The first, Emma Richler, daughter of the late, lamented Mordecai, read an early section from her novel “Feed My Dear Dogs” about a large, eccentric Jewish family not unlike her own, interweaving British icons Dickens and Shackleton into their day-to-day existence. Asked about her influences (Jewish, Canadian, British?) she would only allow herself to be allied to one tradition, that of storyteller, as an inspiring reader of her own work.

The second “daughter”, Naomi Alderman (father Geoffrey), was in the audience listening to Emma, and the discussion between them was an interesting insight into the mindset of an author. For example, they laughingly agreed that critics often read symbolism into writing where none was intended.

Naomi herself had been thrust into prominence, as her first novel “Disobedience” was only published days before, and had just finished being broadcast on “Book at Bedtime” on Radio 4, much to her delight. The day after the Festival, it was announced that the book is on the longlist for the Orange Prize, which I trust will have equally pleased her. However, had we not known that she is a very newly published author, we would not have guessed, as she responded to audience questions with enthusiasm and confidence. Naomi’s novel is set in the Orthodox Jewish community in Hendon, which has to try to come to terms with an unusual love affair. Much has been made of the lesbian relationship, but Naomi contends that her interest was in the human dilemma of secularism versus religion and modernity versus tradition – “holding a paradox in their hands”. The little we learned about Naomi’s personal life (a detailed knowledge of Kashrut and a love of “Buffy the Vampire Slayer”) suggests that these are contradictions she lives with every day.

I missed the more political strand of the afternoon. Firstly Alan Kaufman, formerly of the Israel Defence Force, talking about his novel “Matches”, based on his experiences, gave a bleak view of the possibility of peace in the Middle East. Then Hirsh Goodman, author, political analyst and Middle East news correspondent, spoke about his memoir “Let Me Create a Paradise, God Said to Himself: A Childhood in South Africa and a Life in Israel”.

The Book Festival in itself would have been enough cultural exposure for one day. However, when I heard a few weeks previously that Yasmin Levy was coming to Edinburgh, I felt it was an opportunity too good to miss. I have heard her sing “Adio Kerida” on the radio several times, as well as snatches of other Ladino songs, and was instantly enraptured. In any case, I love “roots” music and to hear one of its great contemporary exponents, who also happens to be Jewish, was sure to be a rare treat. She did not disappoint. Not only is Yasmin Levy a genuine diva (in the best meaning of the word), with an extraordinary voice and compelling stage presence, but she is (once again) a daughter of a notable father. Isaac Levy died when Yasmin was one, but he left her a unique legacy, having collected and published a large library of Ladino songs that were previously only handed down from mothers to daughters. Although Yasmin was born in Jerusalem, she sings only in Ladino and Spanish. A highlight of the evening was when she sang a traditional Sephardi song, “Noches Noches”, in Flamenco style (itself based on Jewish and Muslim liturgical music), accompanied by her superb band on classical guitar, violin, woodwind and percussion. She finished her performance with an unaccompanied lullaby – a perfect end to an inspiring day.

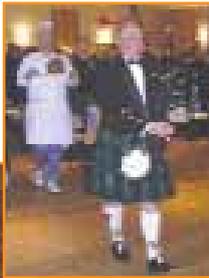
# Around and About The Shein Scene

## 17 January

Luncheon Club member Jonathan Kish is a member of a group of players under the auspices of Lothian Region Age Concern. Based at Meadowbank Stadium, it gives concerts to Retirement Homes, Senior Citizens groups and associated bodies. On one wintry afternoon in January, they came to our Luncheon Club where, after the members partook of a typically tasty meal, they were entertained by Jonathan and his colleagues to a half hour mix of pantomime, songs and sketches, one of which had the intriguing title 'The Mad Hatters Tea Party'. I wouldn't dream of elaborating further. A most pleasant after-lunch soirée was enjoyed with comments of 'let's have more'.

## 29 January

The colourfully attired top table guests were led in by piper Jim Cooper to herald the



opening of the Community Centre's Burns Night. Anita

Mendelssohn welcomed the over 90 group (not age it is hastened to add) before chairman Ian Shein took over the proceedings. There followed an evening, always much cherished by our community, comprising an excellent meal complemented by witty and



lighthearted speeches. Hilary Rifkind and her hard working team certainly gave us a dinner of culinary excellence. From the moment Jim Cooper again took to his pipes followed by cook Harold Abrahams wearing his splendid white-chef's hat and carrying aloft the steaming haggis, the dramatic action packed evening commenced with well-known, jolly Fred Lowrie addressing the haggis. David Neville gave the amusing well-researched Toast to the Lasses, and his wife Michelle, responded appropriately with a cleverly balanced reply. Burns songs were beautifully sung by Rosemary McKerohar accompanying herself on the harp. The enjoyment of a first class evening was assured.

The main speaker was no stranger to our community. Councillor Eric Milligan, former Lord Provost of the city, a first class attraction no matter the occasion, gave the Immortal Memory in inspiring form. His informative, witty, entertaining and authoritative delivery was typical Milligan oratory. Piper Jim deserved his extra dram when again he was called to the fore to assist kilt-clad Rabbi David Rose in reciting grace after meals to the strains of Scotland the Brave. An amusing vote of thanks by Jonny Sperber rounded off an excellent Burns Night to remember.

## 22 February

Nine tables of enthusiastic players sat down to a WIZO Bridge evening. The event, with a break for a most pleasant tea of sandwiches and a variety of cakes, proved to be a great success. Winners were top players Alec Rubenstein and Sid Zoltie. Sponsored by John Donne, the evening raised £339 for WIZO funds.



## 5 March

WIZO introduced a novel concept when they invited Edward Green to present an illustrated talk on Royal Jewellery to an audience of 60 in the Community Centre. Edward, formerly a Director of Royal Jewellers Aspreys and Garrards, gave a fascinating and illuminating exposé on jewellery once owned and worn by Royal Families, our own as well as European, and priceless items, the responsibility of the State. His talk was interspersed with entertaining and informative anecdotes of his many contacts with the Queen Mother and the King of Norway when he had to examine valuables for heritable purposes. Kate Goodwin, who had introduced Edward, tendered a vote of thanks and presented him with a certificate of appreciation from local members of WIZO; the organisation benefited to the tune of £500.



## 13 March

Rabbi David Rose read the Megillah in his own inimitable way for the Purim service in a frenzy of hat changes to interpret all the characters 'on stage'. Sparkly crowns for the Queens, devil's horns for Haman, a bowler hat for Mordechai and a big crown for Ahashverus. There were extraordinary voices to match. If ever Rabbi Rose is thinking of a change of direction, he might like to consider a career on the stage.

There followed the ever-popular fancy dress parade with David Neville interviewing the candidates most professionally...as expected. With hamentaschen to the fore and other

refreshments duly consumed, curtains were lowered, grease paint removed, crumbs swept away, the celebration of Esther's victory for her people was over for another year.



### 15 March

A Special General Meeting of the Congregation was held on when two motions, unanimously approved by Council, were on the agenda for the former's approval, (1) that Rabbi Rose's contract be extended for one year from 1 May 2006 and thereafter there be a rolling contract (which both parties desired) and (2) that a new Constitution be approved for the Congregation.

The President, Philip Mason, spoke of the excellent work undertaken by the Rabbi since he came here three years ago, of his exuberance, enthusiasm and efforts. He had inspired a good name within the wider community and his hospitality was renowned... especially his cooking. He readily

became involved in all age groups and organisations.

Bill Simpson inquired about any possible contractual problems but was assured that these had been previously evaluated and cleared by the Hon. Solicitor.

The Executive adequately dealt with a number of questions regarding the proposed new Constitution, copies of which had previously been circulated to all members. Points arising included the titles of Executive, duties of sub-committees, encouragement of members to stand for council, and provision of facilities for members. Both motions were passed and the latter will be operative at the AGM later this year. Arnold Rifkind proposed a vote of thanks to the President and Council.

### 19 March



A pancake morning was hosted by Post-bar/bat mitzvah class members



who have become aspiring filmmakers.

The group of eight 14-15 year-olds decided to produce a film about keeping Judaism alive in the community.

They intend to interview members of the older generation and take a trip down memory lane with them.

In order to help raise the £2000 needed for a professional production, they recently hosted a pancake morning at the Shul.

Melia Rosen, one of the group members, said: 'in the last three months we have worked as a team. Our energetic discussions on how to keep Judaism alive in Edinburgh ended in a decision to make a film. The first thing to do was raise funds and as everyone knows, the best way to get Jewish people together is to offer good food'.



### Edinburgh goes to Aberdeen

An array of historic Judaica was displayed to invited members of the public on 14th March at the University of Aberdeen. The twin of the 14th century Sephardic Megillah, acquired from a travelling alumnus in the 19th century, was read to the congregation by Rabbi David Rose who, donning the appropriate millinery for each Purim character, slowly worked his way across the ancient parchment.

The collection of artefacts included the most treasured Hebrew Bible compiled in Naples 1493-94 in the brief period of peace enjoyed by the Jewish community before the French invasion in February 1495. The exquisite ornamentation incorporating lapis lazuli pigment and gold leaf, framed the text. Personal details of the work's patrons were also to be found scribbled at the foot of the sponsored pages. The Biblia Latina contained detailed specifications of the Temple from which an attempt of recreation was once made.

Although some of the collection is regularly presented to serious students under strict supervision, this was one of the rare occasions that so many examples were on display and accessible to touch. An era of cultural life styles of the Jews at this time could be found between the pages of a botanical compendium with contributions by the Portuguese Jewish doctor D'Orta who maintained interests in botany and the medical properties of plants. A very small Scottish Hebrew dictionary was also among the 14 or so wonderful exhibits.

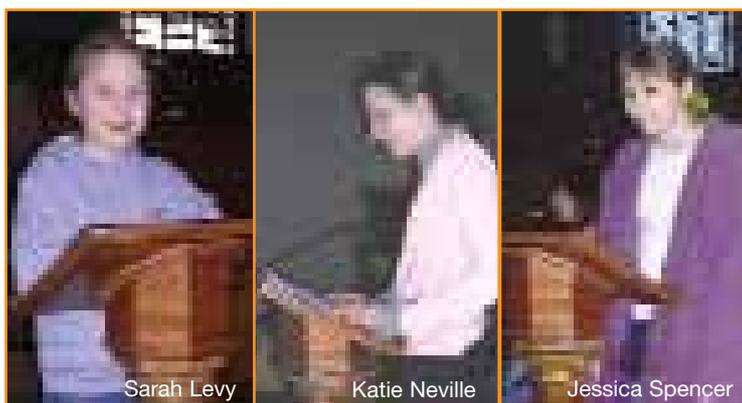
Many thanks go to Aberdeen University for providing festive sustenance and putting so much effort into celebrating Purim in such a unique way.

# Youth Service Programme

26th February 2006



Shachrit Taking out the torah		Lawrence Taylor James Hyams
Torah Reading	Revii Maftir	William Gilroy Lawrence Taylor
Torah synopsis	Rishon + Sheni Shelishi Revii + Hamishi Shishi Maftir Haftorah	Sonya Rosen Sarah Levy Jessica Spencer Isabel Kelpie Amanda Hyams Melia Rosen
Gelilah 1 Gelilah 2		Jonathan Field Benjamin Griffin
Prayer for the Queen Prayer for Israel Returning the Torah		Isaac Forsyth Mark Gilbert James Hyams
Sermon		Erica Budd
Musaf		Lawrence Taylor
Anim Zemirot		Freddie Green Clare Levy
Wardens		William Gilroy James Hyams
Shamash		Michael Taylor



## Positive Steps forward in our Community

Morris Kaplan tells interviewer Elaine Levy about how his vision of a thriving younger community in Edinburgh is being realised.

### What gave you the idea for starting the family Service?

For many years I kept asking the question 'Who is the Pied Piper of Edinburgh Shul?' as there were never any children in Shul.

Was it the Shul council, the Rabbi or Education committee at that time, or was it the parents and the children who were the Pied Piper. The sad thing was that no one seemed to care.

I concluded that it was a mixture of all of them and the way to approach the problem was to have a family service, specially designed for the enjoyment of adults and children, so I set about devising a user-friendly service.

### Who exactly is the service for?

The service is for everyone in the community. Originally it was aimed at the parents and their families who did not come to Shul, but now we attract many adults on their own.

Many people don't come to Shul for many reasons.

- They can't read Hebrew very well
- Can't follow the service
- Find the service boring
- Can't be bothered
- Alternative things to do on a Saturday morning

.....and many other reasons

So I worked out a family service that would combat all of these things and fortunately on Family Service days, the Bais Hamedersh is full of parents, children, families and adults, so I reckon I must have got it right.

### Would you describe the format of the service for those people who have not attended one?

We come together to enjoy our Shabbos Service



We start at 11am prompt and finish by 12.00 mid day, so everyone knows exactly how long the service is.

We use our own Siddurim (Art Scroll and Singers), making our service very easy to follow.

The service consists of all popular and major parts of the Shabbos service; Shema, Torah, Amidah, Adon Olam and many other popular prayers, which we say and sing together. We also have a sermon. Everyone is able to participate no matter what age or level you are at. The service is suitable for all ages and is very friendly.

We have our own kiddush, which allows some of our own members to make the blessing and to socialise, which is very important.

**You have been running these services monthly for over 2 years. What has been your greatest joy?**

Every month my heart bursts for joy as the Bais Hamedrash fills up for our Family Shabbos Service and it was wonderful when we had to move our services on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to the communal hall due to the large number of people who wanted to come to the Family Service.

I am so proud of the increased knowledge and confidence of everyone who attends the service

and I get great nachas watching the continuing participation of the younger members.

My greatest joy is in the knowledge that my family service is helping the older and younger members to enjoy their Jewishness and be confident and comfortable in Shul thereby helping them with their Jewish identity, which I know will be with them for the rest of their lives. For me to have achieved this is indeed a Mitzvah.

The children of the community have been playing a more active role in the main Shabbat services since the inception of the annual youth service by the Rabbi and the monthly service.

**The children of the community have been playing a more active role in the main Shabbat services since the inception of the annual youth service by the rabbi and your monthly service. How do you see the role of young boys and girls developing within the community?**

The Edinburgh community is extremely lucky to have such a fine array of youngsters coming up.

The family service has given them knowledge and confidence and this was seen to good effect during the annual youth service, when all the youngsters participated.

Many Shul members seem to think that our community is slowly dying. I completely disagree and point to the family service as an example of what can be done, if you really care. Our youngsters should be encouraged to participate even more and together, with their parents, will, I am convinced, keep for us a vibrant, Jewish community.





Morris Kaplan started the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation family Service in September 2003 and it has been running monthly ever since with additional services on Yom Tavim.

Family services are held monthly in the Bais Hamedrash. For more information and timetable please email or phone Morris Kaplan

Email: [morris.Kaplan@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:morris.Kaplan@blueyonder.co.uk)

Tel: 0131 339 8201

Photos: Morris and Myrna Kaplan reward parents and children for their regular support of the 'family service'.

With Compliments from  
Mark & Judith Sischy

## Adventures in Kashrut

Stephanie Brickman

I am a “Jew by Choice”, a term coined by those kindly people who feel “convert” sounds too much like convict. I am married to Josh, a “Born Jew”, who was brought up reform in the US. As a couple we’re probably not top of the list of people you would expect to kosher their home, but we have.

Back when I was converting I met Josh’s family for the first time, and while I wasn’t keeping properly kosher then, I had cut out pork and seafood. It was the naming of Josh’s niece Abigail in Washington DC, and the various visiting family members went out for a meal being held in the private room of an upmarket Chinese Restaurant.

What I didn’t realise was that, to Josh’s brother and sister-in-law, going out was a chance for them to eat everything they wouldn’t have at home. There must have been fifteen delicate little courses, pork on lobster on crab - each morsel more treif than the last.

“The first stage for anyone going kosher involves several trips to Ikea”



Being nicely brought up, I pretended to eat for two or three courses until Josh noticed what was going on. Everyone gradually dissolved into laughter at the irony of a table of born Jews munching away, with one Jew-in-waiting trying to swerve the shrimp. As my 91 year old Polish friend Ida often says “Stephanie you really are a very kosher Shiksa!”

Four years later, here we are telling Josh’s stunned family we have decided to “go kosher”. Although they might have expected something like this of me, they are dumbfounded that Josh is so keen. After all, this is Josh, who had to be coached to not ask his grandmother for ham sandwiches as a child, Josh who will drive across Scotland for lobster, Josh who once ate a pepperoni pizza on Yom Kippur...

“Things had got a little out of hand with the flaming.”

The first stage for anyone going kosher involves several trips to Ikea to buy carloads of new kitchen things and the purchase of a thing called the “Kosher Food Guide”. Unfortunately, only a fraction of said guide is devoted to food, most of it revolving around adverts for “Simcha Enhancers” in North London. The section that is about food contains nine pages of confectionery, followed by endless lists of brands so obscure that you would only ever find them in a kosher supermarket. The guide also has the annoying trait of listing things that aren’t kosher, which doesn’t really help. In my limited experience to date, most of the world is unkosher.

The next stage for us was tovelling – the immersion of all our new kitchen things in the mikveh. It was at this stage that an acquaintance of mine from the BBC, Serena, decided this would make a good radio programme. And so it was, that Josh, and I, an obscene amount of kitchen equipment and a radio journalist pitched up at the Shul on a Sunday afternoon.

A handy abandoned shopping trolley round the side of the Shul (ever

wondered what that was there for?) was deployed to shlep the stuff backwards and forwards from the car. It worked quite well, the only problem, as it got darker, being the risk of garrotting ourselves on a washing line that was stretched across the back yard.

“So he tovelled and I grovelled.”

We piled into the mikveh house. A barefoot Josh rolled up his trousers, got onto his hands and knees and began to painstakingly tovel each individual thing allowing it to float briefly in the freezing cold water so it had been properly immersed. The coldness of the water was my fault as I had gaily told the Rabbi it wouldn’t be necessary to heat the mikveh as the pots and pans wouldn’t mind! I wasn’t allowed to forget that. So he tovelled and I grovelled.

We had a little assembly line going after a while, on our hands and knees, unpacking, packing, drying. I was very grateful that Serena the journalist was there as she was a whiz at picking off labels. Seeing the comical sight of Josh’s derriere bobbing up and down on the edge of the mikveh, I was glad for his sake it wasn’t television.

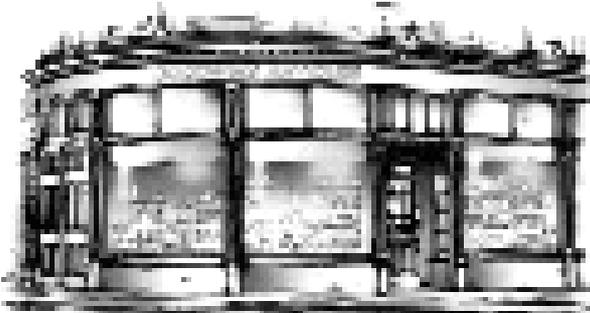
It all took twice as long as expected and our babysitter had to leave, leading to the addition of our toddler in the proceedings just as a carving knife had headed down to the deepest darkest part of the mikveh. “Why Daddy bath” our daughter chimed - hard to answer in two year old terms – as Josh fished around frantically with a net on a stick.

Weary but happy we headed home, thinking we’d sneakily finish off a last bottle of unkosher wine before finally kashering the kitchen itself the next weekend. It seems higher forces were at work to keep us on the straight and narrow, because in a fit of enthusiasm we had tovelled the corkscrew and had no idea where it was.

A week later we prepare to kasher. I stripped the kitchen of everything and cleaned while Josh concentrated on the oven. We hadn’t quite finished when the Rabbi arrived and in no time at all was sloshing boiling water around the kitchen while Josh went over various items and surfaces with a cook’s blow torch. The pair of them were having a whale of a time, like a couple of naughty schoolboys.

I retreated morosely to the bathroom to scrub bits of the hob with brillo pads, which apparently aren’t kosher. Serena from the BBC joins me. It isn’t the

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classic setting for an interview but I'm sure there have been stranger ones.

Josh and the Rabbi knock on the bathroom door. "Ho ho" this is the part where we get to set fire to the kitchen" they quip.

"Jolly Good!" I say sarcastically. Josh seems terribly disappointed that I am staying in the bathroom and not marvelling at their antics.

Another knock at the bathroom door. Josh and the Rabbi were standing in the hall looking very sheepish. Things had got a little out of hand with the flaming. In the kitchen was one very scorched cupboard.

The Rabbi pointed out that actually the flaming was optional. Josh pointed out that he had to flambé the kitchen to make it more interesting for Serena's radio programme.

"The flames went really, really high" said Serena, "It's a pity they didn't make any noise though, so not the best radio."

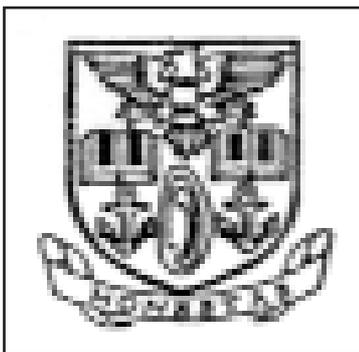
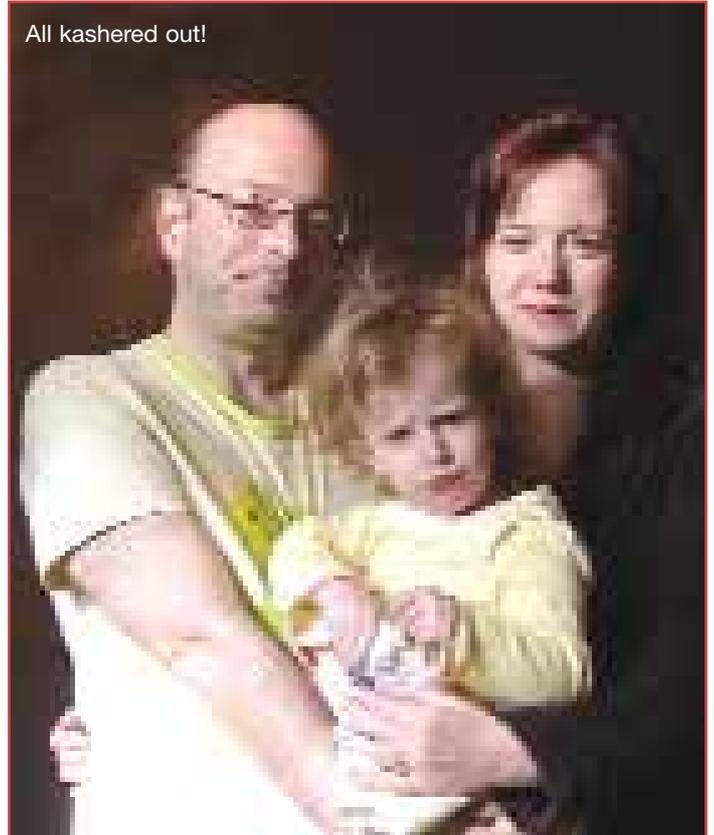
"You won't put this in your article for The Star will you?" asked the Rabbi. "No-one will ever kasher their kitchen again!"\*

We turned the oven on very high to complete its kashering. After about ten minutes the glass door shattered into thousands of pieces. I swept and cleaned up, while trying to keep a toddler out of kitchen with the broom and in my haste a shard of glass embedded itself in the palm of my hand.

"Look Josh" I yelled, watching a small pool of blood well up. "Call the whole thing off - stigmata!"

\* Rabbi David Rose would like it to be known that he cannot be held responsible if the man of the house decides to set fire to flammable liquid with a blow torch and then attempts to deal with the ensuing blaze by trying to blow it out.

All kashered out!



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# Society Reports

## Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society

Ross Bradshaw, the publisher of Five Leaves and the literature development officer for Nottinghamshire County Council, spoke about the forgotten "Jews in the Spanish Civil War." Viewed by many Jews as a precursor to a fascist takeover of Europe, the conflict drew Jews from all over the world to fight on the side of the Republicans against Franco, who was supported by Mussolini and Hitler. About one third of the 40,000 volunteers were Jewish. Yet, 70 years later, few Jewish communities to this day will speak of them. Mainstream Jewish society shunned any acknowledgement of Jewish participation in the war on the side of the communists, despite Franco's anti-Semitism; referring to Jews as a "nauseating burden" that he was grateful the Catholic Church in Spain had freed Spain of. Even the Zionists, who were predominantly socialist, gave scant support to the volunteers, arguing that they would do better to move to Palestine. Yet it was Palestine that yielded to the war a greater percentage of its population than any other region in the world. Nearly half the Polish volunteers were Jewish, and nearly all the Rumanian.

It was a fight for ideals. The banner of the Botwin company exclaimed in Polish, Yiddish and Spanish: 'for your freedom and ours.' Some came to conclude unfinished business, to establish a republic in a land from which Jews had been forced out or into hiding, and tortured or murdered by the Spanish Inquisition when discovered. Some simply came to live up to the ideals of Jeremiah and the Maccabees. It was a bloody war. A quarter of the volunteers perished, and only a quarter returned un-injured. Those who did, faced discrimination back home for having sided with the communists. The attitude has now shown a shift, as Jewish leaders have grown to recognise the Spanish Civil War as the opening battle of the Second World War. Teddy Kollek, in answer to why so many Zionists headed to Spain instead of Palestine, asked instead why they themselves did not.

Dr Colin Shindler, the Chair of the Centre for Jewish Studies in the School of Oriental and African Studies at University College London, spoke to the Lit about "The Triumph of Military Zionism: Nationalism and the Origins of the Israeli Right." The origins of the Zionist right are largely shrouded in mystery, not least because of the mythical status of its founder, Vladimir



Jabotinsky. Born in cosmopolitan Odessa in the 1880s, Jabotinsky was a largely secular Jew with no interest in Judaism. On studying in Italy, he became much enamoured of the people's revolt led by Garibaldi. Soon thereafter he envisioned a similar movement among Jews, which developed into his special brand of Zionism, Revisionism. During the First World War, he organised a Jewish legion, against the better

judgement of most Jewish leaders, but notably with Weizmann's support; it was time to show Jews could no longer be cowed.

Jabotinsky's fiery rhetoric and his 'arming of the Jews' won him favour among many Jewish youths. He established the Revisionist Jewish youth movement Betar, which Jabotinsky hoped would feed a revival of the Jewish Legion. But it seems the movement in time grew out of his control, wishing to free Palestine by force from the British. Jabotinsky, despite his reputation today, in fact held fast to the belief that a Jewish state would best be won from the British through diplomacy, not arms. His reputation it seems also suffered at the hands of the youth movement, especially its most famous adherent, Menachem Begin, who remodelled Jabotinsky's image after his own. More on this topic may be found in Dr Shindler's contribution in this issue.

Avery Meiksin

Catherine Lockerbie,

the Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival, appeared at the Lit on the 16th January, to talk about her role and about her work in bringing writers from all over the world to Edinburgh.



Catherine Lockerbie gained a double first in Philosophy and French at Edinburgh University.

She has worked as a teacher of children with special needs, taught English in Turkey and for a while was a scriptwriter on a radio drama serial. From 1990 to 2000, Catherine worked in journalism and held a number of senior posts at the Scotsman, including Literary Editor and Chief Leader Writer.

For the last five years Catherine has been Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival - the largest book Festival in the world. The Festival began in 1983 and has grown in size and stature ever since.

Over the past five years Catherine has particularly encouraged more participation and debate both between writers and readers and between writers and writers. It is quite simply a hotbed of debate and discussion attracting writers from all walks of life, from the world of politics to the arts, from TV celebs to explorers, from culinary experts to life changing gurus; and of course an eclectic mix of award winning fiction writers.

Catherine has programmed many Jewish and Israeli writers over the past five years and her interest in their work formed part of her talk at the Lit. Along with a rich variety of writers already in the public consciousness, the Festival has been an important platform for new and emerging writers. For example last year Catherine introduced Edinburgh audiences to the

Israeli author, Etgar Keret.

One of the main developments that Catherine has brought to the Festival is to move further from sessions that simply promote an author's latest book to talks and discussions linking into a variety of topical and sometimes controversial issues. In 2001, for instance, she brought together Amos Oz, David Grossman and Raja Shehadeh to discuss and debate, "The Middle East – What next?" It was an eloquent and refreshing discussion on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Facilitating writers talking to writers, and readers questioning writers, has been at the heart of Catherine's work at the Festival.

Catherine's visit to the Lit concluded with a lively question and answer session. And how does the Director of the biggest book festival in the world cope with having to read so many books as part of her job? Answer: she is one of these people who can get by with very little sleep!

David Ian Neville

## Professor Gary Gilbert

of Claremont-McKenna College, California and currently Visiting Scholar at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, spoke to the Lit about 'Jewish identity'. While Jewish identity is a subject quite familiar to today's British Jews judging from the number of book, theatre, and film reviews about modern "identity" issues found weekly in the Jewish Chronicle, Gilbert's talk focused on the ancient history of these identity issues and their similarity to those facing modern Jews.



Gilbert observed that with the destruction of the second temple and the separation of most Jews from the land of Israel, two of the important markers of Jewish identity in the ancient world were lost. It was thus left to the Rabbis to decide on questions such as, "who is a Jew?" While the boundaries were set to include matrilineal descent and conversion rituals, in 1983 the Reform movement

further included those with one Jewish parent who lived in a Jewish home and were brought up as a Jew. Gilbert argued however that identities are by no means clear-cut and neat. Rather they can be established in different ways, often including negative criteria, e.g., not belonging to a particular group. The central theme of his argument was that identities are established through a process of negotiation and interaction, and in the case of the Jews, by interaction with non-Jews. He illustrated this by contrasting Jewish identity in two ancient cities, Alexandria and Aphrodisias. The Greek city of Alexandria was established in the 4th century BCE. By the time it was transformed into the capital of Roman Egypt in the 1st century BCE, it was home to some 50,000-100,000 Jews. It had both synagogues and Jewish law courts and its Jews kept to Jewish customs such as lighting the Friday night candles and observing Pesach. At the same time, however, they clearly were also integrated into the community, as evidenced by their speaking Greek and attending Alexandria's cultural events. Yet in 38 BCE, the Jews were moved into a small crowded area, their property pillaged and Jewish leaders killed. While commenting wryly that this perhaps was an early example of hatred of Jews and of the typical historical episode characterised by "They killed us, God saved us, let's eat," Gilbert then suggested that this disaster was more likely to have been caused by political factors. The Jews had supported the Roman takeover while Alexandrians resented it. Under pressure from the Greeks, the Romans were manipulated to accept both that the Jews had done wrong and that they were "foreigners," i.e., not Greek citizens of Alexandria. The grounds for identifying Jews as foreigners were that they did not worship the "Gods of the city." Interestingly, it was only Greek citizens of Alexandria who were exempted from Roman taxes and both Jews and other "non-Greeks" very much wanted to be Greek.

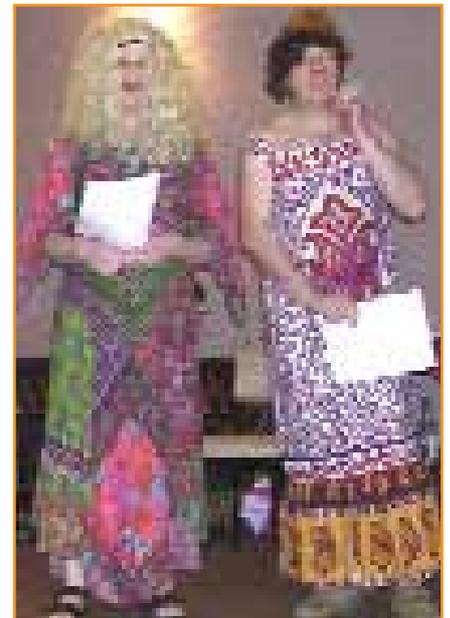
In marked contrast to the Jewish experience in Alexandria, the Jews apparently fared far better in Aphrodisias, another ancient Greek city taken over by the Romans. Evidence from a 4th century BCE inscription on a stone monument honouring those who held public (Roman) positions indicates that those honoured included

Jews (whose community was led by a Jewish woman) recent Jewish converts and non-Jewish "God-fearers" well disposed to the Jews. The very limited evidence available also suggests that not only did Jews and non-Jews work well together, but that non-Jews participated in some Jewish activities.

Concluding his talk, Gilbert observed that in both Alexandria and Aphrodisias, Jews participated in both Jewish life and in Civic life, i.e., their identity was hybrid rather than one of either complete assimilation or exclusiveness. Yet their interaction with non-Jews in Alexandria was met with hostility while in Aphrodisias they were welcomed.

Judging from the nature of the lengthy and lively discussion that followed the talk, few in the audience doubted that modern preoccupations with the complexities of identity clearly have ancient and fascinating antecedents. Likewise, judging from both the praise of audience members for Professor Gilbert's ability to combine a scholarly treatment of his subject with a lively and humorous presentation and the subsequent volume and duration of applause, it was clear that this had been a memorable event.

Steve Engleman



**Beyond the Pale.** The 2005-2006 session of the Lit ended on 19 March with a lively evening of music and "drama", an entertainment fit for Purim, as the syllabus described it. Edinburgh-based Klezmer band

Beyond the Pale, comprising Simon Carlyle on tuba, Andrew Gardiner on clarinet, violinist Barbara Rast, and Colin Warwick on banjo (Pav Verity who plays the tsimbl was not present on this occasion) played a variety of klezmer pieces, preceded by a most enlightening talk on klezmer music by Simon. (See 'Musical Notes')

Singing with the band was Stephanie Brickman, also an Edinburgh talent, who has branched out from jazz singing to include Yiddish song; her zestful performance of two lively songs - "Di grine kuzine" and the famous "Bay mir bistu sheyn" were received with great enthusiasm by the audience. Stephanie also sang and acted the role

of Mordechai in the third part of the evening's entertainment: a Purim shpil in Yiddish, written by Heather Valencia, directed by Gowan Calder and performed with gusto by members of the newly flourishing Edinburgh Yiddish class, among whom are several well-known Lit members who were not afraid to let their hair down in front of their friends! In time-honoured style the male roles were played by women and vice versa: thus Oron Joffe and David Bateman (sporting blond and red wigs) looked gorgeous as the two Queens Esther and Vashti respectively, Gowan Calder was a delightfully wicked Haman, and Ellen Galford in a top hat and dressing gown was a splendidly comic Ahasuerus.



It is unusual for a whole evening of live Yiddish culture to take place in Edinburgh, and those of us who were involved in this event are determined it will not be the last!

Heather Valencia

# Musical Notes

## Klezmer Music

Simon Carlyle

**The word "Klezmer" is derived from two Yiddish words: "Vessel of song" from kli or kley: vessel or tool, plus zmer: song or melody.**

Throughout Europe, the term was used almost exclusively to denote the musicians themselves. Only recently in America, has the term been used to describe the music itself. Other terms commonly used are "Shpilman" and "Muzikant", which is a rather derogatory term (the usual accepted word for musician is "Muziker"). Itzik Schwartz, who grew up in Lasi (Jassy), Romania, said that Klezmerim were sometimes referred to as "Lautari", though this more commonly describes Gypsy musicians. A performing group was usually referred to as a "Kapelye", but also "Khevrisa" (from a klezmer-loshn or musicians' slang term, meaning a band or gang). In very pretentious circles the term "Orkester" was sometimes used (even when denoting a group of only two or three players!)

Klezmerim formed what amounted to a hereditary caste of professional musicians. Places in the kapelye were handed on from father to son (and very occasionally daughter). There were also Guild-like protectionist rules for apportioning the work available between competing Kapelyes and for

keeping outsiders away from it. In addition, there were often rudimentary arrangements for mutual support of members: there are records of specific arrangements for sharing payments between musicians (the Mayster often got more, and the bassist and drummer much less than the "average" share), making benefit payments to indigent or sick members, and even pensions to their relicts.

**"Klezmerim were viewed with some suspicion and caution by the classes who employed them."**

Very much like popular musicians of today in many western societies, Klezmerim were viewed with some suspicion and caution by the classes who employed them. "Yikhes", or ancestry, was an important factor in a Jewish community and Klezmerim (with almost no Yikhes) definitely fell into in the lower part of the social hierarchy, together with treygers (porters) and just above the Gypsies with whom they often played, and with whom they were often contemptuously lumped.

The music that they played (for simplicity, usually referred to as



"Klezmer music") was exclusively instrumental, and the role of instrumental music in Jewish Communities was oddly paradoxical.

After the fall of the Second Temple, all instrumental music was forbidden, and although it gradually crept back into religious practice, and then into everyday life, there remained a feeling that it belonged only in a religious context, and that non-religious music making was in some way improper. Dr Zev Feldman alluded to this when he observed that the music's function of exciting and releasing passionate emotions without any devotional context, also put Klezmerim in a marginal position in society, and they were often seen as a threat to property and morals. For instance Stempenyu, the eponymous hero of Sholem Aleichem's 1888 novella, was depicted as a Kapelmayster and demonic violinist, from whose ravishing charms no girl or married woman was safe. It is perhaps doubtful if this is an accurate representation of Yoysele Druker, the real Stempenyu.

On the other hand, there was always a feeling that even secular music was imbued with a religious element, and that God was only a dance step away. A quotation in a Memorial Book from

Tomashov in Poland illustrates this: When the wedding guests had gathered round the rebe ... the rebe shook Shulik's hand and said "Sing to our God with the violin".

The division between Klezmer music and Khasidic nigunim (wordless devotional chants) was very unclear: nigunim were used by Klezmerim as an important source of melodies, and vice versa.

**"Klezmerim were universally accepted as absolutely essential for a proper wedding celebration,"**

The Klezmer's function was playing social (incidental) music in the Jewish community. As suggested above, this was occasionally in a liturgical setting, although it was usually peripheral, and somewhat frowned upon. In earlier times, klezmer music was especially strongly associated with Purimshpils, but also enlivened other occasions such as civic parades and social dances. However, it is most importantly associated with weddings. It is perhaps not surprising that Klezmerim were universally accepted as absolutely essential for a proper wedding celebration, with its blend of secular (not to say carnal) and religious connotations. There are numerous attestations of this relationship: two quotations will suffice:

"Vos far a klezmer, az a khasene" (The wedding is only as good as its Klezmer)

"A levaye on geveyn iz vi a khasene on klezmer" (A funeral without tears is like a wedding without a klezmer)

A concise description of their duties is given in the records of the Dubno Kapelye (in Western Volhynia) in the 1890s: they had to do the following:

"play at the bazetsn for the bride, lead her to the khupe in the synagogue, then lead the wedding party with freylekhs through only the streets where Jews lived."

They were not permitted to go down the wide streets like Alexandrovka or Panienska, where the neighbourhood was mixed. In addition they were hired on an ad hoc basis to play for the dances at the wedding feast.

Klezmerim were largely ignored in official Jewish histories, and until very recently their music was not regarded as any sort of positive symbol of Jewish culture; it is very summarily dismissed in many early studies of Yiddish culture (eg A Z Idelsohn (1929): Jewish music: its history and development). This attitude also helps to explain the disassociation of many American Jewish musicians (eg Goodman and Tarras) from their Klezmer heritage, according to Feldman.

However there were some notable exceptions, and a few serious musicologists did study Klezmer music as a legitimate aspect of Jewish folk culture. A particularly large debt is owed to Moshe Beregovski (1892-1961), who collected approximately 7,000 items (transcriptions, recordings, written music and photographs) from towns and villages around the Ukraine between 1928 and 1936 under great political difficulties. He was exiled to the Gulag from 1950 to 1955, and only one of his several volumes of writings was published in his lifetime. The vast

bulk of his material was presumed to have been lost during Stalin's anti-Semitic purges. It has recently been rediscovered hidden away at the Vernadsky Library in Kiev, and is only now finally becoming available for study by scholars and musicians.

Beyond the Pale is a group of five non-Jewish musicians with a shared interest in folk music; traditional jazz, Scottish, Swiss and Eastern European dance music. They discovered Klezmer music 5 years ago and play for a variety of social events. They have made a study of early European recordings and transcriptions and music within the social setting, of Ashkenazi tradition, which was largely left behind by emigrants to America, and so nearly exterminated in the Holocaust.

### **A different perspective of the Yasmin Levy concert**

The following concert took place on Sunday 5 March at the Queen's Hall and was unfortunately in direct competition with an Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society event. For those who missed it, Berl Osborne and Eve Oppenheim have written a short account of the concert.

Yasmin Levy is an Israeli singer who has taken a special interest in Ladino songs.

Ladino is a Judeo-Spanish dialect – the Sephardic counterpart to the Yiddish Ashkenazim. She inherited this interest from her father who had made a study of Ladino culture.

Her repertoire was wide and varied; even the Ladino varied in style, from a cantorial mode reminiscent of Kvarin, to the chanteuse manner of Edith Piaff.

Many of her songs demonstrated a constant overlaying theme of farewell and sadness, yet her survival instinct was always present in the music.

Mention must be made of her accompanying group, particularly a virtuoso clarinettist whose lively rendition of some Klezmer music was quite captivating.

*Berl Osborne*

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# The Other Half This article examines and celebrates the contributions of three “non-Jewish spouses”

## Clare Hogg

Editor of the Sukkat Shalom newsletter.  
Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community.

I've been involved with the Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community for 8 years. I first started attending monthly Erev Shabbat services in Homeroyal House with my soon-to-be husband Ricky. It was a completely new experience for me and one which I grew to look forward to and enjoy. The community was small but very welcoming to me. Back then, I attended an 18-month introduction to Judaism class run by Rabbi Pete Tobias at Glasgow New Synagogue in Glasgow in 1997-98 where all key aspects of Jewish life were covered; life cycles, history, traditions, festivals, rituals, key prayers, Shul services, Hebrew, Shabbat and so on.

For the past 12 months I have been producing the Sukkat Shalom monthly newsletter, but this is just a small thing compared to other people's contributions. I felt it was a task that I was reasonably equipped to do and for a small amount of my time, would take a lot of pressure off the community.

There is still a lot I don't know about Jewish life but I've got very supportive people around to keep me right. I kept an open mind about conversion and was never closed to the idea. I was brought up a Catholic and after the usual lapsed teenage years, began to be more active within my faith in later life.

When I attended Jewish services and community events with my husband, I thought very carefully about what I believed in and what was right for me. Attending Basic Judaism classes enabled me to study further, ask questions and understand more.

In the end, with a fully supportive husband, I felt that it would be wrong to convert if I wasn't 100% sure of the decision. As things stand now, I am active locally within my own church and feel that I have made the correct decision for me to retain my Catholic beliefs. When possible (small children permitting!) I still attend any Shul services that I can.

Every couple is different, but personally I feel it's important to be involved in my husband's Jewish life. For me, being married and sharing in each other's lives means a respect for each other's chosen faiths; this also requires a level of commitment to understand and participate when possible in those faiths.

Shabbat is such an important day for a Jewish person that I would find it hard to see how it could be celebrated fully if there was an issue about it in the household. It is a day of the week that I look forward to.

I have learned a massive amount by participating in the Jewish community and am sure that it will continue to further enrich my life in years to come.

## Kate Silk

Edinburgh Liberal Jewish Community. Baker of challah for Sukkat Shalom services, Kate also takes care of the Kiddush glasses (the job no-one wants to do!).

When my husband Nick and I were first together I would occasionally go to a Jewish event but I never really got that involved until after the birth of our eldest son Andrew. I don't have a strong faith but I was brought up Church of England. I think it's good to be brought up as “something”, it gives you a

moral background. We never really discussed it but I always knew that the children would be brought up Jewish although I never felt the need to convert myself.

When Andrew was 3 years old and David was 6 months old they were converted. I went to series of classes with the Rabbi at Glasgow New Synagogue to make sure I knew what to do for all the festivals and so on.

Nick is very involved in the community and I like to be involved to support him. That way it becomes a family activity. It's important to share it and not be isolated. Sukkat Shalom is a very welcoming community, there is no pressure to convert and there are a few people in my position, so it's not something unusual and the community accepts it.

## Martin Simmen

Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation  
Co-organiser, with his wife Shari, of the monthly toddlers group.



I admit it has been a struggle but for the first time ever I have made it through Pesach on a diet of matzah and macaroons. As someone raised in the Church of Scotland, I was, until a few years ago, completely unaware, not just of matzah, but of any notion of the celebration of Pesach. Of course, as a child in Sunday School, I heard the story of Passover and the Exodus from Egypt, but the fact that Jews continued to mark this event every year through millennia, went oddly unmentioned. It was only through my fiancée and then wife, Shari Cohn, that I got to experience the beauty of Pesach and the other festivals, both in the Edinburgh synagogue (especially through Rabbi Shapira and Rabbi Rose) and in our home but also in the homes of many friends in the community. Along the way I've also had the chance to learn how to make proper matzo ball soup, latkes, blintzes and rugelach. Synagogue services came as a bit of a surprise though: an act of worship, chat-forum, and theatre all rolled together — a far cry from the solemnity of the Presbyterian services of memory, where complete silence would descend whenever the minister was on his feet. As a scientist, I have great admiration for the vibrant tradition of questioning and debate that is so evident in the community, not least through the Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society, where I have been lucky enough to hear many talks of a remarkably high calibre.

My involvement got a fresh impetus in 2000 with the birth of our daughter Hannah, whom we are raising as Jewish, but also to be fully aware of and respectful of other traditions. We have a Shabbat meal on Friday night (where Hannah keeps me right with the blessings), and enjoy attending the very welcome monthly Family Service organized by Morris Kaplan. I also help out with the thriving Parent-Toddler group set up by Shari, open to all Jewish children and their parents in the Edinburgh area.

Having come to see the value of many aspects of the Orthodox community, I can appreciate why intermarriage still raises concern for some. However, when I look around the Shul, I see a small but growing number of inter-married couples committed to rooting their children in the Jewish tradition and contributing to the community more generally in whichever way they can. If religion is to be true to its Latin meaning (re-ligare, to bind back together), then I do not see that as a threat to the future of the community but rather as an opportunity for its continuity and growth.

# Jewish Perceptions of Jesus

Susanna Heschel (discussion to be continued in the next edition).

What greater theological intimacy could exist between two religions than to have the founder of one be a pious member of the other? Yet like all intimacies, tensions can easily arise: to whom does Jesus belong, to the Jews or the Christians? Who was he, a loyal Jew or the founder of the new religion, Christianity?

For two thousand years, Jews rejected the claim that Jesus fulfilled the messianic prophecies of the Hebrew Bible, as well as the dogmatic claims about him made by the Church Fathers – that he was born of a virgin, the son of God, part of a divine Trinity, and was resurrected after his death. Why Christians chose to form a religion about a preacher from the Galilee has long puzzled his fellow Jews. Was Jesus a pious Jew whose followers invented a religion about him after his death? Or was Jesus a wicked Jew who urged his followers to break with their Judaism? Who, indeed, was the real founder of Christianity – Jesus or Paul? How did Jesus, a Jew, become Christ, the incarnate God worshipped by Christians?

For two thousand years, a central wish of Christianity was to be the object of desire by Jews, whose conversion would demonstrate their acceptance that Jesus had fulfilled their own biblical prophecies. Until the last two centuries, however, Jews actually paid relatively little attention to the figure of Jesus, and what they wrote was for internal consumption. Jewish discussions of Jesus in antiquity and the Middle Ages were not read by Christians, nor were they part of the formal Jewish-Christian disputations held in medieval Europe, which concentrated on doctrinal differences. In those internal Jewish discussions of Jesus, the tone was primarily one of mockery. The Toldot Yeshu, a purported life of Jesus composed by Jews in antiquity, follows the gospel narratives of his life, but inverts their significance. For example, Jesus' miracles are acknowledged to have

“Jesus is presented as deceitful and self-serving, but without an intention of starting a new religion.”

occurred, but are attributed to ill-gotten sorcery techniques he learned in Egypt, or to his infiltration of the Temple's holy of holies where he allegedly stole the secret name of God. Jesus is presented as deceitful and self-serving, but without an intention of starting a new religion. The Sefer Nizzahon, a late thirteenth-century anthology of anti-Christian polemics, assumes a similar tactic, ridiculing the gospels' claims to fulfill Old Testament prophecies and presenting Jesus as a sinner who deliberately violated Jewish law.

“Other medieval Jewish texts, written for an audience larger than the Jewish world, present Jesus as a pious Jew who made no claim to divinity.”

Underlying Jewish explanations of Jesus lies a political agenda: explaining to Jews how a disreputable Jesus managed to launch a religion that ultimately became far more powerful than Judaism.

Other medieval Jewish texts, written for an audience larger than the Jewish world, present Jesus as a pious Jew who made no claim to divinity. Profiat Duran's (d. 1414) examination of the gospels led him to conclude that Jesus made no claims to being divine and simply demanded adherence to the Torah. Maimonides (1135-1204) interprets Christianity and Islam as part of the divine plan of preparing the world for redemption by bringing knowledge of God to the heathen, thus making them handmaidens of the Jewish mission, even while he views Jesus himself as a "wicked heretic." Yet the political agenda is just as sharp when Jesus is presented positively. If Jesus was a devout Jew, Christianity is ultimately a theological distortion introduced by Paul and the church fathers. At best, Christianity is subservient to Judaism, spreading its message of monotheism to the heathens. In the case of the Toldot Yeshu, Jesus is the deliberate deceiver of his followers, whereas if Jesus, according to Profiat Duran, adhered to Jewish law, Christians who believe he was their messiah or lord have simply been deceived.

Beginning in the late eighteenth century, however, the tone and volume of Jewish discussions of Jesus change. Emancipation and Enlightenment, with their promise of Jewish entry into a secularizing Christian society, elicited a positive Jewish interest in Jesus not out of appreciation for Christianity, but as a tool to justify Judaism. For example, the noted Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn sought to win Christian tolerance of Judaism by reminding his audience of Jesus' Jewishness: "Jesus of Nazareth himself observed not only the law of Moses, but also the ordinances of the rabbis; and whatever seems to contradict this in the speeches and acts ascribed to him appears to do so only at first glance. Closely examined, everything is in complete agreement not only with Scripture, but also with the tradition.... And you, dear brothers and fellow men, who follow the teachings of Jesus, should you find fault with us for doing what the founder of your religion did himself, and confirmed by his authority?"

“And you, dear brothers and fellow men, who follow the teachings of Jesus, should you find fault with us for doing what the founder of your religion did himself, and confirmed by his authority?”

The emphasis on Jesus' faithfulness to Judaism initially had to proceed with caution. Mendelssohn writes in an unpublished note in 1770, "It is a disgrace that we should reproach Socrates and Plato because they were pagans! Was this a flaw in their morals? And Jesus a Jew? -- And what if, as I believe, he never wanted to give up Judaism? One can only imagine where this remark would lead me." Into dangerous waters, no doubt, given Christian views at the time toward Judaism. The Jewishness of Jesus was known, but not to be publicised.

The rise of liberal Protestantism, with its quest for the historical Jesus and its claim that to be a Christian means to have the faith of Jesus, rather than the religion of dogma about Jesus, was one of the historical factors that encouraged Jewish theologians of the nineteenth century to contribute to New Testament scholarship. Starting

with Abraham Geiger and continuing with Heinrich Graetz, Levi Herzfeld, Joseph Derenbourg, Leo Baeck, Joseph Eschelbacher, and Felix Perles, among others, the Second Temple period took a position of prominence in the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, not only to elucidate developments in early Judaism, but to demonstrate how early Christian texts can be clarified with reference to Jewish sources, particularly rabbinic texts.

**“while Christianity demanded belief in established dogma, Judaism permitted freedom of belief and required only ethical behaviour.”**

Yet in arguing that Jesus was a Jew who can best be understood by studying the gospel texts in the context of Jewish sources, these Jewish historians were not simply building a bridge between the two religions, linked by the Jewish Jesus. Rather, they attempted a more radical agenda: developing a counterhistory of the prevailing Christian theological version of Christianity's origins and influence. The *Wissenschaft des Judentums* did not merely want the study of Judaism to be added to the curriculum, but wanted the study of Judaism to radically revise the established view of Christian origins, in an effort to resist and even overthrow the standard portrayal of Western history. At the heart of the West, according to the new German-Jewish historiography, stood not classical Greek or Roman civilization, nor Aryan culture, nor the New Testament, but the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic literature. It was those texts, not Greece, that produced the great monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and laid the foundations for the West. Even modernity, Jewish historians argued, with its claims to secularised, scientific forms of knowing and its insistence on tolerance and diversity, was to be understood as the product of Judaism, not Christianity. After all, while Christianity demanded belief in established dogma, Judaism permitted freedom of belief and required only ethical behaviour.

The initial step taken by Jewish historians was to redefine the nature of Judaism during the era when Christianity developed. Was it a dessicated religion that required the

radical rejection led by Christianity? How did the Jew Jesus lead to the dominance of Christianity in Western civilisation?

In Isaac M. Jost's narrative of Jewish history, written in the 1820s, the Pharisees are presented as narrow-minded and hypocritical, responsible for their own destruction and for Jews turning away to Christianity. By contrast, thirty years later, Abraham Geiger, one of the founders of Reform Judaism, inaugurated a new era of scholarship with his magnum opus, the *Urschrift und Übersetzungen der Bibel*, published in 1857, one of the most important works of Jewish scholarship of that century. Geiger defined two tendencies in early Judaism, Pharisaic and Sadducean, a liberal and a conservative proclivity, respectively. The Pharisees, far from being the figures of hypocrisy depicted in the New Testament, attempted to liberalize and democratize halakha, Jewish religious law, to make its practice easier. The Sadducees, the priests of the Jerusalem Temple, by contrast, represented the narrow interests of the priestly aristocratic elite seeking to preserve its privileges by a conservative reading of Jewish law.

**“Jesus himself, according to Geiger, was part of the liberalizing Pharisaic movement of his day”**

Jesus himself, according to Geiger, was part of the liberalising Pharisaic movement of his day. In a book on Jewish history that he published in the 1860s, a passage that became notorious among Protestant theologians declared: “He [Jesus] was a Jew, a Pharisaic Jew with Galilean colouring -- a man who shared the hopes of his time and who believed that these hopes were fulfilled in him. He did not utter a new thought, nor did he break down the barriers of nationality.... He did not abolish any part of Judaism; he was a Pharisee who walked in the way of Hillel.” After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, the Sadducees were left without a Temple to conduct their priestly worship. Rather than join their own enemies, the Pharisees, Geiger argues, the Sadducees were drawn to the early Christian movement, and they brought their old polemics with them, reflected in passages such as Matthew 23.

Christianity was not founded by Jesus, Geiger argues, but by Paul, who brought the Jewish monotheism taught by Jesus to the pagan world, where it became corrupted by pagan thought and led to non-Jewish doctrines such as the trinity. Where could Christians today find the actual faith of Jesus – Pharisaic Judaism? Geiger's answer: in the Reform Judaism that Geiger was bringing into existence, a comparable Pharisaic liberalization of Judaism.

Geiger's extensive scholarly examination of Christian origins, especially the figure of Jesus, should be understood not as an effort at assimilation, but, in light of postcolonial theory, as an attempt to subvert Christian hegemony and establish a new position for Judaism within European history and thought. In arguing that Jesus said and did nothing new or original, but was simply one of the numerous liberal Pharisees of first-century Palestine, Geiger was enacting a theological revolt against Christian hegemony and claims to supersession. Both Christianity and Islam had derived their most important teachings from Judaism, he argued in a book entitled, *What Did Mohammed Take from Judaism?*, and at their inception both Christianity and Islam intended nothing more than the spread of Jewish ideas to the pagan world, making them maidservants to the great religious genius of Judaism.

The conclusion was not simply that Judaism had exerted an influence on Christianity and Islam, but that both religions were little more than extensions of Judaism.

Professor Susannah Heschel, is an expert on German-Jewish history, and holds the Eli Black Chair in Jewish Studies. She is an associate professor in the Department of Religion at Dartmouth College in the United States. She is also a social activist for the marginalized in Jewish society and daughter of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel.

References corresponding to this article can be made available by contacting the editor.

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# A Community Obsession

David V Kaplan

**It has been a pleasure to receive the Edinburgh Star through my letterbox in leafy Stanmore, Middlesex. Its current Community News interspersed with pictures from the past, keep me updated and nostalgic. A vexing theme, though, seems to crop into virtually every edition, whether in an editorial, a letter or an article. The recurrent question of who is a Jew and how this affects the Edinburgh Jewish community can be found in practically every edition of the Star. In many ways, this has become the Edinburgh Star obsession.**

It is obvious that there are some underlying agendas with this common theme featured in the Star, particularly in the last 5 years. This issue is a very delicate one for many families in the Edinburgh community, but the disproportionate coverage of it smacks of something a little more strategic and personal. So what is the issue that is so often aired in the Star and by whom?

The main argument proposed is that there is no reason, under Jewish law, why a child born from either a Reform or Conservative (Masorti) converted mother, or from a Jewish father and non-Jewish mother, cannot be considered fully Jewish.

Various arguments have abounded, including: Moses married a non-Jew so what about his children? King David's great-grandmother Ruth was a convert from Moab, so was King David not really Jewish? And sadly the most common of all arguments put forward, Hitler and his Nazi regime did not care about any distinctions relating to birth and they murdered all who had any Jewish blood coursing through their veins.

To clarify, Moses was married before the Jewish Law was given to him by God. Furthermore, Zipporah fully adopted the faith of Moses as did her famous father, Yitro (Jethro). There is no dissent that Zipporah kept kosher, kept the laws of family purity and observed the Sabbath after the Revelation at Sinai.

Ruth is probably one of the most famous converts in our history who famously chose the Jewish way of life and converted to follow her mother-in law's religion. It should be noted here that Ruth was married to one of Naomi's sons and didn't convert during her marriage to him. Naomi's other daughter-in law was Orpah who did not go with Ruth. As Jewish irony would have it, Ruth's great-grandson was a certain King David and Orpah's great-grandson was a certain Goliath!! They were second cousins!

The Hitler regime analogy is perhaps the most emotive and most used of the modern day arguments and for me, perhaps the bleakest road to go down. The Holocaust was an attempt by the Nazi regime and its collaborating allies to destroy not only the Jewish faith, but predominantly the Jewish "gene" biologically, as Nazi science preached that the Jew, via its blood and gene pool, infected world society and needed eradicating from the planet. In order to ensure the complete success of this policy, the Nazi regime defined a Jew via bloodlines and enshrined them in the infamous Nuremberg Laws. Nazi law stated that a Jew, for the purposes of breeding and employment, would be defined as anyone having a Jewish maternal or paternal grandparent. These laws

introduced the world for the first time to the concept of a Half-Jew. The Nazi regime didn't differentiate so called Half-Jews and even Quarter- Jews from Jews. All were sent to their deaths. But, in our tradition we have no concept, nor should we, of the Half or Quarter Jew, even though some Jewish media, including the Jewish Chronicle continuously employs the term.

Thank God, we as the Jewish people do not allow Adolf Hitler to define who is a Jew. To define a Jew today in the same way as the Nuremberg Laws did, is surely an affront to the Jewish people.

The only over hang from these sad days for the Jewish people is the Law of Return in Israel which today is under serious review due to the reason for its adoption having disappeared now from post-Holocaust Europe.

I firmly believe it is up to practising and fully believing Jews, based on the Torah and the Talmud, to define who is a Jew and not to allow Adolf Hitler and Heinrich Himmler to make this decision for our faith and us for generations to come. In this context, the term believing Jew is applied to Jews who hold with true faith that God himself revealed the Torah to Moses and the Jewish people on Mount Sinai. It is somewhat ironic that Christianity and Islam also take this divine revelation to be true but Reform, Liberal and Conservative Judaism do not.

These movements do not like to see themselves as simply an updated form of Judaism for the 21st century or as an easy touch for potential converts for intermarrying couples. The Reform/Liberal/Masorti Rabbinate and their respective national leadership are very keen to promote that they are ideologically different to authentic Orthodox Judaism. It is about time that we commended this approach and acknowledged that they are simply different religions and not a modern alternative. I am not concerned that the Reform/Liberal communities are in Edinburgh, as they will no doubt prove to be a welcome home for many people who ideologically believe in the new religion they adhere to.

Sadly, due to intermarriage, membership of Reform/Liberal communities in smaller Jewish communities have been in the main because of a Jewish status need and not via ideological beliefs as is often the case in the larger Jewish communities. This can be clearly seen within the Glasgow Reform community where, according to their previous religious leader, Pete Tobias, over 80% of their new members came from intermarried couples of whom all the women had converted to Reform Judaism.

There is hardly a Jewish family in Edinburgh which is not affected by the difficult issue of assimilation and intermarriage. I recall recently leafing through the Star with a few of my Edinburgh friends looking at a picture of the opening of the Edinburgh Cheder by the late Chief Rabbi Jakobowitz in 1982. It was a profoundly sad experience when we realised how many of our Cheder friends had either married out of the Jewish faith or we simply had no idea where they were today. The percentage of my Cheder class who have married out is nearly 85%.

\*According to Jewish law, we are all aware that a child born to a Jewish mother is Jewish (apart from female reform/conservative converts). It is fantastic to see so many families in our community who have a Jewish mother and a non-Jewish father bringing their children to Shul, Cheder and functions. Equally, it is encouraging to see the leaders of our community embracing these families in a way that when I was growing up in Edinburgh I would doubt would have been the case.

I understand why Jewish fathers who have married non-Jews may wish their children to be recognised as Jews not only by the Edinburgh Community but by the world at large. However, I would argue that nearly all Jewish men who marry out of the faith know that their children will have Jewish status issues, as there are very few Jews who are not at all aware that the Jewish line passes not from the father but via the mother.

There is of course the argument that the Jewish people are diminishing in numbers and by accepting all those who want to be considered Jewish will help secure the future of the Jewish people? Thankfully Jews have not been overly pre-occupied by concerns over the numbers of Jews in the world. For Jews it is simply not a quantity issue and never will be.

There are many reasons why Jews have married out of the faith and no doubt will continue to do so. I am not seeking to judge those who have married out as that is their free choice.

From an educational perspective though, it is very important to inform intermarried families that there is no need to seek Jewish status per se as Jewish belief clearly states that you do not have to be Jewish in the eyes of God in the quest for eternal life and salvation. For non-Jews, Judaism features the Noachite (7 laws given to Noah for all humankind) laws as a guide by which to live their lives. It is not a matter of Jews being better than non-Jews. That notion is ludicrous. We simply have different laws and missions to carry out which have the same end product, carrying out God's will and becoming closer to Him.

For Jewish men who have married out of the faith under their own free will, very often the campaign for inclusion of their

children as Jews is carried out not by them but by their parents. This is an interesting phenomenon in itself. It would feel more authentic if my old Cheder friends in this situation wrote letters and articles on their own behalf stating how they want their children to be fully Jewish and what practical steps at home they are taking to keep the kosher laws and observe the Sabbath. After all Judaism cannot be learnt from a textbook, it must be lived.

I fully understand the grand parents of these children wanting acceptance, the opportunity \*to have their grandson have a Bar Mitzvah in the same Shul as them and the grand occasion of their 5 year old granddaughter reading the Four questions at the Seder table must be great aspirations for most if not all Jewish grandparents.

There is no issue at all in the Star congratulating families in our community on the birth of non- Jewish grandchildren as detailed in the last Star editorial, as inclusion in the Star Announcements does not authenticate Jewish status. We should be confident as a community to wish our fellow congregants congratulations on such occasions and not ignore for what may be a difficult time for them.

I hope all my old Cheder friends who have intermarried have fulfilled marital lives and their children grow up to be great citizens of this country and the world generally. It does not make these children any less loved or any less valued that they happen not to be Jewish. I am all for these children learning about their families' history and heritage and they are welcome to explore the religion further if they so desire and some may even convert, but this is not the position the Jewish religion starts from.

It is time that the Edinburgh Star ceased this obsession and moved on and hopefully in 20 years time when the graduates of today's Edinburgh Cheder thumb through the Star in 2026 they won't have to pick out the one or two who are committed Jews with committed Jewish families.

David V Kaplan describes himself as a 'Graduate of Edinburgh Cheder 1984'

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# A Review of 'the story of god' by Robert Winston

Janet Mundy

You may have seen Robert Winston's BBC series, also named "the story of god", late last year. This book, although related, is much more than a tie-in rushed out to capitalise on the success of the series. It is a serious study of the development of religion from its early roots to the emergence of the three main monotheistic religions and an investigation of the place of religion in the modern world. While scholarly, it is written in Professor Winston's usual accessible style, full of anecdotes and personal references, many relating to his position as a practising Jew, and one whose family has lived in Britain since 1700.

The prologue to the book immediately sets the tone for the book. The first paragraph describes a mezuzah, and paragraph two quotes the Shema, in particular "The Lord our God, the Lord is One" as a major theme for his book. Typically, he then expands on the personal to a more global experience, from an elderly Muslim in Tashkent to a young woman praying in Cambodia. He then introduces the concept he calls the 'Divine Idea', a belief in one or many gods, which he then explores throughout the rest of the book. As he says, "I hope also that a personal account of some of my own struggles with God, and an expression of how I continue to attempt to resolve that conflict, as an averagely rational scientist and as a Jew, will be of some interest."

The book then covers a roughly chronological course, from the early roots of religion, which he suggests can be inferred from the primitive practice of burying the dead many thousands of years ago, through the human sacrifices of early civilisations such as the Aztecs, to the gradual emergence of monotheism, starting with Zoroastrianism, which promoted the idea of a Lord of Wisdom, Ahura Mazda, "the one uncreated God, eternal and the begetter of all other gods". There were other lesser gods, and an evil power, Angra Mainyu. Zoroastrianism, like later more familiar religions, also had sacred texts, the Avesta.

The Bible and Judaism are described in detail, primarily for a non-Jewish audience, as are Christianity and Islam. The constant shifts in the nature of the relationship between these three major religions form the main part of the book. Perhaps because Professor Winston has himself been the victim of anti-Semitic threats from a small group of Catholics as a result of his work on in-vitro fertilisation, which he describes late in the book, he appears slightly less charitable towards Christianity than Islam. For example he states, "One of the great paradoxes of the Divine Idea is its capacity sometimes to permit, or even motivate, acts of great cruelty. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Christianity, where belief in a loving, forgiving God has been enforced with torture, branding, amputations and death by fire." This bias may also be a reaction against the Islamophobia of the modern Western world. For example, he says of the Bible and Qur'an, "The

Arabic of the Qur'an is considered a sacred language, and when Muslims approach it they feel they are entering into a spiritual experience, in the same way as Jews do when they hear the Torah. By contrast, Christian attempts to render the Bible into everyday language in order to spread the Word far and wide have sometimes diminished that aura of spirituality surrounding the text." In relating the flourishing of Judaism in the Islamic culture of the 12th and 13th century in comparison to the Spanish Inquisition that followed it, he certainly seems to feel a stronger relationship between Judaism and Islam than Christianity. It is also possible that this is based on family tradition, as his ancestor, Rabbi Joseph ben Ephraim Caro (who wrote the Shulchan Aruch, codifying Jewish law) was forced to move from Spain and Portugal to Turkey, before moving eventually to Safed.

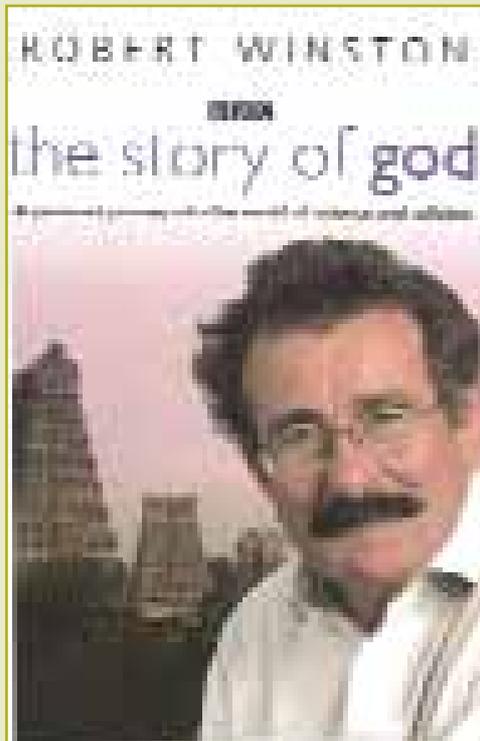
Another reason for this may be a theme that recurs throughout the book – the contrast between religion and science, and particularly the current controversy between scientifically accepted Darwinian evolutionary theories and the Christian creationists, who are currently challenging that paradigm. Anyone who saw the episode on the television series where Professor Winston visited a group of American creationists and was barely able to hide his incredulity, will not be surprised that he is scathing in his repudiation of their views. He points out that, since Maimonides and Nachmanides in the 13th Century, Judaism has had no difficulty with the Biblical creation story, as Judaism has always invited interpretation of the text, while some Christians are still struggling with it as literal truth today.

Conflict of all kinds recurs throughout the book – between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims, Protestants and Catholics, Arabs and Jews and, particularly, between religion and science, from Galileo's perceived heretical suggestion that the earth rotates around the sun, to

Professor Winston's gentler disagreements with noted atheists (and respected colleagues) such as Richard Dawkins, Philip Pullman and Douglas Adams. Despite thousands of years of human history, no one has been able to prove, or disprove, the existence of one or more gods. However, even in a modern era with wide scientific knowledge, Professor Winston notes that a recent survey indicated that one in four respondents had some sort of belief in a "traditional god" in this country. Whatever the truth, the book shows that as long as there are human beings, there will be a need for some sort of deity, or "Divine Idea".

Whether your interest is in the history of religion, the debate between major religions or between science and religion, there is much to ponder in this book, which I highly recommend.

Published by Bantam Press 2005. £18.99



# Obituaries



## Ruth Sophia Cohen

25th July 1964 to 14th March 2006

Ruth was born in Edinburgh a few months after her parents, Philip and Myra, moved up to Scotland from Surrey.

She attended Sciennes Primary School during which time her talents for art, dancing and gymnastics first became apparent. These were further developed during her time at James Gillespie's High School. She also attended cheder and was Bat Mitzvah in 1976.

Ruth went to Manchester University where she took an active part, and thoroughly enjoyed, the vibrant Jewish student life. She graduated with an Honours Degree in History followed by a post graduate course at Napier College in Edinburgh.

It was during her time at university that she was first diagnosed with MS. This cruel and debilitating disease was to increasingly affect her mobility and health over the next 20 years. Despite this, she fought bravely against it with a strong determination and was an inspiration to others. The love and support of her parents gave her strength.

Ruth went on to work in Careers Guidance and it was here that she first met her partner John. He dedicated himself to her happiness. They also travelled widely together including holidays to New York, Paris and Stockholm.

Ruth wanted to help others in a similar situation to herself. For example, she set up a series of lectures which she wrote and gave to Architectural students relating to disability issues. These were aimed at explaining the practical problems of wheelchair users

and suggest how architects and planners could improve their designs.

Ruth was not particularly interested in sport but her one obsession was with snooker. She went on an annual trip with John to Sheffield, to see the World Championship Finals which they attended for 17 consecutive years, which must be some kind of record.

She also helped raise money for charities. This included presenting a television appeal on behalf of a charity and making several tandem parachute jumps.

It was less than 2 years ago that Ruth became an aunt to my son Samuel. Her love and joy shone through.

There was much happiness in Ruth's life; in her childhood thanks to the unconditional love of her parents, in Manchester and during her many years with John.

She will be sadly missed by all who knew her.

Braham Cohen

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**The JC**  
A new look for an old friend

# Dame Muriel Spark

1st February 1918 to 13th April 2006



With the passing of Dame Muriel Spark, Edinburgh, world city of literature, has lost one of its most distinguished writers, certainly its most influential novelist since Walter Scott. The world of literature too has lost a writer of genius, a pioneering novelist and a brilliant short story writer who transformed fiction-writing in English in the second half of the twentieth century.

To wish to claim Muriel Spark for ourselves as a 'Scottish writer' is a natural enough desire, though to describe her as such tells only part of the truth, is only one strand in the story, and is helpful only to a degree. Besides, how does one define what is or what makes a 'Scottish writer'?

Much of Spark's writing follows in the tradition of Hogg and Scott and Stevenson. And some of her work shares the bitter and mordant economy and chilling darkness of the Border Ballads. Spark was to write in 2004 that, 'no-one without a knowledge of those Ballads could understand my work.' But it is also true that of her twenty-two novels, only one, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, is set entirely in Scotland, with two others being set partly in this country, *Symposium* and *Aiding and Abetting*.

'Scottish both by birth and formation',

and a writer who wrote with 'a Scotch accent of the mind' that is unmistakably discernible in her work, Muriel Spark was much, much more than a 'Scottish writer': she was one of the finest twentieth-century novelists writing in English, an innovator with an international reputation, one of the most influential writers of the post-war period. In recognition of her international importance, the Scottish Arts Council established this year the Muriel Spark International Fellowship. The announcement of the first holder of this fellowship, Margaret Atwood, was made only a few weeks before Dame Muriel's death.

Born Muriel Sarah Camberg in Edinburgh in 1918 and educated in this city, she was to say that 'it was Edinburgh that bred within me the conditions of exile.' These conditions took her first to Africa at the age of 19, after which Scotland was never to be her home again. Not without many connections, affiliations and associations for Spark, Edinburgh also became for her that 'place that I, a constitutional exile, am essentially exiled from.' It was that sense of exile, as well as her deeply felt experience of it, that would inform her career as a writer, which began in earnest after she left Rhodesia for post-war London, where, of necessity, Spark took up an appointment with the Poetry Society as its General Secretary, combining with this the editorship of the Society's *Poetry Review*. Bringing youth and vitality to this near-fossilised institution, Spark's real enthusiasm for contemporary poetry and her energy as a moderniser upset many there. For more than a year, her attempts to drag the Society into the twentieth century met with fierce opposition from some colleagues and council members. Throughout this difficult period, Spark required it of herself to exercise nothing but tact and to respond to her critics with absolute charm until 'her face ached of it'. Worn down by the old guard, she eventually asked to be dismissed rather than resign. (Some details of this far from dull period can be read in Spark's volume of autobiography, *Curriculum Vitae*, which she published in 1992.) This new freedom gave her room to write, and she started her own publication,

*Forum*, a magazine for poems and short stories. Although this ran for only two issues, it featured work by Roy Campbell, Kathleen Raine, Hugo Manning and Henry Treece. Now being published regularly in several poetry magazines herself, Spark was admitted to the Society of Authors in March 1949. She was also submitting poems to major London publishing houses for publication in a single volume. But from all these publishers came polite refusals. A major reversal in her fortunes then took place when in 1951 she famously won *The Observer* short story competition with 'The Seraph and the Zambesi'. This is a surreal tale about a world where things are not as they seem, and which features a poet, a dancer, a Seraph and the Zambesi River, on which the Seraph rode 'among the rocks that look like crocodiles and the crocodiles that look like rocks.' Almost 7,000 writers entered this competition for the huge prize of £250 and the promise of publication. This award was not only to change the course of Spark's career as a writer; it was also to change the course of literary history.

Of course, Spark's first appearance in print had already taken place over twenty years earlier, in 1930, at the age of twelve, when five of her poems were published in *The Door of Youth*, a collection of poems by Edinburgh school children, with a foreword by the poet, novelist and politician John Buchan. Spark's poems in that collection, and those she wrote during the 1930s for *Gillespie's High School Magazine*, are as remarkably confident as they are technically accomplished. But it was not until after her success in *The Observer* competition that the Hand and Flower Press published her first collection of poems, *The Fanfarlo*, *And other verse* in 1952. This book was reviewed warmly in *The Times Literary Supplement* early the following year. Her poems were also published in *The TLS* from time to time, her last one appearing there only a few weeks ago.

Although her success in *The Observer* competition naturally made her attractive to publishers seeking a first novel, it was not until 1957 that Spark published that first novel. During these six years, Spark did not take a holiday

from writing. Despite a period of ill-health, she was immensely productive, writing literary biography, and continuing to write poetry. She had already published, with Derek Stanford, *Tribute to Wordsworth*; and there followed her own *Child of Light*, a reassessment of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley; and, with Stanford again, *My Best Mary*, selected letters of Mary Shelley; a study of the Poet Laureate John Masefield, whose Edinburgh public reading she attended as a schoolgirl; an edition of Brontë letters; and, also with Stanford, a selection of letters of John Henry Newman and a critical study of Emily Brontë. More than fifty years later, Spark's meditative essay on the personality of Emily Brontë is still highly regarded, and was singled out for special attention in the Oxford Companion to the Brontës published in 2005.

Aided by the generosity of the writer Graham Greene, who had read some of her stories and who sent her regular cheques, 'with a few bottles of red wine to take the edge off cold charity', Spark completed her first novel, *The Comforters*, in 1956. Published early the following year, it was generally well-received by the critics. The famous English novelist Evelyn

Waugh 'offered a glowing quotation for publicity and an equally generous review.' He had been working on a novel on a similar subject to Spark's, and went as far as saying, 'I was struck by how much more ambitious was Miss Spark's, and how much better she had accomplished it.'

There followed in the next four years eight new works: five novels, *Robinson*, *Memento Mori*, *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*, *The Bachelors* and the pivotal *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, which Spark was to describe not unkindly as 'her milch cow'; a selection of the poems of Emily Brontë, a collection of short stories; and 'stories and ear pieces.'

In her hugely productive literary career, Spark was to publish, in addition to her works of biography and criticism, twenty-two novels, several collected editions of short stories, and a respectable amount of poetry. But it will be for her novels, quite naturally, that Spark will be most remembered, for their startling originality, their wit and verbal brilliance, as well as for their technical assuredness.

What is consistently true about Spark is that there was never a time when



she was not doing something remarkable in her novels. In terms of the themes, she created in several novels plots about the business of novel-writing itself, and explored the world of the supernatural and the endless struggle between good and evil. In terms of technique, most characteristically she would subvert conventional lines of narrative, using the devices of flash-forward or flash-back to create a sense of dislocation between present, past, and future. These devices, and 'the movement between past and present', the writer Anthony Burgess said, 'created a view of reality that was Godlike'. Spark's 'extraordinarily daring time-shifts backwards and forwards across the

chronological span of action', combined with her very distinctive feature of 'prophetic glimpses of the future fate of her characters', the novelist and critic David Lodge described as 'mimicking the omniscience of God who alone knows the beginning and the end.' He wrote, 'this does not serve the purposes of a pat moralism or a reassuring providential pattern. It unsettles, rather than confirms, the reader's ongoing interpretation of events, and constantly re-adjusts the points of emphasis and the suspense in the narrative.'

The brilliance of Spark's techniques as storyteller was also paid due tribute in the citation of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, when she was admitted as an honorary member: 'her novels display an absolutely confident and economical style, an uncanny insight into human character, and a highly individual philosophical zeal that never wearies of exploring the vanities of civilised hellishness.'

Writing ten years ago about how some readers tended to misjudge her age, Spark wondered if she 'wrote young.' In her final novel, *The Finishing School*, published in 2004, she demonstrated, with her

highly original vision and voice, that she did continue to 'write young.'

Muriel Spark was one of the luminaries of post-war British literature whose writings brought pleasure and delight to readers worldwide, her works having been translated into more than twenty languages, including Albanian, Croatian, Japanese, Russian, and Catalan. She also massively influenced a new generation of writers of the 'post-modern' novel. Muriel Spark leaves an enormous literary legacy.

Michael Lister, Edinburgh

Photos by kind permission of Robin Spark

# Maccabi GB Junior Rugby vs. Heriots U15 Rugby Club

By Steven (proud father) & James Hyams



It was a cold Sunday February morning at Goldenacre when Maccabi, playing in a red and blue strip, met a Heriots team playing in blue and white hoops. This was the second trial for Maccabi representatives to be selected to form part of the first junior rugby squad to represent Great Britain as an Under 18 team at the 2009 Maccabiah Games.

The representatives came from Manchester, Blackpool and London and, of course, our very own Edinburgh. As Maccabi stepped on to the pitch there was a huge cheer from the crowd, but they knew straight away it was going to be a hard match. James Hyams, the captain of Maccabi for this game, went up to shake his opponent's hand, then the whistle blew for the start of the game. Maccabi put up a stern defence but with a very experienced and strong Heriot's side against them they had to fight for every ball. Heriot's strength shone through after only two minutes when they scored their first try.



Maccabi never gave up and fought bravely. When the half time whistle blew the score was 23-0 to Heriots. This may look like a bad score, but for a team like Maccabi who have only met twice before, it showed the talent of their side. As the second half kicked off, the Maccabi team continued to fight bravely, with two members of the team coming off injured, one with a bleeding nose, the other with a pulled muscle in his leg, after a terrific tackle against one of the Heriots players, who was twice his height.

The game finished 57-0 to Heriots, which wasn't a fair reflection of Maccabi's tireless efforts. The Heriot's coach, Andy Irvine, said that Maccabi fought bravely and didn't deserve this score, which made the team feel better and now they're all set for their next trial in London.



12-year-old Michael, who attends 'Azami Judo Scotland' every week, is seen with his trophy for the Scottish Mini Mons Championship awarded on Sunday 29th January 2006. Michael had to challenge three other competitors within his category. When asked how he felt on receiving the trophy, his mother, Jackie, said that 'he was surprised, pleased excited and delighted' ...in that order!

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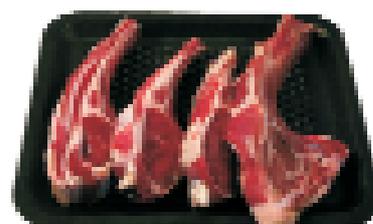
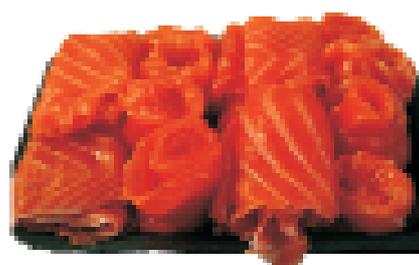
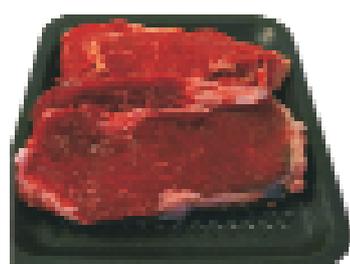
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If you have not already responded to our appeal, and would like to, it is never too late. Your donation, no matter how large or small, will always be most welcome.

The Star would like to apologise if any names have been incorrectly written.

If any person believes they have been inadvertently missed, please contact the editor and they will be included in the next issue of the Star.

# Announcements

**Ronnie Goodman** writes that he and his wife **Anne** recently celebrated their 59th wedding anniversary. He wrote a letter to Her Majesty the Queen, first to congratulate her on her 80th birthday and secondly, to wish her and Prince Philip continuing good health so that they would all be able to celebrate their diamond wedding in 2007. Ronnie explained to Her Majesty that despite the sad situation of his wife Anne, who resides in a nursing home, and who no longer recognises him, he derives infinite pleasure in visiting her every other day and considers it a bonus when she greets him with a big smile.



The Queen kindly responded through her Lady-in-Waiting and Ronnie was touched by her sentiment and wished to share the two responses he received.

## Congratulations

**Deborah and Jonathan and Mason** on the arrival of their son **Natan Reuven**, born on 2nd April 2006. Proud grandparents, Irene and Philip provided the photograph.



## The Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation Jewish Edinburgh Group

Festival Open Day  
12.00 – 4.30pm Sunday 20th  
August 2006

Join us for bagels and coffee

The Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation is having an Open Day during the Festival to welcome festival visitors and performers.

### The day will include:

An exhibition about the History of the Edinburgh Jewish Community

Tours of the Shul - a rare modernist 1930s building, faced in red brick, by leading Glasgow architect James Miller. Grade B listed

We are hoping that a number of acts from the Festival with shows or events that have a Jewish cultural interest will come along and talk about their shows and perform extracts. Interested performers/groups wishing to take part please write or email:

### Jewish Edinburgh Group

c/o: The Synagogue,  
4 Salisbury Road, Edinburgh EH16 5AB

Or email:

[jeg@www.ehcong.com](mailto:jeg@www.ehcong.com)

The Open Day will be held at the above address.

# Forthcoming Events

## June

**2 Friday**  
First day of Shavuot

**11 Sunday**  
WIZO annual lunch/garden party at the home of Maryla and Edward Green

**18 Sunday**  
Cheder prize giving/picnic

**21 Wednesday**  
Synagogue AGM 8.00

## July

**13 Thursday**  
Fast of Tammuz

## August

**3 Thursday**  
Fast of Av

**20 Sunday**  
Festival open day  
12pm – 4.30pm

## September

**23 Saturday**  
First day Rosh Hashanah

There are no meetings of Lodge Solomon, Council of Christians and Jews or Literary Society during the Summer months. These along with dates of future WIZO

lunches to be confirmed in the next edition.

Senior Maccabi meet on Sunday evenings in members' homes. For further information, contact Alice Kelpie (337 1894).

The Luncheon Club meets every Tuesday and Thursday at 12.30pm.

AI meetings take place in the ICommunity Centre, Salisbury Road, unless otherwise stated. All are subject to alteration.

## Corrections

Apologies go to Cassie, Jonty and Lily Karro for misspelling their names in the last edition of the star.

Ivor Klayman informs us that the boy front row right in last edition's Star Trek is Alan Myerthal and not Mervyn Smith and that Shelagh Smith is the correct spelling.

With regret we cannot take responsibility for misspelt names if given verbally. If readers wish to insert a personal announcement on this page, they must provide a clearly written version.